

IMMIGRANTS AND SILVER CITY

Milwaukee is a city of immigrants. People have come here seeking jobs, following family connections, and hoping for a better life. The earliest settlers came from French Canada and New England. In 1850, most immigrants were from Germany and Ireland, followed later in the 1800s by people from Poland and Italy. They all worked together at factories in the Valley.



Milwaukee Public Library



Background photograph: Milwaukee County Historical Society
Aerial photograph: City of Milwaukee

In 1844, Milwaukee had twice as many German language newspapers as English. Today in Silver City, you can hear many languages spoken on the streets.



Center photographs: Milwaukee Economic Development Corporation

In its heyday, the area southwest of the Valley was known as Silver City. Workers would spend their pay—silver dollars—at businesses along National Avenue. Farther east, near 27th Street, was National Park, a 52-acre park with lake fishing, horse racing, the city's first roller coaster, and bicycle racing. When the park closed in 1900 and local industry continued to grow, hundreds of new houses were built on the former park grounds.

By 2000, Silver City had welcomed Hmong and Hispanic immigrants, as well as many African Americans. Both new and longtime residents enliven the neighborhood with restaurants, grocery stores, and other businesses serving a diverse cultural mix.

LEARN MORE, DO MORE...

Volunteer for the Milwaukee Area Refugee Consortium.

Attend a local festival celebrating immigrant heritage.

"Old Silver City, a stretch along West National Avenue between the Milwaukee city limits and West Milwaukee, received its name from the chance remark of a stranger who, entering a saloon, saw a large pile of silver coins stacked in a poker game and said, 'Why this must be Silver City!' For years the name clung to the street."

History of Milwaukee County, Milwaukee Writers Project, 1947



HANK AARON STATE TRAIL

Hank Aaron State Trail sign panels supported by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Menomonee Valley Partners, Inc., the Wisconsin Coastal Management Program and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management under the Coastal Zone Management Act, Grant #NA03NOS4190106