



# SOUTH MILWAUKEE

THE WAY IT HAPPENED

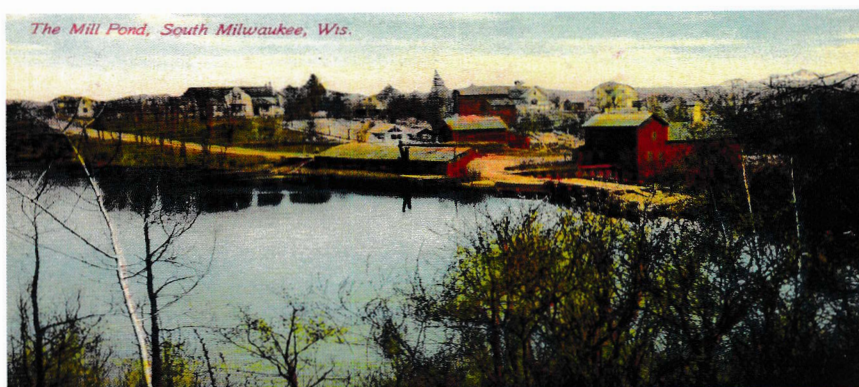
EVENT LOG

1833 TO 1985

## THE SHORT LIST

- 1835 The first settlers arrive
- 1835 Tavern and Stage coach Inn constructed
- 1839 John Fowle built a dam, pond and a mill. (Pic. below)
- 1855 The Chicago, Milwaukee & Green Bay Railway built tracks thru town.
- 1855 Basket making factory started by John Grover
- 1856 Cream City Brickmaking began.
- 1891 The South Milwaukee Co. was formed: bought land; laid out a town site and sold lots. Land prices soared.
- 1892 South Milwaukee incorporated as a village
- 1893 The Bucyrus Foundry & Manufacturing Co. incorporated in Wisconsin as: The Bucyrus Steam Shovel and Dredge Co.
- 1896 South Milwaukee became a 4th Class City.
- 1920 The Lawson Airline Transportation Col built a 34 passenger airliner in South Milwaukee
- 1923 Continental Faience and Tile Company hand manufacture tile known through the United States.
- 1946 The Spectacle of Music began.
- 1972 The South Milwaukee Historical Society was founded.

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## CITY OF SOUTH MILWAUKEE MAYORS

George C. Bush	1897-1898
Delos A. Fowle	1899
Fredrick E. Mansfield	1900*
J.M. Millman & Edward A. Bunn	1901
Charles Franke	1902-1908
Dr. Sidney M. Smith	1908-1910
Charles Franke	1910-1916
George Lorig	1916-1920
William Grobschmidt	1920-1924
Charles Franke	1924-1928
Evan H. Baetke	1928-1932
Charles J. Plotz	1932-1938
Walter McCreedy	1938-1940
Charles J. Plotz	1940-1952
Dean L. Potter	1952-1956
William P. Atkinson	1956-1964
Joseph M. Kehoe	1964-1966
Chester W. Grobschmidt	1966-1994
David M. Kieck	1994-2006

\*Impeached for refusal to carry out council orders.

## SOUTH MILWAUKEE EVENT LOG

- 1833 In the Treaty of Chicago, signed on Sept. 26, the Potawatomie, Ojibwe and Ottawa Tribes ceded their remaining lands East of the Mississippi River and agreed to relocate west of the Mississippi River.
- 1833-1840 Military Road between Fort Dearborn (Chicago) and Fort Howard (Green Bay) was constructed following old Indian trails along the lake.
- 1835 Elihu Higgins, of Massachusetts, is credited with being our first settler, coming here in the Spring of 1835. He was followed by Moses Rawson, John Fowle, Joseph Dibley, and several others.
- A Stage Coach Inn & Tavern was constructed by John Fowle on the military road at the creek. Later, erosion forced it to be moved further up stream.
- 1836 The first religious meetings were held in Oliver Rawson's log cabin. Everyone attended regardless of religion.
- 1837 First Caucasian children born in what became Oak Creek Township: Augusta Rawson Higgins & Horace Fowle.
- First public sale of lands in Milwaukee County. \$1.25 per acer, limited to 500 acers.
- 1837-1838 The first school in the district was a private one. Mrs. John Fowle was the teacher. She taught at the Fowle house.
- 1839 Elihu Higgins built a saw mill near the mouth of the Oak Creek.
- St. Matthew's Catholic church built.
- John Fowle built a saw mill and a grist mill up stream from Higgins's mill. The grist mill is believed to be the first grist Mill in Milwaukee county. (picture on pp2) Previously grain was hauled to Burlington for milling.
- 1840 - The first public school building was started. It was finished in 1843. There were 58 pupils.
- The Methodist's built a parsonage for a Circuit Riding Preacher. Services were held in school houses.
- St. Johns Evangelical Lutheran church built.
- 1841 Milwaukee County separated the town of Oak Creek from the town of Lake.
- First election of supervisors for Oak Creek Township in April,

- 1846 The schooner "Governor Hunt" sailed from the port of South Milwaukee with a load of grain.
- First marriage in Oak Creek Township.
- James Moore built a woolen mill at the site of what became a woolen goods store, a saw mill in 1849 and since 1872 the Milwaukee Basket Co.
- First Oak Creek Township census counted 1,259 persons.
- Commerce in the form of The Heidelberg Blacksmith Shop, a general store began at the corner of the Military highway and Hawthorne St.
- 1848 The Schooner, "Honest John" was built at the mouth of the Oak Creek to haul lumber to Milwaukee.
- John Fowle built a small scow named , "The Monkey Skunk" and later a schooner named "Julianna" after one of his daughters ,by the creek mouth. He used them to haul lumber to Milwaukee.
- 1850 P.T. Barnum circus stopped in South Milwaukee and gave a show.
- 1851 Mr. Bunn built a yellow mill up stream of the Fowle Mill but died before it could be used. It was later used as a basket factory, a broom shop, a straw shop, a creamery and a cheese factory.
- An ice storm destroyed Higgin's Mill at the mouth of the creek.
- First STEAM saw mill built by Howes & Asa at 15th and Rawson.
- A second public school was stated at 10th Ave. for grades one to eight.
- The second school in the area was built just east of the original.
- 1854 First Congregational Church was completed. It was used by all.
- 1854-1855 The Chicago Milwaukee & Green Bay Railroad, (Now the Chicago & Northwestern Railway) built tracks through the township.
- 1855 Basket making at home started early in Oak creek township. The First basket making factory started in 1855 by John E. Grover.

- 1856 Joe Dibley, John Blake & Mr. Park started a small brickyard at the north end of what is now Grant Park. It operated from 1856 to 1859.
- 1860 Oak Creek Census: 2,222.
- 1860 -1865 `Civil War years.
- 1865 Warren Grover, J.A. Bethel & Leonard Heidelberg made, "split baskets" that were shipped all over the mid-west.
- 1867 A church bell was obtained from a church in Milwaukee and brought to Oak Creek by Ox team.
- Charles Ahrens bought the Fowle Mill and installed a Leffel turbine-doubling it's capacity from 25 to 50 bushels a day.
- 1870 Oak Creek Census: 1,959
- Horace Fowle & Horace Wells started a large brick yard near the mouth of the Oak Creek. Its famous cream colored bricks were loaded on boats and shipped widely. It operated until about 1885.
- St Mark's Episcopal Church was opened.
- 1880 Oak Creek Census: 2,097
- 1882 Joseph Vollmer opened a store at North Chicago and Hawthorne.
- 1888 First High School organized at 10th and Rawson.
- Post Office name was changed to South Milwaukee.
- 1890 Oak Creek Census: 2,087
- Herman Grote started an ice business-harvesting ice from the pond.
- 1891 The South Milwaukee Co. was formed: bought land; laid out a town site and offered lots. Land prices soared
- The First High School class graduated— there were 4 graduates.
- 1892 The Bucyrus Foundry & Manufacturing Company bought the land where their South Milwaukee plant would be built.
- The Voice Journal Printing Company started.

- 1892 The First National Bank begins.
- South Milwaukee incorporates as a village. Population 518.
- First plant built in the new city was Schultz Brothers Furniture Co.
- The Racine fire engine Co. replaced Schultz Furniture in the building that became the BE Club.
- Julius Schipkowski manufactured musical instruments.
- Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church was dedicated.
- The South Milwaukee Journal started.
- 1893 The first sewer system and first water stand pipe in SM was built.
- The Bucyrus Foundry & Manufacturing Company incorporated in Wisconsin as The Bucyrus Steam Shovel and Dredge Co.
- Contract accepted of the South Milwaukee Power and Light.
- The fire station was moved to the new city hall on 10th Ave.
- Other plants soon followed: The Hatch Cutlery Co.; So. Milw. Malleable Iron Co.; Adamant Mineral Paint Co.; Moore Manufacturing Co.; Koch's Hotel; The Hotel Rogers; The Lake View Club House; Midwest Pottery; Appleton Electric Sign Co.; N.W. Barrel Co.; Mitchell Manufacturing Co.; Appleton Electric Co. and the South Milwaukee Association of Commerce were established.
- Lownes Manufacturing Company made a line of pipe wrenches.
- Huntington Manufacturing Co., makers of agricultural machinery, moved into to a new building south west of the depot. It was later succeeded by the Stollenwerk Manufacturing. Co.
- Line Material Co . Succeeded Stollenwerk.
- Eagle Horseshoe Co. erected several wooden buildings
- The Columbia Mineral Wool Co. buys the Standard Mineral Wool.
- Two major fires destroyed the Lakeview Club House and the Adamant Mineral & Paint Co.—A Horse drawn engine and a hook and ladder were added to the fire department.

- 1893 A nation wide depression struck the new village ending the real estate boom and many of the new business. A rash of fires, of questionable origin, destroyed even more buildings & businesses.
- 1894 St. Mary's Catholic Church was completed.
- 1895 South Milwaukee Savings Bank begins. (now PyraMax Bank)
- 1896 The Milwaukee Street Railway Co. (TMER&L) began street car service to South Milwaukee. There was a major dispute over crossing the rail road tracks at Marquette Ave.
- 1897 Stowell Manufacturing and Foundry Co., manufactures of malleable grey iron and hardware purchased the Moor Mfr. Co.  
George C. Busch was the first Mayor of the new 4th Class City.  
The city hired part time police officers. The police station was a garage near 12th and Milwaukee Ave.  
Schutz Brothers' furniture Co. started where BE Club is now.  
Julius Schipkowski manufactured musical instruments.  
Lake Shore Transfer Co. bought South Milwaukee Express and Storage Co.  
South Milwaukee became a city of the 4th Class. Population 1500.  
South Milwaukee National Bank reorganized to a State Bank.
- 1899 The Moore-Whitmore Basket shop was taken over by J.F. Conant.  
The third Ward (or Madison School) was built at 13th and Madison.  
A Library Board composed of 9 citizens was named and the South Milwaukee Free Library established. The books were initially housed at the High School, but were was soon moved to the Smoot Photo Gallery.
- 1900 Census Population 3,392

- 1901 The library was moved to a back room at Max Hoffman's store. He classified the books according to the Dewey Decimal system.  
Estelle Whalen headed the new library and was paid \$50 per year  
Dr. Dockery came to South Milwaukee and built the Dockery Bldg. on Milwaukee Ave.
- 1902 A branch of the South Milwaukee Street car line was extended down 5th Avenue to Carrollville and later extended to HY 100.  
Zeigler Soda Water Co. started.  
Bettenger & Sons opened a two story mercantile store at 10th and Monroe.  
First gasoline buggy came to town.  
James W. Caveny & John Caveny began a coal, wood and masonry Supply business at 10th and Marquette.
- 1904 Bergmann's Drugstore opened.  
Dr. Sidney Smith began a medical practice in South Milwaukee. He built an 8 bed hospital on Milwaukee Ave.  
Zucker's Department Store on Milwaukee Ave. was built.  
1904-1907 About 77 Bucyrus steam shovels were sold to dig the Panama Canal.  
The Second Ward, (or Marquette School) was built.  
Louis Vogl operated a bakery until 1919.  
First two cylinder Ford came to town.  
St Adalbert's Church started.  
The Lake Shore Transfer Co. was organized and quickly bought out by the South Milwaukee Express & Storage Co.
- 1908 Stephenson Motor Company built trucks in South Milwaukee.  
Badger Malleable & Manufacturing was established.

- 1908 Nirschl and Brings built motor trucks in South Milwaukee.
- 1911 Grant Park became Milwaukee County's first county park Horace Fowle sold his home and 210 acres on the Lake bluff to Milwaukee County Parks. Patrick Cudahy, a member of the new County Parks Commission, financed it at no interest.
- Line Material was created in a basement factory.
- Pfister and Vogel built a patent leather plant.
- The Keystone Glue Co. created by Pfister & Vogel
- The South Milwaukee Herald established with Will McNeil as editor.
- 1913 The Yellowstone Trail, The first transcontinental Hy.in the US. came, through South Milwaukee on, what is now, Chicago Ave.
- 1914 To 1918 World War I years
- 1914 A new High School was built on Pine Street.
- Frederick Wulff hired as horticulturist at Grant Park.
- 1915 The council appropriated \$1500 /year to support a library . An application to the Carnegie Foundation for a library Grant was submitted.
- Herman Grote, "the Ice Man", drowned in "Ahren's Pond" while harvesting ice.
- Frank Welebs built a dairy with modern Pasteurization equipment. He delivered milk daily in S.M. The dairy closed in 1947
- 1916 The Newport Co. built a plant to manufacture carbolic acid.
- 1917 The new Carnegie library was dedicated - Gladys Hook librarian.
- 1918 A.L. Granec and his wife tanned hides and made drums.
- 1919 The South Milwaukee Wood Products Co. came about with the merging with the S.M. Handle Co and Standard Pattern Co.
- The Grant park golf course opened on 100 acers of land.

- 1920 The Lawson Airline Transportation Co. built a 34 passenger airliner in South Milwaukee. Lawson had the first Airmail contracts and a plan to blanket the nation with airline routes using hubs similar to those which are used to this day. The plane.crashed on takeoff due to weather and ground conditions, and the company went bankrupt. A model of the plane is on display at the So. Milwaukee Historical Society museum.
- Schartow Manufacturing Co. erected a factory and manufactured saddlery & hardware. In 2021 it was replaced by,"The Midland Co."that had moved to South Milwaukee from Racine.
- Zeigler Soda Water Co. become Willms Brothers.
- 1921 The first motorized fire truck was purchased.
- 1922 By 1922, The Conant Mfg. Co. changed hands several times and became known as the Milwaukee Basket Co.
- Rawson School was built in 4th ward.
- 1923- Continental Faience and Tile Company Hand manufactured tile and was known throughout the United States.
- Doerman Shoe Company made "Great Scott" children's shoes.
- 1924 Willms Brothers became Eagle Soft Drink Company.
- The Soorp Haroutune Church was built. It was first Armenian church in Wisconsin
- Other plants at about this time:
- Ajax Pattern Works; Milwaukee Tool & Forge; the Cherry Sparkle Bottling Co.; Moore/Whitmore Basket Works and North West Barrel Co.
- 1926 Rapco Leather Co. tans hides from area meat packing plants.
- Reggie "Da Cursher" Lisowski was born in South Milwaukee.
- 1927Everbright Electric Sign Company came to South Milwaukee.

- 1928 Appleton Electric in Chicago purchased Stowell Manufacturing plant in South Milwaukee to serve as their foundry division.  
Work began on a new Jr. High building.  
.The Eagle Soft Drink Company was formed. It sold bottles of Eagle Rock Water from a deep well.
- 1929 Everbrite Signs, Inc. was formed.  
Fire destroyed the Vocational school.  
Vogle Bakery returned to South Milwaukee.  
A combined City Hall, fire department, police station and jail was built on 10th avenue. An annex was added later for the Police dept.
- 1930 Midwest Tanning Co. Started.  
Jell Products was started. They made a gelatin product -"Dew-Jell".  
The Voice of South Milwaukee broadcast weekly news at WRJN  
The Civilian Conservation Corps expanded and remodeled the Seven Bridges Area .
- 1931 E.I. DuPont Demours & Co. took over the Newport Co. plant.
- 1932 A new vocational school building was completed at Memorial Square .The complex of educational buildings was completed at Memorial Square and Pine Street including an athletic field.  
A new post office building was built.
- 1932-1935 The Works Progress Administration rebuilt the dam, built the warming house and created The Oak Creek Parkway, that, in time, would encircle Milwaukee County with an 85 mile ring of parks.
- 1935 During its centennial celebration, the city showed its opposition to Metropolitan government by conducting a mock funeral of "Mr. Consolidation". Death was attributed to "Consolidation of the joints" following surgery by the State Assembly.
- 1936 A new primary sewage treatment facility was built

- 1939 William D. Kyle purchased the Milwaukee Tool Company and made electrical equipment. Later it became Kyle Plant of McGraw-Edison Power Systems Div. Kyle became the worlds largest producer of "Reclosers". It is known today as Cooper Power Systems.
- 1940 Population Census—11,134  
Grebe Bakeries founded in the kitchen of Irene Grebe.
- 1941 The South Milwaukee Incinerator plant was built.
- 1941—1945 World War II Years
- 1942 United Steelworkers Local 1343 at Bucyrus Erie received a charter
- 1946 Spectacle of Music. Parade and competition began. By 1964 the lineup had over 100 entries with over 200,000 people viewing the 3 1/2 to 4 hour parade.  
The Aluminum and Bronze Foundry, A Subsidiary of Tol Bender Co., produced Tenzaloy in a South Milwaukee plant.
- 1949 Line Material became a division of McGraw Electric Company.
- 1950 To 1953 Korean conflict years.
- 1950 The South Milwaukee Journal was sold and became the "The Voice Journal" with Gordon R. Lewis as editor.  
The South Milwaukee Yacht Club was incorporated.  
A 500,000 gallon elevated water tank was built.  
About this time other industries were active in South Milwaukee:  
North Western Barrel Company.  
Kinder Company  
Columbia Grinding Company  
Oak Creek Foundry and Machine Company  
Rentner Metal Spinning company  
Mitchell Manufacturing Company  
Aluminum and Bronze Foundry Inc.  
Diamond Industries.

- 1951 General Douglas Mac Arthur came to South Milwaukee.
- 1952 A summer storm struck during the Spectacle of Music, doing major tree damage and collapsing tents of many participants.
- 1953 The Milwaukee Equipment Manufacturing Company burned to the ground in a spectacular, million dollar, 15 hour fire.
- 1954 US Post Office Bldg. placed on National Register of Historic places.  
A third ward school was build and called Parkway School.
- 1955 to 1975 Vietnam War
- 1956 Ground breaking for Trinity Memorial Hospital. ( Now Aurora South Shore.)
- 1957 Lakeview School was built.
- 1959 South Milwaukee Bank became a Marine Bank and the, "Home State bank" became part of the "M&I Bank System."
- 1960 Census 20,304  
Three days of heavy rain plus melting snow produced worst flood in 45 years.  
At about this time the new Marine Bank branch built a new building.  
John F Kennedy made a campaign speech at the Rawson Ballroom.
- 1963 E.W. Luther school was built.
- 1965 D.E. Carlson, now Metal Cut, started making small precision machine parts.  
The South Milwaukee Savings and loan moved to a new location at 1015 Marquette
- 1967 Spectacle of Music returns.  
A new public library opened. It was bult where the old one stood.  
A natural gas explosion damaged St. Adalbert's church. Sixteen people were injured.

- 1970 Population Census: 23,297  
Home State Bank moved to 1001 Marquette Ave.
- 1971 Blakewood Elementary School was built.  
South Milwaukee Human Concerns was organized.
- 1972 South Milw. Historical Society was founded. Dennis Rankin, Pres.  
Diamond Industries moved to South Milwaukee from Oak Creek.  
Coho salmon raised at a water department pond were released in Lake Michigan  
So. Milwaukee's secondary sewage treatment plant operational.  
So. Milw. Pictorial renamed South Milwaukee News Graphic.
- 1973 The Lighting Division of Appleton Electric purchased the Line Material Company's eleventh Ave plant in South Milwaukee.  
South Milwaukee "News Graphic" organized.
- 1975 The original hand carved millstones from the Fowl Mill were ceremonially returned to the dam site by the South Milwaukee Historical Society
- 1976 Gertrude Endthoff published, "South Milwaukee Then To Now".
- 1977 A new \$42 million High School adjoining the old one, was built with an 800 seat Performing Arts Center.
- 1977-1978 A new water tower was built and two old water towers were demolished.
- 1978 Chicago Northwestern RR Depot placed on National Register of historic places.
- 1980 census population 21,069
- 1985 150 yeas since the first settlers arrived.





The South Milwaukee Historical Society  
717 Milwaukee Avenue  
South Milwaukee, Wisconsin

This pamphlet has been printed by the South Milwaukee  
Historical Society as a Community Service Project

#### SOURCES

The material in this pamphlet has been abstracted from existing publications by society member Don Bulley. specifically from:

Gertrued Endthoff's Book "South Milwaukee Then To Now"

Pamphlet, "After 30 Years";

"The Story of South Milwaukee" by Lois and Stephen Schreiter and Richard Thinnes;

"Brief History of Settlement Along Oak Creek and the City of South Milwaukee WI.";

"South Milwaukee Centenary, 1835-1935; "

"Celebration ; South Milwaukee Proud Past, Promising Future":

"Centennial Celebration"

and the South Milwaukee Historical Society files.