

Cook County, 23 miles NW of the Loop. **Folklore** attributes Wheeling's name to the rumble of wagon wheels bumping down the community's dusty main road, but the village was actually named for Wheeling, West Virginia. The continuous stream of wag- ons did give rise to numerous eateries along Milwaukee Avenue, earning the area a nickname of “Restaurant Row,” a name it continued to carry into the 1990s.

By 1836, Milwaukee Avenue, then known as Des Plaines Valley Road, had become a stagecoach route between Chicago and Green Bay, Wisconsin. This prompted Joseph Filkins to build a tavern and hotel at the corner of Dundee Road and Milwaukee Avenue.

Along with the surrounding **German** farming community, another hotel, a blacksmith shop, a **hardware** store, and a school spurred population growth in the 1840s. Napoleon Periolat started a **brewery** in 1850 which operated until 1910 and was followed by more **hotels** and restaurants.

Because of Wheeling's location along the **DesPlaines River**, and its numerous restaurants and taverns, Chicagoans flocked to the area on weekends. In the 1880s the popular sport of **bicycling** prompted races between Wheeling and Chicago with as many as a hundred participants. In 1886 a line of the Wisconsin Central **Railroad** came through town, stopping at a station just south of Dundee Road.

Wheeling had formed a **township** government in 1850. When **railroad workers** and laborers began frequenting Wheeling's **saloons**, often creating disturbances on the streets, local officials seeking the authority to maintain law and order opted to move for incorporation. In 1894, the newly formed village immediately began regulating the dramshops.

In 1917 the Knights of Columbus built the Columbian Country Club, later called Windsor, Bon Air, and finally Chevy Chase. The country club and 18-hole **golf** course changed ownership in the 1930s and operated as a **gambling** establishment. Gambling plus big **band** music were also the attractions at Red Mary's Wheeling Inn. Regardless of the town's notoriety, it was these establishments and the good-quality restaurants that enabled Wheeling's residents to survive the **Great Depression**.

Between 1950 and 1970 Wheeling grew from 916 to 14,746 residents. Manufacturing burgeoned during this period with the addition of 86-acre South Wheeling Industrial Park and the arrival of companies such as Acco International, makers of office supplies.

In 1984 Wheeling **annexed** the 131-acre Arlington Country Club. Along with its neighbor, the city of **Prospect Heights**, Wheeling purchased Palwaukee **Airport** from the Priester family in 1986. The **Metra** North Central Service opened service through the area in 1996 and built a station for commuters off Wheeling Road just south of Dundee. The population in 2000 was at 34,496 21 percent of whom were Hispanic and 9 percent Asian.

Neighboring suburbanites and Chicagoans have continued to frequent **restaurants** along Milwaukee Avenue. In 1990 village eateries totaled 40, including the prestigious French restaurant Le Francais, Bob Chinn's Crabhouse, Hackney's Restaurant, Don Roth's, and the 94th Aero Squadron.

Wheeling, IL (inc. 1894)				
Year	Total (and by category)	Foreign Born	Native with foreign parentage	Males per 100 females

<b>1900</b>	<b>331</b>		—	—	—
<b>1930</b>	<b>467</b>		—	—	—
<b>1960</b>	<b>7,169</b>		<b>3.4%</b>	<b>14.7%</b>	<b>101</b>
	7,154	White (99.8%)			
	4	Negro (0.1%)			
	11	Other races (0.2%)			
<b>1990</b>	<b>29,911</b>		<b>12.7%</b>	—	<b>95</b>
	27,073	White (90.5%)			
	406	Black (1.4%)			
	29	American Indian (0.1%)			
	1,410	Asian/Pacific Islander (4.7%)			
	993	Other race (3.3%)			
	2,469	Hispanic Origin* (8.3%)			
<b>2000</b>	<b>34,496</b>		<b>31.4%</b>	—	<b>97</b>
	26,452	White alone (76.7%)			
	843	Black or African American alone (2.4%)			
	80	American Indian and Alaska Native alone (0.2%)			
	3,193	Asian alone (9.3%)			
	25	Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone (0.1%)			
	3,168	Some other race alone (9.2%)			
	735	Two or more races (2.1%)			
	7,135	Hispanic or La			

One of the most exotic and colorful suburban nightclubs was the Villa Venice (2855 Milwaukee Road) in [Wheeling](#). Its mobster clientele favored Parisian-style reviews with nude chorus lines, but they also supported appearances by [jazz](#) artists such as Eddie South and Milt Hinton.

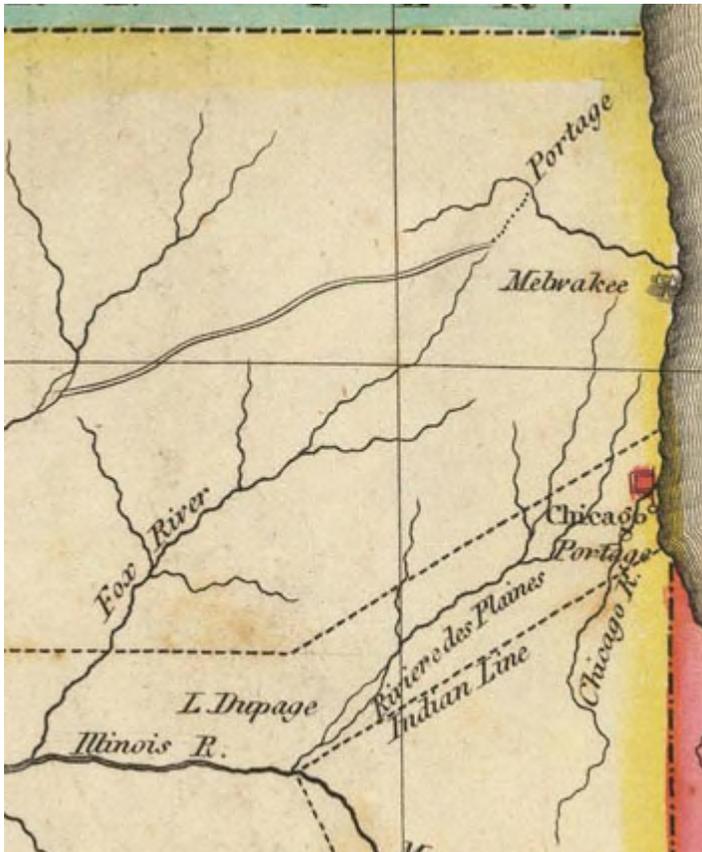
During the 1830s and 1840s, farmers purchased most of the available land in the county and began raising crops and livestock. Without [railroads](#), some farmers hauled their harvest to Chicago, but others went to closer, smaller settlements. By 1840, [Wheeling](#), Gross Point (now [Wilmette](#)), [Lyons](#), [Summit](#), [Brighton](#), [Willow Springs](#), Calumet, [Blue Island](#), and [Thornton](#) were thriving settlements. Most were [agricultural](#) centers, serving the farmers in their vicinity with small stores, churches, and schools.

The Indian title to a considerable portion of the land in this state has been extinguished at different periods, and by fair purchase. In 1803 the Kaskaskias sold to the United States a tract of country of about 12,000 square miles, bordering on the Mississippi, from the mouth of the Ohio to the mouth of the Illinois, and extending back about eighty miles. The Sacs and Foxes, in the year following, conveyed to the United States a large tract in the form of a triangle, each side being about 240 miles in length, lying on the Mississippi, between the mouths of the Illinois and Ouisconsin, and extending eastward to a point at the mouth of Fox river, in the Illinois. In the year 1805, the Piankashaws sold to the United States a tract thirty by one hundred miles in extent, between the Great and Little Wabash. In December 1816, the Ottawas, Chippeways, and Pottowatamies, ceded to the United States certain lands lying within a line running from a point on the left bank of Fox river, ten miles above its confluence with the Illinois, through the space between Chicago creek and the river Plein, to a point on Lake Michigan, ten miles north of the mouth of Chicago creek; for which cession they were to receive from the United States a considerable quantity of goods, and an annual compensation for twelve years of the value of one thousand dollars. In 1818, and subsequently, other treaties have been made with the different tribes residing in Illinois, by which additional territory has been gained.

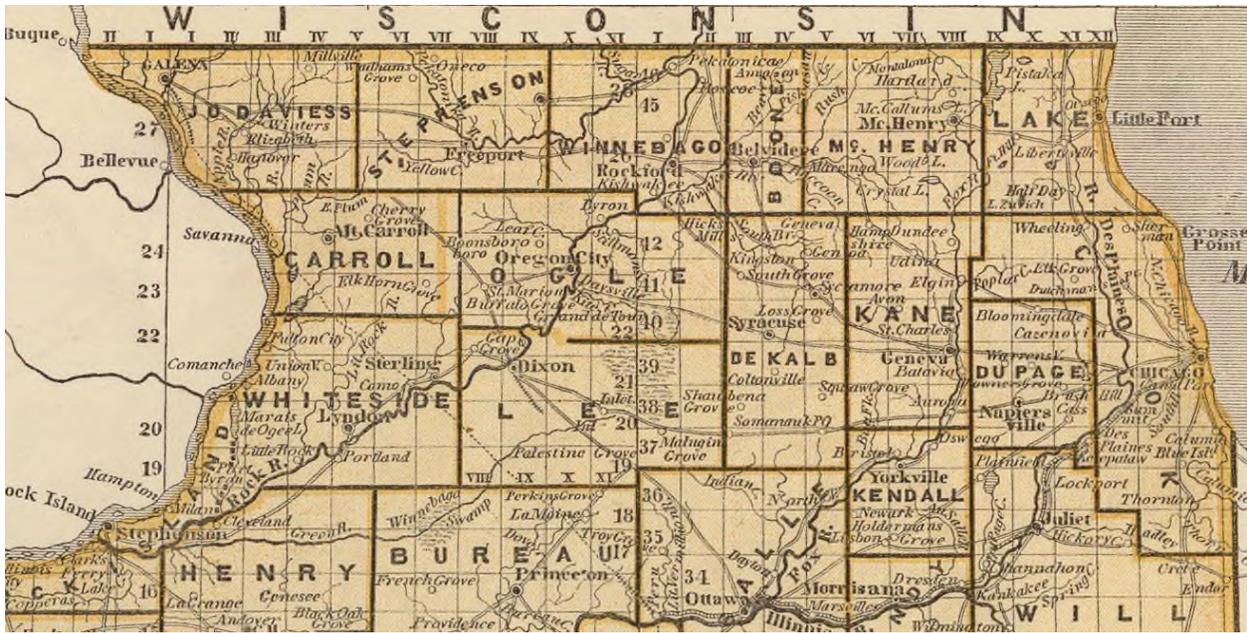


1831- 1836    1836-1839    1839 - today

1836 Map:



1845 Map:



No one knows how old Milwaukee Avenue is. The Indians used it for hundreds of years before the white man came. It was the principal route between the Chicago portage (from the Des Plaines to the Chicago River) and Green Bay and thus connected the Mississippi and the St. Lawrence. It probably saw the migrations of many different tribes for the Algonquin people were continually on the move.

Our road parallels the Des Plaines River and is seldom out of sight of that stream. It runs, for most of the way up to Gurnee, on the higher ground on the river's west side. It is possible that the early French explorers knew at least a part of this trail for LaSalle got far enough inland, from Lake Michigan, to make a fairly accurate drawing of the upper Des Plaines. That was when the Outagamies robbed his canoes near Kenosha and he had to chase them to recover his property.

Traders like Indian Clark probably traveled this trail at an early date and even Gurdon Hubbard, the most of his activity was down state, did get up to Lake Geneva in 1826 to buy ponies from Big Foot's band.



The earliest representation of the trail on paper that we have today, is on an old map drawn by Lucius Lyon about 1830 to show the boundaries of the lands ceded to the Government by the Indians at Prairie du Chien in 1829. This shows many trails

and traces, and a line meandering northward from Chicago is marked "Milwalky" trace.

The earliest Lake County settlers came this way from Chicago and nearly all of them settled along it from Half Day to Gurnee even before the area was officially open for settlement. After the Indian title was extinguished in 1836, following the Treaty of Chicago (1833), the State decreed that all of the land northward to the state line should be a part of Cook County and the Commissioners of that county ordered that a road be opened thru it. Three "Viewers" were appointed to plot its course. These decided there could be no better route than the old trail. It was mighty crooked, but it ran on the highest ground in most places and nearly all of the settlers then in the area, had built their cabins along it.

Of course, the Commissioners "improved" it. They cut down a few trees here and there to make it wide enough for a wagon.

The route of this road as described by Mr. Haines, in his early History was: Northwest from Kinzie Street in Chicago to "Wentworth's Ridge;" this is the present intersection of Lawrence and Milwaukee Avenues. Thence to "Planck's Point, the present Touhy and Milwaukee corner. From there to "Hickory Grove," just south of the Villa Venice, where the trail crossed to the west side of the river.

It continued on that side to "Wissencraft's Point," just about the present county line. It followed the numerous bends of the river to "Spring Creek Timber" where it crossed Indian Creek. It did not even pause at Libertyville. There was not much here but a fine grove of oak trees and they called it "Independence Grove" then.

The next landmark was "Winecups" (Wynkoop's) Point, the present Bull Creek crossing and from there to "Rudd's Ford," now called Gurnee, where it crossed to the east side of the river again. You will note that the traveler had to ford the river twice and wade two creeks. This was our first road.

After we became a part of McHenry County, in 1837, the Commissioners of that county held a meeting at the "Abingdon Inn." It stood at the corner of the present Rtes 120 and 63 but for some reason they adjourned their meeting to Starr Titus' store in Libertyville, maybe it was warmer there, anyhow, they had it on the agenda to "improve" the highway so they appointed three viewers to "straighten the Milwaukee Road on the best and highest ground from Wissencraft's to Indian Creek."

It seems that the old trail ran pretty close to the river thru that section for when Daniel Wright came, in 1834, he built his cabin on the east side of the trail and he was only 200 or 300 feet from the stream. Hiram Kennicott, also on the east side of the trail, was near the river and had his mill right on the bank. Job Tripp came a year later and located south of Wright and his cabin was also east of the trail and close to the river.

That part of the county is quite flat and the viewers could not get the road onto much higher ground by moving it but they could straighten it and they did. By shifting it a bit farther west, from the County line northward they made it almost a straight line to Indian Creek but in doing so they bypassed the Kennicott Mill settlement which was the original "Half Day" and probably caused some of the later comers to cluster about the Indian Creek crossing where they founded the

present Half Day.

Tripp and Wright built frame houses on the west side of the new road but Kennicott decided the mosquitoes were pretty bad on the mill pond so he sold out and went to New Orleans.

Along in 1839 we became Lake County and the State sent three special commissioners to scout around and pick out the best spot for a County Seat. They took one look at Libertyville and said "This is it" but they did not like the name so they changed it to Burlington, which does not seem like much of an improvement, but they did like our Milwaukee Road for Mr. Haines says in his History, "It was supposed that the road from Chicago to Milwaukee, by way of Libertyville, could never be superseded but on the contrary must continue to increase in importance until it would become one of the greatest thoroughfares in the western country. It was therefore considered that the interest of the inhabitants of the county required the location of the Seat of Justice on this thoroughfare."

There were minor changes made in its course, as time went on, all aimed at "improving" it, but in the main, it stayed pretty much where the Indians left it.

Will Studer says it originally ran on the east side of the big elm tree which formerly stood on Francis Berry's lot instead of the west side, as it does now and it kept a bit to the east up to the present site of the Public Service Building. That was to avoid the worst part of the swamp at the present Maple Avenue corner, for William Whigam said, when he came to town to get married, there were cattails there higher than his head.

You have probably noticed, as you drive up Milwaukee Avenue from the south, that as you enter Libertyville Township you encounter east and west ridges about every half mile. Those ridges used to be higher than they are now and the hollows between them were deeper, so in wet weather the mud was pretty deep in these low places and the stage coach, which started to run on our road in 1836, and the farm wagons as well, often got stuck in them, so to "improve" the road the County Commissioners had the low places "corduroyed." That is, they laid logs across the road which kept the vehicles from sinking but it sure shook up the passengers.

There was one of those corduroyed stretches right here in town, in front of Central Park, and another near the Milwaukee railroad tracks.



That was about the only "improving" the road got until the Spring of 1882, when, after the winter of the big snow, there came unprecedented floods and there did not seem to be any bottom to the roads. Some forgotten genius suggested putting gravel on the highway to build it up. The vast gravel beds of Libertyville and Vernon were then recent discoveries so the material was right at hand. It took several years and a lot of gravel to make much difference but eventually the road thru

the two townships was the envy of the County.

Our part of Milwaukee Avenue was never "planked" tho that type improvement was quite popular in the 1850's. The Chicago end was planked for eight miles northward in 1849 and during the next two years the planks were extended for three miles beyond "Dutchman's Point," ( Niles). Early in the fifties Amos Snell lived at the intersection of Milwaukee Avenue and Rand Roads. He was a big real estate operator and promoter, in that time, and he secured control of both highways. He planked Rand Road to Des Plaines and graveled Milwaukee Avenue to the Lake County line. Gravel remained as our road surfacing for many years.

After the turn of the century an occasional automobile was seen on the old road and the dust, which was always bad in summer, began to be a real problem. The street thru the Village was sprinkled with a heavy oil which was some improvement but the tar-like oil was tracked, into the houses and ruined a lot of carpets.



Folks were real patient about that but after some twenty years they decided it had gone on long enough so they up and paved the road with concrete. The State helped out on the cost and the Village spread part of it back on the community as a whole, so the property owners on the street didn't get nicked too badly but they narrowed the roadway up some to keep the cost down and that left the horse blocks and hitching posts high and dry on the parkways but it was 1922 then and there were not many horses left anyway.

So now they have improved it again, taken those parkways back into the roadway so four lanes of traffic can sail thru town all at once and the whole thing lighted up by fluorescent lights. It will still be the old "Milwalky Trace" tho Daniel Wright and Indian Clark would probably not recognize it.

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Postcard images provided by the Libertyville-Mundelein Historical Society.

[Map \[of the\] boundary line between ceded and unceded lands, surveyed under the direction of the Hon. J. H. Eaton, Secy. of War \[conformably\] to the stipulations of the Treaty of Prairie du Chien of 1829 / by Lucius Lyon of Detroit, Mich. Ter.](#)

