

# Third Ward – by Svenja Berger

The Historic Third Ward is a warehouse district in downtown Milwaukee and it is on the National Register of Historic Places. Today, at the Third Ward there are over 450 businesses and it is important for Milwaukee's economy as a mixed-use neighborhood. The district consists of specialty shops, restaurants, art galleries and theatre groups, creative businesses and condominiums. Furthermore, the Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design and the Broadway Theatre Center are located here. Additionally, along the lakefront you can find the Henry Maier Festival Park, where Milwaukee's lakefront comes alive each summer for many festivals. The Third Ward is bordered by the Milwaukee River to the west and south, Lake Michigan to the east and Clybourn Street to the north.

In Milwaukee's beginnings, the Third Ward was a swamp. Then the land was drained and houses populated the east side of the ward, while factories and warehouses were built on the west side. Irish immigrants were the first settlers in the area.

In 1856, the first railway connected Milwaukee to the Mississippi River, allowing traders to supply the settler population in the west with needed goods.

The Irish settlers in the Third Ward experienced two great tragedies. On 7 September 1860, ship Lady Elgin Milwaukee sank and over 400 people died. The second tragedy was a fire which started on October 28, 1892. Strong winds helped spread the fire. When the fire was under control at midnight, a total of 440 buildings were destroyed and more than 1,900 people were homeless.

Afterwards, prominent local architects took over the design of many commercial buildings after the fire. Construction continued for 36 years, so the buildings are very similar because of this short period of development. The Irish had moved to different areas of the city and Italian immigrants replaced them during this time of reconstruction. The Italians were prolific in the warehouse business and formed Commission Row, a group of food companies.

In the 1960s, highway construction displaced the Italian Third Ward community. Moreover, the trucking industry and growth in the suburbs led to the reduction in warehouse business and industry.

