

**The Rise of Political Fragmentation in Metropolitan  
Milwaukee, 1892-1935**

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## **Abstract**

This study uses an historical approach to answer: what factors led to political fragmentation within metropolitan Milwaukee? The dominant paradigm in today's narrative is that the rise of suburbia and the decentralization of industry occurred post-World War II. However, many of the problems seen within post-WWII and up until today were issues that the city was struggling with as early as the 1890s, particularly through the desire to acquire badly needed land via annexation and consolidation. By studying the metropolitan area of Milwaukee, this study argues that more emphasis on the sources of political fragmentation will result in a re-examining of earlier time periods, such as the one discussed here between 1892 and 1935. Through this approach, a better understanding of earlier eras of decentralization and suburbanization will help draw conclusions around why metropolitan areas are so politically fragmented. Lastly, the only way to understand policy-making and how to create solutions is to understand the causes and factors that led to particular developments in the first place.

## **Introduction**

Metropolitan Milwaukee is now a classic example of what's seen throughout all American cities: a city that's surrounded by autonomous suburbs, has an array of special districts, and contains an abundance of school districts. As early as 1936, Milwaukee County had 1 county, 1 metropolitan sewerage district, 5 cities, 5 villages, 7 towns, 64 school districts, 5 city schools, and 5 vocational school boards.<sup>1</sup> This study uses an historical approach to answer: what factors led to political fragmentation within metropolitan Milwaukee? By 1910, seven suburbs had chosen to incorporate, the city was

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<sup>1</sup> "Metropolitan Milwaukee: One Trade Area Burdened with 93 Local Governments," Submitted by the Joint Committee on Consolidation in Milwaukee County, 1936:2

no longer expanding their territory by an act of the State Legislature, and major businesses such as the world-renowned Allis Chalmers Company had moved their plants outside the city limits. What were the reasons behind these changes?

The dominant paradigm in today's narrative is that the rise of suburbia and the decentralization of industry occurred post-World War II. The city, it's said, held the central role within the metropolitan region up until this era. However, much of the problems seen within post-WWII and up until today were issues that the city was struggling with as early as the 1890s, particularly through the desire to acquire badly needed land via annexation and consolidation. With extremely weakened support from the Wisconsin Legislature, an increase of industry looking for lower taxes and speculators looking to buy up land on the outskirts, the city's only move was to attempt to align with powerful public and private local organizations and businessmen to expand their territory. Although somewhat successful, city expansion didn't do much to slow down suburban expansion either, as suburban officials had formed their own coalitions and, sometimes, acted out of regards for their own interests, rather than the vested interests of their residents.

Using the theory of growth machines and historical institutionalism as frameworks to this historical analysis, this study attempts to document the early conflicts between suburbia and the city, and how local and state actors shaped the political boundaries that are seen today.

## Literature Review

Much scholarly information has been written about the fragmentation of metropolitan government, as well as the decay of the inner city while the suburbs continue to expand outwards. Political fragmentation, Jon Teaford asserts, relates to the inability of cities to capture peripheral growth, leading to a rise of autonomous governments surrounding central cities, defined as suburbs.<sup>2</sup> A suburb must be a separate, politically incorporated entity.<sup>3</sup> Increased suburbanization has become an important topic to study due to environmental issues and spatial inequalities that have arisen from the less-than-efficient metropolitan layout; the idea of regional government, too, has become an ever more popular theory to combat the social ills of the inner city, make public utilities within the metropolitan area more efficiently dispersed, and to allow for more cooperation within cities and suburbs to assist each other.

Kenneth Jackson, one of the most influential writers on suburbanization post World War II, documented the rise of suburbia in his book *Crabgrass Frontier*.<sup>4</sup> Jackson argues that the need for housing (paired with the increased availability of federal housing loans), as well as the citizenry's desire for economic and racial homogeneity led to the creation of large post-1945 suburban subdivisions. Highlighting the automobile and the conception of federal interstate highways as other causes for the rise of suburbanization, he also clearly articulates reasons for the mass movement to suburbia.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Jon C. Teaford, *City and Suburb: The Political Fragmentation of Metropolitan America, 1850-1970*. Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979.

<sup>3</sup> John McCarthy, "The Reluctant City: Milwaukee's Fragmented Metropolis, 1920-1960." (PhD diss., Marquette University, 2005). ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

<sup>4</sup>See Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 238-241.

Other scholarly research has focused on the effects on sprawl on the central city. John Powell makes a compelling argument about the social inequalities that sprawl has created, maintaining that sprawl post-1945 was different in that it had federal support and correlated with the decline of the inner city.<sup>6</sup> As Powell's argument focuses on a later time era, he is right to focus on federal policy-making; prior policy issues of suburbanization and movements to the periphery, however, were largely concentrated at the State level—therefore, within this study, the State played a much larger role than the federal government.

Much of the literature revolving around suburbanization, such as Jackson's inquiries, has focused on post-World War II; research has largely separated itself from pre-1945 suburban trends.<sup>7</sup> This approach places the rise of suburbia within an incorrect vacuum that divorces the suburban trend from the time era when a large percentage of suburbs began incorporating.

General references to Frederick Law Olmsted's theory of nature as an urban remedy and Ebenezer Howard's creation of an ideal "Town-County magnet" are sometimes references in regards to early suburbanization; however, they tend to be

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<sup>6</sup> John Powell, "Sprawl, Fragmentation and the Persistence of Racial Inequality," in *Urban Sprawl: Causes, Consequences, & Policy Responses* (edited by Gregory D. Squires, Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute Press, 2002), 75-76.

<sup>7</sup> John Powell, in "Sprawl, Fragmentation and the Persistence" does acknowledge that sprawl started as early as the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; however, he argues that this sprawl had little effect on the city's performance and was only a small part of the population; that, and many city's used annexation to retrieve this land. However, this broad generalization overlooks the start of industrial suburbs in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the beginning roots of economic segregation, where the rich and middle class started the trend of housing outside the city, and that some city's only succeeded in annexing the least desirable land due to suburban power. Powell's reference that the federal government largely didn't interfere pre-World War II is accurate, but discounts the state and local interference that did occur during that era.

placed within the periphery and are rarely discussed in regards to early suburban governmental policies.<sup>8</sup>

Some scholars have pointed out early American suburban biases: for example, Robert Fishman compares the re-structuring of Paris in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the urban emphasis in France to the favoring of the suburban style of America in the same era.<sup>9</sup> John McCarthy, too, also recognizes this gap in literature, and starts his analysis of fragmentation within Milwaukee in the 1920s;<sup>10</sup> this, too, though discounts suburbs that were formed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, as well as the early shift of industries into the periphery. Hence, one reason for this study is to reconstruct the narrative around decentralization, suburbanization and political fragmentation that includes the existence of these trends from the 1890s up into the 1930s.

There is some, albeit limited, research that has accounted for the beginning formation of suburbs. William G. Colman provides an extensive account of how federal, state and local government pursued pro-suburban policies from the beginning in *Cities, Suburbs, and States*. As state government created local government, he argues that the state legislative response was friendly to outer city incorporation (versus annexation) due to fear of large growth of cities and the belief that the people should decide whether they want to be independently governed or not.<sup>11</sup> Jon Teaford provides a narrative in *City and Suburbs* that correlates well with Colman's analysis—Teaford's time frame is larger,

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<sup>8</sup> See Frederick Law Olmsted, "Public Parks and the Enlargement of Towns," (*American Social Science Association, 1870*) and Ebenezer Howard, *Garden Cities of To-morrow* (edited by Frederic J. Osborn, Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1965).

<sup>9</sup> Robert Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia*, (New York: Basic Books, 1987), 103-133.

<sup>10</sup> McCarthy, "The Reluctant City," 7-9.

<sup>11</sup> William G Colman, *Cities, Suburbs, and States: Governing and Financing Urban America*, (New York: Free Press, 1975): 19-23.

from 1850-1970, so he documents changes throughout that era. Both, however, use a level of analysis that is national in scope, allowing them to draw general themes but not to go into great detail about one particular region.

In addition, much research has been devoted to the effects of fragmentation and suburbanization and not the causes of it, rendering an incomplete picture, as it can be difficult to come up with solutions when the reasons behind the issues are evasive.

This study examines these trends by utilizing John Logan and Harvey Molotch's theory of urban governance as a "growth machine" in order to assess what actors make up urban government and which ones were able to exert the most influence in their desire to continue growth.<sup>12</sup> Two important questions Logan and Molotch ask are, "who governs?" and "for what?"<sup>13</sup> Logan and Molotch argue that politicians, business elites, and local media make up a growth coalition that influences urban policies.<sup>14</sup> In particular, Molotch emphasizes the role elites have in shaping government:

An elite competes with other land-based elites in an effort to have growth-inducing resources invested within its own area as opposed to that of another. Governmental authority, at the local and nonlocal levels, is utilized to assist in achieving this growth at the expense of competing localities.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> John R. Logan and Harvey L. Molotch, *Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place*. Berkeley, CA. University of California Press, 1987.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 391.

<sup>14</sup> In fact, they stress that local business people participate the most within the growth coalition and come to play such a role that they are influential in who becomes elected into political office.

<sup>15</sup> Harvey Molotch, "The City as a Growth Machine: Toward a Political Economy of Place," (*American Journal of Sociology* 82, no. 2 1976): 309.

Elites are united by their belief in promoting growth and work together to achieve growth, regardless of other disagreements.

Frequently, initial suburban incorporation is viewed through the lens of self-rule and local autonomy and, although this was the case for some upper-class residential suburbs (such as River Hills, for example, in Milwaukee County), viewing suburban incorporation and city expansion policies through the lens of different growth coalitions shows that these processes were not always expressly the will of the people—often, they were processes that were the will of industries, suburban officials, and media outlets looking to preserve their low taxes, their jobs, and/or their city’s image.

However, the growth machine theory is limited in that it discounts the role that institutions play outside of being influenced by other actors, such as the state legislature, autonomous actions by local governments, and the courts. Therefore, this study also uses historical institutionalism as an approach in order to study the intersectionality between traditional institutions and new coalitions. Historical institutionalism, as defined by Joel Rast, is an historical approach where scholars examine political structures and processes over an extended time period.<sup>16</sup> In particular, historical institutionalism focuses on how different governmental bodies function autonomously, particularly if they pursue options that are not what society is advocating for.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Joel Rast, “Annexation Policy in Milwaukee: An Historical Institutional Approach,” (*Polity*, 39, no. 1 2007): 57.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, 58.

## **Methodology**

The focus of this study is to shed light on what historical factors from 1892 to 1935 established the foundation for the political fragmentation that is seen today in metropolitan Milwaukee. Placing emphasis on the power of the state in regards to making city annexation increasingly more difficult, as well as opposition from surrounding villages and cities, the example of Milwaukee shows that fragmentation was supported through early governmental policies. The increasing difficulty of the city to annex outlying areas and consolidate with suburban villages shows that local suburban governments—however sparsely populated—were already developing political influence. The city’s attempts to woo towns to be annexed because of their superior water supply and better services were sometimes successful; however, annexation’s were piecemeal and the location of industries outside the city prior frequently stopped annexation from going further because of industry’s desires to avoid higher city taxes (hence, decentralization was occurring much earlier). This study analyzes the different actors at play: policies that were implemented through traditional forms of government, such as the State Legislature and the courts, and how they either coincided or clashed with the goals of local growth coalitions made up of civic organizations, public officials, and the media.

Essentially, this study hopes to contribute to current scholarship by re-examining an earlier time period and arguing that there are earlier trends of suburbanization and industry decentralization; by placing greater emphasis on the causes of political fragmentation in order to consider solutions; and by examining the formation of growth coalitions and autonomous governmental actions to explain that political fragmentation

was a process that occurred for political reasons that stemmed beyond citizen's beliefs in local autonomy.

This paper draws predominately on archival documents situated in Milwaukee County. The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's (UWM) archives at the Golda Meier Library hosts the Town of Milwaukee Records from 1835-1955, the City Club of Milwaukee's files, an organization that was exceptionally active in supporting annexation for the City of Milwaukee in the 1920s. The Milwaukee County Historical Society houses the Milwaukee County Suburbs Collection, which provided insight into early suburban growth and the Daniel Hoan Papers which correlated well with the City Club files on the Advisory Board and Committee on Annexation.

Two Ph.D. dissertations from Marquette University were also utilized in piecing together this narrative: "The Reluctant City: Milwaukee's Fragmented Metropolis, 1920—1960" (2005) by John McCarthy, and "The Politics of Governmental Integration in Metropolitan Milwaukee" (1952) by Charles Davis Goff. Pertinent laws concerning annexation, as well as court cases, were also used to help understand the political context.

Using these primary sources in conjunction with relevant secondary sources, a more accurate picture of 1892 to 1935 can be made. However, like all historical research, it is important to acknowledge the reliance on what historians have deemed relevant to be saved. Therefore, my research relies heavily on common council and advisory meeting minutes, files kept by civic organizations, and newspaper clippings. The role of industry was surmised through these files, as well as particular court cases; the beliefs of the people were taken through interpretations of the media, and through political files such as referendum votes.

## **Analysis**

### **Introduction to Annexation, Incorporation and Consolidation**

During the time frame of 1892 to 1935, a few different movements were occurring at largely the same time: from the city, the movement to annex unincorporated land as well as to consolidate city-county; and from the outlying areas, the movement to incorporate autonomously or to be annexed to the city.

Annexation can only occur on unincorporated land; existing suburban governments cannot be annexed, they must be consolidated.<sup>18</sup> Consolidation generally refers to the combining of governments; however, this can mean many different things—it could be one suburban government consolidating with the city government and giving up power; it could be the city extending its limits to the edges of the current county; it could be the city keeping its current boundaries, but having the county have the same boundaries and creating a separate county for the adjacent areas; or it could just be the consolidation of particular functions, such as water or sewage.<sup>19</sup>

This historical analysis is split into two categories, where the first one focuses on annexation policy from the city and incorporation efforts from the suburbs and the second category examines different consolidation movements that occurred. Both sections place emphasis on the formation of different growth coalitions and the role of the Wisconsin

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<sup>18</sup> Annexation frequently was confused with consolidation in newspaper stories, propaganda flyers, etc, so that annexation became a word that was intensely divisive within suburban communities, even though impossible to implement.

<sup>19</sup> See Nathan Glicksman and WM A. Hayes, “Consolidation Study: Legislative and Administrative Phases of Consolidation of County and City Governments,” The Merchants and Manufacturers Association of Milwaukee, 1908. Their findings are explained more fully later on, when addressing consolidation movements.

Legislature. A separate category, “The Role of the State” helps synthesize their role, much of which was described throughout the narrative around the formations of the growth coalitions. Use of a linear time frame was utilized as much as possible to keep track of events, but since the movements for annexation/incorporation and consolidation occurred largely at the same time, time hops do occasionally occur.

## **Early Suburban Incorporation and City Annexation Policy**

### **The City at a Standstill: The Rise of Suburban Incorporation, 1892-1923**

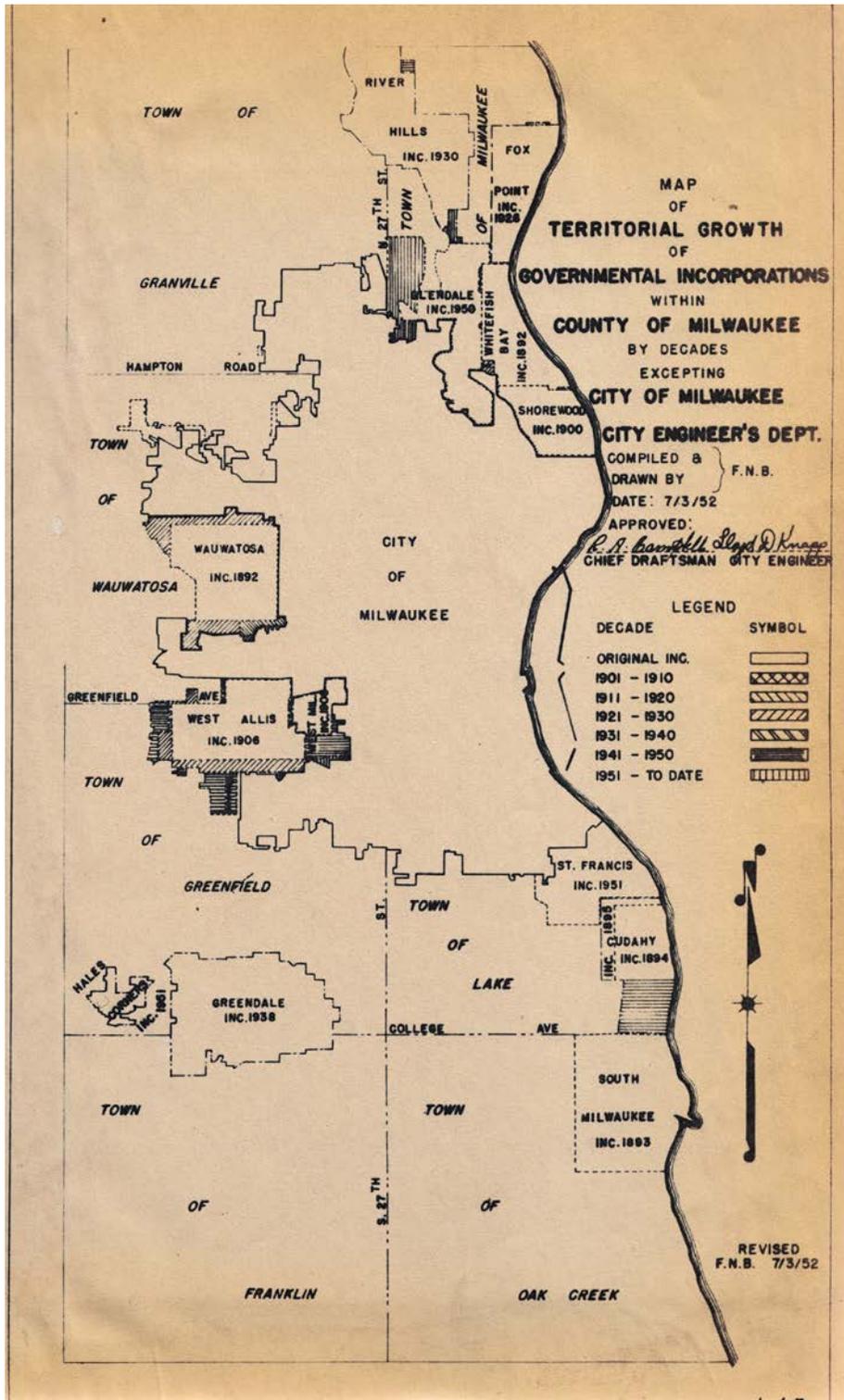
Milwaukee was not in a position to promote large-scale annexation, and until the formation of the Division of Annexation in 1923, annexation was left up to individuals on unincorporated land wishing to become a part of the city. A consequence of this was that from city incorporation until 1936, 62 percent of annexations involved less than ¼ square mile each.<sup>20</sup>

While the city was stagnant, though, suburban incorporation was booming: Wauwatosa and Whitefish Bay in 1892; South Milwaukee, 1893; Cudahy, 1895; North Milwaukee, 1897 (although later consolidated with the city of Milwaukee in 1929); Shorewood (East Milwaukee), 1900; and West Allis and West Milwaukee in 1906. Besides the exceptions of largely residential Shorewood and Whitefish Bay, suburban areas that incorporated were spurred by large industries that moved to the periphery of

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<sup>20</sup> “Metropolitan Milwaukee: One Trade Area.” 32.

Figure 1: Suburban Incorporation



Excerpted From Goff, "The Politics of Governmental Integration," 117A.

the city.<sup>21</sup> Industries were recognizing the assets of building on new, less occupied land and taking advantage of lower tax rates; some, too, had no alternative, as land was becoming increasingly scarce in the city proper and the Wisconsin Legislature wasn't providing the city with the expansion that it needed. Many industries, once settling in a specific area, worked hard to draw other businesses to re-locate in their area.

John and Patrick Cudahy, for example, moved their meatpacking industry to what was then an unincorporated village called Buckhorn after a proposed city ordinance would have declared meatpacking a municipal nuisance.<sup>22</sup> The Cudahy Brothers Co. spent large sums developing housing for employees, where the Cudahy Brothers Co. Land and Investment Co. was in charge of building cottages in close proximity to the meatpacking plant, selling them to employees for \$900.<sup>23</sup> They also spent time attracting other businesses to their locale; Patrick Cudahy provided Obenberger Drop Forge Co. (later named the Ladish Co.) "a loan urging it to locate in the new city, where it stayed and prospered."<sup>24</sup> The population continued to grow so that by 1906 Cudahy incorporated as a city; however, for the first years, the huge majority of residents were employees of the Cudahy Meatpacking Company, meaning this business had almost complete control over the political realm, leaving them free to practice their industry as they desired.

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<sup>21</sup> Shorewood originally incorporated under the name East Milwaukee, due to the success of Coney Island, an amusement park that also boasted of having taverns; Coney Island (with a few different name changes throughout its' existence) closed down in 1916, and the village agreed to change its name to Shorewood the following year. Shorewood, too, needed an industry to push itself to incorporate; the industry, however, did not end up defining Shorewood's existence.

<sup>22</sup> Goff, "The Politics of Governmental Integration:" 32. The ordinance never passed, but Cudahy moved forward with his new plant in Cudahy.

<sup>23</sup> "History Housed in Family Homes," *Cudahy: Celebrating 75 years of progress, 1906-1981*, Oct. 15, 1981, box 1, folder 5, Milwaukee County Suburbs, Milwaukee County Historical Society, Archives Department (hereafter cited as Milwaukee Suburbs).

<sup>24</sup> Patrick Knudreen, "Others Followed Meat Packer," *Cudahy: Celebrating 75 years of progress, 1906-1981*, Oct. 15, 1981, box 1, folder 5, Milwaukee Suburbs.

South Milwaukee, too, was incorporated mainly due to the South Milwaukee Company, made up of real estate promoters that expressed interest in the area in 1891. They had large plans for this small village, located closely to the hub of the city:

The idea was to re-plan and extend this typical rural settlement into an industrial suburb, a rival of Milwaukee with a strong industrial base along the shore of Lake Michigan with spacious streets and grand homes. A downtown plan was platted and laid out in lots, streets were named and industrial spaces were allocated for sale.<sup>25</sup>

The South Milwaukee Company raised and spent over \$1 million by 1891 in order to construct the new village, making streets and sidewalks.<sup>26</sup> Within a year, companies such as the Schutz Brothers Company and the Bucyrus Steam Shovel and Dredge Company (originally located in Bucyrus, Ohio) had agreed to re-locate, and the idea of incorporation was projected. With 518 residents recorded on the census, South Milwaukee successfully incorporated as a village.<sup>27</sup> Particularly successful was the Bucyrus Company; by 1922, they employed on average 1,800 people and were trading with 43 international companies.<sup>28</sup>

Cudahy and South Milwaukee are just two examples showing the rise of industry and the impact it had on allowing for suburban incorporation. Rather than complying with the belief that industries began moving outside the city post-World War II, industries were already spilling into the outskirts. Businesses increasingly were the reason behind incorporation, showing that industry had a profound affect on shaping the political boundaries that are still seen today. While the city slept, speculators and

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<sup>25</sup> *South Milwaukee Centennial Celebration, 1897-1997*, box 3, folder 19, Milwaukee Suburbs.

<sup>26</sup> Goff, "The Politics of Governmental Integration," 29.

<sup>27</sup> *South Milwaukee Centennial Celebration*: 6.

<sup>28</sup> *After Thirty Years: South Milwaukee, 1892-1922*, Dec. 10, 1922, box 3, folder 19, Milwaukee Suburbs.

businesses jumped on opportunities to buy up abundant land on the outskirts of the city and link their area to railroads to gain access.<sup>29</sup>

### **In Response: The Formation of the City Growth Coalition**

By the twentieth century, the city of Milwaukee was experiencing a housing shortage and a land crisis: the city land was built up almost to capacity, rents were rising, and the “iron ring” around Milwaukee was closing in as more and more communities chose to incorporate. Increasingly worried, the Mayor, Daniel Hoan, chose to appoint an Advisory Committee in 1916 made up of civic societies and organizations to advise the common council of public and citywide interests (see Appendix A for list of involved organizations).<sup>30</sup> The majority of the meeting minutes focused around the Legislative Committee, which reported on different bills in the Senate that the committee then decided whether to support or not. Sometimes, representatives from the committee would agree to attend meetings of the Legislature in Madison in order to show support for particular bills; for example, two representatives showed up for a 1917 annexation bill and a 1917 city-county consolidation bill.<sup>31</sup>

One such condition of the growth coalition that Harvey and Molotch outlined is that the members work together regardless of differing viewpoints. A spat early on between

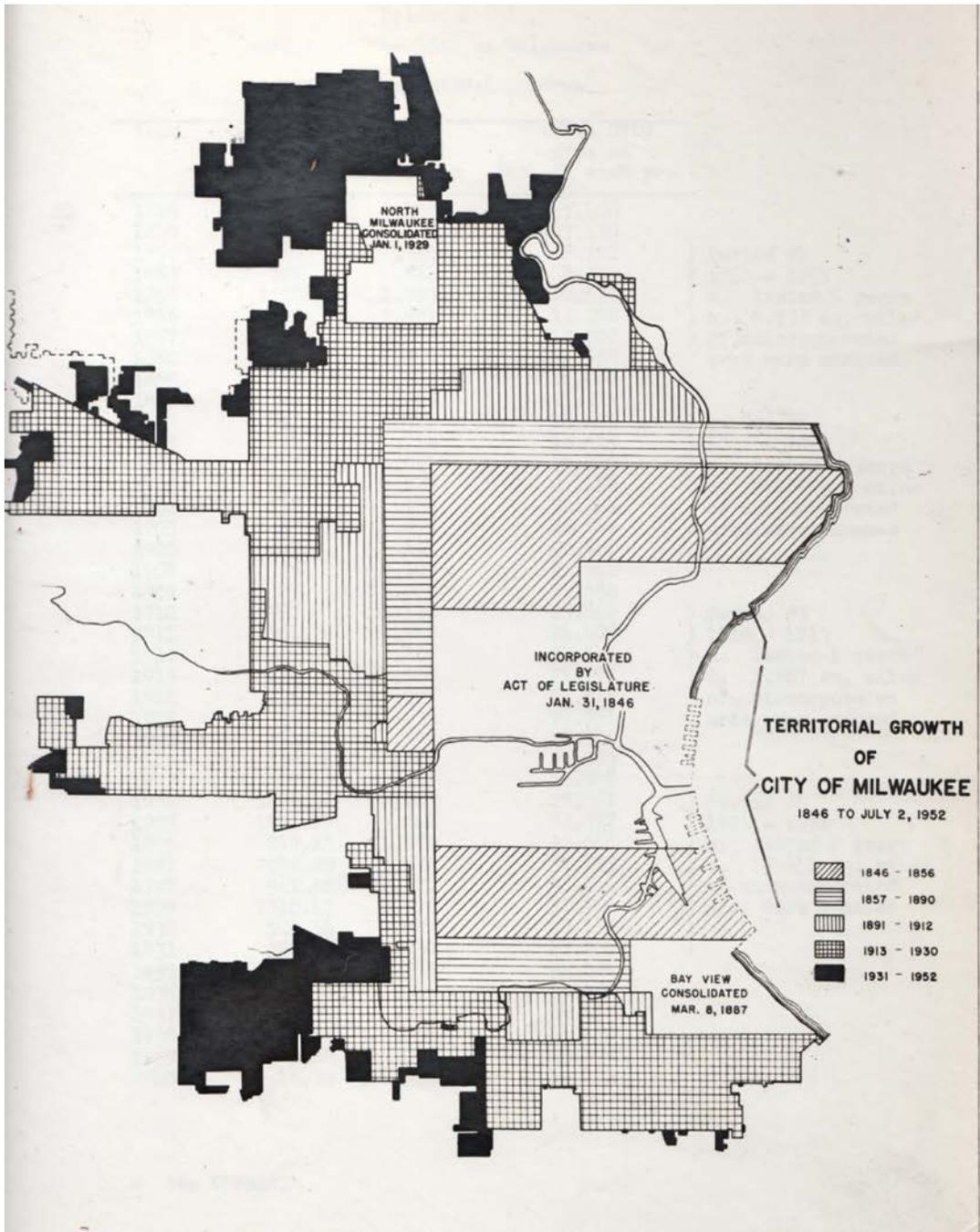
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<sup>29</sup> Another interesting example of suburban incorporation is Bay View, which incorporated in 1879 and then consolidated with the city of Milwaukee in 1887; however, Bay View is outside this study’s time era, but similar themes of incorporation because of industrial wants and lack of support from the Town are present in this example as well.

<sup>30</sup> Minutes of Advisory Committee, Nov. 9, 1917, box 5, folder 1, City Club of Milwaukee Papers, 1909-1975, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Archives Department (hereafter cited as City Club Papers).

<sup>31</sup> Minutes of Advisory Board, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1917, box 1, folder 3, Daniel Hoan Files, Milwaukee County Historical Society, Archives Department (hereafter cited as Dan Hoan Papers).

Figure 2: The Growth of the City



Excerpted from Goff, "The Politics of Governmental Integration"

the Advisory Board and the Mayor occurred when Dan Hoan, a socialist, chose to back the St. Louis socialist platform, which had declared World War II a great crime.

Members of the Advisory Board convened a secret meeting, and many expressed discontent with they mayor’s endorsement; however, they voted to accept his viewpoints and move past them—no one resigned.<sup>32</sup> Even when political differences occurred and created a stir, the growth machine stayed intact; in fact, after that, there was little to no reference of tensions between the coalition and Socialist members.

A few years later after the creation of the Advisory Board, the Committee on Annexation was created to focus solely on annexation issues. This committee consisted of a number of very prominent civic organizations within the City of Milwaukee, in particular the City Club, which held many of the meetings.<sup>33</sup> By 1920 the committee had outlined a number of methods to increase annexations to the city, as illustrated through their list of “Suggested Methods of Annexation:”

1. By campaign of appeal to suburbanites and getting consent.
2. By amending statute so that consent is more easily obtainable.
3. By axe or discriminations method – withdrawing services of various kinds – water, fire and sewer.
4. By having State Legislature annex
  - a. Parties (City and Town) interested
  - b. State as outside party should decide between parties immediately interested
  - c. This is bigger than a city issue; it is a state issue
    - i. Big share of State taxes from Milwaukee
    - ii. State development related to Milwaukee’s development
5. Annexation through Legislature by sections, every two years.
  - a. Have opposition of only one town or city at a time.
6. Creation of tax districts for services rendered.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> “Vote to Accept Mayor’s Views,” *Milwaukee Journal*, Jan. 12, 1919, box 5, folder 1, City Club Papers.

<sup>33</sup> Fred Hunt, the representative for the City Club, was also the President of the Mayor’s Advisory Committee.

<sup>34</sup> Minutes of Committee on Annexation, October 19, 1920, box 5, folder 1, City Club Papers.

Over half of the above proposed methods involved State interference; clearly, the committee acknowledged that current law would never allow for large swaths of land to be annexed over. This was largely based off of prior research on other cities like Los Angeles, Baltimore and New York City. Baltimore, for example, was able to increase their land by 189 percent in 1918 via an act from their State Legislature.<sup>35</sup> Hence, the growth coalition spent a large amount of their time continuing to appeal to the State Legislature. Multiple bills were drafted to change annexation policy—in 1919 Bill 250S, for example, proposed that any adjoining town of a first class city that receives light, water or power should be able to be annexed to the city provided that  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the city council approves the annexation.<sup>36</sup> The bill was defeated in the Senate, where suburban areas such as Shorewood, Wauwatosa, West Allis, Greenfield, the City of Wauwatosa, the Town of Lake, Cudahy and South Milwaukee opposed it.<sup>37</sup> This bill was partly in response to a 1913 law that prohibited the city from shutting off water from outlying areas, which went directly against the coalition’s attempts of using ‘axe or discriminations method.’<sup>38</sup> The majority of both pro and anti annexation bills were voted down in the State, suggesting a divided legislature; of the 13 annexation bills introduced from 1915 until 1933, only five were passed (two of which were pro-annexation, one anti-annexation, and two neutral).<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Report, “Extension of City Limits,” City Planning Committee, 1920, box 5, folder 9, City Club Papers.

<sup>36</sup> State of Wisconsin. Substitute Amendment No. 1, S., to Bill No. 250, S. May 6, 1919, Offered by Senator FONS, box 5, City Club Papers.

<sup>37</sup> Thomas Manning, testimony to Circuit Court of Dane County, July 15, 1919, box 5, City Club Papers.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

<sup>39</sup> Goff, “The Politics of Governmental Integration,” 117A.

As city annexation proponents soon began to realize, the State Legislature time and again was unable to assist them in either making annexation law more permissible or in personally assisting in city annexation. So, as time wore on, reliance on the first two points—appealing to suburbanites and withdrawing services—became the two only successful methods of annexation (and consolidation). The limitation to this approach severely weakened the influence that the city growth coalition had.

Since public officials couldn't rely on State intervention, there were also attempts to collaborate and communicate with businesses in order to bring them into the city proper. In 1921, Mayor Daniel Hoan sent a letter out to industries on the periphery asking them if they were open to annexation and their reasons for their answer.<sup>40</sup> The majority of industries that responded resoundingly said they were against annexation, citing higher taxes as the main reason. Others, like the Rundle Manufacturing Company, specified they didn't object to annexation, but were obliged to support the town of Greenfield because of favors extended to them in the past, and Greenfield wanted to keep factories within its limits; therefore, they concluded, "we have taken the stand that we will not oppose annexation, but will do nothing to further it at the present time."<sup>41</sup> The most favorable response came from the South Side Malleable Casting Company, where the author of the letter cited that the city would be "greatly benefited by the incorporation of all the plants near and surrounding the city limits."<sup>42</sup> One week later, though, the Company sent another letter to Mayor Hoan, informing him that the writer had expressed his own personal opinion, and that the directors have agreed that they do not wish to have their

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<sup>40</sup> Daniel Hoan to multiple businesses, Feb. 7, 1921, box 1, folder 26, Dan Hoan Papers.

<sup>41</sup> Rundle Manufacturing Company to Daniel Hoan, Feb. 9, 1921, box 1, folder 26, Dan Hoan Papers.

<sup>42</sup> South Side Malleable Casting Company to Daniel Hoan, Feb. 9, 1921, box 1, folder 26, Dan Hoan Papers.

lands become a part of the city.<sup>43</sup> Only two companies sent back letters acknowledging that they wouldn't object, provided they received services such as sewer and water lines. The city attempted to work with businesses, but rarely was able to obtain partnerships to expand their boundaries.

The city growth coalition also had the two largest newspapers on their side: the *Milwaukee Journal* and the *Milwaukee Sentinel*, both of whom printed pro-annexation and pro-consolidation articles. The Division of Annexation and the Subcommittee on Annexation also utilized extensive printed propaganda that was distributed throughout adjacent areas to explain the benefits of being annexed to the city. The brochures were, to one critic, able to be compared to what "might be expected of a modern infantry company armed only with museum-piece flint-lock muskets."<sup>44</sup>

Overall, the annexation movement was met with some success: from 1924 until 1931, 17.441 square miles of unincorporated area were annexed (in comparison, from 1900 to 1923, in more than double the time, the city only annexed 5.518 square miles).<sup>45</sup> The City had succeeded in creating a partnership between public officials, local civic organizations, and the media; they failed, however, in gaining support within the State Legislature and within industry outside the city limits. By 1932 the Division of

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<sup>43</sup> South Side Malleable Casting Company to Daniel Hoan, Feb. 16, 1921, box 1, folder 26, Dan Hoan Papers.

<sup>44</sup> Goff, "The Politics of Governmental Integration," 139. Goff was more impressed with the work of the *Milwaukee Journal* and the *Milwaukee Sentinel* in successfully promoting annexation policy.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, 828.

Annexation was disbanded and the city went back to acquiring very little unincorporated land.<sup>46</sup>

### **The Suburbs Push Back With Their Own Coalitions, 1923-1935**

Although the city was more successful in comparison to pre-1923, they met consistent pushback from surrounding suburbs, as they were attempting to extend boundaries themselves. Suburban population was also increasing rapidly: within the years from 1920-1930, suburban population increased by 79 percent, whereas city population increased 26 percent, even as the city had expanded its land acquisition tremendously.<sup>47</sup> A few new suburban entities also formed: Fox Point, 1926; River Hills, 1930; and, slightly later, Greendale in 1938. Not only that, but Wauwatosa expanded its' borders to the north and south; West Allis to the south; and Whitefish Bay a small section in the southwest corner (as seen in Figure 1, "Map of Territorial Growth"). Interestingly, under law it was more difficult for suburbs to annex land than the city. "General city" charters had to follow the 1889 laws, which required at least three-fourths of the citizens of the annexing area and the owners of at least one-third of all taxable property to petition the city council that they desired to be annexed into; then, the residents would vote if they chose to be annexed or not, where at least half had to vote yes.<sup>48</sup> The city, on the other hand, as a special charter could follow the 926-2 section of the 1893 laws, which only

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 97. The Department of Abstracting and Annexation was formed in 1946, a department very similar to the original Division of Annexation. From 1932 until 1946, focus now lay on consolidation of governments and municipal facilities.

<sup>47</sup> "Metropolitan Milwaukee: One Trade Area:" 9.

<sup>48</sup> Zolik, Nathan J. "Suburbs, Separatism, and Segregation:" 504.

required one-half of the citizens of the annexing area to petition the city council for annexation (with no referendum needed).<sup>49</sup>

Some county organizations participated actively in the suburban growth coalitions, such as the Milwaukee County League of Municipalities, which was made up of an array of suburban attorneys interested in stopping city annexation and protecting suburban interests. This organization was largely active during pertinent hearings on annexation in the Wisconsin Legislature, and used language to appeal to the autonomy of other rural towns within Wisconsin, ignoring the different metropolitan problems of suburban communities.<sup>50</sup>

There were also other politically involved organizations that chose to stay neutral on the topics of annexation and consolidation: the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce, an organization that promoted rights of businesses, did not take an active stance on either policy; in fact, rarely was the issue even mentioned during meetings.<sup>51</sup> The Board of Directors by 1921 explicitly stated that annexation was a matter that should be left up to residents of sections adjacent to Milwaukee; by 1931, the topic of consolidation was brought up, but again the meeting concluded “upon which matter no definite position has been taken.”<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> *Zweifel v. Milwaukee* (1925) upheld the ability for Milwaukee to use 926-2 to annex new territory; it wasn't until the 1951 *Wauwatosa v. Milwaukee* case where the court ruled that Milwaukee had to follow the 925-16 section that a referendum be given to the electors.

<sup>50</sup> Goff, Charles Davis. *The Politics of Governmental Integration*. 155.

<sup>51</sup> Goff's dissertation indicates otherwise, citing that a city alderman blamed the Milwaukee Association of Commerce for defeating annexation measures in 1921 (156). No evidence within the archives was found to support this claim.

<sup>52</sup> Minutes of Board of Directors, Dec. 13, 1920, and Minutes of Board of Directors, June 19, 1931, box 1, folder 2, Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce, Milwaukee County Historical Society, Archives Department (hereafter cited as Milwaukee Association of Commerce).

As was highlighted above in section on the formation of suburbs from 1892-1923, one of the advantages many suburbs and unincorporated areas had was the location of powerful businesses that had heavy influence within the political realm; in fact, by 1936, half of large industries in the metropolitan area were located in the suburbs (see Appendix B for map of industries outside the city limits).<sup>53</sup> In West Allis, for example, large industries like Allis Chalmers and Kearney and Trecker not only allowed for incorporation, but also soon after Theodore Trecker, president of Kearney and Trecker, was voted into political office.<sup>54</sup> The interconnection between business and politics created many industries on the fringe of the city that were advocates against city expansion and looked to keep their taxes as low as possible.

*An Example of Industrial Power: St. Francis and the 20+ Year Battle for Incorporation*

For industries that were still located on unincorporated land, many chose to seek incorporation after it was clear that attempts from the city were being made to annex the area. John Teaford calls this strategy the creation of “municipal fiefdoms,” or the idea that industries moved outside cities to unincorporated areas to evade taxes, and then when the city attempted to annex them, they chose to incorporate instead.<sup>55</sup>

This was the case of St. Francis: the twenty-year struggle for incorporation of St. Francis had a particular anti-annexation flavor to it. The area of St. Francis (which didn't incorporate until 1951) fought tooth and nail to not be annexed by the city. The Lakeside

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<sup>53</sup> “Metropolitan Milwaukee: One Trade Area.” 30.

<sup>54</sup> Christopher Mark Miller, “Milwaukee’s First Suburbs: A Reinterpretation of Suburban Incorporation in Nineteenth-Century Milwaukee County,” (PhD diss., Marquette University, 2007).

<sup>55</sup> Teaford, *City and Suburb*: 14.

Power Plant, which was the first central power plant to use only pulverized fuel, had begun operation in 1920 in St. Francis, which was then unincorporated.

The earliest referendum for incorporation was in 1926, where 784 votes were cast in favor and 1420 against.<sup>56</sup> However, by 1931, Milwaukee had begun annexation within a portion of the area of St. Francis: frantic, some residents of St. Francis filed suit to declare the city ordinance invalid.<sup>57</sup> They then went one step further and decided to file a petition to incorporate, including the area that Milwaukee was in the process of securing annexation procedure. The city took the issue to court, where the judge ruled that the incorporation petition was not acceptable since Milwaukee had already begun annexation of some of the territory within the proposed incorporation.<sup>58</sup> While in court, testimony from the attorney of the taxpayers filing the incorporation petition showed that the Lakeside Company had helped finance the cost of incorporation with a contribution of \$550.<sup>59</sup> Promises to make a tax-free village were also circulated because of the wealth of the Electric Company. One newspaper article, aptly titled “Given Whisky by Opponents,” explains that a disruptive, drunk resident showed up to a St. Francis annexation meeting, where he later told the Sheriff that he “had been treated to drinks in saloons in the town of Lake by someone opposed to the proposed annexation,” and was then told to show up to the meeting and create a disturbance.<sup>60</sup> It’s up to speculation as to whom the opponent

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<sup>56</sup> Goff, “The Politics of Governmental Integration,” 167.

<sup>57</sup> “Court Action Will be Filed in Annexation,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 5, 1931, box 15, folder 1, City Club Papers.

<sup>58</sup> “Court Blocks Incorporation of St. Francis,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 19, 1931, box 15, folder 1, City Club Papers.

<sup>59</sup> “Utility Seeks Incorporation of St. Francis,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 13, 1931, box 15, folder 1, City Club Papers. The \$550 covered the cost to take a census in the proposed territory.

<sup>60</sup> “Given Whiskey by Opponents,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, Feb 6, 1931, box 15, folder 1, City Club Papers.

was, but it goes to show that there was a wide range of schemes being produced to stop annexation of St. Francis to the city.

Two months after the 1931 incorporation petition was denied in court, another incorporation movement was made, this time in territory that the city was not set to annex, which largely included the Lakeside Power Plant and vacant land.<sup>61</sup> A 1932 Supreme Court case, Re-Organization of the Village of St. Francis, 209 Wis. 645, ruled that territory wanting to be incorporated must fully represent a village, not a rural area, and that the area of St. Francis did not fit this description.<sup>62</sup> A lull in the incorporation movement occurred, but was re-started in 1939, another in 1949 and, finally, 1951, when St. Francis incorporated, with the Lakeside Power Plant within their boundaries.<sup>63</sup>

The case of St. Francis shows the repeated attempts to incorporate, and how the Lakeside Company played an active role in the process. If residents had wanted incorporation, they would have chosen to do so as early as 1926; however, as can be seen through the donations from the Lakeside Company and the many schemes by public officials and annexation opponents, the top reasons for incorporation did not relate to the resident's desires—they related to the desires of one industry and a few public officials. For example, the *Milwaukee Sentinel* reported that the crowd where the whisky dissenter had emerged was attended by around 600 people, and that the great majority of the crowd was pro-annexation, one of the main reasons being the promise of city water within a

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<sup>61</sup> Goff, "The Politics of Governmental Integration," 170.

<sup>62</sup> Report, "Report of the Committee Appointed by the Town Board of the Town of Milwaukee for the Purpose of Making a Study of the Feasibility and Procedure for Incorporating the Present Town into a Village or City of the Fourth Class and Report Back to the Next Annual Town Meeting." June 23, 1940, box 1, Town of Milwaukee Records, 1835-1955, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Archives Department (hereafter referred to Town of Milwaukee Records).

<sup>63</sup> Goff, "The Politics of Governmental Integration," 173-177.

year's time.<sup>64</sup> Many political boundaries were created through this sort of political struggle that involved actors that were not always representative of the people's desires.

## **The Consolidation Movement, 1908-1935**

As early as 1908, a study conducted by Nathan Glicksman and WM Hayes highlighted the potential benefits of consolidation.<sup>65</sup> The study proposed four different ways to consolidate: 1) the current city becomes a city-county, and the rest of the county becomes a separate county; 2) the current city becomes a city-county and the rest of the county is annexed to adjoining counties; 3) the city limits are extended to the county limits; or 4) a partial fusion of city-county government that is maintained in common by the city and the outlying areas.<sup>66</sup>

Glicksman and Hayes brought up a few different difficulties in regards to any method of consolidation beyond the fourth proposed method: the necessity of a constitutional amendment, as the State Legislature has authority over re-arranging counties. A constitutional amendment would require a majority passage in both the Senate and the House, a wait until after general elections to where both houses must once again approve the amendment, and then approval by a popular vote to all Wisconsin citizens.<sup>67</sup> Not only is the process tedious, but the Legislature had stalled multiple times on passing any type of bill promoting consolidation, let alone amending the constitution—and, even if the Legislature approved the amendment, would the people?

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<sup>64</sup> "Given Whiskey by Opponents," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, Feb 6, 1931, box 15, folder 1, City Club Papers. One must be cautious, though, of the *Sentinel's* well-known bias towards city annexation, and how accurate their portrayal of full support for annexation was.

<sup>65</sup> Glicksman and Hayes, "Consolidation Study." Previously mentioned in introductory section.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, 5-8.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, 9-11.

Acknowledgment of metropolitan fragmentation was becoming a national concern. Chester Maxey, a consolidationist, in 1922 expressed that there were three current trends; some cities were overflowing into other boundaries; other cities were being dominated by powerful suburban municipalities; and a few had managed to create a level of co-existence.<sup>68</sup> Milwaukee was not listed as an example that had received any level of consolidation or co-existence.

The city took a few different approaches to attempt consolidation: by piecemeal efforts to consolidate with particular suburbs, by passage of bills to create city-county consolidation, and by sometimes supporting functional consolidation of specific services.

### **The City's Piecemeal Efforts to Consolidate Specific Suburbs**

While the city was also pushing annexation, at the same time they were looking to consolidate with incorporated suburbs. Large-scale attempts for consolidation were made within North Milwaukee, Shorewood, and Whitefish bay; smaller scale attempts were also seen in Wauwatosa and West Allis—all of these except North Milwaukee failed.

Suburban coalitions were active in distributing their own propaganda fighting against encroachment from the city. One such flyer from the Citizens' Committee of Whitefish Bay was particularly expressive:

Milwaukee wants to annex Whitefish Bay—Milwaukee with its terrific tax burden now wants to shift the load to the suburbs—wants you to carry the tremendous load.

Milwaukee, with its 100 school barracks, with 3,500 school children attending school in them, wants you to be annexed. Do you want barracks?

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<sup>68</sup> Maxey, Chester C. "The Political Integration of Metropolitan Communities" (*National Municipal Review Nat Mun Rev* 11, no. 8 (1922)), 229.

Milwaukee, with its chlorinated drinking water, that contains all the putrid sewage of Manitowoc, Sheboygan, Port Washington and many other lake cities, wants you—your children and their children to drink that unhealthy mess the rest of their lives. No matter how much chlorine is put into the water it is still sewage!

There are a number of big selfish interests that want to control Whitefish Bay. They work sometimes openly—but mostly undercover. It is your duty—your interest to stop them in their tracks—NOW!<sup>69</sup>

Suburban governments also spent money lobbying to defeat bills they didn't support. Cudahy in as early as 1907 was involved in lobbying efforts to oppose a resolution in the State legislature that would have consolidated the city of Milwaukee into the county boundaries; the Common Council “appropriated the princely sum of \$1,000 to pay aldermen's expenses for a lobbying effort in opposition.”<sup>70</sup>

#### *The Struggle for Consolidation: North Milwaukee*

North Milwaukee was the only suburban entity that successfully consolidated with the city after the 1887 consolidation of Bay View. It took the city seven years after a majority of voters had voted to consolidate, however, to acquire North Milwaukee.

The Committee on Annexation spent many years appealing to North Milwaukee residents; the first public meeting in January of 1922 promoted consolidation, where an approximate 50 audience members attended.<sup>71</sup> In April, North Milwaukee by popular

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<sup>69</sup> Flyer, “Annexation—Shall Our City and Village Combine?” An Argument by the Whitefish Bay Annexation Ass'n. City Club of Milwaukee, box 9, folder 1, City Club Papers. The quoted piece was from an excerpt on what the opposition has been promoting.

<sup>70</sup> City's Many Facets Cut by Founding Fathers,” *Cudahy: Celebrating 75 years of progress, 1906-1981*, Oct. 15, 1981: 3, box 1, folder 5, Milwaukee Suburbs.

<sup>71</sup> Report, “Meeting at North Milwaukee,” Committee on Annexation, January 12, 1922, box 5, folder 2, City Club Papers.

vote favored consolidation with the city; however, ordinances had to be passed by both cities and approved by referendum to make it official.<sup>72</sup>

The local North Milwaukee government officials, though, were intent on stalling the consolidation process for as long as possible. City expansion advocates frequently complained about the selfish interests of suburban government officials, citing that their desire to keep their jobs led to rejection consolidation. Sometimes public officials acted out of beliefs that were not aligned with other influential actors or with the citizenry; in many cases such as this one, public officials were acting out of their own desire to obtain their jobs, and because of that attempted to form coalitions with local industries and residents.

Many actors were aligned against keeping North Milwaukee as a suburb. Its own newspaper, the *North Milwaukee Annexationist*, even appeared with its first edition on March 10, 1928.<sup>73</sup> The newspaper again painted the consolidation movement as a people's movement that was stalled by the common council:

Shortly after the movement began a referendum was held in North Milwaukee and a substantial majority of the voters declared themselves in favor of consolidating with Milwaukee.

...However, the so-called "Home Town" Common Council of North Milwaukee has stubbornly refused to abide by the people's will. Seven years have elapsed, and the Council has not yet passed the required ordinance of consolidation, so therefore the people could have an opportunity to vote for or against its ratification.

Impatient at the long delay, the people last year decided to force the Council to take action. Over 1100 voters signed a petition requesting the Council to immediately pass an ordinance of consolidation.

The Council again ignored the people's will, and instead conceived a scheme to cause further delay, and mislead the people, by holding another referendum on the question of consolidation.

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<sup>72</sup> Report, Civic Secretary on Civic Work to Board of Directors, April 17, 1922, City Club Papers.

<sup>73</sup> The *North Milwaukee Consolidationist* would have been a more suiting name.

The people, however, “got wise” to this scheme and decided that the only way to get effective action was by perfecting a strong organization, selecting a slate of candidates for mayor and aldermen pledged to annexation and placing them in the field against the political ring that has so long been resisting the people’s will.<sup>74</sup>

Eventually, by late 1928 public officials of North Milwaukee relented in passing an ordinance for consolidation; another referendum by the people confirmed the desire to consolidate, and it did so in early 1929.

North Milwaukee is a good example of how suburban officials used particular tactics to stay incorporated, even when residents wished otherwise; unlike other suburbs, though, the city did manage to finally persuade North Milwaukee to consolidate. However, North Milwaukee was a unique case—in fact, it taxed their residents *more* than the city of Milwaukee, which was rarely the case for suburbs. One could argue that North Milwaukee actually became a burden to the city—frequently the city, desperate to stop the iron ring of suburbs, would annex or consolidate any land that they were given the opportunity to do so, which resulted in areas that had bad quality services, limited or no high schools, and a poor tax base.

### **The Shift from City-County Consolidation to Municipal Consolidation:**

By the 1920s, the movement for consolidation had gained national attention: Thomas Reed, an advocate for regional planning and consolidation, acknowledged the

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<sup>74</sup>“Reasons Why North Milwaukee Should Become Annexed to Milwaukee,” *North Milwaukee Annexationist*, March 10, 1928, Vol. 1, No. 1, City Club Papers.

“multitude of mushroom municipalities and special districts” now surrounding cities; he also, however, by 1941 had admitted that most attempts at consolidation had failed.<sup>75</sup>

The goals of consolidation gradually started to shift: A Special Committee Report issued by the Interim Committee on City-County Consolidation in Milwaukee County from the Senate in 1927 exemplifies the movement shift. The study looked at a few different cities: Denver, which completely consolidated city and county government in 1902 and was settled in the courts by 1911; Los Angeles, where city-county consolidation has not taken place, but L.A. successfully annexed surrounding areas by withholding the only water supply; and San Francisco, which organized a city-county government in 1856 but still had a blossoming metropolitan area on the fringes. The study concluded, however, that none of the observed cities were like Milwaukee, and that there would be difficulties in obtaining a constitutional amendment, persuading a majority of voters within the suburban areas to vote for consolidation, and contending with suburban officials scared of losing their jobs.<sup>76</sup> The study ended with a limited proposal:

In view of the constitutional and practical difficulties which stand in the way of the complete consolidation of all governmental units in Milwaukee county, we are forced to the conclusion that such consolidation is not feasible, at least at present. This does not mean that something cannot be done to bring about unification in the exercise of the governmental functions in which consolidation is most essential. In such matters as sewerage and other phases of public health, metropolitan planning and zoning, water systems, park development, and even fire protection, it is possible to secure unification throughout the metropolitan district of Milwaukee, although all existing separate governmental units are retained.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Reed, Thomas Harrison. *Municipal Management* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book, 1941): 114, 116. Reed acknowledged that there had been some success in setting up single-purpose metropolitan districts; however, he stressed that functional consolidation doesn't address key metropolitan issues.

<sup>76</sup> *Report on the Interim Committee on City-County Consolidation in Milwaukee County*. Special Committee Reports, Senate Journal, May 11, 1927: 1011-1015, City Club Papers.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, 1016.

For some time, pro-consolidationists were not dissuaded by this report, and continued to push ahead to create a more consolidated city-county government. The *Milwaukee Journal* and the *Milwaukee Sentinel* were particularly loud in their efforts to promote consolidation; a 1932 *Milwaukee Journal* article explicitly stated their support:

A City club committee asks “community-wide support of the constitutional amendments” proposed by Alderman Fleissner, to make possible the consolidation of governments in Milwaukee county.

The committee’s plea cannot be too strongly endorsed. Of course this community should do all it can to wipe out its governmental duplications.

Of course it should try to get rid of most of the 79 governmental units that are such a burden upon taxpayers and a drag upon efficiency.

...There should be such consolidations as are possible, at once. And there should be complete consolidations of all governmental functions, the administrative authority centered in the county board, just as soon as necessary legal steps can be taken.<sup>78</sup>

By 1929 the city coalition was moving to push ahead the Mehigan Bill in the Senate, which would have allowed for consolidation of suburbs only through petition and referendum, eliminating approval from the suburban government.<sup>79</sup> The bill, however, was voted down.

By 1934, largely no progress had been made, and the Wisconsin Legislature appointed a Joint Committee on Consolidation in Milwaukee County.<sup>80</sup> Within the same year, hoping to appeal to the Legislature to take action, a county referendum question was put on the November 1934 ballot. Worded as:

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<sup>78</sup> “Support Consolidation,” *Milwaukee Journal*, Dec. 5, 1932, box 15, folder 1, City Club Papers.

<sup>79</sup> Irving Mehigan was Chairman of the Interim Committee on City-County Consolidation; this bill introduced, however, directly clashed with recommendations from the Interim Committee.

<sup>80</sup> Leo Tiefenthaler, “History of Consolidation Movement in Milwaukee County,” (presented to Joint Committee on Consolidation in Milwaukee County, March 15, 1934), box 9, folder 1, City Club Papers. When Tiefenthaler presented, he only included the first three proposed methods of consolidation from Glicksman and Hayes, leaving out the partial fusion proposal perhaps because he didn’t agree with this method.

“Do you favor county board action, state legislation and amendment of the state constitution to bring about consolidation of municipal services and government’s in Milwaukee County?”<sup>81</sup>

The total results were astoundingly in favor: about 72% voted yes in the whole County. The city, of course, carried the vote (90,022 of the 104,708 ‘yes’ votes were from the city). Only Cudahy, out of the suburban areas, had more ‘yes’ than ‘no’ votes (1041 to 981 – see Appendix C for results).<sup>82</sup>

By this time, these results show that there was a distinct divide between what suburban and city residents wanted, and one reason was due to the increased services that suburbs could now provide their residents. Thoughts on consolidation in Whitefish Bay, for example, in 1929 highlighted that it would be an asset for the city to consolidate with because of its well-established services (meaning the city wouldn’t have to spend a lot of money).<sup>83</sup> Suburban residents were becoming more satisfied with their local government, and the city and suburbs were becoming even more divided.

Since 1917, nine attempts had been made to amend the constitution to unify governmental units; all had failed. Many started to turn towards what seemed like the only way to achieve success –through consolidating specific municipal functions, such as the Metropolitan Sewerage Commission, the County Library System, and the County Parks System; just like annexation, consolidation was happening in a piece-meal fashion.

The Socialist Party was particularly against piecemeal consolidation, worried that “hasty consolidation of services will tend to prevent rather than expedite consolidation

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<sup>81</sup> Minutes, Citizens’ Association on Consolidation in Milwaukee County, August 9, 1934, box 15, folder 1, City Club Papers.

<sup>82</sup> “Metropolitan Milwaukee: One Trade Area,” 21.

<sup>83</sup> Report, County Auditor, “Comparative Facts on Milwaukee and Whitefish Bay,” 1929, box 1, folder 26, Dan Hoan Papers.

under one government.”<sup>84</sup> Not only that, but sometimes the city had superior services, such as health care, and creating a new county administration puzzled them; wouldn’t it make more sense, they felt, if the county health care system was consolidated under the city-run health care system?<sup>85</sup> Consolidation of municipal functions would also get rid of the city’s edge over the suburbs in regards to offering superior services to outlying areas. Therefore, was piecemeal consolidation a way to provide suburban residents with better access to services and further weaken the city’s role?

Evidence from other cities, such as the creation of special purpose metropolitan districts in the Boston area, show that this assisted suburbs chances of survival—prior to the creation of the Metropolitan Water District, annexation to Boston was the only way to receive acceptable water.<sup>86</sup>

Interestingly, competition was a large factor that had made industries move out of the city—to find cheaper land and cheaper taxes. However, competition within the realm of public services had been to the advantage of cities: now, piecemeal consolidation took that away from them, without a guarantee that further governmental consolidation would occur.

Here, the State chose to intervene. In 1921, they created the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District and in 1937 the suburban and city parks merged together to create the Milwaukee County Park System. Other local attempts were made to consolidate public health facilities and the police force.

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<sup>84</sup> Statement of Socialist Party, Milwaukee County, on Consolidation of City-County Government (adopted by the County Central Committee of the Socialist Party at a regular meeting), Dec 26, 1934, box 1, folder 28, Dan Hoan Papers.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> Teaford, *City and Suburb*: 79.

The media played generally advocated for any type of consolidation. Suggestions from the Citizens' Association on Consolidation in Milwaukee County to secure a favorable referendum vote were to give discussions before groups in order to be published in newspapers and to release copies of material from the Joint Committee to give to newspapers.<sup>87</sup> Functional consolidation was underway, and received large support from the majority of actors on both sides of the spectrum, one exception being the Socialist Party.

### **An Analysis of the Role of the State**

As evidenced through explanations of the formation of growth coalitions, much of the focus was spent on appealing to the Wisconsin Legislature; hence, coalitions were severely limited in what they could accomplish, based off of which direction the Legislature chose to turn.

First, the United States was founded off of local self-rule ideals that scholars such as John Stuart Mill espoused; therefore, when suburban areas appealed to State Legislatures to incorporate (or stay incorporated), they found sympathy in the Legislature due to the belief in local autonomy. Many suburban areas played off this sympathy in order to block bills that would have assisted the city's annexation procedures. Ignored were the unique problems of a metropolitan area, unlike other rural districts within Wisconsin—hence, within the Legislature there was also misunderstanding or apathy to urban problems, a problem that can still be levied at the State today.

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<sup>87</sup> Minutes, Citizens' Association on Consolidation in Milwaukee County, August 9, 1934, box 15, folder 1, City Club Papers.

For example, appeals for annexation and incorporation directly to the State Legislature were quite burdensome; therefore, many cities, such as Milwaukee, created laws that allowed for incorporation to manifest without necessary state intervention. Therefore, the hands-off approach of states in order to create a situation where local governments were required to pursue either annexation or incorporation, resulting in a fragmented metropolis because there was no outside entity regulating the procedure. Perhaps if there were more representation of what urban environments needed, a more hands on approach from the State would have been implemented.

As public services became more and more of an issue—either through too much overlap or through inefficient services in some areas, the State was finally moved to take action, such as creating the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage Commission in 1921. The Wisconsin Legislature, however, was made up predominately of Progressives with a rural background that clashed with the Socialist ideals of complete consolidation.<sup>88</sup> Hence, they refused to take a stance on complete consolidation, and instead settled for a piecemeal approach that satisfied suburban residents—the ultimate compromise, which is still strong today. Piecemeal consolidation allows for localism, yet acknowledges the necessity for some central planning—however, it leaves metropolitan areas such as Milwaukee with a hodgepodge of local governments and special districts, a zigzagging quilt that seems impossible to unravel.

The State, therefore, played an interesting role within this era, sometimes choosing to follow the specific interests of Progressive Party, rural-based Senators that did not identify with urban areas or with Socialist ideals. Other times, they chose a hands-

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<sup>88</sup> Teaford, *City and Suburb*: 100.

off approach, looking to local governments to solve issues; and, then, sometimes they actively inserted themselves in order to decrease waste and inefficiency, such as through piecemeal consolidation.

## **Conclusion**

Through an historical dive into the incorporation of suburbs, the formation of growth coalitions, and the role of the state institution, one may begin to answer the question: how did the metropolitan region of Milwaukee become so fragmented?

Industries, with little to no space left to build in the city, took advantage of cheaper land outside the city to build up, investing money into housing and infrastructure as well. Once established, many chose to incorporate and created a political government that was congruent with their desires. Hence, decentralization of industry was occurring at a much earlier rate—as early as the 1890s—and frequently industrial suburbs, heavily located to the west and south of the city, were not incorporated due to romantic ideals of self-rule.

However, there were suburbs, although not necessarily the focus of this study, that sprung up due to what Teaford calls the “social and economic particularism,” or the desire to segregate based off of socioeconomic status, industry area, ethnicity, and more.<sup>89</sup> This can be seen in the incorporation of the North Shore suburbs, such as Whitefish Bay, Shorewood and River Hills. Many times, upper class residential suburbs like these chose to incorporate also because of the desire to create better services, which Towns were not always able to supply. An interesting correlation that was unable to be

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<sup>89</sup> Teaford, *City and Suburb*: 10.

discussed here is the effect suburban incorporation had on residential segregation and the social dynamics of the metropolitan region.<sup>90</sup>

In response to the ring of suburbs forming on the exterior of the city, the city formed a large-scale growth coalition to appeal to the State Legislature, annex unincorporated land, and push for massive consolidation of city and county. Although the coalition was able to annex more land than before and consolidate with North Milwaukee because of a more organized and efficient system, they were frequently blocked by suburban coalitions and their use of the state and the courts. Hence, local growth coalitions were influential in many ways, but were severely limited by traditional institutions.

The State played a large role; first, by taking a hands-off approach to the majority of annexation and consolidation bills, and letting incorporation and annexation be sorted out locally; second, by adopting an approach to consolidate municipal services, which further benefitted suburbs access to these services, and weakened the city's stance even further.

Lastly, historical institutionalism allows the reader to recognize that not all policies were implemented due to coalitions intent on seeing growth—in particular, many suburban officials acted of their own accord without the support of the people due to their desire to keep their jobs and their position of power. The State, too, sometimes acted out of accordance of particular beliefs and interests that did not align with urban, Socialist ones.

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<sup>90</sup> Teaford in *City and Suburb* and Colman in *Cities, Suburbs, and States* highlight how suburban incorporation can be connected to the desire to segregate—tracing how this segregation plays out today would be an important piece to the puzzle of metropolitanism. Colman, in particular, spends time examining how to create equitable growth policies within metropolitan regions.

With political fragmentation firmly in place almost a decade later, the question now is: what to do now? The mushrooming of special districts, the exodus out of the city (both by residents and industry), and the increasingly important role of the automobile were important factors then, and continue to be. Is the ultimate compromise—a blend of localism and consolidated municipal functions fraught with inequities—here to stay? As Colman says, “by the time states could begin to see what they had wrought in terms of tax, fiscal, and economic inequities between city and suburbs, the horse was not only well out of the barn but probably dead of old age.”<sup>91</sup>

A re-occurring theme in this study is the importance of the State. Other cities that were able to consolidate with surrounding suburbs were supported by the Legislature through an act that allowed consolidation to occur. Another theme is the role business plays in creating political space—a role that is still important, as cities and suburbs are constantly marketing themselves to appeal to potential businesses. Conclusions can be drawn that show some effectiveness of coalitions; however, the State still plays an incredibly important role, making it seem that consolidation and regionalism must be supported by the Wisconsin Legislature in order to move forward.

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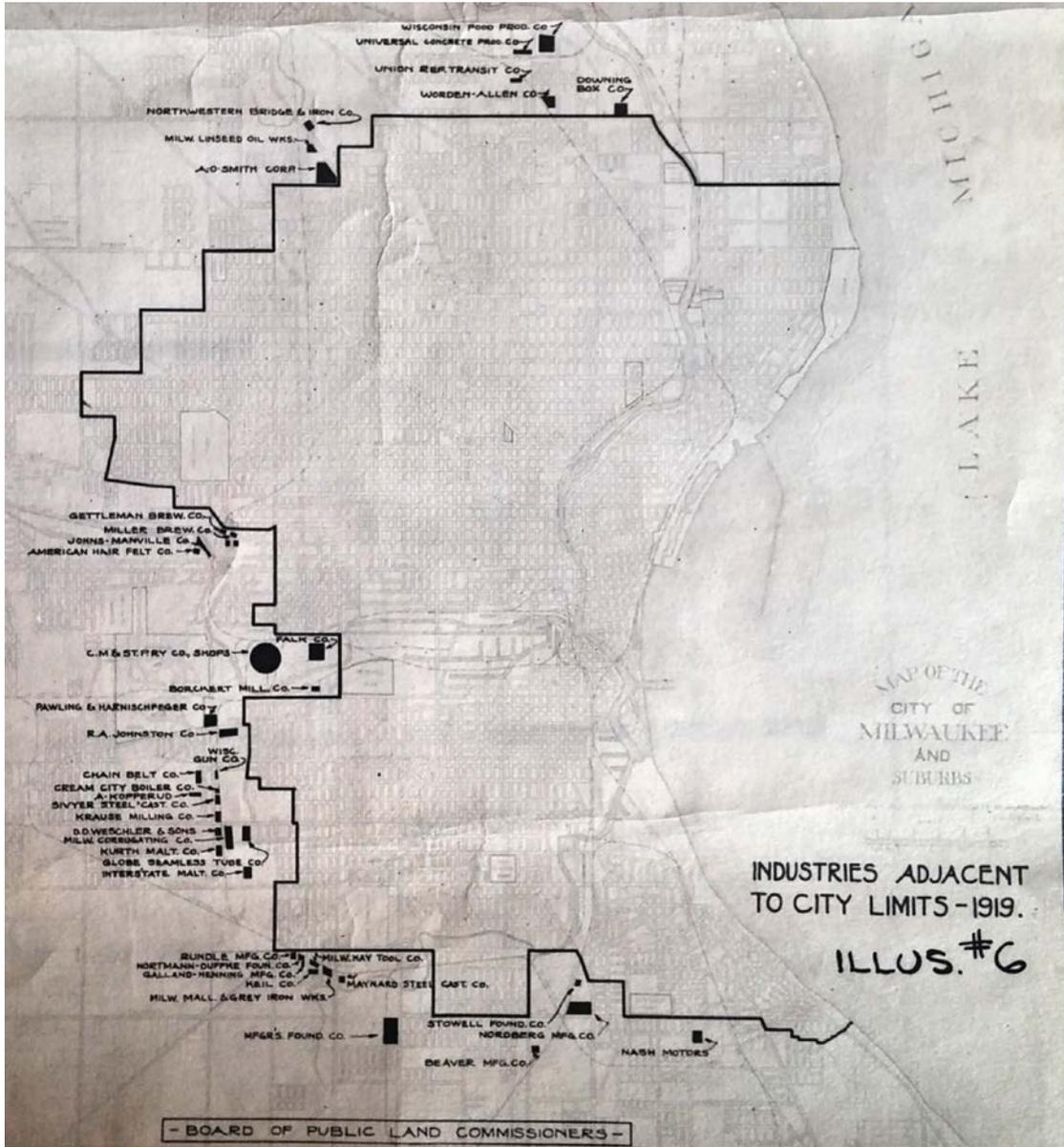
<sup>91</sup> Colman, *Cities, Suburbs, and States*: 21.

## Appendix A: List of Members on Mayor's Advisory Committee

ORGANIZATION	REPRESENTATIVE
American Institute of Architects	Peter Brust
Bay View Advancement Association	B. Karn
City Club of Milwaukee	Fred. S. Hunt
Detroit St. Civic Club	Tony Bellant
Dover St. Social Center Club	<i>Unsubscribed</i>
Forest Home Ave. Civic Association	<i>No answer</i>
14th Ward Advancement Association	Leo Krzycki
Greater Milwaukee Association	W.E. Hamilton
Green Bay Ave. Advancement Association	Edw. J. Kraus
Milwaukee Accountants' Society	E.C. Bayerlein
Milwaukee Electrical League	Philip Grossman
Milwaukee Engineers' Society	M.A. Beck
Milwaukee Real Estate Association	M.J. Shenners
National Ave. Advancement Association	F.N. Fitzpatrick
North Ave. Civic Association	R.C. Freihube
North Side Civic Club	R.J. Miller
North Side Civic League	C.B. Whitnall
Northwest Side Advancement Association	C.J. Rice
Rotary Club	Wm. J. Zimmers
South Side Civic Association	Theo. Otjen
South Side Community Club	<i>all.</i> H. H. Jacob. B. B. Bohleman
24th Ward Advancement Association	Edw. Mohren
United Northern Advancement Association	Chas. Philips
Vliet St. Advancement Association	Louis Aaron
Washington Park Advancement Association	Dr. Gustave Schmidt
West Side Civic Club	Wm. M. Kunkel

Excerpted from box 1, folder 3, Dan Hoan Papers

## Appendix B: Industries Adjacent to City Limits



Excerpted From Report, "Annexation in 1921", box, 1 folder 26, Dan Hoan Papers

## Appendix C: Consolidation Referendum

<b>ADVISORY REFERENDUM ON THE CONSOLIDATION OF SERVICES AND GOVERNMENTS</b>				
	Number		Per Cent	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
<b>TOWNS:</b>				
Franklin .....	83	496	14.3	85.7
Granville .....	506	825	38.0	62.0
Greenfield .....	710	816	46.5	53.5
Lake .....	750	1,482	33.6	66.4
Milwaukee .....	149	513	22.5	77.5
Oak Creek .....	83	461	15.3	84.7
Wauwatosa .....	680	729	48.3	51.7
Total .....	2,961	5,322	36.7	64.3
<b>CITIES:</b>				
Cudahy .....	1,041	989	51.3	48.7
Milwaukee .....	90,022	19,748	82.0	18.0
South Milwaukee .....	727	2,306	24.0	76.0
Wauwatosa .....	2,769	3,947	41.2	58.8
West Allis .....	4,211	2,500	62.7	37.3
Total .....	98,770	29,490	77.0	23.0
<b>VILLAGES:</b>				
Fox Point .....	42	224	15.8	84.2
River Hills .....	29	134	17.9	82.1
Shorewood .....	1,146	3,185	26.5	73.5
West Milwaukee .....	652	691	48.5	51.5
Whitefish Bay .....	595	1,786	25.0	75.0
Total .....	2,464	6,020	29.1	70.9
<b>COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE</b> ...	104,195	40,832	71.8	28.2

Excerpted from "Metropolitan Milwaukee: One Trade Area," 21.

## **Appendix D: Archival Data**

### **Archives Utilized:**

University of Milwaukee-Wisconsin Golda Meier Archives

Collections Used:

City Club of Milwaukee Records, 1909-1975

Town of Milwaukee Records, 1835-1955

Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce

“Metropolitan Milwaukee: One Trade Area Burdened with 93 Local Governments.” A 1936 study submitted by the Joint Committee on Consolidation in Milwaukee County. 1936.

Milwaukee County Historical Society (MCHS)

Collections Used:

Milwaukee County Suburbs Collection

Daniel Hoan Collection

### **Description**

The City Club of Milwaukee Records contained pertinent information relating to the workings of the Advisory Board and the Committee on Annexation, as well as excerpts from the *Milwaukee Journal* and the *Milwaukee Sentinel*. They also housed multiple reports on annexation and consolidation and proposed bills to the Legislature.

The Town of Milwaukee Records contained a valuable study looking at the possibilities of incorporating as a village, and used St. Francis as an example within the study.

The Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce meeting minutes held relevant information on the association’s interactions (or, in this case, lack thereof) in regards to annexation policy, which contrasted slightly with a statement mentioned in

Goff's dissertation. Of particular importance was the Metropolitan Milwaukee study by the Joint Committee on Consolidation, located by itself, which succinctly summed up trends and statistics for the time era being studied.

The MCHS archives provided me with a look at the suburban perspective through the Milwaukee County Suburbs Collection, mainly including reports and newspaper articles. The Dan Hoan collection provided valuable information to the role the mayor and public officials played, as well as correspondence between officials and businesses.

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