

# Bizarre 606

## A Guide to Elevated Weirdness

THE STRANGE AND OBSCURE ALONG  
THE BLOOMINGDALE TRAIL  
FROM WALSH PARK TO WESTERN AVE



Courtesy of Bizarre Bucktown,  
the guided neighborhood  
walking tour featuring  
history, mystery,  
and ghosts!

### The Bloomingdale Line

The rail line that became the Bloomingdale Trail was built at street level in 1857. It wasn't until 1910, under city decree, that the St. Paul and Pacific Railroad elevated the tracks. That's over 50 years of maimings and deaths at its 35 unguarded crossings. The last train was in 2001. In 2009, the line was sold to the city for \$1. The 606 park system opened on the oddly coincidental date of 6/06/15.

#### N Marshfield AVE

Walsh Park honors fireman John C. Walsh who died after the spectacular arson of a factory at this location, in July 1970. His death uncovered widespread fire insurance fraud related to abandoned buildings. Nearly 60 years earlier, an even larger arson happened here too. The Northern Malt Company was torched to the equivalent of \$15 million in damages.

#### N Paulina AVE

The factory buildings here were the Felt & Torrent Manufacturing Company, creator of the Comptometer — a mechanical, key-driven adding machine. In their day, the company was doing the equivalent of a billion dollars a year in business. Paulina Ave is named for the wife of real estate subdivider, Ruben Taylor.



*One block North, visit the beer garden of the haunted [Bucktown Pub](#), or dine at the family-friendly [Pizza House](#), or snarf down an award-winning burger at [Cortland's Garage](#). Exit the trail at Walsh Park then walk to Cortland Street.*

#### N Hermitage AVE

Modeled after St Peter's Basilica, Saint Mary of the Angels was almost demolished in 1988. It was saved when the mysterious Prelature of Opus Dei stepped up to run it and rally the community. (See also *The DaVinci Code*.) Today, the 26 roof angels keep watch over Bucktown. At dusk, watch for the bats in the belfry. Hermitage Ave is named for the Nashville home of President Andrew Jackson.

#### N Wood ST

Just south of the trail, in 1929, a garage fire led police to the getaway car used in the St Valentine's Day massacre. A mobster was cutting it up for disposal and started the blaze. Oops. Wood is named for the real estate subdivider, Alonzo Wood.

#### N Honore ST

The southwest corner at the trail is the former location of the "Get Me High" lounge, an infamous gathering spot during Bucktown's resurgence. It's the birthplace of Slam Poetry! Honore is named for Henry Honoré, father of Chicago's parks and boulevards system, and also of Bertha Honore, the wife of Potter Palmer.



*One block South, visit [Club Lucky](#) for excellent Italian food and fine cocktails, enjoyed on their sidewalk cafe or at the restored 1930s bar. Ask to see the bullet holes from 1967, which might explain their resident ghost. Exit the trail at Hermitage, then walk to Wabansia Ave.*

#### N Wolcott AVE

At this crossing, in 1902, a freight train hit the twelve year old Otto Schlock. Just one of the innumerable accidents before the tracks were elevated. Just to the South was the Kuppenheimer clothing factory. The street was renamed from Lincoln Street, in 1939, for Alexander Wolcott — the first physician in Chicago.

#### N Winchester AVE

Churchill Field is named for the former Churchill Cabinet Company, who donated this land to make a community park in 1954. Previously, in 1919, the Independent Snuff Company factory stood here. To the south stood Stenson Brewing Co; mobster Johnny Torrio's prohibition beer maker. Winchester is named for a town near Sheridan's victory at Cedar Creek, VA.



*One block North, visit [Lotties Pub](#), formerly a notorious den of gambling and other vices. You might recognize it as Molly's from NBC's *Chicago Fire*. Exit the trail at Damen, then walk to Cortland St.*

#### N Damen AVE

Check out what's happening at the Art Plaza here, or just peer South towards the Bucktown-Wicker Park entertainment district. The tall building is Northwest Tower, soon to be a hotel. Across from that, the 102 year old Flat Iron Arts building is home to working artists (and Bizarre Bucktown HQ). This street was once named for James Robey, a real estate developer, but is now in honor of Fr. Arnold Damen, founder of Loyola University.



*To the North, explore Bucktown's "indy row" of eclectic shops. Or, grab a Chicago-style dog at [George's](#). To the South, the [T-shirt Deli](#) offers fun fashion, and [The Goddess and The Grocer](#) has supplies to gird oneself for the bustling environs.*

#### N Hoyne AVE

The Churchill Cabinet Company here probably made the cabinet for your favorite pinball machine, or your great grandfather's crank telephone. The street is named for Thomas Hoyne, who was accidentally elected mayor in 1875 due to confusion over a change in election day. Alas, the court said it wasn't fair.

#### N Leavitt ST

Named for David Leavitt, a NYC banker instrumental in building the MI-IL canal. The canal linked the Great Lakes to the Mississippi river, enabling passage to the Gulf of Mexico.

#### N Milwaukee AVE

Originally an old Indian trail that led (sort of) to its namesake city. It was a wooden plank toll road, but in 1881 an angry mob burned down the toll gate for all of us. Today it's a popular bicycle route sometimes called the Hipster Highway.



*Exit here for the sadly named [Park #567](#) and, to the South, the [Bucktown Library](#). The gourmet burger shack [Small Chaval](#), and a 7-11 are also nearby.*

#### N Winnebago AVE

Named for the Native American tribe, which you might know better as the Ho Chunk. A bit to the West and South lies the former Hammond Organ factory.

#### N Western AVE

The longest continuous street in the world! (24.5 miles, if you must know.) The trail's bridge here was moved from Ashland Ave, right down North Ave, on the back of a flatbed truck. This street is named for demarcating the original western boundary of the city, in 1854. (And nearby North Ave marked the northern boundary.)



*Exit here for the closest 'L' stop, as well as [Margie's Fine Candies](#), an ice cream shop since 1921. Sit in the booth where [The Beatles](#) ate sundaes when they visited in 1965.*

### If you enjoyed this...

The Bizarre Bucktown walking tour goes way beyond this sampler with a 90-minute guided exploration of the neighborhood. Learn about forgotten events and surprising secrets, and experiences interactive mysteries. For info, schedule, and tickets visit or call:

[www.BizarreBucktown.com](http://www.BizarreBucktown.com)

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