Although this was originally a port of entry for Irish and German immigrants in the 1800s, it wasn’t until the second wave of immigrants, a majority of them Czech, that Pilsen received its name. These new residents named the neighborhood after Plzen, one of the largest cities in the modern-day Czech Republic, and from the “neo-bohemian baroque style architecture” to the numerous ornate and fascinating churches, they immediately began putting their “Old World” stamp on the area.

Pilsen remained a predominantly Eastern European neighborhood until 1960s, when, displaced by the construction of the University of Illinois at Chicago campus, a “sizeable Mexican population drifted south to the neighborhood.” Mexican-Americans have dominated the area since this time, and the neighborhood, with its countless number of Mexican restaurants, grocers, bakeries, and shops, as well as the National Museum of Mexican Art, has grown into one Chicago’s centers of Mexican culture.