



Chicago's Pilsen Neighborhood (Images of America Series)

Peter N. Pero

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For nearly 150 years, Pilsen has been a port of entry for thousands of immigrants. Mexicans, Czechs, Poles, Lithuanians, Croatians, and Germans are some of the ethnic groups who passed through this “Ellis Island” on Chicago’s Near Westside. Early generations came searching for work and found plenty of jobs in the lumber mills, breweries, family-run shops and large factories that took root here. Today most jobs exist outside of Pilsen, but the neighborhood is still home to a loyal population. Pilsen is compact but abounds with close-knit families, elaborate churches, mom-and-pop stores, and sturdy brick homes. Nearly 200 photographs from libraries, personal scrapbooks, and museums provide the evidence. Some notable people who walked the streets of Pilsen include Anton Cermak, Amalia Mendoza, George Halas, Cesar Chavez, Judy Barr Topinka, and Stuart Dybek. Today the Pilsen schools are nurturing another generation of artists, athletes, and activists. Many Chicagoans and tourists from outside the city are rediscovering this colorful and historic neighborhood. Let this history book serve as their guide.

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