

'Reflected growing city'

Downtown district offers a lesson in history

By Patti Gallagher

A 20-block radius in downtown Lincoln is a come-alive history book of Nebraska.

Within a few minutes, a stroll could take you past the homes and the histories of turn-of-the-century governors, mayors, legislators, business owners and other community leaders.

The area, called Mount Emerald and Capitol Additions, was named a National Historical District last June. Because of a listing in the National Register of Historic Places, the area is eligible for federal funds and protection.

But more important than a listing and federal support is the Nebraska history and culture the area offers.

According to Daniel Kidd of the State Historical Society, the area, built during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, "reflected the governmental, educational and commercial character of the growing city."

The area now includes 228 dwellings. It is bordered by 17th and A streets, the alley between 20th and 21st streets, E Street and 18th Street. Although almost exclusively residential, the district includes two churches, five apartment buildings, a former fraternity house, three duplexes and a combination dentist office-residence.

Value is history

The value of the district, however, lies not only in what it is today, but in what it used to be.

It used to be the home of Gov. Charles Bryan, 1923-25 and 1931-35. Bryan was the brother of William Jennings Bryan, remembered by native Nebraskans as a great orator and three-time presidential candidate.

The district used to be the home of nine state legislators, a secretary of state, a state treasurer, a state congressman, five mayors and several attorneys.

The university population also was well represented in the district. In it are the original homes of six past UNL presidents, three members of the NU Board of Regents and many past faculty members.

Former homeowners also included Don L. Love, for

whom UNL's Love Library is named, and Willard Kimball, who owned Kimball Recital Hall until it was purchased by UNL in 1930.

The areas of banking, insurance and commerce also were represented because many founders of Lincoln businesses owned homes in the district. The founder of Beatrice Foods Co., Morris Friend and the founder of the National Bank of Commerce, Morris Weil, had homes in the area.

According to Kidd, the houses themselves their ages and structure also are a major factor in being named as an historical district.

Design is sign of the times

Kidd said the neo-classical style of architecture and the period revival style are frequent in the district. The structures are fairly consistent, he said, in that about 80 percent are not more than two-stories high.

Although no rules specify what may be included within a district, Kidd said, it would be inappropriate to erect new structures in the area. The area remains unique because no building is less than 50-years-old, he said.

The Mount Emerald and Capitol Additions area is the first historical district in Lincoln, according to Kidd. Lincoln's Haymarket, however, recently has been approved on the state level as an historical district.

At least nine other areas across the state, including Omaha's Old Market and the towns of Brownville, Nebraska City and Tecumseh previously were named as historical districts.

The first step in becoming an historical district is a nomination by the historical society. The society submits the nomination—in this case more than 50 pages of detailed descriptions about the area—to the U.S. Department of the interior. That department then decides if the district should be placed in the Register of Historical Places.

Prominence not important

Being in the National Register does not require a place

to be nationally prominent, Kidd said. The register will accept places that are important to the history of a specific place, he said.

Kidd said the Federal Grant-in-aid program has been cut drastically in recent years. Three years ago, his office had \$600,000 from the Department of Interior to distribute to historical places around the state. Last year, the office had only \$100,000.

If a homeowner applies to the historical society for a preservation grant-in-aid and is accepted, then federal funds will be matched by the state.

In addition, a listing in the register provides present residents with the history of their homes, Kidd said. He said the historical society often gets calls from residents in the district about who owned their houses. The society gets this information from the *Who's Who* publications, county records, news clippings and interviews.

Census figures show states western growth

Preliminary census figures indicate increasing stability and growth in western Nebraska.

According to Anne Ralston, research associate at the Bureau of Business Research at UNL's College of Business Administration, preliminary 1980 census counts released by the U.S. Bureau of the Census indicate that during the decade 1970-1980, counties in

western Nebraska gained portion of the population they lost from 1960 to 1970.

During the 1960-1970 decade, western Nebraska lost 9,497 people (a loss of 9.1 percent), whereas for the 1970-1980 interval, western Nebraska gains 3,205 people.

The more rapidly growing counties in the 11-county western area since 1970 were Box, Butte (35.6 percent), Morrill (5.5 percent), Scotts Bluff (4.7 percent) and Sheridan (3.8 percent).

Of the seven western area counties experiencing population declines since 1970, four (Banner, Deuel, Garden and Sioux) appear to be repeating their 1960 to 1970 trends, but at slower rates of decline. The remaining three declining counties (Dawes, Kimball and Cheyenne) have been affected by special circumstances. Dawes county's population has been influenced by a declining institutional (college) population since 1970. Kimball County's population, which had shown growth in the earlier years of this decade, may now reflect the winding down of major construction projects. In Cheyenne County, as well, the completion of construction on Interstate 80 may have contributed to the decline in population.



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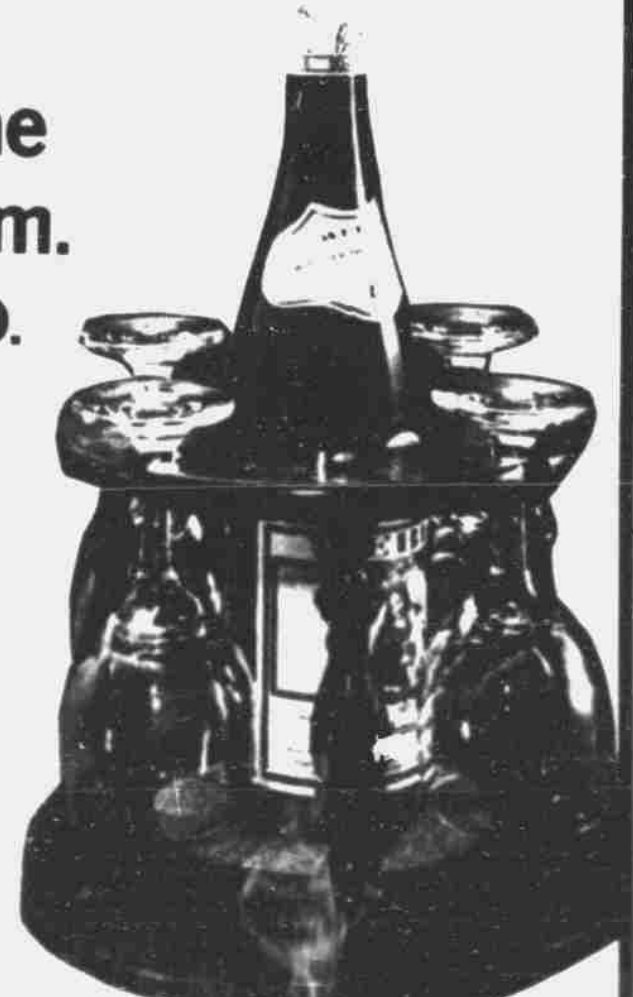
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