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## SCOTT FOUNDATION GRANT

The William and Ruth Scott Foundation awarded the Park and Recreation Department a grant to assist with Mayor Fahay's Neighborhood Park Rehab Program. The foundation awarded \$55,377 to supplement the City's budget for renovating Columbus Park. Additionally, the Scott's will provide \$29,071 to expand the improvements planned for Fillmore Park. Work is currently underway on both parks.

"The Scott's generosity and interest in Omaha's Neighborhood Parks is tremendous," stated Larry Foster, Acting Director, "their financial commitment, will make these two parks the 'pride' of their neighborhoods."

Shortly after his election, Mayor Fahey announced his plan to renovate 70 Neighborhood Parks, an initiative central to his pledge to improve neighborhoods. Details of that plan are listed below.

### Neighborhood Park Renovation Plan



"This Neighborhood Parks Renovation Plan will improve 70 neighborhoods parks over the next five years. This plan reflects my priorities. Neighborhood Parks are critical amenities that city government must provide for because they help form the building blocks of strong neighborhoods. Strong neighborhoods build strong cities."  
- Mayor Mike Fahey.

Mayor Fahey's announcement calls for the renovation of 70 neighborhood parks. That means new playground equipment and, where needed, new signs, landscaping, walking paths and picnic tables, for each park that has not already been renovated in the last 15 years. Prior to construction, each neighborhood community will have input into how their park is to be renovated through a series of public meetings.

These renovations will be funded by a refocusing of the city's six-year capital improvement program for the years 2003 - 2008, and will be accomplished without raising taxes or a new bond issue. The capital improvement plan is the city's primary financial and planning tool for capital improvement projects. Some other projects will be delayed, however, no downtown redevelopment projects or any other project already underway will be delayed. Also, no sewer separation projects, public safety projects, transportation project or projects that would result in the loss of federal or state grant funding will be delayed.

Renovation has already begun and is expected to be complete over the next 5 - 6 years. The total cost for these improvements is estimated to be approximately 7 million dollars. The City's share of the costs will be paid from Park Bond dollars. The Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District has agreed to be a partner with the City on this project. They are contributing 1 million dollars over a 4-year period.

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## Levi Carter Park

**Location:** 809 Carter Lake Shore Drive

**Size:** 519.5 Acres

**Facilities:** The major attraction possessed by this park is Levi Carter Lake, which provides opportunities for water-skiing, fishing, and boating. The park also has sports facilities including two baseball fields, two football fields, and two basketball courts. Paths, picnic areas, shelters, restrooms, a pavilion, and open space are just a few of the other amenities within Levi Carter Park adding to its appeal.



**History:** The oxbow lake that formed north of the city when the Missouri River changed course in 1877 was first known as Cut-Off Lake. It soon became valued as a commercial and recreational resource. The South Omaha meatpackers Swift and Armour were among those who located ice cutting and warehousing operations along the northern banks of the lake. Attracted by its water-related recreational advantages, a beach resort with a large boathouse and two-story pavilion, a Rod and Gun Club, and a YMCA camp had all settled on the lake shores by 1906.

Omaha industrialist Levi Carter, owner of the Carter White Lead Works in nearby East Omaha, became interested in Cut-Off Lake for different reasons. He passed this land daily going to and from his business and was among the first to see its desirability for park and boulevard purposes.

In 1908, three years after Carter's death, his widow donated \$50,000 to the city to acquire lakefront lands for a public park memorializing her husband. Terms of the donation stipulated that Cut-Off Lake, also known at that time as Lake Nakoma, be officially named Carter Lake.

The Park Commissioners were not looking to add to their holdings in the northern section of the city; Miller, Fontenelle and Kountze Parks were already in place but they welcomed Mrs. Carter's offer. A number of citizens objected to the proposal which required the City to provide matching funds to develop the property; they felt the City money would be better spend improving existing park properties.

A 1908 Commission report states that "by the acquisition of this park Omaha is given a beautiful body of water with possibilities for aqua sports and recreation." In the 20 years since Omaha's first parks were developed, more active forms of leisure activity had become popular. The Board's interest in the lake property reflected this shift in attitude about the purpose of parks. The earlier focus was on the quite enjoyment of picturesque scenery but now there was a new emphasis on the provision of facilities for more active activities, such as swimming, golf, tennis and baseball.

In 1908, Mrs. Carter donated funds for Levi Carter Park; she also married Edward Cornish, an Omaha attorney who had served on the Park Commission. After moving from Omaha in 1911, the Cornishes continued to play an active role in the development of Levi Carter Park through gifts of property and funds

for improvement projects.

In 1989, \$1 million was expended to upgrade Levi Carter's facilities. This park was the first one to benefit from the Major Park Rehabilitation philosophy initiated by the Department of Parks, Recreation and Public Property in 1988.

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## SUBURBAN PARK PLAN WINS AWARD

Pictured from left to right are: Acting Director for Parks and Recreation, Larry Foster; Mayor Mike Fahey; Dave Ciaccio with the Ciaccio Dennelle Group.



The American Society of Landscape Architects, Great Plains Chapter, has awarded their 2003 President's Award of Excellence to the Omaha Suburban Park Plan. The receipt of this award continues the acclaims and honors bestowed on this "cutting edge" park-planning document. The Plan has previously been a featured presentation at many conferences and meetings including the

National Parks and Recreation Association, the Washington State Parks and Recreation Association, the British Columbia, Canada, Parks and Recreation Association. It is regarded as a national model.

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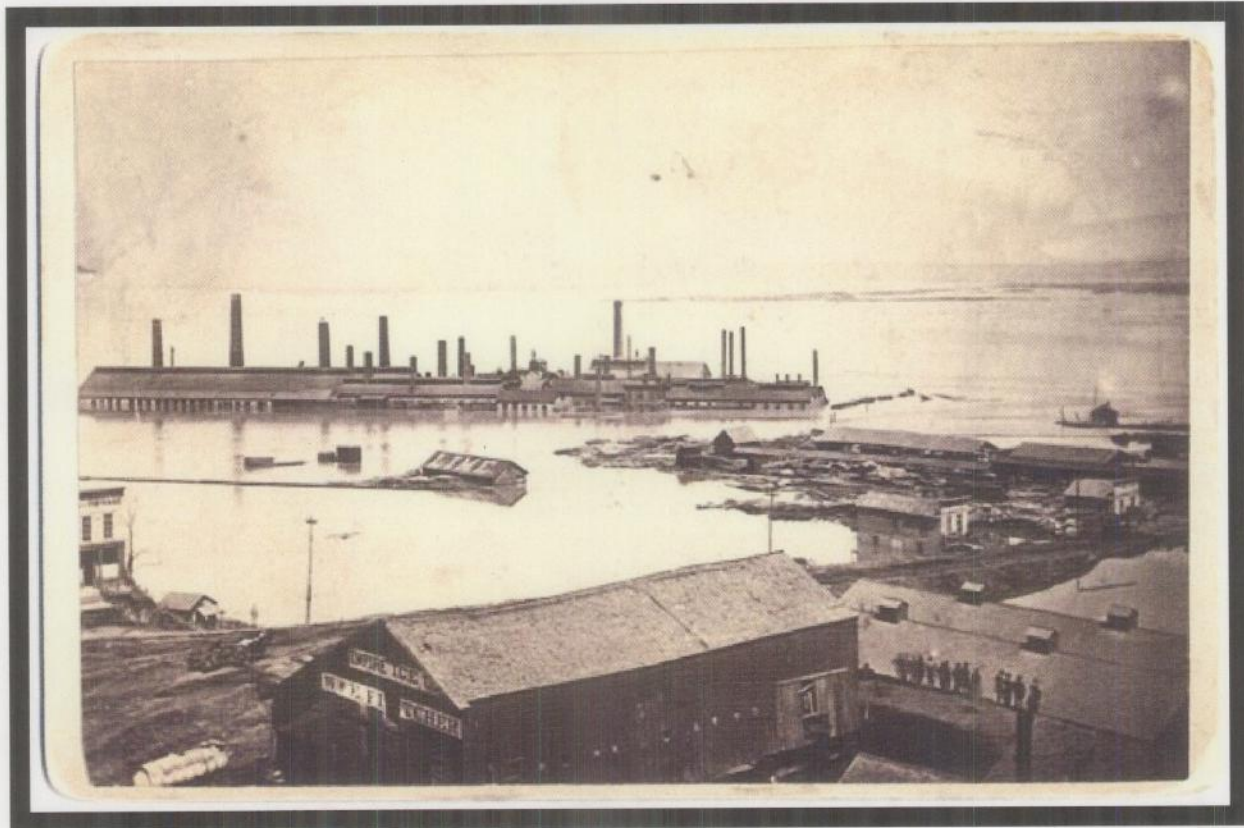
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## FLOOD OF APRIL 1881

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On April 1st, 1881, a large ice jam on the Missouri River near Yankton, South Dakota, broke apart releasing floodwaters down the Missouri valley. Water reached Omaha on April 6, 1881. The U.S. Government built a temporary dam around businesses on the riverbank but it did not hold. This photograph looking northeast shows the Omaha Smelting Works and Union Pacific shops under water.



Floodwaters crested at 23½ feet on April 7, 1881, at 6 p.m. This depth was 2 feet higher than ever recorded on the "Big Muddy". The Missouri had also reached a width of 5 miles covering all the lowlands between Omaha, NE and Council Bluffs, IA.

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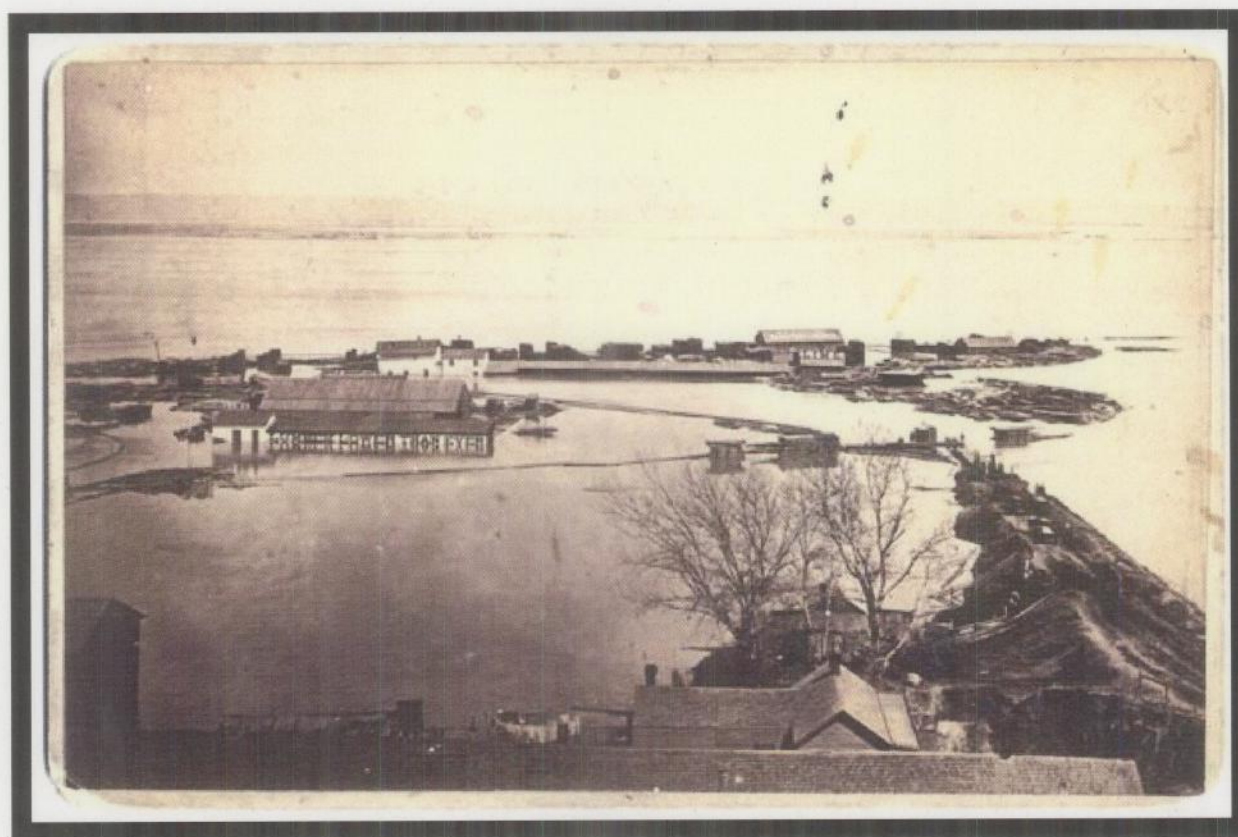
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## FLOOD OF APRIL 1881

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This classic photograph by E. L. Eaton looks eastward over several flooded lumberyards. The singularly appropriate sign "Lumber Lower Than Ever," was on the west wall of the Hoagland Lumber Yard located at Douglas street and the U. P. tracks. The street going out into the river on the right is Farnam Street.



Owners managed to save most of the wood only by employing a large force of men working night and day. The large "V" to the south of Hoagland Lumber is a boom designed to trap floating boards. The boom succeeded in part, but the Missouri was clogged with ice, driftwood and flood debris. The loss of property and flood damage was considerable.

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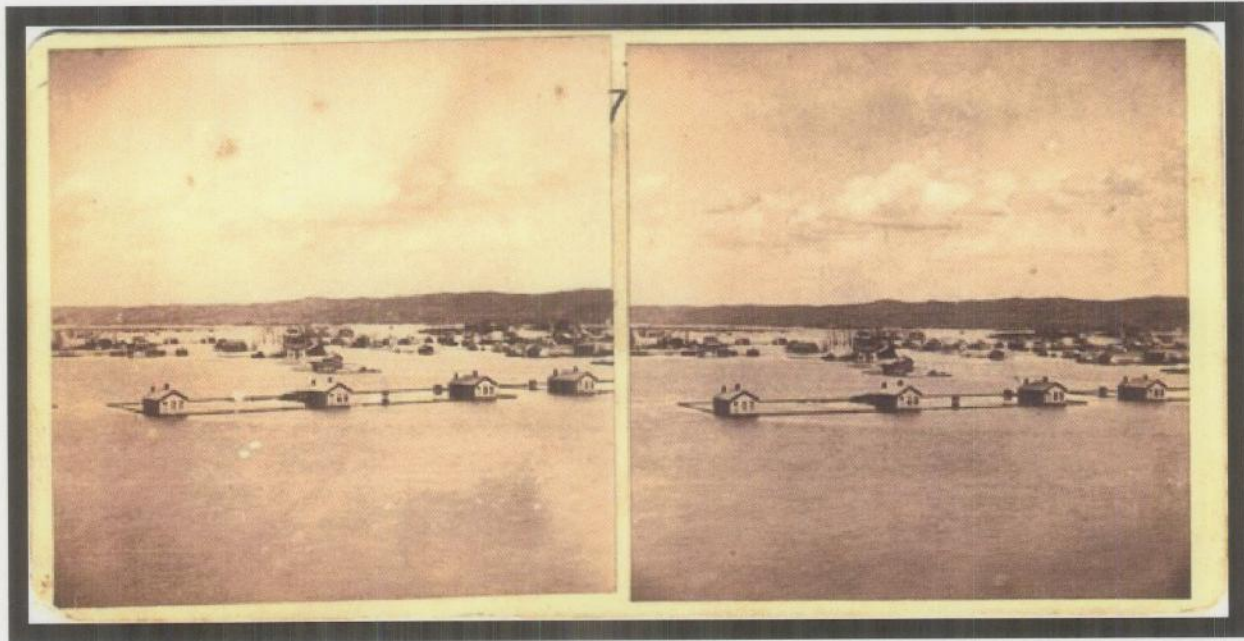
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## FLOOD OF APRIL 1881

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Four small wood frame tenement houses are visible in the foreground of this photograph taken from the roof of the Union Pacific Transfer Depot & Hotel in Council Bluffs, Iowa.



These small homes were made available to Union Pacific employees. Water from the flood covered the low ground between Omaha and Council Bluffs for a width of 5 miles. Many Council Bluffs businesses were destroyed. Lake Manawa was also created during the April 1881 flood. The Omaha Bee paper covered the "Great Flood" nearly every day from April 2-13, 1881.

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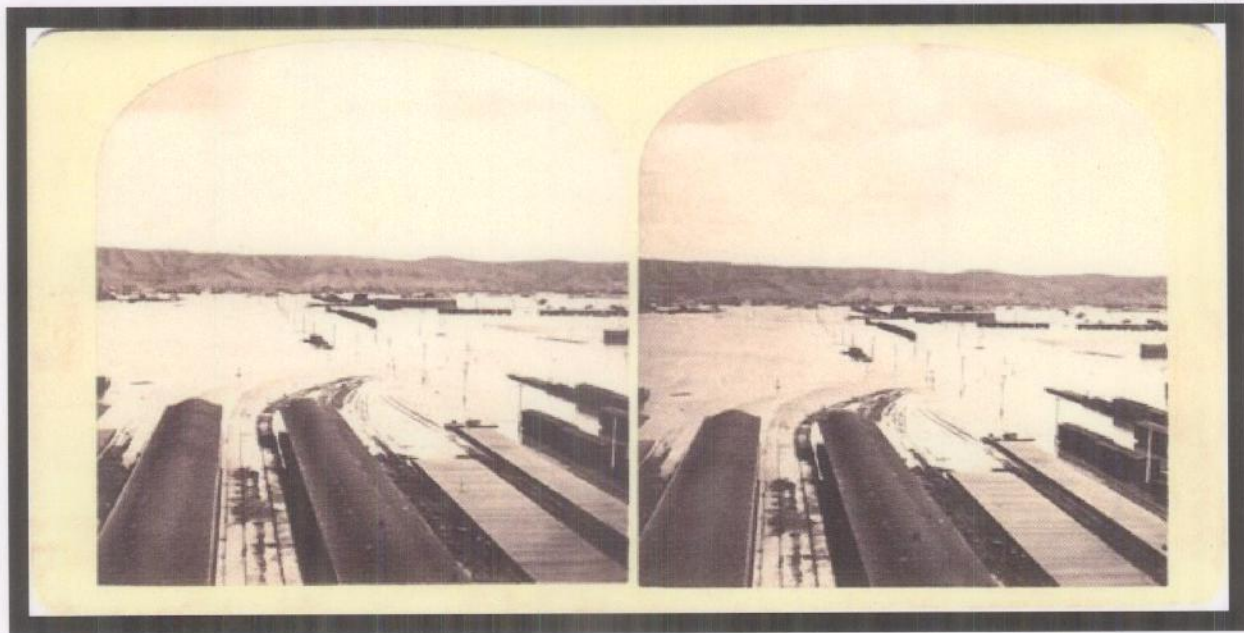
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## FLOOD OF APRIL 1881

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Looking southeast from the roof of the Transfer Depot & Hotel in Council Bluffs, Iowa. Two large rail sheds and miles of water-covered tracks can be seen.



After the 1881 flood, the U.S. Government invested huge dollar amounts in improvements along the Missouri River north of Omaha. Union Pacific and American Smelting Works raised the level of the ground on which their buildings were located. Ground levels were raised for 2 miles upstream from the smelting works because of increased land values. Citizens felt that these improvements would protect them from any future floods.

Text written by Lynn Sullivan, October 2003

[1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#) [8](#)

Becker, Harold. "Omaha: A Century in Photos – Lumber Was Lower and Water Was Higher." *Omaha Sun Newspaper*, 23 June 1966.

Becker, Harold. "History in Photos - River 5 Miles Wide in 1881." *Omaha Sun Newspaper*, 8 April 1981.

**Savage, James. *History of the City of Omaha and South Omaha*. Chicago: Munsell & Company, 1894. Page 146.**

**Wakeley, Arthur. *Omaha: The Gate City*. Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1917. Page 448.**

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### ELMWOOD PARK

Elmwood Park was the second largest of the system designed by Horace (H.W.S.) Cleveland. It is located about 3 ¼ miles west of city hall. Currently, it is bounded by Dodge, Happy Hollow Blvd, 60th, Pacific and 67th streets.

Cleveland recommended that Omaha acquire a park large enough to shut out city sights and sounds in order to refresh the senses. In 1889, Lyman Richardson, John T. Bell, and Leopold Doll donated the original 55 acres. The tract was described as a romantic spot with many beautiful Elm trees. Hence the name "Elmwood Park". Between 1889 and 1892, additional land was purchased, donated or taken through condemnation. The city spent \$135,110 for acquisitions. By 1917, the park had grown to 208.13 acres (Wakeley, p. 158).

By 1892, architect H.W.S. Cleveland had made extensive changes to the park. Scenic roadways had been created which made it a popular driving spot. A seven acre lake had also been added. Elmwood park is locally famous for its mineral spring which contains magnesia, soda and various other minerals (Wakeley, *ibid*). The city sealed off or chlorinated outlets from the spring amid public outcry for health reasons in 1947. One irate housewife blamed the City Health Department for ruining 34 quarts of pickles when she accidentally used chlorinated spring water (Frisbie, p. 1).



The Moorish Castle style pavilion was erected in 1890 for \$5,586. Originally an open air structure, it was condemned in 1939 as unsafe and closed to the public. Commissioner Towl directed that it be repaired and enclosed (Frisbie, *ibid*). The pavilion received a facelift in 1987. Omaha spent \$100,000 from a bond issue to replace windows and repair restrooms (*Omaha World Herald*, 31 January 1987).



The Elmwood Park Golf Course was opened in 1916. Nearly 30,000 rounds of golf were sold per year in the 1960's. Irrigation pipes were installed in 1966. The primary reason for the irrigation system was the Elmwood Park Pool. Apparently when the kids were showering, the golf course had only a trickle of water!



The terrain in Elmwood park contains many ravines. Bridges were constructed over ravines on scenic walking trails. One of the most heavily used was the Jones Street Bridge. The old bridge was torn down and a new one built in December 1980 for \$73,200. The new bridge has the same “inverted truss” as the old but is made from a type of steel that needs no paint and little maintenance (*Omaha World Herald*, 9 December 1980).

Text written by Lynn Sullivan, September 2003

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Frisbie, Al. *Omaha World Herald*, 1 July 1962. Page 1.

*Omaha World Herald*, 9 December 1980. Page ?.

*Omaha World Herald*, 31 January 1987. Page ?.

Wakeley, Arthur. *Omaha: the Gate City*. Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1917. Page 158.



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**Velie brand car-  
Elmwood Park**



**Fontenelle Park**



**Fontenelle Park E  
Ames Avenue  
entrance**



**Elmwood Park Ravine  
& Footbridge**



**Elmwood Park Rustic  
Bridge on golf course**



**Elmwood Park  
Pavilion-family in  
Velie car**



**Riverview Park-Ladies  
at Lily Pond**



**Riverview Park-  
Lagoon & Island**



**Riverview Park 3625 S  
10th**



**Riverview Park  
Pavilion**



**Riverview Park  
Pavilion**



**Douglas County Court  
House looking ne  
from 18th & Harney  
during Leveling  
Project**

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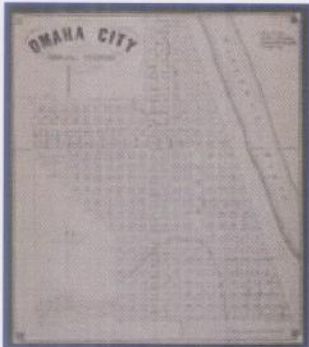
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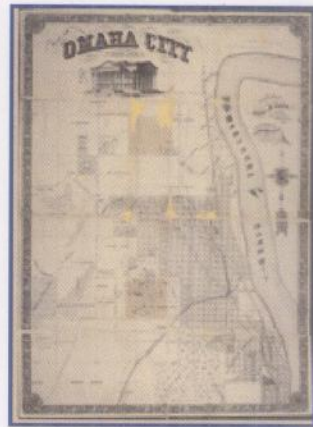
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1854

Omaha

(Lowe, Jackson,  
Bayliss & Co.)



1866

Omaha

(Oscar F. Davis)



1868

Omaha

(Chicago  
Lithographing Co.)



1870

Omaha

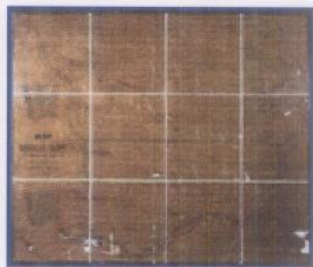
(Byron Reed)



1876

Omaha

(Chicago  
Lithographing Co.)



1878

Douglas & Sarpy  
Counties

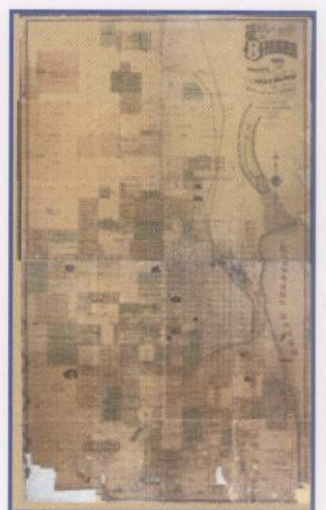
(Boggs & Hill)



1878

Omaha

(Geo. P. Bemis)



1883

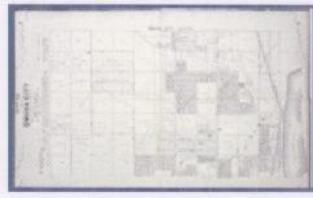
**Omaha**  
**(Geo P. Bemis)**



**1885**

**Omaha -  
Central Part**

**(1885 Official Atlas  
of Nebraska)**



**1885**

**Omaha -  
Northern Part**

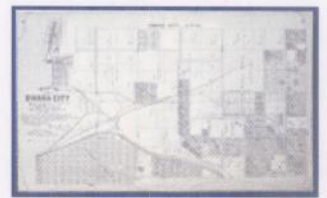
**(1885 Official Atlas  
of Nebraska)**



**1885**

**Omaha -  
Southeastern Part**

**(1885 Official Atlas  
of Nebraska)**



**1885**

**Omaha -  
Southwestern Part**

**(1885 Official Atlas  
of Nebraska)**

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1887

Omaha & Environs  
(J. M. Wolfe & Co.)



1890

Paving Map of  
Omaha  
  
(Aug. Gast Bank  
Note &  
Lithographing Co.)



1891

Omaha & Environs  
(J. M. Wolfe & Co.)



1897

Trans-Mississippi &  
International Guide  
Map of Omaha  
  
(Megeath Stationery  
Co.)



1900

Douglas County -  
School Districts &  
Voting Precincts  
  
(Geo. McBride)



1905

**Paving Map of  
Omaha**

**(City Engineer's  
Office)**

1905

**Sewerage Map of  
Omaha**

**(City Engineer's  
Office)**

1905

**Water Supply Map  
of Omaha**

**(City Engineer's  
Office)**



1923

**Omaha**

**(Guy Pease &  
Chas. J. Norgard)**

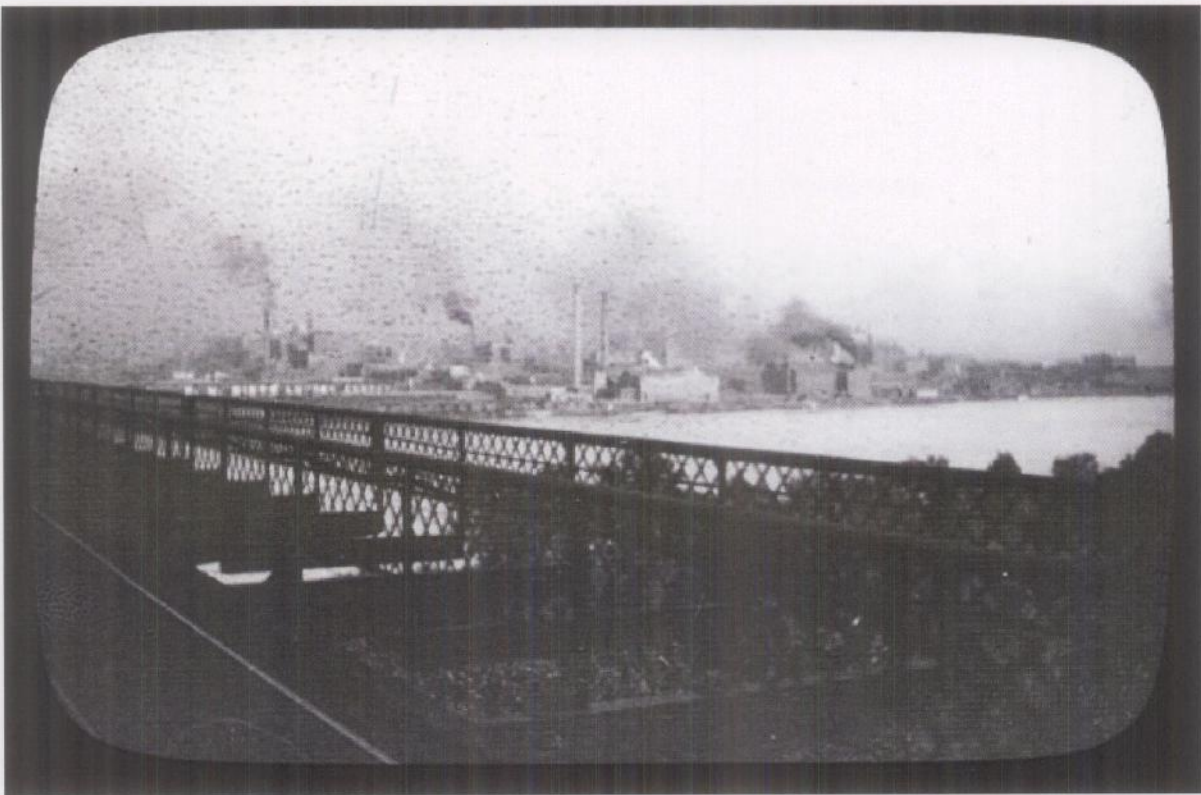
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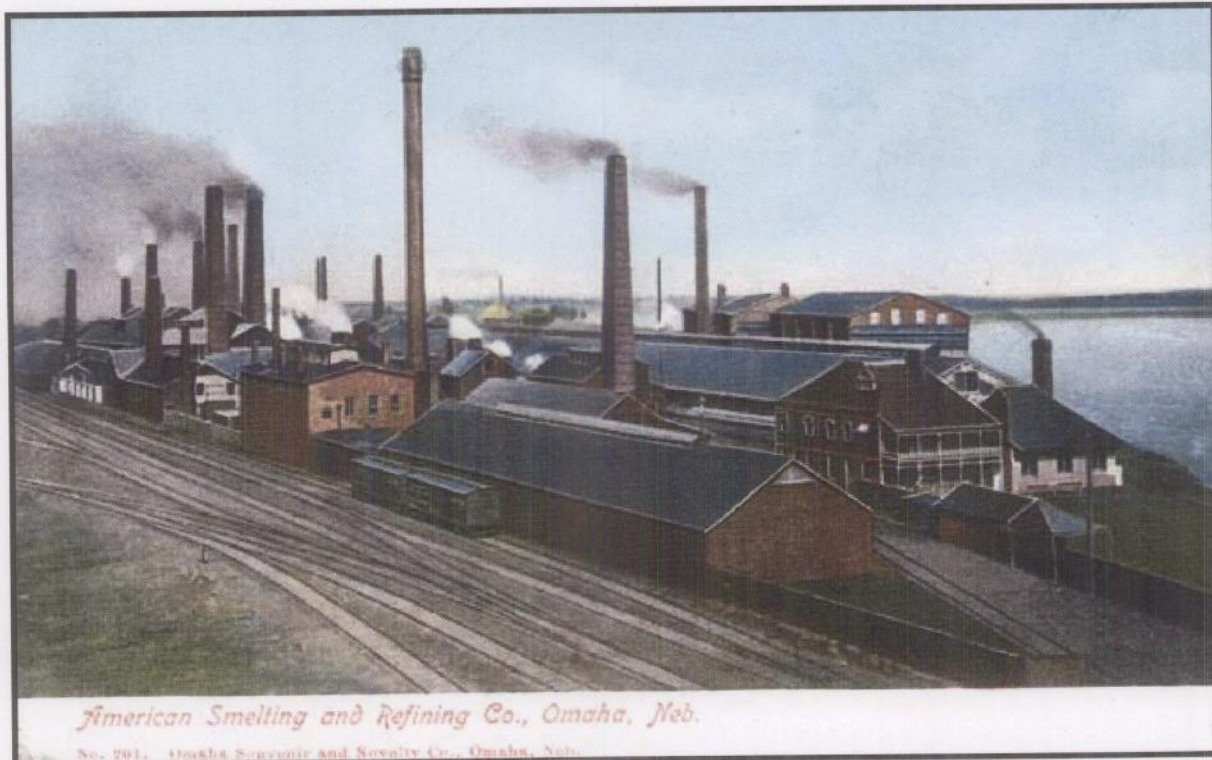
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## AMERICAN SMELTING & REFINING COMPANY



This postcard shows the American Smelting and Refining Company looking toward a more northerly direction. American Smelting and Refining Co., better known by the acronym "Asarco", consolidated several plants on April 4, 1899. **Twenty-five years later, the Asarco plant at the corner of 5th and Douglas streets was the largest lead refinery in the world.**





An image of Asarco, circa 1900-1909, shows the refinery looking northwest from the Union Pacific Bridge over the Missouri river. Smog from the plant obscures most of the view as emission standards did not exist at this time. In 1972, University of Nebraska Medical Center scientists said Asarco was releasing too much lead into Omaha's air. Asarco submitted a demolition and site cleanup plan in December of 1995 to the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality. They were fined \$3.6 million in 1996 for discharging lead and other pollutants into the Missouri. Asarco was closed in July of 1997. After extensive site cleanup, the land was turned over to the City of Omaha as a 23-acre park. The site was named "Lewis and Clark Landing" in April 2001 honoring the early explorers.

Text written by Lynn Sullivan, October 2003

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Anderson, Julie. "Capping Under Way at Asarco Site Cleanup Is Rolling on the River; Transformation in Progress." *Omaha World Herald*, Metro Edition, 01 November 1999. Page 1.

Anderson, Julie. "Whom should Park Immortalize? Got a Name?" *Omaha World Herald*, Sunrise Edition, 06 April 2001. Page 1.

Savage, James. *History of the City of Omaha and South Omaha*. Chicago: Munsell & Company, 1894. Page 496.

*Standard Blue Presents: Buildings of the 80's in Omaha*. Omaha: Standard Blue, 1976. Page 76.

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## RIVERVIEW PARK



In keeping with H.W.S. Cleveland's philosophy that parkland should be secured before city growth reaches the area, Park Commissioners selected a parcel of land along the Missouri River between Omaha and South Omaha. The property was so hilly that "the land could not support a table on four legs" (City of Omaha Planning Dept., p. 16). Problems arose with landowners over purchase and the city acquired 111.57 acres by condemnation proceedings between 1893 and 1899 for \$90,053.50. From 1899 to 1917, the city spent \$125,000 for improvements and maintenance (Wakeley, p. 161).

Present boundaries of the park are Interstate 80, Riverview Blvd, and Grover street on the north and east. Gifford Drive and railroad tracks on the south and 10th street on the west.



The spectacular vistas of the Missouri River gave the park its name. Cleveland was unsure about incorporating the terrain of the land into a workable park. H.W.S. Cleveland's health failed before he could begin work. Park Superintendent W.R. Adams completed the plans which included a lagoon and scenic drives.



Almost from the beginning, Riverview Park has had an association with animals. In 1896, park officials added a collection of animals to the park. A moose was bought for \$150, a bear for \$25 and fish were moved in for \$1.00 (City Planning Dept., p. 18). In 1964, the park was leased to the Omaha Zoological Society as the site for Henry Doorly Zoo.

Text written by Lynn Sullivan, September 2003

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City of Omaha Planning Dept. *Omaha's Historic Park and Boulevard System*. March 1992. Pages 16-18.

Wakeley, Arthur. *Omaha: the Gate City*. Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1917. Page 161.

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## HANSCOM PARK



Greenspace was virtually nonexistent in early Omaha. The only public park originally platted was Jefferson Square in 1854. The park was bounded by 15th, 16th, Farnam and Douglas streets. Jefferson Square Park was formally dedicated on November 25, 1865 (Omaha History Clipping File). The park was razed on March 18, 1969 as part of Interstate construction.

Prior to 1889, Omaha had no legal means to purchase land or maintain a park system. Due to increased lobbying by concerned citizens, the Nebraska State Legislature passed a statute allowing cities to raise funds through taxation or issuance of bonds.

One of the oldest parks is Hanscom Park. The 50 acre tract was donated in October 1872 by Andrew J. Hanscom and James Megeath. According to historians Savage & Bell, "No charge was made for the property, but the gift was upon condition that the city expend in improving it the sum of three thousand dollars in 1873, four thousand dollars each year for the three years following, five thousand in 1877, and the same amount in 1878; to forever keep the property in good order, and to grade and keep in good repair the streets by which the tract was bounded. The donation was accepted on these conditions, the property christened "Hanscom Park" (Savage, p. 437). The park is in what was the extreme southwestern part of Omaha. It is currently bordered by Woolworth Avenue on the north, Park Avenue on the east, Ed Creighton Avenue on the south and 32nd Avenue on the West.

1889 brought considerable changes to the park. Noted landscape architect, H.W.S. Cleveland was hired to create a more natural look for Hanscom Park. He was paid \$913.30 in 1889 and 1890. By 1898, a Park Commissioners' report stated that "Two Lakes, a cascade, extensive flower beds, two and one-half miles of macadamized roadway, fountains and a magnificent growth of forest trees make this the only finished park in the city" (City of Omaha Planning Dept., p. 26).



Hanscom Park also had more improvements in 1891-92. Omaha spent \$17,381.28 on the creation of a lake and the construction of a bandstand and pavilion (Lethem, p. 43).



Recreational equipment began to appear in Hanscom Park in the early 20th century as the community's needs changed.

Text written by Lynn Sullivan, September 2003

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City of Omaha Planning Dept. *Omaha's Historic Park and Boulevard System*. March 1992. Page 26.

Lethem, Jonathan. *Historical and Descriptive Review of Omaha*. 1892. Page 43.

Savage, James Woodruff & John Bell. *History of the City of Omaha*. Chicago: Munsell & Co., 1894. Page 437.



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- progress report
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### Highland Park Gets a Makeover

On a November morning in 2003, neighbors gathered at Highland Tower on 25th and B in South Omaha to consider the state of Highland Park. Omaha by Design facilitators helped conduct a Place Game that generated lots of ideas about how their park could be improved.

After a walk around the area, they talked about making the park more accommodating for family gatherings' with better picnic facilities and shelter. An improved play area, better signage, a fresh image and places for walkers to sit and talk were some of the suggestions that also came out of the session. Now, their ideas have been put in place and here's what's changed because of their efforts.



The central square of the park before.



The new gazebo at the park's center.





*The playground before.*



*The playground after.*



*The park's entrance, then.*



*The park's entrance, now.*



*The sidewalks before.*



*The sidewalks after.*

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## Mayor Fahey Wins Laurels Award



**Rex Fisher**, chairman of Omaha by Design, and president of Qwest Nebraska, presented **Mayor Fahey** with the Laurels Award at a ceremony in the Qwest Center Hilton.

Omaha by Design is proud to announce Mayor Mike Fahey is the latest recipient of the Omaha By Design Laurels Award. The [Laurels Award](#) is given to individuals, organizations and businesses that make significant contributions to great public spaces in our City.

During his term in office, Mayor Fahey contributed to Omaha's great places through his aggressive park renovation and neighborhood grant initiatives.

Since the 2001 introduction of the park renovation program, the City has completed 25 neighborhood park renovations and has 14 renovations underway. Thirty-seven additional parks will be renovated by spring 2008. In addition to the park renovation program, the Mayor's office annually awards grants to fund neighborhood-based beautification and safety projects.

For the last year and a half, the Mayor's support and leadership of Omaha By Design was essential for the completion of the comprehensive urban design plan for the City of Omaha. His support was instrumental in the unanimous passage of the Urban Design Element for the City's Master Plan by the Planning Board and Omaha City Council.

As part of the implementation of Omaha by Design recommendations, Fahey announced the identification of the Benson area as the first neighborhood alliance planning model. The Mayor's Office, Planning Department and Omaha by Design will be leading a partnership of neighborhood associations, business owners and the University of Nebraska of Omaha to develop a comprehensive plan for the area. This alliance will serve as a model for other future neighborhood alliances throughout the city.

Rex Fisher, chairman of Omaha By Design and president of Qwest Nebraska, presented Mayor Fahey with the Laurels Award at a ceremony in the Qwest Center Hilton. You can read about the new urban design element of the City's Master Plan at [www.omahabydesign.org](http://www.omahabydesign.org).

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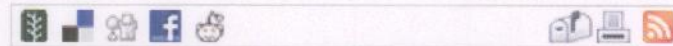
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## Old South Omaha Has Long History Of Welcoming

### New Association Unites Old Neighborhood

POSTED: 9:21 am CDT May 12, 2006  
 UPDATED: 10:09 am CDT May 15, 2006



**OMAHA, Neb.** -- One of Omaha's oldest neighborhoods has one of the newest official neighborhood associations.

The area that includes the Burlington Roads Neighborhood was formerly known as the town of South Omaha. It is bordered by 42nd Street, 1 Street, Interstate 80 and Dahlman Avenue. The area has always welcomed immigrants from all over the world, and it still is home to residents whose families first inhabited the neighborhood in the early 1900s.

The people who first immigrated to the area called the town Magic City. An old stream through the middle of the neighborhood had several blocks know as "zabno," which translated from Polish means "frog hollow."

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The neighborhood is home to the site of one of the city's oldest churches. St. Francis of Assisi and St. Stanislaus are both in Burlington Roads.

The pool that served so many in the first half of the 1900s was closed because of a polio scare in the 1940s and now a large rock marks the spot. The rock was placed 27 there years ago, but not as a memorial to the pool.

The neighborhood park is named after a hero from the Revolutionary War. Pulaski Park was named after Gen. Casimir Pulaski.

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Today, a school that used to be the center of the neighborhood has been transformed into urbane rental properties.

The new Burlington Roads Neighborhood Association hopes to restore trees to the area. Neighborhood historian Theresa Bidrowski said trees have always been an integral part of the neighborhood, which was once known as "Golden Hill."

"I have asked around and nobody knows why, but I can imagine because they took pride in this area, and they felt this was their golden opportunity to make a better life for themselves," Bidrowski said. "The early part of the century, it was known that every block had it's own store grocery store and a bar for the men of the area."

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# Burlington Road Neighborhood Association

*Keeping the Neighborhood on Track*

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## Our Area's History

### The Early Days

A Brief History --- More to Come!

Our homes rest on an area that was once a part of a hilltop section with a number of small creeks. Some of the creeks flowed into a larger stream bed east of us. The railroad companies drained that area to build their railways. In the early 1900's, our area was developed by mostly Polish immigrants and became a suburb of the town of South Omaha.

#### **SOUTH OMAHA HISTORY:**

The development of the stockyards spurred the growth of South Omaha. While the South Omaha stockyards were initially seen as a resting place for cattle on their way to larger markets, such as Chicago, the industry expanded into packing operations and was the nation's third largest stockyards by 1893. It became one of the largest in the mid 1900's.



Stockyards early to mid 1900's

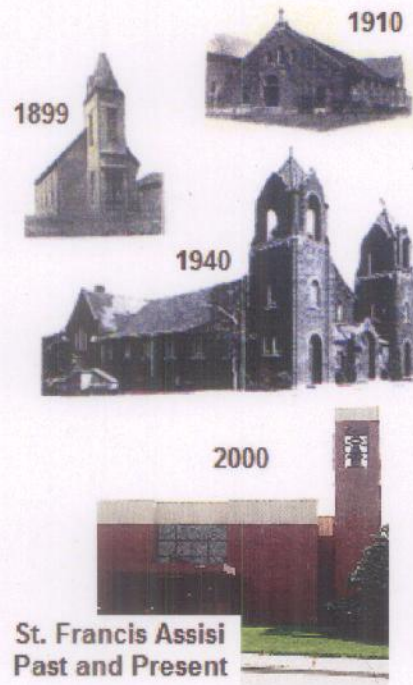
The town of South Omaha evolved out of the livestock trade and was laid out around the stockyards. Both entities grew rapidly, and by 1890 the population numbered over 10,000 people and claimed four major meat packing plants. At the turn of the century, South Omaha (known as the "Magic City") had over 26,000 inhabitants and was considered the "backbone of Omaha's economy." Today, the wide expanse of stockyards is gone. A shopping center, movie theater, and other smaller businesses have replaced the lots. Many smaller meat producing plants still remain in the area. The Stockyards Exchange Building has been renovated into apartments with the beautiful top floor ballroom still used and lent out for parties.

#### **BURLINGTON ROAD NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORY:**

Immigrants from Poland started to migrate into our area at the turn of the century looking for work in the thriving packing house business. They built homes and formed congregations around two churches; first St. Francis Assisi (32nd and K Street) in 1899, and later St. Stanislaus (41st and J Street) in 1919.

An area close to St. Francis Assisi Church, an early suburb of South Omaha, was known as "zabno" which means "frog hollow" in Polish. This was before industry moved into the area. There was a stream which ran through the area with many frogs in it.

Below are some pictures of the St. Francis Assisi Church as it has changed over time. The church is located today at 32nd and K Streets. The first parish school was a former public school located on 33rd and J. It was purchased by St. Francis in the early 1900's. A new school was built in 1954 next to the church on 32nd and K. The old school was torn down and homes were built in its location. Today St. Francis School has closed. The school building does hold a Polish Museum, and the classrooms are utilized by the growing Hispanic congregation for their religious classes.



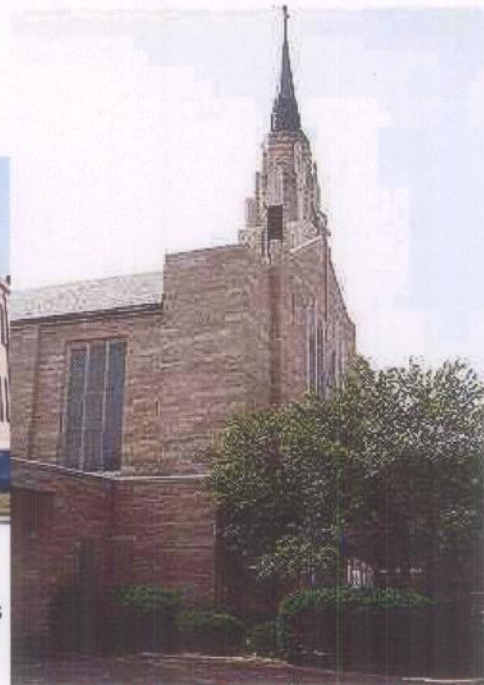
There were very few cars in the early 1900's. Most people walked. They wanted the centers of their life to be near, so St. Stanislaus Parish was founded further west where many of the newer immigrants started building homes. The founders of the parish built the church/school with their own hands in 1919. It served the congregation until 1953 when the new church was built. The upper floor of the old building was turned into classrooms.

### St. Stanislaus School Today

4501 South 41st Street



The church was once housed in the upper floor of the school. A new front addition was added to the school in 1999. The school is still a vibrant part of the neighborhood. It maintains classes Pre-School to Grade 8.



### St. Stanislaus Church

The church was built in 1953. Its tower can be seen for miles around our area.

Early residents use to fondly call the L Street hill leading up to 42nd, "The Golden Hill"; perhaps in response for their wishes and dreams for a better life. In the early 1900's many neighborhood grocery stores dotted our area. Some of those stores are now family homes. One can recognize them by their flat roofs. Wolf's Store on 36th and F was one of the last to close in about 1970. Other small businesses dot the area along L Street and 42nd Street today.



Many BRNA residents remember attending Robbins School on 39th and I Street. It was constructed in 1910 with a 1916 addition. It was named Robbins-Franklin School. The school closed in the 1990's when the new school Ashland-Robbins was built. It is listed on the Nebraska National Register. They state that -- **"It was significant for its contribution to the educational system of South Omaha, then Omaha proper after its annexation. The school served residents of a newly established and growing Polish immigrant area dominated by meatpacking and the livestock industry. It is also an excellent example of Neo-Classical Revival architecture."** Today it is known a Robbins School Apartments with 21 units. Rehabilitation converted the former school into rental residential use in 2000.



Robbins during renovation in 1999



Robbins Apartments in 2004

### Pulaski Park



Our neighborhood park is located at on 40th and H. It has been a part of the area since the beginning of the 1900's. It slowly evolved into a park. At first it was known as Clearview Park. It was an area where people would come to picnic and see a wonderful view to the west or the east since

the park is located on one of the higher sections in the area. This was at a the time when there were few homes and trees to block the view. The land west of 42nd Street was mostly undeveloped. As the Polish population grew in the area, the early citizens proudly renamed the park in honor of the great Polish General Casimir Pulaski, a hero of the American Revolution. It was their way of giving honor to their new country and also showing pride in their heritage.

General Pulaski came to American to fight for freedom. In Pulaski's first letter to George Washington, he wrote, "I came here, where freedom is being defended, to serve it, to live or die for it." With Washington's recommendation, he became general of the calvary. He spent the winter of 1777 training his men in Trenton, not far from Washington's headquarter at Valley Forge. He used his own personal finances, when money for Congress was scarce, in order to assure his forces of the finest equipment and personal safety. He transformed the calvary into a fighting force and became known as "The Father of the American Calvary." In 1779, he was wounded while riding his horse into battle. It is said that his enemies were so impressed with his courage, that they permitted him to live and to be carried from the battlefield. He died shortly after from his wounds. Americans have always recognized Pulaski's heroism and the price he paid for their freedom. Throughout America there are many counties, cities, parks, schools etc. named after him. Illinois has a state holiday in his honor on March 7th. We should be honored to have our park named after such a hero.



Pulaski Park's Memorial Rock

Pulaski Park once held a swimming pool. It was roughly located where the ball field is now. Actually, the pool is still there, buried under tons of dirt. There also was a pavilion located on the north side of the park. The pool was closed in the 1940's. Some long-time residents' memories of the park include the large number of trees and how cold the water was when they went there early in the morning for swimming lessons. There were many summer evening dances at the park in the 1930's and 40's. During the day, the children would flock to the park to swim, work on craft projects and play. A large rock was added in 1979 as a patriotic memorial to honor the early immigrants and their heritage. It states: "General Casimir Pulaski – A great Polish soldier who died for American Liberty". There was a grand party the day it was dedicated. A polka band played.

The park was renovated in 2001 adding a walking strip, a history sign and new playground equipment. It also has a ball field and basketball courts. Unfortunately, many of the park's huge old trees have been cut down.

Today our BRNA neighborhood continues to thrive with many nationalities. Our neighborhood association hopefully will work toward rejuvenating our area and bring us together as not only neighbors, but also friends.

More to come.....

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