



Burlington Road Neighborhood Association

Keeping the Neighborhood on Track

N12

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Our Area's History

The Early Days

A Brief History --- More to Come!

Polaski pool on
page 4.

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

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Superfund

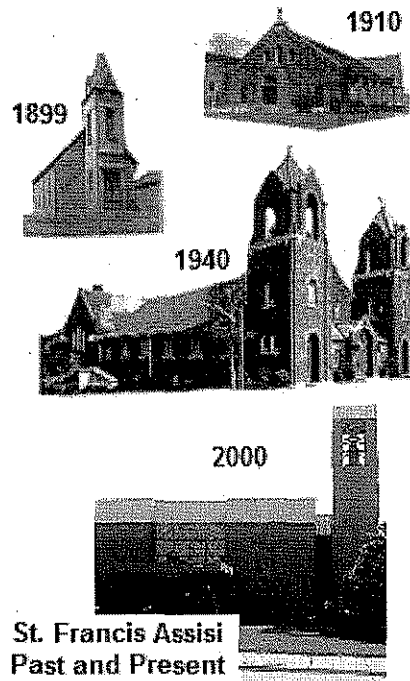
The town of South Omaha evolved out of the livestock trade and was laid out around the stockyards. Both entities grew rapidly, and by 1890 the population numbered over 10,000 people and claimed four major meat packing plants. At the turn of the century, South Omaha (known as the "Magic City") had over 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.

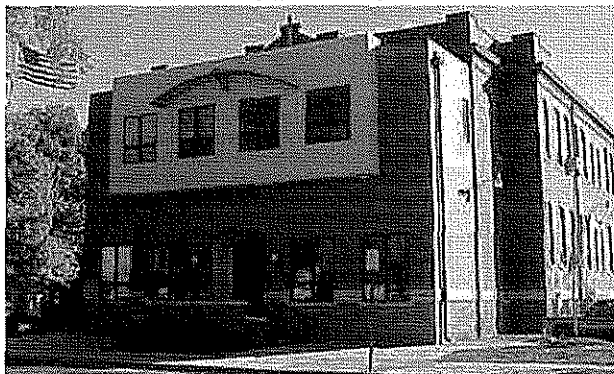
Below are some pictures of the St. Francis Assisi Church as it has changed over time. The church is located today at 32nd and K Streets. The first parish school was a former public school located on 33rd and J. It was purchased by St. Francis in the early 1900's. A new school was built in 1954 next to 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.



**St. Francis Assisi
Past and Present**

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.

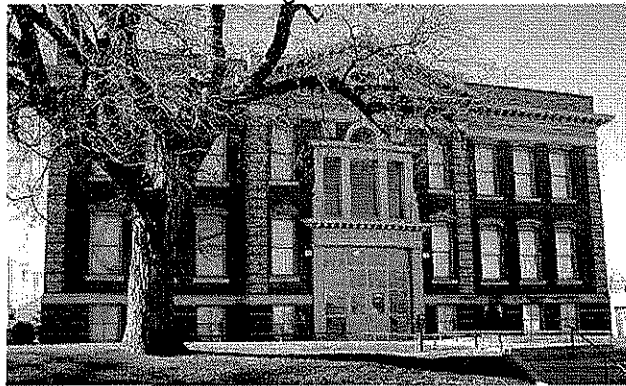
Early residents use to fondly call the L Street hill leading up to 42nd, "The Golden Hill"; perhaps in response for their wishes and dreams for a better life. In the early 1900's many neighborhood grocery stores dotted our area. Some of those stores are now family homes. One can recognize them by their 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

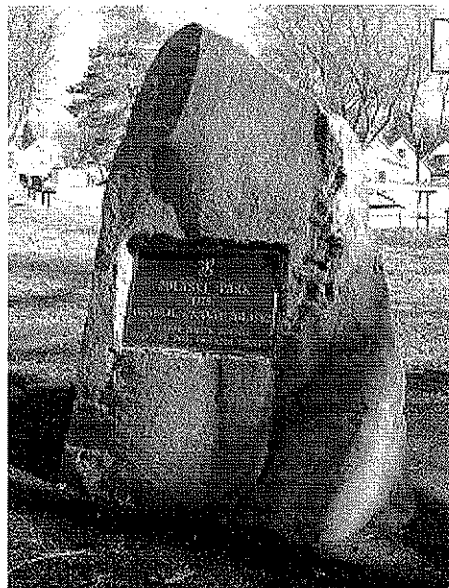
Pulaski Park



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 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 America 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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