



# Clinton Neighborhood History

The Clinton neighborhood began as a sort of farming outpost northeast of the city. The area was settled between 1864 and 1879 by pioneers who either purchased land from the U.S. Government or acquired land by farming under the Homestead Act. **(1)** The Homestead Act, which became law on Jan. 1, 1863, allowed citizens over 21 to file for 160 acres of free, unappropriated public land. The land became that person's property at the end of five years, provided he or she had built a house on it, dug a well, plowed 10 acres, fenced a specified amount, and lived there for the five years. **(2)**

The proximity of Clinton to the new state capital encouraged growth, and by 1897, the Clinton area had been annexed into the city of Lincoln. **(3)** Many of the neighborhood streets—Leighton, Baldwin, Potter, Merrill—are named after early settlers of the area. The neighborhood itself may have been named after a man named McClintock (hence, Clinton), but more likely it is named after Clinton Elementary school, which was built at 29th and Clinton streets in 1891 (the current building was built in 1926 at 29th and Holdrege). The school was named after DeWitt Clinton (1769-1828), who served as both governor and senator in New York. In 1812 he made an unsuccessful run for the U.S. presidency. **(4)**

By the early 20th century, the rural aspect of Clinton had been replaced by a more industrial character. Rail lines form the northern boundary of the Clinton neighborhood, and other lines connected to Havelock, where the main Burlington shops were located. Many residents of the neighborhood during this period likely worked for the railroad, giving the area a largely blue-collar population. **(5)**

Though Clinton has no official historic district within its boundaries, it does hold one of Lincoln's historic treasures. The Lincoln Northeast Branch Library opened on July 29, 1909 as one of the 2,509 libraries built throughout the world as part of Andrew Carnegie's philanthropy. Andrew Carnegie was a famous steel



magnate who donated \$55 million to cities around the world specifically for the creation of libraries. **(6)**

The original \$10,000 grant for the construction of Lincoln's libraries carried stipulations that the citizens of Lincoln donate the land for the building, and that annual appropriations for operation and maintenance be no less than the original donation. **(7)** The library was originally located at 27th and Orchard streets. The building was moved in 1992 to a new site south of the 27th street viaduct. The building now houses Neighborhoods, Inc., a non-profit organization that promotes homeownership and community revitalization. **(8)** The building was designed by an immigrant from Germany named George Berlinghof, who came to the U.S. in the 1880s. He also designed the original Lincoln High School building (completed in September 1915), as well as the Miller & Paine building downtown. **(9)**

## Sources

1. City of Lincoln, Department of Urban Development. Focus Area Plan-Clinton. 1998.
2. [www.ultranet.com/~deeds/homestead.htm](http://www.ultranet.com/~deeds/homestead.htm); [www.time-passages.com/homestead-act.html](http://www.time-passages.com/homestead-act.html).
3. City of Lincoln, Focus Area Plan-Clinton, 1998.
4. Callaghan, Mike. How the Lincoln Public Schools Were Named. (Lincoln, 2000), 7.
5. Ed Zimmer, Historic Preservation Planner for the City of Lincoln.
6. [www.andrewcarnegie.cc](http://www.andrewcarnegie.cc)
7. Junior League of Lincoln. An Architectural Album. (Lincoln: Jacob North Printing Co., Inc., 1979), 42.
8. <http://www.ci.lincoln.ne.us/city/urban/comdev/heart/clinton.htm>.
9. Interview with Barbara Hansen of Bennet Martin Public Library, 3 April 2002, 9:15