



Near South Neighborhood History

This neighborhood, located just south and east of the downtown area, contains some of Lincoln's most prominent, well-known features, including the Sunken Garden at 27th and Capitol Parkway and the First Plymouth Congregationalist Church at 20th and D Streets. With the construction of the Kennard and Gillespie houses (see downtown entry) southeast of the Capitol building in 1869, a trend of building fine homes for some of Lincoln's wealthier residents was set. Many of these homes that are still standing sit in a small district within the neighborhood called Mount Emerald. This district holds over two hundred buildings which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. **(1)**

Near South contains about a square mile of the city, stretching from G Street on the north to South Street on the south, and from 13th Street on the west to 27th Street on the east. The area was actually platted (that is, organized into blocks or lots) in stages. Capitol Addition, east of 17th Street between B and F Streets, was available for house lots by 1870. **(2)** Franklin Heights Addition was platted in 1889 by two couples from Pennsylvania, the Seals and the Peppers, **(3)** and the Mount Emerald Addition was organized around 1905.



Sen. Fern Orme

Of particular interest: The Hubbard House, located at 1909 F Street in the Mount Emerald district, was home to Lincoln's first woman city council member, Fern Hubbard Orme. Orme was elected to the city council in 1946, and was a four-term state senator in the late 1950s into the 1960s. **(4)** More information on Senator Fern Orme can be found at this address:

[www.unicam.state.ne.us/institute/
former_legislators/orme.html](http://www.unicam.state.ne.us/institute/former_legislators/orme.html)

Near South is also host to a number of prominent churches. First Plymouth Congregational is one of the most impressive. In 1921, four Nebraska architects and six national firms were invited to design Nebraska's new state capitol. Though Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue's entry was selected, one of the

finalists in the competition, H. Van Buren Magonigle, was invited by the First-Plymouth commission to design their church. Built from 1929 to 1931, First Plymouth claims Lincoln's other great tower, which stands at 171 feet (the capitol stands at 400 feet). **(5)**



Near South is still host to many impressive homes that were built by the bankers, doctors and railroad owners who moved to the area in the 1880s. R.O. Phillips, for example, built his "castle" at 18th and D streets with Colorado sandstone that was imported by rail. The building has since been converted into an apartment complex. **(6)**



One of Lincoln's first millionaires, John Fitzgerald, built a mansion on what is now the Mount Emerald district, but the mansion burned to the ground in 1904. **(7)**

The neighborhood began to lose some of its prominence in the 1920s when zoning codes first allowed apartment complexes south and west of the Capitol. The shift from single-family homes to multiple-family housing was accelerated in the 1950s, when Lincoln saw a surge of growth to the southeast. Today the neighborhood is a diverse mix of students and working families, single-family homes and houses converted into apartment residences.

Sources

1. The Near South Walking Tours Vol 1: Franklin Heights and Environs. (Lincoln: Augstums Printing Service, 1988), 1.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., 13.
4.
www.unicam.state.ne.us/institute/former_legislators/orme.html
5. The Near South Walking Tours Vol 2: Mount Emerald and Environs. (Lincoln: Augstums Printing Service, 1989), 3, 23-4.
6. Junior League of Lincoln. An Architectural Album. (Lincoln: Jacob North Printing Co., Inc., 1979), 21.
7. Historic and Architectural Site Survey of Malone, Near South and South Salt Creek Neighborhoods, Lincoln Nebraska. (Lincoln: College of Architecture, 1974), 65-66.

Walking Tour Books

Walking tour books are available for purchase through the Near South Neighborhood Association. These self-guided tours through the historic sites of the Near South Neighborhood contain fascinating information about this neighborhood's homes, prominent owners and builders of the area. Volume 1 covers the Franklin Heights area, and Volume 2 covers the Mount Emerald including the State Capitol. Each volume is available for three dollars. To purchase send a check made out to NSNA along with mailing information to:

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