



South Salt Creek Neighborhood History

Much of South Salt Creek was included in the original plat of Lincoln set down in 1867, but because of the nearly annual flooding in the area, land value and development lagged far behind the rest of the city. Even by 1888, with other city lots selling for \$1000 or more, lots in South Salt Creek were only selling for \$200. In addition, the neighborhood was somewhat removed from the business and residential centers of the city, and was relatively inaccessible. **(1)** From the 1880s through the 1910s, the neighborhood remained isolated even as Lincoln grew substantially. This is largely due to the fact that, from its inception, Lincoln has tended to grow to the south, north and east (the Near South and Malone neighborhoods are prime examples of this trend).

At the same time, the inexpensive lots in South Salt Creek helped make the area more attractive to the Germans from Russia who came to live in Lincoln. Land agents from Burlington railroad also encouraged these immigrants to settle on their land, and many of them took up the offer. In fact, by the 1920s, Germans from Russia made up a fifth of Lincoln's population, with 84% of them living on the flood plains west of 10th street. **(2)**

Similar to the North Bottoms area, the Germans from Russia had a strong influence on the development and character of this neighborhood. As in the North Bottoms, the immigrants to this area built small houses from material available in the region. They built their homes in the American styles, but modified American styles with Russian customs. One custom was the "summer kitchen," which is explained in more detail on the North Bottoms page. A custom more prevalent in South Salt Creek was the use of a side door on the houses as the main point of entry. The custom in Russia was to have the side of the house facing the street dressed with shuttered windows while entry to the house was gained through the side yard. This custom prevailed here in Lincoln; the immigrants continued their use of a side door and rarely used the front porch. **(3)**

Also of historical significance is one of the oldest Lutheran churches in the city, Friedens Evangelical Lutheran Church, located at the corner of 6th and D streets. The church was built by Jacob Rohrig **(4)** in

1907 to serve a small congregation of Germans from Russia. The church had no architect, but instead was based on a church that some of the members had attended in their village of Frank.

One of the members of the congregation even had a small photograph of the church, and from this picture a very Byzantine looking building was erected. Sadly, a fire in 1925 destroyed the back bell tower, but the minister at the time, Reverend Huehne, managed to save the wooden statue of Christ that hung above the altar. That same statue still hangs there today. **(5)**

While the South Salt Creek neighborhood has been strongly influenced by Germans from Russia and their culture, the area holds other sites of interest. Cooper Park, for instance, is Lincoln's oldest park. It was originally platted from 6th to 8th, D to F streets in 1867. In 1882, the city actually sank a well in the park that served as the only water supply for seven years. **(6)**

The Tyler House, located at 808 D Street and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is also a significant focal point of the neighborhood. **(7)**



Today, the neighborhood is home to the museum of the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia, located at 631 D Street. It also features a widely diverse area of single family homes, light industrial development along the rail lines in the north section, and multi-family dwellings scattered throughout the neighborhood.

Sources

1. Historic and Architectural Site Survey of Malone, Near South and South Salt Creek Neighborhoods, Lincoln Nebraska. (Lincoln: College of Architecture, 1974), 74.
2. Ibid., 86.
3. Ibid., 95.
4. Ibid., 90.
5. McKinnon, Ellen et al. Looking at Lincoln: A Guidebook and History of the City of Lincoln. (Lincoln: Media Productions and Marketing, Inc., 1983), 95-96.
6. Historic and Architectural Site Survey, 74.
7. Junior League of Lincoln. An Architectural Album. (Lincoln: Jacob North Printing Co., Inc., 1979), 24.