



# Woods Park Neighborhood History

Woods Park contains two separate historic districts, the East Lincoln/Elm Park Historic District and the Bungalow Historic District. The East Lincoln area was first platted in 1868 as the East Lincoln plat, reflecting hopes for Lincoln's rapid growth. **(1)**

Lincoln did grow quickly in the 1870s and 80s (the population jumped from 2500 in 1870 to 55,000 in 1890) **(2)** but most people came to live in Everett, Near South or Malone neighborhoods during these years.

Like other neighborhoods in their first stages of development, the Woods Park area was affected by the nationwide depression of the 1890s. The depression put a hold on speculation—real estate values plummeted, along with Lincoln's population (which dropped to 40,000 by 1900). **(3)** It wasn't until 1905, when the Woods Brothers platted the Elm Park Addition (between Randolph and L streets), that rapid growth ensued in the neighborhood. **(4)**

The historic districts of Woods Park earned this distinction largely due to the architectural significance of homes in the area. In the Elm Park/East Lincoln area, the "Prairie Box" style of homes predominates. **(5)** These homes were built specifically for middle-class families; they were modest, simple and affordable housing.

In the "Bungalow" Historic District, over 95% of the structures were built during a twenty-year span (1910-30) in the Craftsman and Prairie architecture styles which predominated at the time. **(6)** These homes were also constructed with the middle-class in mind, particularly the young middle class who sought "starter homes". One of the most influential builders of homes for this area was a man named Edward A. Gehrke. His advertising motto was "Marry that girl, then see Edward A. Gehrke, the Bungalow Man." **(7)**

The first school in the area was Elliott School, which was named for Miss Phoebe Elliott, a member of the Lincoln Board of Education when the school was built in 1888. The current building was built in 1922 and is located at 225 South 25th Street. Miss Elliott was apparently the first teacher of the first school in Lancaster County. The school was a log house located

one and a half miles north of Roca on a sand hill, thus acquiring the name "Old Sand Hill School." **(8)**

These districts within the Woods Park neighborhood remain of especial historical value, as the style and architecture of homes in this area has remained remarkably consistent and unchanged since the 1920s.

## Sources

1. Zimmer, Ed. The Woods Park Walking Tours, East Lincoln/Elm Park Historic District, Bungalow Historic District. (Lincoln: Woods Park Neighborhood Association), 1.
2. Lincoln, Nebraska's Capital City 1867-1923. (Lincoln: Woodruff Printing Company, 1923), 187.
3. Ibid.
4. Zimmer, Ed. The Woods Park Walking Tours, 1.
5. Lincoln-Lancaster County Planning Department. Application for Landmark or Landmark District Designation, Addendum to Petition to Amend the Zoning Ordinance. Woods Park, East Lincoln/Elm Park district.
6. Lincoln-Lancaster County Planning Department. Application for Landmark or Landmark District Designation, Addendum to Petition to Amend the Zoning Ordinance. Woods Park, Bungalow district.
7. Ibid.
8. Callaghan, Mike. How the Lincoln Public Schools Were Named. (Lincoln, 2000), 10.