

NEW DRAKE PARK PLAYGROUND

Drake Park improvements have been a long term Association priority and activity since 1980. In the 1970's Drake Park had become a focal point of area crime, vandalism, and deterioration. Because the turn-of-the-century park sat along the gateway to the neighborhood at 23rd and Cottage Grove Avenue, the "turning around" of Drake Park was an obvious priority. (A brief history of Drake Park excerpted from the book "FROM KEOKUK ON . . ." is included.)

A handful of Association members conducted weekly litter clean-ups of the park in 1980. The following spring flowers were planted at the park's main entrance. That fall daffodils were planted around the park's shelter. In 1982 Association volunteers (adults and children) painted the shelter, benches, and playground equipment with paint and supplies provided by the city's Parks Department. That fall the city relocated 20 trees from a demolition site to the park to join trees planted by Association members.

Because the park is among the city's most heavily used by children, the Association decided (thru its meetings and member consultations) that a new playground would better serve the recreational needs of the park's young users. Moreover, the Association board theorized that a new playground might be an incentive for families with young children to purchase properties and live in the surrounding area. Such an incentive would help accomplish the goal of shifting ownership patterns away from absentee-owned to owner-occupied (described in Project II.)

The first step in the multi-year project was to generate a seed fund of capital with which to use later for leveraging the necessary private and public

backing needed to finance a new park. The seed fund was generated by a raffle held during the Association's 1982 Fallfest festival held in Drake Park annually. The raffle, using gifts donated by area businesses (with a grand prize of \$300 of groceries from the area's supermarket), generated over \$1200 - \$600 of which was earmarked for the 1983 Fallfest and \$600 of which became the playground seed fund.

At the annual meeting in October, 1982, the membership agreed to establish a new committee called the Youth Committee with one of its priorities being the design and implementation of a new Drake Park playground. With an original nucleus of five members, the committee arranged for the ICB film on new playground equipment around Iowa to be shown at the Association's February potluck. The film was intended to generate interest, ideas and participation in the new playground.

With an expanded group of members and fresh ideas, the committee then concentrated its next efforts on research and planning for a new park concept and design. Committee members reviewed materials from the public library and equipment publications from manufacturers provided by Parks Department officials. The concept and design phase was headed by two area homeowners — Tim Tabor, whose regular job involves work with children; and, John Gradoville who was artist-in-residence at the Des Moines Art Center. They drew on ideas from the ICB film, research materials and random interviews conducted with children and parents at the park itself.

From this research and planning evolved two main concepts. The first involved the creation of an atmosphere based on personal pride and ownership. Experiences in cities nationwide have shown that playgrounds built predominantly with outside

resources have higher incidents of vandalism and greater vulnerability to neglect than those built with local or neighborhood resources. Thus, the new Drake Park playground, it was concluded, should be built to the greatest extent possible with volunteer neighborhood resources. The more involved surrounding youth and families were in the construction of the playground pieces, the greater their inclination to assume a subsequent role of "natural caretakers".

The second concept involved the creation of free-form play centers. Each play center was to have appeal to children of a certain age group. The play centers would be adjacent to each other to allow continual movement from one center to another and also to allow older children to play nearby younger children whom they were to be watching. The free-form nature of play equipment would enable a single piece to have greater versatility than the more traditional pieces.

Utilizing these two underlying concepts, the designers Gradoville and Tabor began to build a three dimensional model out of cardboard, styrofoam, and wood pieces. After several revisions, based on comments from committee members, from area residents and youth, a final model was completed in July, 1983. (Pictures of the model are included.)

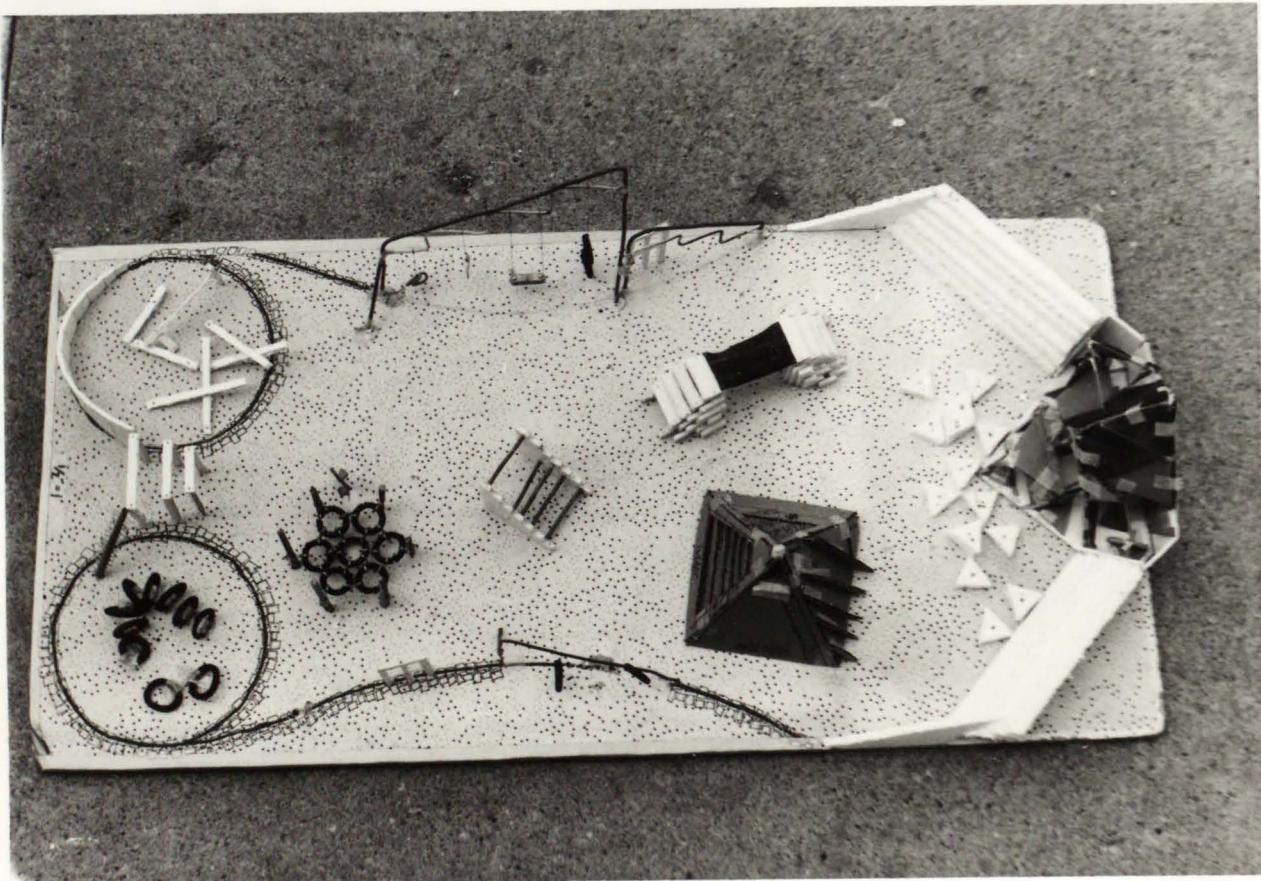
Upon completion of the model, Association officials then approached other groups for their support and joint sponsorship. The Woodland-Wilkie Board (an advisory group of area residents that recommend projects to the City Council for federal funding) agreed to support the concept and work with the Association on securing resources. (The Woodland-Wilkie group had pushed the city for years to make Drake Park improvements.) The Association then approached the City Parks Board for their approval and willingness to participate in joint sponsorship.

As the accompanying articles reflect, the Parks Board approved the concept and agreed to help develop a site survey, participate in site preparation, provide "safety" consultation, and oversee the construction. The parks department also raised the possibility of financial support as well. The Association also secured a commitment from Neighborhood Housing Services to provide construction counseling and serve as a conduit for tax exempt donations of cash. Finally, Des Moines area landscape architects agreed to donate time to develop, with the parks department, a formal site survey.

Plans are progressing so that the first piece can be completed by this year's Fallfest, September 10th. The mayor of Bondurant, who also heads the union at Firestone Tire, has arranged for the donation of as many tires as are needed for the project. City parks' officials intend to secure wood beams to be used. The Association's seed fund will purchase assorted odds-and-ends for the first piece. A sign announcing the forthcoming playground has already been constructed in the park by youth volunteers, arranged by Neighborhood Housing Services. The 4' x 5' sign lists the project's sponsors and includes pictures of the model. Volunteers are currently being recruited by committee members, a nearby park block leader, and the coordinator for the Woodland-Wilkie Board.

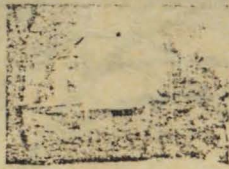
Completion of the first piece by Fallfest will provide a preview of the whole playground to come. It will generate enthusiasm among the expected 1000 in attendance at Fallfest. The finished piece will also create a leverage effect for donations of time, money and materials necessary to complete the playground by 1985.

The playground project combines artistic creativity of area residents, leveraging of public and private resources, neighborhood volunteerism, and youth involvement. As such, it will stimulate and contribute to the reinvestment of resources in the surrounding area and stand for years as a symbol of achievement by Drake area residents.



Overview of playground design model built by neighborhood artists Tim Tabor and John Gradoville.

97. 2315 DRAKE PARK - The ATHEARN HOME. Built by 1888, this Eastlake Victorian first housed noted professor Walter Athearn. His tenure at Drake spanned a number of fields. He taught courses in arithmetic, physiology, grammar and religion. He was nationally known for his work in religious education. He was also a respected author and magazine editor during the university's formative years. He left Drake and the home in 1916 for a teaching post at Boston University. The home today remains the single family dwelling of retiree Mary Margaret Tener.



98. **DRAKE PARK.** When the area was platted by the University Land Company, the five acre plot bounded by 23rd and 24th, Cottage Grove and Atkins (later renamed Drake Park Avenue) was left undeveloped at the insistence of General Francis M. Drake. He felt that it should be held aside as a place for recreation, relaxation and contemplation. The site soon became known as General Drake's lots. They were frequently the main practice fields for Drake athletic teams before the turn of the century. General Drake's heirs passed the lots on to George and Emma Barnett who sold them to the City Park's Board in 1906 for \$5500. The City then named the park in Drake's honor. Drake had helped his brother-in-law, Chancellor George Carpenter, found the university in 1881. He had amassed fortunes as a builder of railroads and founder of small banks in central Iowa. He was a true philanthropist. He believed that "for every \$2 God gives me, I must give \$1 in return". He was the university's major benefactor during its first two decades. In 1896 he became Governor of Iowa at the age of 66, making him the state's oldest chief executive officer. Perhaps his most lasting contribution as governor was to authorize the erection of the State Historical Building, today still a state landmark of treasures. Upon leaving office in 1898, he described Iowa as "the home of one of the most enlightened bodies of people on earth". Drake Park has had a roller coaster history. It housed the first religious services in 1888 at the Cottage Grove Presbyterian Church. In the early 1920's it was the site of mass demonstrations staged to protest the extension of Keosauqua Hwy. The City Council had planned to turn Keosauqua into a six lane thoroughfare running northwest from downtown to the city limits. The Council had accurately anticipated the city's growth in that direction. Drake area residents, upset at the prospect of their homes being razed, used Drake Park as a rallying point for their protests. Older residents recall "one Sunday demonstration" in particular that drew thousands plus the Mayor. Today Keosauqua stops at 19th and Carpenter; an indication of their success. The park in the thirties and forties was a quiet gathering spot for family picnics. The wading pool and shelter were constructed during the Depression as WPA projects. Although the park was spared from freeway alterations, it suffered as absenteeism and transiency increased. In the late sixties the park became a city-wide gathering point for basketball fans of Drake's famed NCAA team of 1969. Drake greats like Dolph Pulliam, Willie McCarter and Willie Wise often practiced during the summer at the park. Even after the Drake stars had graduated, the park increasingly became a main place to "hang out". In the process it evolved into one of the city's unsafest parks by the mid 1970's. It was punctuated with liquor, drugs and rowdiness. By the end of the seventies, area residents moved to regain control. It began much as it had 100 years earlier - with religious services. Nearby members of the Newlife Center (a fundamentalist group) started holding their Sunday morning services in the middle of the park. Other residents concentrated on clean-up, trees and flower gardens. By the fall of 1981, the park was once again safe enough for the Drake Neighborhood Association to move its annual Fallfest Festival there. The event marked a symbolic turning point in its history back to its heritage as a family and neighborhood gathering spot.

99. 2422 DRAKE PARK - The ELLIOTT HOME. Built by 1908, this Stick style first housed sisters Edith and Isabella Stevenson. They were succeeded in the 1920's by another woman, Nellie Leona Elliott. A noted educator, Elliott had been principal of Bird School before transferring to Grant School in 1918. Her tenure at Grant (1918-1941) spanned longer than any other principal at the school.





Drake Park with Grant School in background.
Photo by Kathy Kelly (1980).

She was also a prominent civic leader having served as president of the Des Moines Federation of Women's Clubs, president of the State Federation of Teachers' Clubs and director of the State Council of Administrative Women. By 1940 she had relinquished the home and moved to the Cutler Flats (2419 Cottage Grove). The home returned to a woman again in the 1970's, widow Marilyn Neal.

100.

1040 21st - The MANDELBAUM HOME. Built by 1906, this American four square was constructed for pioneer retailing executive Julius Mandelbaum. Mandelbaum was characterized as being "among the most progressive forces in mercantile life in Des Moines" at the time. As founder and president of J. Mandelbaum & Sons, he opened a dry goods store in 1864 that grew steadily in volume and importance to become "one of the most prominent business establishments in Des Moines". Although the business carried the name of the sons, it was perhaps his daughter who contributed most to its survival (albeit with a different name). She married Joseph Friedman's son William (2815 Rutland). Today their son William Jr. reigns over Iowa's premier retailing establishment - Younkers - which had, coincidentally, merged with the



Park board approves playground to be built by volunteers

By JIM HEALEY

Register Staff Writer

A new playground area to be built in Drake Park by neighborhood volunteers received the blessing of the city's Park and Recreation Board Tuesday.

The new play area, to replace existing equipment in the northeast corner of the park, "has been a longtime priority," according to John Neubauer, president of the Drake Neighborhood Association.

The area and the nearby Sherman Hill neighborhood have been the locations of at least eight rapes this spring. Neubauer said, "Because of the recent rash of rapes in the neighborhood the project has taken on additional importance ... to restore confidence in" the area.

He sought no funds, only approval of the project, from the board Tuesday. He got it on a 10-0 vote. Board member James Muto remarked, "It's wonderful to see someone with so much interest in their neighborhood."

The residents had prepared a map and scale model of the new playground, which would cost up to \$100,000 if the city had to install it, Neubauer estimated. Instead, the Drake group will try to get lumber, tires and other materials free, and residents will assemble those into

swinging, sliding and climbing devices, and would erect a stage-like area at one end of the space.

The park is located north of Cottage Grove Avenue, between Twenty-third and Twenty-fourth streets. Two elementary schools — Elmwood and Grant — have been closed in the area, chasing younger families elsewhere, until very recently.

"Now that we find families starting to move back into the area," Neubauer said, "it's important for us to provide ... some type of really fine facility in lieu of schools."

The existing equipment "is older; it's taking up a lot of space," he said. "We think this is a lot safer and allows for more creative play."

Parks Director William Foley told the board there may be some \$6,600 in city money available to remove the old equipment and prepare the area for the new.

The board also Tuesday approved 10-0 a stainless steel sculpture by Christiane T. Martens of Champaign, Ill., to be placed in front of the Botanical Center. The inverted arcs — which some say resemble skeletal ribs — are intended as a memorial to Constance Belin, a civic leader who died in 1980, and will be paid for from

a gift by her brother.

And the board approved, also 10-0, a jazz show next Monday at Brian Melton Field from 6:30 p.m. until 8:30 p.m. A park board policy has prohibited such shows in parks because of fears about rowdiness, drug use and other problems.

But the board lately has begun to distinguish between rock 'n' roll shows — which it fears — and jazz and pop concerts. One such performance, by the show band Mudbone at Good Park July 3, caused no problems, Foley said.

The Melton concert will feature Rosemary Webster, C. Moore Gray and Dartanyan Brown. It is free.

The board also heard a report that the city's Saylorville Corridor project has been cut by more than one-half because federal officials rejected a proposed major sports complex along the Des Moines River and a foot path meandering along the bank.

Those \$3 million plans were cut to \$1.2 million, and now include improvements to roads, parking, boat facilities and restrooms at Prospect Park, and a bicycle trail from there north along the river bank to property near Euclid Avenue that will be dubbed J.C. White Park, after the company that owns some of the land.

THE DRAKE NEIGHBORHOOD

The neighborhood surrounding Drake University is rich in tradition and pride. It's roots date back almost 150 years to Chief Keokuk in the 1840's. As leader of the Sac and Fox tribes, Keokuk negotiated the treaty that allowed the federal government clear title to Central Iowa in 1845. It was the only Indian Treaty ever adopted by the U.S. Senate without amendment. Moreover, it provided the Indians a three year grace period before their required departure. It was during this grace period (1842-45) that Keokuk was said to have assembled tribal leaders for council meetings atop a plateau overlooking Fort Des Moines' two rivers below. The Plateau sits at 24th and Cottage Grove Avenue, the historic gateway to the Drake Neighborhood.

Forty years later Chancellor George Carpenter was attracted to the same area. In 1881 he decided to move his college from Oskaloosa to Des Moines. With the support of city and state business leaders, Carpenter and his colleagues founded Drake University and the surrounding neighborhood originally called University Place. The concurrent development of university and neighborhood was built on the premises of toleration, sensitivity and pursuit of knowledge. The area's post Victorian homes possessed an elegant simplicity and sturdiness still evident today. Influencing anchor points were The Disciples of Christ and the Presbyterians, both of whom built churches in 1889. The churches' toleration of life-style and absence of pretentiousness enables people of rich diversity to live peacefully side by side; such as, doctors and chiropractors, evangelists and traditionalists, carpenters and corporate presidents, and retirees and students.

Today there remains spiritual diversity and tolerance unmatched by any other community of similar size, as evidenced by the presence of almost 20 different religious groups and churches based in the Drake area neighborhood. Combined with the presence of a major Midwestern University and two small business districts, the churches provide the area with stable anchor points that have survived countless tests of change and time.

BACKGROUND OF THE DRAKE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

The Drake Neighborhood Association was formed in 1979 to address the area's accelerating deterioration. Around 1960 a variety of external forces began to chip away at the area's stability, composition and heritage. With the intrusion of an east-west freeway on its southern border and subsequent speculation of a north-south along its eastern border came gradual transition to substantial absentee-owned properties. Urban renewal displacement in neighborhoods to the east and south spurred further transiency, crime, and decline. Those who remained grew increasingly isolated, fearful, and frustrated. University and business leaders likewise lamented the area's aimless drifting. By 1978, the City's R. L. Polk studies cited the Drake area's southeastern quadrant as the most rapidly deteriorating neighborhood in the city.

The impetus for a broad-based neighborhood revitalization effort in 1979 came from Church Woman United and University officials. The resulting association was a volunteer self-help group committed to rekindle the ageless values of neighborhood spirit, respect, and beauty. Association organizers Gladys Burkhead and Larry Cunning turned to the area's anchor points for commitment to the budding association. Its initial directors represented the churches, businesses, homeowners, landlords, tenants, and University. It agreed upon a philosophy of patience, prudence, and consensus. It evolved a master blueprint of action and embarked on projects to achieve the goal of revitalization based in part on residential and commercial needs assessment surveys conducted in 1980 and 1981 (detailed in 1981 ICB Project Book). In less than four years the association turned a neighborhood considered by the city as one of the most deteriorating into one considered by the state as one of the most improving. The association proceeded to win 1st Place in the "neighborhood" division of the Iowa Community Betterment competition for 1981 and 1982. This recognition by the Iowa Development Commission was the result of the development and initial implementation of a revitalization

master plan designed to remake the Drake area into one of the city's finest neighborhoods by 1990. The association's master plan included the following points:

(1) GATEWAY BEAUTIFICATION: enhancing the landscape and appearance of the Cottage Grove entrance off the freeway.

(2) HISTORIC DISTRICT: research that would lead to efforts to establish a Cottage Grove Historic District on the National Register.

(3) UNIVERSITY SQUARE: taking catalytic steps, to bring about redevelopment and restoration of the business district adjacent to campus, with an international flair.

(4) NHS: recruiting Neighborhood Housing Services to relocate their housing rehab program into the Drake Neighborhood.

(5) TAX ABATEMENT AREA: securing tax incentives for the residential area north of campus that would eventually stimulate housing improvements there.

In 1983 the master plan was expanded to include rehabilitation of Elmwood School. The Association realized that it could not accomplish revitalization alone. But they could cultivate an environment for investment in revitalization by the private sector. In 1984 university trustees and Des Moines business leaders formed the Drake-Des Moines Development Corporation (DDM) to improve the area's physical appearance.

On August 2, 1985, Drake trustee, Kenneth Austin and Hawkeye Bank president Mike Earley (DDM co-chairperson) unveiled a nine month "Drake Neighborhood Study" and resulting "Revitalization Strategy." The DDM study was prepared by the Drake Research Institute in consultation with Bussard/Dikis architects and the Crose-Gardner Landscaping firm.

Based on an indepth analysis of the area's geographic, demographic and economic context and research to identify the area's "image and retail, commercial and housing market potential," the study developed a strategy for revitalization by "identifying priority projects and the activities needed to launch such initiatives." The strategy closely mirrored the Neighborhood Association's master plan developed five years earlier. The analysis included telephone surveys of

neighborhood residents and encounter group sessions with neighborhood leaders.

DDM REVITALIZATION STRATEGY

1. UNIVERSITY SQUARE REVITALIZATION: Redevelopment of the 4 square block business district east of campus to include a mix of commercial activities and professional offices. The report states that revitalization of this area will be the "principal catalyst" for redevelopment of the entire neighborhood. The finished business district is expected to resemble an international village.
2. REJUVENATION OF ENTRYWAY CORRIDOR/INTENSIVE HOUSING REHAB: Acceleration of efforts already underway to rehab or remove structures along the main corridors to the university. These corridors included 23rd, 24th and 25th to University Avenue from the Cottage Grove freeway exit. DDM intends to work on rehab here with Neighborhood Housing Services which had already targeted the corridors for attention (see Neighborhood News June 1985). The corridor theme expands on the association's "gateway" initiative that in 1980 began with tree landscaping at the Cottage Grove traffic islands.
3. ADAPTIVE REUSE OF ELMWOOD SCHOOL: Determine how best to restore Elmwood School for commercial or community use. The report urges a formal study to enable such a determination. Restoration of Elmwood School has been a priority of association officials for more than 3 years. The association already has a \$1000 foundation grant pledged to the university for its study.
4. DESIGNATION OF COTTAGE GROVE HISTORIC DISTRICT: Joint efforts by DDM, the university and the Association to persuade state and federal officials to place the Cottage Grove area on the National Register. The association's original application to the state started in 1980 will serve as the basis for the joint effort.
5. DEFINITION OF UNIVERSITY BOUNDARY AND COMMUNITY RESOURCES: Completion of the university's own new master plan that shows the public clearly its boundaries and development

plans. Concurrently, the resources offered by the university to the community would be more clearly described and aggressively marketed.

6. NORTHSIDE RESIDENTIAL REDEVELOPMENT: With the expected contraction of the university's north boundary, large tracts of university owned property may be made available for rehab and redevelopment. Working with private developers, the report suggests a "land banking" operation that protects the area's residential character. Ultimately, the Drake northside would make a smooth transition from university-owned rental to owner-occupied properties. The tax abatement designation for the northside secured by the association three years ago will aid this transition.
7. CONTROLLED DEVELOPMENT ON THE EAST: New developments in this area already announced include a new apartment complex adjacent to University Square. Others being considered include a nursing home or retirement village. Most of the land to be developed is already controlled by interests associated with DDM.
8. MONITOR CONDITIONS AND STUDY USE: As University Square redevelopment progresses, the report recommends monitoring conditions immediately northeast to Harding Road and studying improvements that could be made there as well.
9. ACTIVELY MONITOR WEST SIDE CONDITIONS: With the bulk of initial redevelopment focused north, east and south of campus, the report urges monitoring residential and retail conditions on the west side so that decline does not simply move from east to west.

The DDM strategy plan was a sensitive blend and careful targeting of restoration, rehabilitation and new development. It represented a bold initiative by Drake Trustees and Hawkeye Bank officials for neighborhood revitalization which treats the neighborhood's heritage with respect. It culminated a six year planning process for area wide revitalization initiated by the neighborhood association.

Implementation of the master plan was kicked off in 1986. The DDM corporation broke ground on \$10,000,000 worth

of new construction projects in the University Square business area. The projects include a federally funded law center, two new apartment projects and a new motel. Plans for a new office building have also been announced with groundbreaking scheduled for next year. The university has also undertaken restoration of a nearby commercial building worth \$200,000. The building will in part house area development planning and marketing activities.

Also, former association board member and current city councilman Ric Jorgenson is heading a task force assembling a pool of money for residential rehab in the area south of the new commercial projects.

The university and association have pooled money and hired a historic planner who is now working with state officials on the historic district application. Work on that is scheduled for completion before the year's end.

COMMITTEE AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE DRAKE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

The committees form the back bone of the association's longterm effort to revitalize the Drake area. The following list identifies the associations standing committees and their focus. The list reflects the broad-based nature and scope of the association's revitalization thrust:

EXECUTIVE: Oversees matters between monthly board meetings, sets agendas for monthly meetings, and helps to publish the monthly newsletter.

BEAUTIFICATION AND HOME IMPROVEMENT: Promotes home improvement projects and informs residents of area housing services available. Plans and executes area beautification projects like tree/flower plantings.

COMMUNICATION: Maintains monthly phone contact with all members regarding meetings, potlucks, special events, and neighborhood issues. Also calls each board member before the board meetings.

HISTORIC: Arrange for Historical tours, promotes historic

book and collects information to add to the area's heritage. Along with working on getting the Cottage Grove area on the historic register.

MEMBERSHIP: Maintains membership records and recruits new members.

SPECIAL EVENTS: Plans and executes: annual Fallfest which attracts up to 1,000 people for an afternoon of festivities, and the Halloween Party for the neighborhood children and Ice Cream Socials.

UNIVERSITY/ PUBLIC RELATIONS: Develop presentations and slide shows to use to promote the area, keep attune to press coverage and work with Drake University on joint projects.

The committee's work is sanctioned and overseen by the association's 15 member Board of Directors. This board is annually elected by the general membership, sets policies and approves projects based on goals established by the master plan, annual membership reviews, and community surveys.

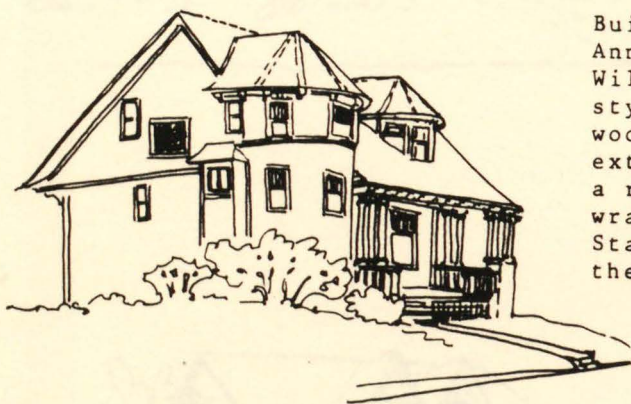
A SELF-GUIDED TOUR OF THE DRAKE NEIGHBORHOOD

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Forty years later George Carpenter and his colleagues founded Drake University and the surrounding neighborhood originally called University Place. The university and neighborhood were developed concurrently. The area's post Victorian homes possessed an elegant simplicity and sturdiness still evident today.

Although the houses are not open for public inspection, this self-guided driving or walking tour of the following historical homes provides a glimpse of the unique character and charm of the neighborhood. Some of the houses are noted for their architecture, others for their past occupants.

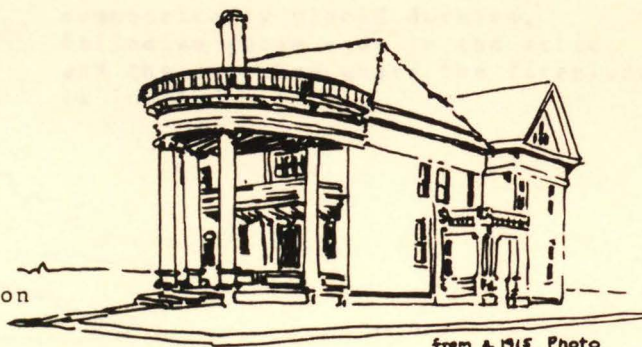
1045 - 22nd Street



Built in 1898 this stylish Queen Anne house was constructed for William Bell. The Queen Anne style incorporated highly ornamented woodwork, curved lines, bay windows extending two floors or having a rounded turret. A porch often wrapped around the front area. Stained and leaded glass highlighted the main windows.

1080 - 22nd Street

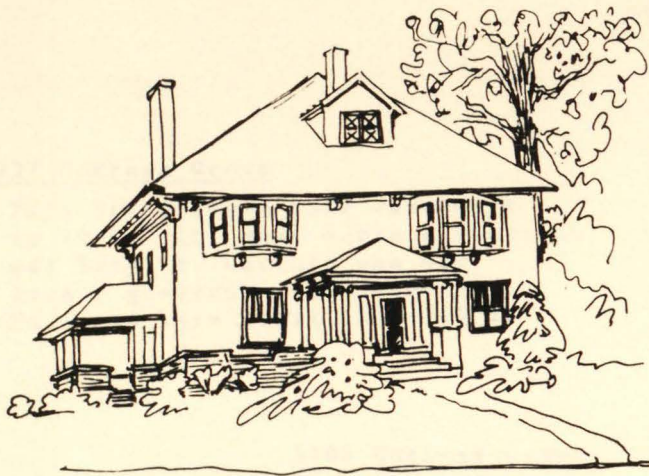
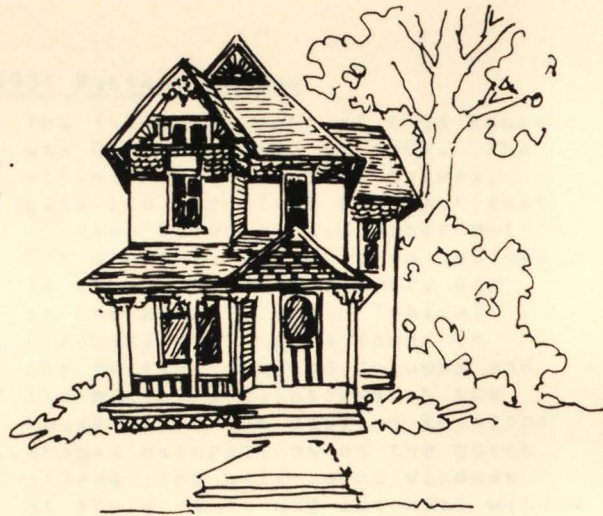
The Peak Mansion was built at the turn of the century. This neo-colonial style house has been designated a historic home on the National Register. Although in need of restoration now, it epitomized the grandeur of 22nd Street from days gone by. Its construction was a fitting conclusion to 20 years of development in the immediate area.



from a 1915 Photo

1022 - 26th Street

Built in 1889 by A. O. Reynolds.
Note the Eastlake architectural
style, fishscale gables, and
decorative porch trim.

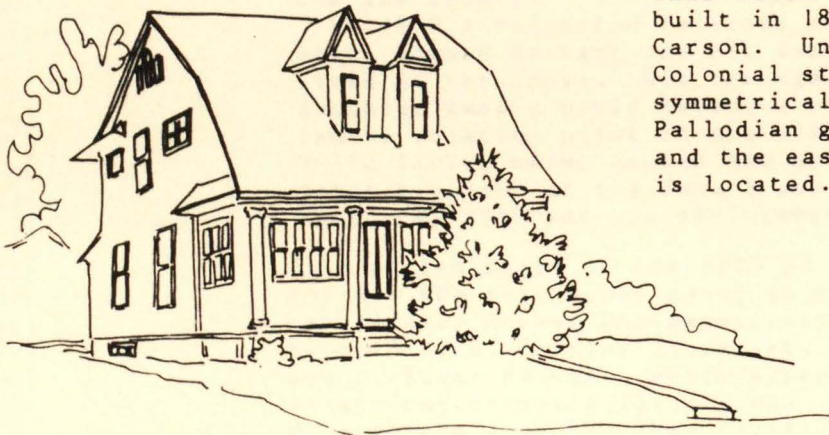


2912 Kingman Blvd.

Built in 1905 by William J.
Goodwin. Tudor style.

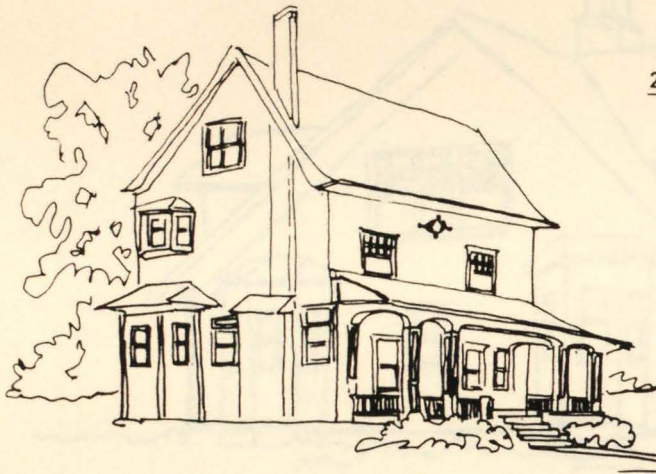
2920 Kingman Blvd.

Built in 1908, this Tudor style
first housed T. A. Dye. In the
1950's it was purchased by Cottage
Grove Presbyterian Church for
its manse. Today it is privately
owned.



2923 Rutland Avenue

This Dutch shingle house was
built in 1898 for Dr. Andros
Carson. Unusual to the Dutch
Colonial style are the double,
symmetrically placed dormers,
Palladian gable ends in the attic,
and the east bay where the fireplace
is located.



2934 Rutland Avenue

The first resident of this house was C. A. Weaver, in 1904. The style, free Colonial revival, gets its name from the fact that it uses Colonial and other motifs. For example, a Victorian influence is shown in the two-story bay on the east facade. Typical Colonial styling is found in the paired, paneled columns and the matching pilasters at the house wall, the applied keystone shaped decorations on the porch frieze, the half-round windows at the dormer, and the oval window centered on the upper front facade.

2937 Cottage Grove

This Stick style home was built in 1908. Its most notable occupant was Beryl F. Carroll who was Iowa's governor from 1908-1912. He lived here until the 1940's.

2940 Cottage Grove

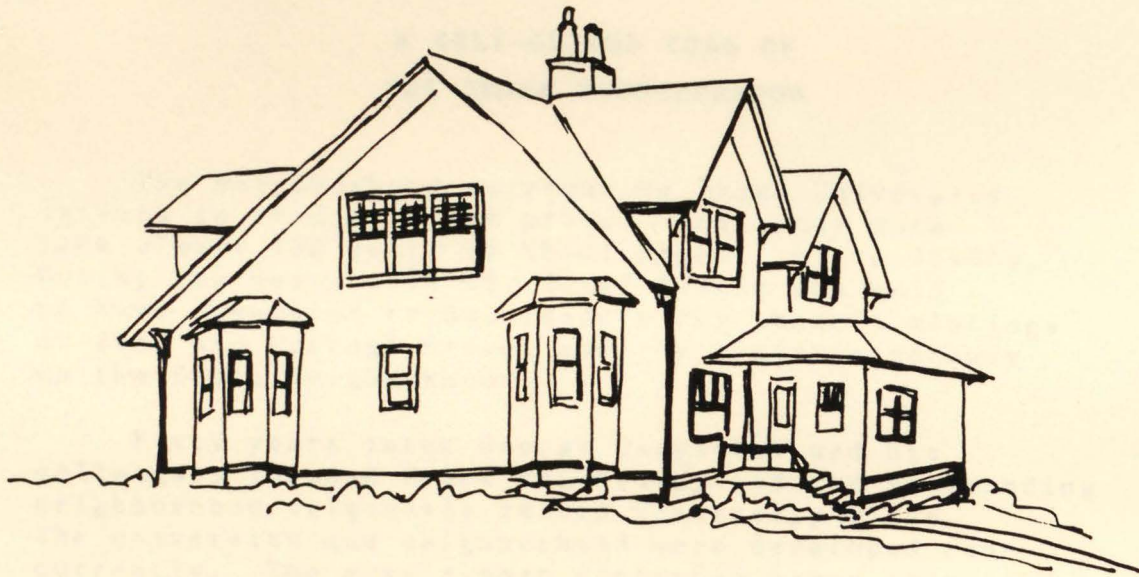
This once grand Victorian house is being lovingly restored by the present owner. This effort is one of many undertaken in the Drake area with the help of Neighborhood Housing Services.

3104 Cottage Grove

Built in 1900, this altered American Foursquare house was owned by Levi J. Wells. Two of every five homes in the area are Foursquare. Its shape is square and boxlike with an unadorned exterior relying on shape and proportion for its impact. A porch usually extended across the entire front. Its symmetry was its beauty.

By 1910 a respected railroad executive Edward Earhart and his family lived in the house. His teenage daughter Amelia would become a world famous aviation pilot in the 1920's. While living here, Amelia saw her first airplane at the Iowa State Fair. By 1930 she was christened

"one of ten heros of the 1920's" and was the only woman among such notables as Ernest Hemingway, Admiral Richard Byrd, Charles Lindbergh, and J. Edgar Hoover. While attempting an around-the-world flight, she disappeared over the vast Pacific Ocean fifty years ago, in 1937.



2805 Brattleboro Avenue

This house was built in 1900 by prominent architect Frank Wetherell. In the 1950's it became the home of Drake professor Ruby Holton who was credited with building an "excellent" women's athletic program. She was a member of the Des Moines City Council. She is fondly remembered by her colleagues as a "woman of profound courage". Today the house is owned by Drake Univeristy.

At Cottage Grove on 26th Street notice the recently restored brick side walks, a project undertaken in several areas by the Drake Neighborhood Association's Historic Committee.

These are just a few of the significant houses in this area. They are very much a part of the history of Drake University and the neighborhood.

Illustrations by Peggy Jester.

Text* prepared by Ruth Trumbo, Drake Neighborhood Association
Historic Committee

*Reference to From Keokuk on: The History of the Cottage Grove Area.

The Drake Neighborhood Association
Des Moines, Iowa

INTRODUCTION

1981
Iowa Community Betterment
by
The Drake Neighborhood Association

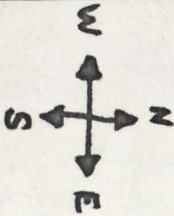
on her morning TV show. The results from the two approaches demonstrated an important lesson about organizing to Association members. In response to the door-to-door campaign, more than 100 volunteers helped collect a half ton of litter from the 20 sample blocks plus a few adjacent blocks. In response to the media campaign, no one showed up at the designated spot.

The need for clean streets and yards continued to be emphasized informally in both written and verbal communications during the rest of 1980. By spring 1981 there was no longer a pressing need for a formal litter pick-up campaign. Association members were asked at potlucks, by telephone and by mail to clean their blocks the first week in April. Groups of children from the New Life Center and Boy Scouts assisted as well. Garbage bags left over from the previous year were distributed at the winter potlucks. The appearance of the neighborhood today is a testament to the fruits of our labors.

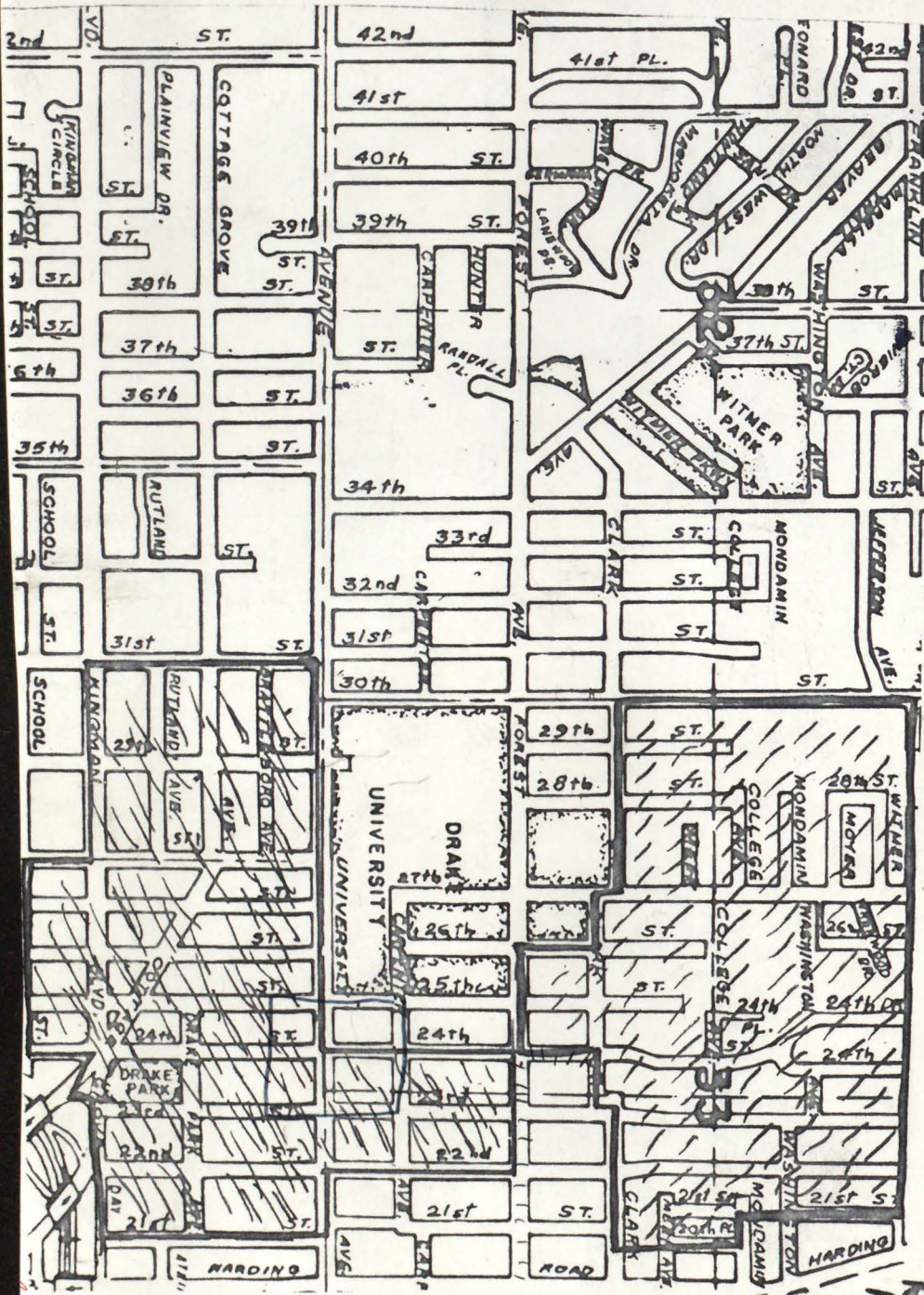
* COMMUNICATION *

Until summer 1980 all direct communications with area residents were conducted by telephone. A formal calling committee chaired by board member Gladys Burkhead had been established as an outgrowth from the original Church Women United calling group. Before each potluck, members would be called and reminded of the event's time and place. Association progress would be shared then as well. Members were encouraged to bring a neighbor.

In response to member request, the board authorized Association member Robert Furstenau (an editor for Meredith Publishing) to begin a bi-monthly newsletter called "Neighborhood News". It complemented efforts of the calling committee to inform members and increase awareness of the Association's endeavors. By the summer of 1981 the newsletter had become a monthly publication reaching 400 area households. The calling committee had grown to twenty with each responsible for twenty households. In less than two years the Association had established regular contact with more than 15% of the neighborhood's households. A set of "Neighborhood News" is included as Exhibit B.



DRAKE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION



Shaded Area: Proposed
University
Place
Revitalization
Area

Proposed
University
Place
Historic
Neighborhood

* HERITAGE *

The neighborhood surrounding Drake University has historically been rich in tradition, toleration and pride. Most of this 200 square block area was built 75 to 100 years ago. Its homes possessed an elegant simplicity and sturdiness still evident today. Its population blended old and young who until recently took care of and learned from each other. Its tolerance of life-style and absence of pretentiousness allowed doctors and chiropractors, evangelists and traditionalists, carpenters and corporate presidents, and retirees and students to live peacefully side by side.

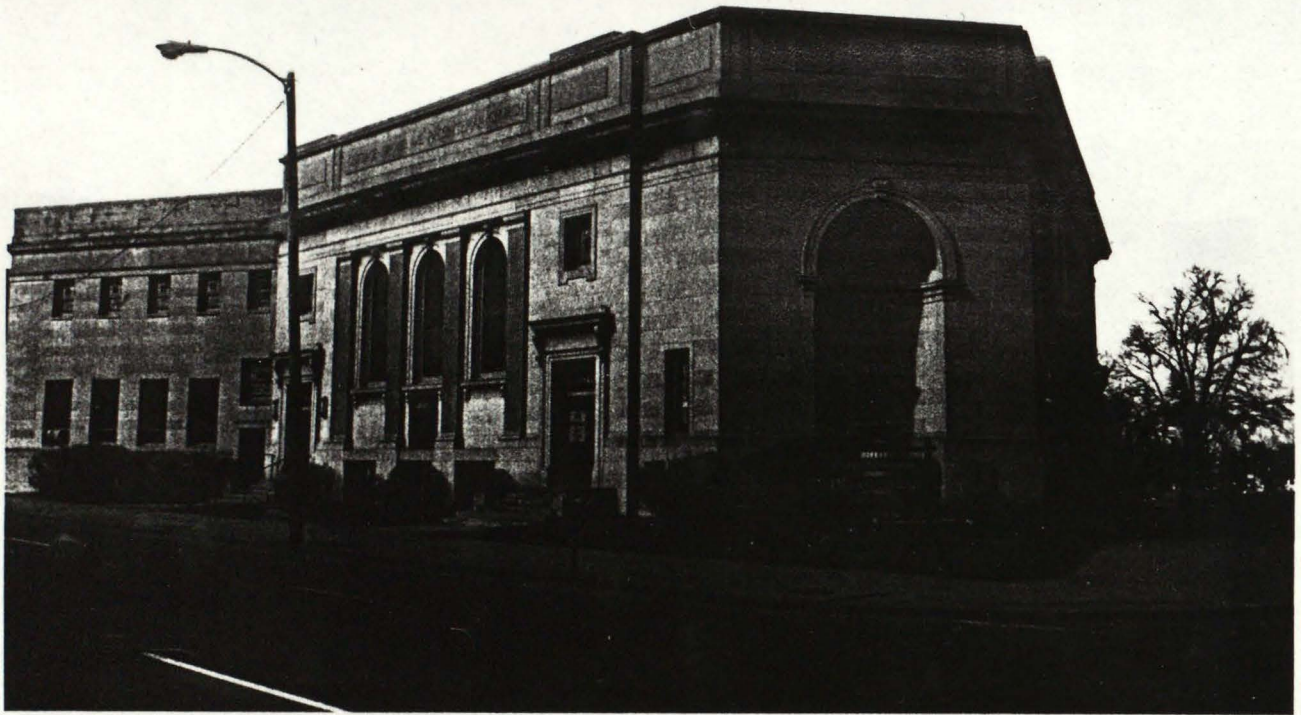
The development of the neighborhood called University Place began 100 years ago concurrent with that of the university. It was built on a plateau overlooking downtown Des Moines to its southeast. Because the university was originally affiliated with the Disciples of Christ, many of its first settlers were Disciples. They built the University Christian Church in 1889 at 25th and University Avenue. The Disciples' principles of simplicity, patience and pursuit of knowledge became etched forever in the heritage of University Place. Soon after, Presbyterians settled the neighborhood interspersed among the Disciples. They too built a church in 1889 at 24th and Cottage Grove. The Presbyterians likewise practiced toleration and pursuit of the common good. The patterns first set by these two anchor points, have prevailed over the years.

Today there remains a spiritual diversity and tolerance in the University Place neighborhood unmatched by any other neighborhood or community of similar size (population 5000), as evidenced by its more than 17 religious groups including the First Christian Church, Cottage Grove Presbyterian Church, Greek Orthodox Church, Redeemer Lutheran Church, Trinity Lutheran Church, Iowa Synod-Lutheran Church, St. John's Catholic Church, Grace Methodist Church, Crestwood Baptist Church, Disciples of Christ in the Upper Midwest, New Life Center, Drake Newman Community, Cross Ministries, St. Luke's Episcopal Church, First Free Methodist Church, Heavenly Temple Church of God in Christ, and Macedonia Baptist Church.

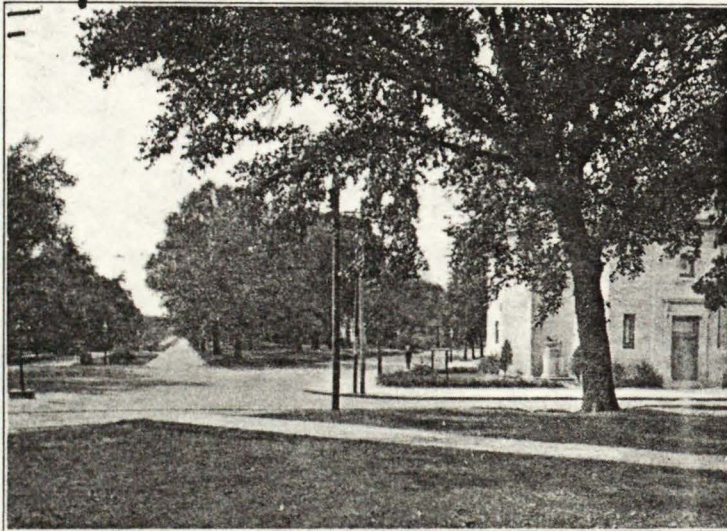


FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH

COTTAGE GROVE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



UNIVERSITY PLACE GATEWAY



Kingman Boulevard

CARPENTER SQUARE

Page thirty-three

From 1919 City Parks' Board Report

Around 1960 external forces began to chip away at the neighborhood's heritage, stability and composition. Deterioration started with the Freeway's construction in the early 60's. The neighborhood's original gateway at 24th and Cottage Grove and its accompanying park Carpenter Square (shown on page 3) were stripped and dissected into barren traffic islands. At this point the area east and south of Drake began the gradual conversion from owner-occupied to absentee-owned rental units. This conversion accelerated in the early 70's due primarily to plans to turn Harding Road into a north-south Freeway and urban renewal displacement in neighborhoods to the east and south of the University Place area. Crime rose, stability broke down and homes deteriorated. By 1978 the R.L. Polk studies concluded that the area between 19th and 31st, University and the Freeway was the most rapidly deteriorating neighborhood in the city. During this time those who had stayed watched with worry the spread of isolation, fear and blight.

* ASSOCIATION FORMED *

By 1979 people began to say "enough is enough". The impetus for a broad-based neighborhood revitalization effort came from Church Women United. Neighborhood organizer and elder stateswoman Gladys Burkhead along with Drake's physical plant director Larry Cunning arranged the area's first neighborhood meeting. Fifty people braved 100° heat on a steamy Sunday afternoon July 1979 to talk about neighborhood concerns. They had been among more than 100 persons contacted by a calling committee of Church Women United. The central issue was how to begin addressing the area's deterioration. After two hours the group by consensus elected to organize a self-help neighborhood effort. Thus the Drake Neighborhood Association was born to rekindle the ageless values of neighborhood spirit, respect, beauty and self-sufficiency.

At the group's urging, Mr. Cunning and Ms. Burkhead set out to find other neighborhood leaders who might help build the Association. Their goal was to enlist those from all anchor points in the neighborhood. Within two months they had prevailed upon ten others to serve as initial directors of the budding association. Those ten included the area's bank president, three pastors, a homeowner/attorney, a large landlord, two renters and two businessmen. A second neighborhood meeting of 50 residents approved the slate and goals set forth for establishing a non-profit corporation. Those included to:

- * Further the interests and well being of the neighborhood surrounding Drake University;
- * Recreate neighborhood identity and spirit;
- * Assist area residents in their legitimate pursuits and concerns; and
- * Assist in related areas of community service.

A copy of the Articles of Incorporation is included in this project book as Exhibit A.

As 1980 began, the Association turned its attention to determination of needs and strategies to achieve the goals. The Board identified two immediate needs: to clean-up the neighborhood and to help residents get to know each other once again. In doing so, it hoped to increase people's awareness of the Association's revitalization effort.

* POTLUCKS *

The first neighborhood "pottluck" was held January 1980 at the Greek Orthodox Church. The pottluck concept was intended to bring area residents together in a social setting. It enabled people to meet their neighbors, share concerns and ideas, and offer suggestions to board members.

The first pottluck was well received and attended. The board decided to continue sponsoring a pottluck at least once every two months. Other churches were soon volunteering their facilities for the bimonthly affair.

Each potluck included a short membership meeting and project progress reports followed by a half hour program on topics of neighborhood interest. Programs, for example, have included crime prevention, litter clean-up campaigns, self-help forums, landlord-tenant solutions and area heritage. Interest in the potlucks increasingly grew. By spring 1981 there was resident demand for monthly potlucks. Variations were added. One potluck was modeled after an old-fashioned box social. White elephant sales became a potluck mainstay to encourage recycling among residents. By summer 1981 the potluck approach had grown so successful that July's ice cream social drew more than 250 persons. They have clearly helped to renew a sense of neighborhood spirit and identity.

* LITTER CLEAN-UP *

Litter in streets and yards was a glaring problem before the Association was formed. It was a visible sign of indifference and frustration. An organized clean-up was planned for the spring of 1980. A Drake graduate student helped organize the formal clean-up campaign as part of his masters thesis, which studied the effect of volunteer efforts to clean litter from residential blocks. Two approaches were tested.

One involved a person-to-person approach whereby volunteering block leaders solicited from 20 sample blocks (10% of those within the Drake Association area) knocked on the doors of those living on their block. They asked each person to help clean their own block on the designated day (April 12). Volunteers were supplied garbage bags financed by Home Plastics Company and the university. The second approach tested the effectiveness of media public service appeals. Volunteers were asked to come to a designated spot on April 12. Local radio, television and newspapers helped publicize the April 12 clean-up. The day before Mary Brubaker interviewed the Drake student

70 attend meeting for Drake area

By Helen Randall

About 70 Drake University area residents, businessmen and university officials gathered Thursday night at the Greek Orthodox Church, Thirty-fifth Street and Cottage Grove Avenue, for a potluck and to show support for a Drake neighborhood organization.

Gladys Burkhead, a resident of the area and member of the communications committee of the newly formed Drake Neighborhood Association, said the turnout was the best so far for the group.

She said more than 44 memberships were sold at the meeting. Membership charges are \$1 for singles and \$2 for families.

The organization was formed to improve the area bound by Harding Road on the east, Forty-second Street on the west, Franklin Avenue on the north and Kingman Boulevard on the south.

Burkhead said discussion at the meeting included topics of safety in the area and appearance of properties.

She said board members besides herself are Willis Cunning, president, an area resident and director of Drake's physical plant; Gene Hiskey, area property owner; John Neubauer, area businessman; the Rev. James Ryan, pastor at First Christian Church; Rod Rhoads, area businessman; the Rev. Wayne Shoemaker, pastor at Grace Methodist Church; Larry Wenzl, president of First Federal State Bank; Nelda Wells, resident; Georgia Bolton, resident; Preston Daniels, area businessman; the Rev. George Pallas, pastor at the Greek Orthodox Church; Ginger Kuhl, resident, and Pauline Morrison, resident.

31 Jan 80

Oes Moines Tribune.

* FALLFEST *

One of the many ideas to emerge from member suggestions was that of an annual celebration that would further build neighborhood spirit and identity. The Association decided in 1980 to sponsor a FallFest event. A special events committee was formed. More than twenty five area residents planned the first Festival originally called Oktoberfest. The October 11 event featured a variety of food, drink, entertainment, games, arts and crafts for the whole family. The City granted permission to close down 25th Street across from Drake's campus. About 300 people turned out despite chilly weather for what most agreed was a good first attempt.

Immediately afterwards, the special events committee evaluated its effort and solicited feedback from Association members. The committee concluded that Drake Park (a 5 acre park off 24th and Cottage Grove) would provide a better setting for the annual event. The name was changed to FallFest and the time changed to correspond with the opening of autumn. The 1981 FallFest is in the final stages of preparation. Its occurrence contributes significantly to increased neighborhood pride and spirit.

* REHABILITATION PLANNING *

The self-help concept has been firmly imbedded in the Association's philosophy since its inception. The board of directors has parlayed this philosophy to policy by seeking incentives (rather than grants) from the public and private sectors which would encourage property owners to invest time and energy in the rehabilitation of their structures. The procurement of such incentives has proceeded at a painstakingly slow pace.

After extensive meetings during the summer of 1980 with City Council members, City officials and business leaders, the Association board settled on three long-term strategies to improve the area's aging structures. The first was to seek designation of the neighborhood's northeast quadrant as a tax abatement area under the state's new Urban Revitalization law. Using two VISTAs loaned the Association by Cross Ministries, a

Neighborhoods plan for Preservation Week

You can see repaired homes on the near north side, decorate a new senior center, watch a performance of the Iowa Scottish Heritage Pipes and Drums, or picnic on the lawn at Hoyt Sherman Place.

These are a few of the activities planned by a coalition of Des Moines neighborhoods to celebrate Preservation Week, May 10-16.

The neighborhood volunteers have decided to observe this year's national theme "Conservation: Keeping America's Neighborhoods Together" by organizing a week-long series of events in each community.

The schedule:

Monday, May 11 — Councilman George Nahas, standing in for Mayor Pete Crivaro, who will be out of town, will proclaim Preservation Week in Des Moines at 10:30 a.m. at City Hall.

Tuesday, May 12 — A 3 p.m. public tour of the Irving Harrison area featuring homes repaired during the past year by residents working together. The tour begins at Harrison Avenue and Sixteenth Street.

Wednesday, May 13 — A 10 a.m. coffee and decorating ceremony at the CCI/Fairgrounds Community Council's new Senior Center Congregate Meal Site, in the Wilson Adult

and Community Education Center, E. Twenty-fourth Street and University Avenue.

Thursday, May 14 — Planting of flower beds at 2 p.m. in Drake Park by the Drake Neighborhood Association to beautify the area for the annual fall Octoberfest celebration. The planting will take place at the southwest entrance to the park at Twenty-fourth Street and Cottage Grove Avenue.

Saturday, May 16 — Sidewalk planters to be constructed at 10 a.m. by the Park Area Association in the Highland Park business district along Euclid between Second and Sixth avenues as part of the business revitalization effort.

Also Saturday, from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m., the Owls Head Association will have a neighborhood celebration featuring the Iowa Scottish Heritage Pipes and Drums and a parade on Forest Drive and Ridge Road between Twenty-eighth and Twenty-ninth streets.

And on Saturday, from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., the Sherman Hill Association will sponsor a picnic at Hoyt Sherman Place. The Woodland-Willkie foot patrol will be honored for its efforts to prevent crime.

anonymity donated \$200 toward "public tree planting".

The Association and the Strawberry Patch agreed to set aside the money for future tree plantings. The feasibility of planting flowering trees on the Kingman Blvd. islands is already being studied as a project for next spring.

Neighborhood beautification is an ongoing process. The Association, for example, now has plant sales at most potlucks. The central focus of Fall Fest 1981 is a garden bulb sale featuring a special overseas supply. A neighborhood garden club is scheduled to be formed later this fall. Plans for more gateway beautification efforts continue. The

Association offered the State Drake Park as an alternative site for the controversial Capitol Fountain scheduled to be replaced this fall. Restoration of the historic fountain as a flowerbed overlooking Carpenter Square would further activities undertaken this year. The State may accept the Association's offer by next spring. The letter to the State is included as Exhibit E.



"structural condition survey" was conducted on the area's 200 blocks. Relying on data from the City's Planning Department, the area most needing and eligible for tax abatement was determined. According to City records, 49% of all residential structures city-wide were reported to be in very good condition, 47% good to fair and 4% deteriorating or dilapidated. By contrast, only 13% of the structures in the Association's proposed tax abatement area were considered in very good condition, 72% fair to good and 15% deteriorating or dilapidated. Based on the research findings, the Association formally asked the City Council in September 1980 for the tax abatement designation. The southeast quadrant of the neighborhood had already been granted that status by the Council as a part of an adjacent neighborhood's revitalization petition. If the Council approves the Association's request, the eastern half of the University Place area most in need of rehabilitation would have the incentive of residential tax abatement. The Association's letter to the Council is attached as Exhibit C.

Since submitting the request for tax abatement designation, bureaucratic red tape within City agencies has thus far prevented the Council's expected approval. City agencies plan to complete their review later this fall. When in place, the designation will allow property owners up to 10 years to have forgiven any tax increases resulting from rehab improvements.

The second strategy has been to seek designation of the area south and east of the university as a historic district on the National Register of Historic Places. The 40 square block area between 21st and 31st / Brattleboro and Kingman - School has long been considered one of the few remaining neighborhoods in the city that has retained the homogeneous character of architecture possessed when built 80-100 years ago. The Association board concluded that if this area qualified for historic designation, then property owners might be more inclined to restore homes to their original styles. As one of the three projects submitted for judging, the historic research effort will be described in more detail later.

The third strategy has been to seek designation of the most deteriorated section as "a neighborhood housing service" area. A Congressionally funded non profit group called Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation was founded in the 70's to bring

public and private resources to bear on "deteriorating" (instead of "deteriorated") inner city communities. The Reinvestment Corporation helps form triangular partnerships among target neighborhoods, lending institutions and local governments. It decided a year ago to establish a second target area in Des Moines. The first was started four years ago on the city's near northeast side.

The Association has been working cooperatively with four other neighborhood groups to its south and east to attain this target designation. The expected target area will straddle the east-west Freeway and what was to have been the north-south Freeway (Handing Road). In doing so it will help reunify again an area dissected by external forces. More importantly, it will make available below market interest capital for rehabilitation in an area that less than three years ago was a "red-lined" district. The program is expected to be operational next year.

* SUMMARY *

As 1980 ended the Association could point with pride to cleaner streets and yards. The downward spiral of deterioration had bottomed. A sense of neighborhood was returning. Long term strategies for structural rehabilitation were in place.

The 1981 priorities set by the Board with advice and counsel of the membership have become the basis for the three projects submitted for consideration in the Iowa Community Betterment program. Those include:

- 1- Gateway beautification;
- 2- Research on potential historic district; and
- 3- Formal needs assessments of residential and business attitudes.

Things are looking up for Drake area

By Jane Norman

A year ago Gladys Burkhead, 74, of 1107 Twenty-seventh St. walked through her neighborhood and saw unkempt houses with peeling paint, overgrown lawns littered with trash and homes peopled by unfamiliar faces.

Now, Burkhead says, "I have neighbors. I can walk down the street and see people I know.... I can see pride in our neighborhood."

The pride has been fostered by the work of the Drake Neighborhood Association, a community group founded in November 1979 to combat the slow but steady decline of the once-stately Drake University area.

The association defines the boundaries of the area as Harding Road on the east, Forty-second Street on the west, Franklin Avenue on the north and Kingman Boulevard on the south.

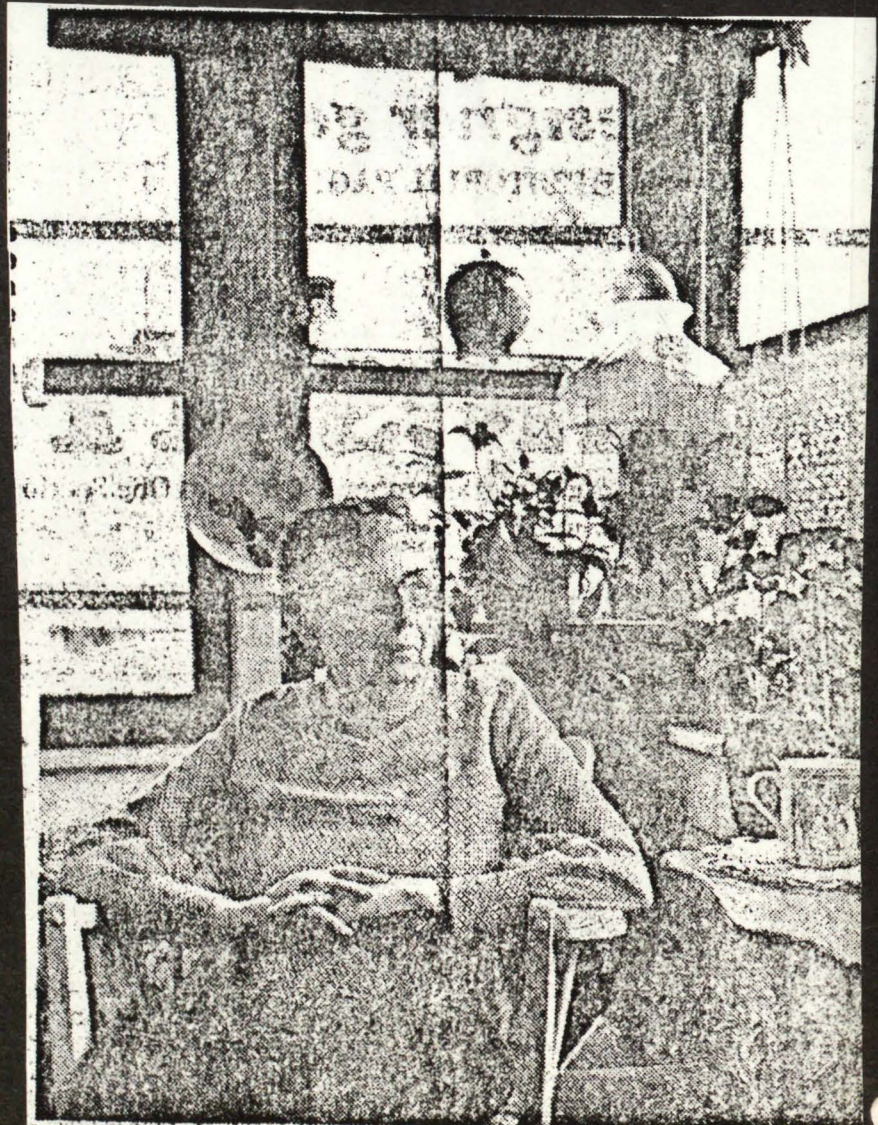
In 1979 the group said it intended to fight the neighborhood's unkempt appearance, a lack of communication among neighbors and problems with security.

The association's members are the first to admit that the battle hasn't been won yet, but they are pleased about the influence they have had in uniting residents.

They're also far from short on plans, including an attempt to place portions of the area on the National Historic Register.

"The self-pride around here is up about 120 percent," says Willis Cuning, president of the association and director of Drake University's physical plant.

"There has been a noticeable



TRIBUNE PHOTO BY BOB NANDELL

Gladys Burkhead of 1107 Twenty-seventh St. is a real booster of the Drake Neighborhood Association, a community group founded in November 1979 to combat the decline of the once-stately Drake area. Where once she saw only houses with peeling paint and trash-littered streets, now, says Burkhead, "I can see pride in our neighborhood."

The University Place community was born 100 years ago on a countryside plateau overlooking Des Moines. Due to its relative isolation from the city proper, it soon grew to be self sufficient. Its principal link to the city was Cottage Grove Avenue. In the early 1880's horse-drawn street car service came only as far as 19th and Woodland. When service was extended to University Place later in the decade, Cottage Grove became the main trunk line with the first stop at 24th. The "point" corner of 24th, Cottage Grove and Kingman Blvd. soon became recognized as the "gateway" to University Place according to noted historian Dr. Charles Ritchey. Even before becoming the area's gateway, Ritchey in his book Drake University Through 75 Years found that the 24th and Cottage Grove point had been a regional gathering spot for Indian council meetings. Indians would assemble under a huge "council tree" at the corner overlooking the two rivers valley below.

By the century's end the gateway was a showpiece and source of neighborhood pride. Drake founder and chancellor George Carpenter had built an elegant home along the gateway at 24th and Kingman. General Francis Drake had set aside five acres across from Carpenter's home for use as a park (later named Drake Park). The Cottage Grove Presbyterian Church had been built at the gateway's northwest point thanks in large part to "farmer" Albert Kingman (for whom Kingman Blvd. was named). After Chancellor Carpenter's death, a land company called the Carpenter Square Land and Park Company was formed. In 1898 it took possession of a small triangular plot bound by the gateway corner and 25th Street. They named the triangular park Carpenter Square as a memorial to Carpenter. They then conveyed title of the Square to the City on the condition that it remain a park. (The gateway and Carpenter Square are shown in a 1919 photo on page 3.)

As pointed out in the Introduction, deterioration of University Place began at the gateway. As a part of the Freeway construction around 1960, public planners insisted that Cottage Grove be widened to accommodate increased traffic flow exiting the Freeway. To accomplish that the Carpenter Square Park was converted into four barren traffic islands and Carpenter's house razed. An anchor point and symbol of pride was erased. The gateway razing stimulated a gradual change in public perception of University Place. It became merely a place for many to pass thru instead of a stately place to live.

When the Association began to plan its beautification strategies, the gateway seemed an obvious starting point. The prevailing feeling was that if deterioration started there, restoration should begin there. The Association's Special Events Committee, for example, felt improvements to the Drake Park-gateway area were essential for attracting successful Fallfest turn-outs there annually. Rebuilding pride and spirit was indelibly linked to restoration of anchor points like the gateway.

Another neighborhood non-profit group, the Strawberry Patch, proposed a gateway beautification plan that included reforestation of Carpenter Square and flower bed plantings at the entrance to Drake Park. The Strawberry Patch had been formed by five area residents in 1979 to convert idle pieces of public property to productive use. In conjunction with the Special Events Committee and in consultation with the Association board, Strawberry Patch officials designed a reforestation scheme to plant 150 walnut and chestnut seedlings. A proposal was submitted to City officials in February seeking permission to restore the traffic islands to mini-parks. The letter to the City Council is attached as Exhibit D. The Strawberry Patch agreed to sponsor, finance and care for the trees after their planting. Association members volunteered to plant them.

Initial public reaction to the reforestation project was very favorable. The Mayor and City Council praised the proposal to undertake the project with the neighborhood's own ingenuity and resources. Other City officials had to scrutinize every minute detail of the proposal before passing judgment.

The month of March was devoted to consultations with officials from the State Department of Transportation, the City Department of Traffic and Transportation, the City Parks Department, the City Planning and Zoning Department and the City Manager's office — all of whom claimed some jurisdiction over beautification plans concerning these four small traffic islands. The State DOT and City Parks first had to decide who would be responsible for mowing the grass around the trees and if

Editorial - Tribune 16 Feb 81

Beautiful idea

Let's hear it for The Strawberry Patch Holding Company and Buying Concern, five Cottage Grove area neighbors who incorporated and are asking the city to give them responsibility for beautifying neighborhood traffic islands. The islands are formed by the intersections of Cottage Grove Avenue with Kingman Boulevard and Twenty-fourth Street. The Strawberry Patchers want to plant trees and flowers, and to water, fertilize and nurse them to beauty.

There are several such barren islands in Des Moines that could become mini-mini-forests without blocking the vision of motorists — wasted real estate that the TLC of concerned neighbors could convert to garden spots.

Others should take note of the Strawberry Patchers' zeal, go forth and do likewise.

Article - Tribune 13 Feb 81

Group hopes to plant trees on traffic way

By Celeste Hadrick

To some, the traffic islands that separate the crossings of Cottage Grove Avenue with Kingman Boulevard and Twenty-fourth Street are just that — islands of land that help control traffic.

To a group of local environmentalists, however, the islands are potential mini-meadows and city forests.

The Strawberry Patch Holding Company and Buying Concern, a group of five Cottage Grove area residents who incorporated more than a year ago, is asking for the City Council's blessings to plant trees and flowers on the grassy traffic dividers.

A grove of trees once stood on the triangle called "Carpenter Square," where the three streets meet, explained the group's secretary, John Neubauer, in a letter to the council. And Strawberry Patch wants to restore the grove, assuming full responsibility for the planting, fertilizing and care of the trees, which would be purchased through private donations.

The point, Neubauer said in an interview Friday, "is to take a barren piece of land that is not productive and turn it into a productive piece of property."

The trees will serve as a winter windbreak, a source of summer shade and an asset to the neighborhood, he said.

He said the group was talking with city traffic and transportation director James Thompson to be certain that traffic vision "will not be impeded in any way."

Neubauer's group last year asked the council for permission to use the old city dump for the site of an energy-producing plant fueled by trash, garbage, human waste and sludge, but has not received the federal grant requested for that.

Two years ago, his group petitioned the council to rename Cottage Grove Avenue Cottage Cheese Avenue.

"One of our unstated purposes then was to draw attention to the disappearance of trees along the avenue," Neubauer said in his current letter.

either really wanted the extra burden. City Parks decided they were and they would. Next City Traffic had to consider if the trees would jeopardize traffic safety.

The Strawberry Patch proposal had called for planting the trees close enough to create a canopy effect - growing up instead of out. City Traffic decided no major traffic problems would occur from that approach. The City Forester then assessed the types of trees to be planted. He agreed that their root systems should pose no great danger to sewer lines or streets. He also assessed the feasibility of planting the trees within 15 feet of each other, and concluded it would work. He pointed out to City Parks and State DOT that after 15 to 20 years, the trees would squeeze out the grass leaving no grass to mow. The City Manager then considered all his departments' findings and tentatively concluded the reforestation project could proceed. Final judgment was withheld though until each potential planting site had first been staked.

In April 150 seedlings were ordered from Cascade Nursery in northeast Iowa. The nursery agreed to sell the trees at cost and contributed the shipping costs. The \$200 tree cost came from Church Women United gave \$100 from coins

Plan for trees takes root

By TOM MAPP

Register Staff Writer

The dream of a group of Drake Park residents to see trees growing from neighborhood traffic islands is nearing reality and may come to fruition early next month.

John Neubauer, secretary of the Strawberry Patch Holding Company and Buying Concern, said 150 black walnut, American chestnut and a few Douglas firs will be planted on the islands at the intersection of Cottage Grove, Kingman Boulevard, and Twenty-fourth Street.

The Strawberry Patch received tentative approval from the City Council, pending necessary approval from the state and city officials.

The only hitch remaining is final Park and Recreation Department approval of the location of the trees. Neubauer said stakes will be set to show how they will be arranged.

A grove of trees once stood on the triangle called "Carpenter Square" where the three streets meet, Neubauer said in a letter to the council. Strawberry Patch would accept full responsibility for planting, fertilizing and caring for the trees, the letter said.

"Our intention is to plant the trees close together so that they grow straight up and create a canopy effect," Neubauer explained. "There are no branches down low."

The trees will cost about \$200 which will be raised through private donations, Neubauer said.

collected over five years in donation cans placed in neighborhood businesses. The other \$100 was given by a family who lived and owned property around the Carpenter Square islands.

Saturday May 2 was selected as tree planting day. The Association helped with a publicity campaign during April. The calling committee contacted members on the mailing list. The newsletter called for shovels, shovellers and planters. The monthly potluck included it in the program. Businesses along Cottage Grove displayed "planting best" posters. Some churches made pronouncements from the pulpit. By May 2 neighborhood anticipation was high.

The islands were staked a week prior to planting. A delegation of City officials then made their final inspection. City Parks said the stakes were far enough apart for mowers to pass. The City Forester liked the "tree farm" style of spacing. City Planning felt there were no great conflicts with "overall city landscaping philosophies". City Traffic insisted on a few minor adjustments easily made without compromise to the overall design. The City Manager accepted an invitation to plant the first tree.

May 2 - Carpenter Square Re-forestation Day. By noon 10 shovels, 2 wheelbarrows, 20 planters, 150 trees, a 1200 gallon water truck, 10 buckets, 2 TV stations and the City Manager had arrived. Four hours later more than 40 persons had planted and watered all 150 seedlings. Gateway beautification had officially begun.

After two weeks of intense watering the seedlings were left to fend for themselves. By mid June more than 90% had budded. Each was encased with a bed of woodchips. Thanks to the City Forester, City Parks had donated a 10 ton truckload of woodchips for mulching. Since then bountiful rains and considerate mowers have helped the trees become sturdy and strong.

Gateway beautification then turned to flowers. The Special Events Committee was granted permission by City Parks to plant and maintain flowerbeds at Drake Park's gateway entrance. It was mutually agreed to limit the beds the first year to see if park-goers would respect them. Drake Park had in previous years become notorious for rowdiness and vandalism.

The flower planting was planned for May 14 as part of national observance of Preservation Week 1981. The Association had been

As described in the "Introduction", the Association last year established three long term strategies to address the need of home rehabilitations. One strategy was to encourage original restoration of a 40 square block area south and east of the university. City officials and local historians had often pointed out to the Association that this was one of the few remaining sections of the city still retaining its original styles and periods of architecture. Preservation, the Association reasoned, was worth pursuing in this area surrounding the gateway.

The Association board considered what "incentive" might best encourage property owners to preserve and restore. They concluded that pride of ownership in a nationally recognized historic district might offer the most encouragement. Pride in a home's antique value, it was hoped, would translate into greater sensitivity to the "preserve and restore" strategy. Too frequently in the past twenty years, the new absentee owners had chosen to cover-up signs of deterioration in this area. Sagging porches, for example, had been stripped. The remaining scarred spout would then be covered with plywood. Loose gingerbread trim had been simply torn off and thrown away. City and state officials quietly warned that continued tampering with these homes' fragile original architecture could cause the area to lose its distinction as a potential historic district. With this assessment in mind, the Association authorized the creation of a historic committee whose task was to research the history of the area considered a potential historic district. If the research findings later warranted, the board would seek its placement on the National Register of Historic Places.

Relying on the Association's communication network, twenty members volunteered to take part in research tasks. The volunteers were a mix of district homeowners, older members who had once resided in the district and residents with historic interests. An Association director with experience in coordinating research projects was to chair the committee. The City's unofficial historian and the director of a National Register historic district agreed to serve as counsellors.

The first step begun November 1980 was to conduct a bibliography search for printed materials and documents relevant to the project. Each member was assigned a particular library,

community expert or public agency to contact. Those consulted included the State Historic Library, City Public Library, Drake Library, City Clerk's archives, City Planning Department, City Parks, City Engineering, City Assessor, County Recorder, County Auditor, County Archives and local historical societies. Relevant information was catalogued, referenced and stored for future access. The search took two months to complete with 100 hours time logged.

During the bibliography search preservation officials pointed out that an application for National Register designation had to demonstrate architectural and historical significance. It became apparent that the next step should be to establish tentative boundaries for the historic district and criteria for their selection. A tour of the area surrounding the university revealed some clear architectural distinctions. For example, the homes between 21st and 31st south of University Avenue to Kingman Blvd. and School Street all had similar styles and periods. But when one crossed 31st going west, a marked variety of periods and styles was evident. A similar distinction was noticed south of Kingman between 28th and 31st. Research into the city's platting records revealed some reasons for the distinctions. The area between 21st and 31st, University and Kingman (28th-31st)/School (24th-28th) was roughly platted during the 1880's. The area west of 31st was also first platted then; but later had to be replatted for various reasons. The replatting contributed to the development of different periods of architecture which, according to preservation experts, diminished its worth as a historic district. The 28th to 31st section south of Kingman was found not to have been platted until after 1900 and the death of its owner Albert Kingman. This plat carries the name Kingman Estate whereas the plat north of Kingman Boulevard was named Kingman Place. 21st Street was an obvious eastern boundary because streets to its immediate east were marked with recent intrusions of the City's Urban Renewal Program. The northern boundary was determined by Drake's presence west of 25th along University Avenue and the hodge-podge strip of businesses east to 21st. University property and the business strip formed a natural northern boundary.

Within these tentative boundaries the historic committee then researched the district's age. The proposed district contained more than 500 structures. No one source of information could be relied upon. Many building records in the city and county archives had been either burned, lost or discarded. The bibliography search had found that City Assessor records showed a construction date which in many cases was the home's first year of taxation. These were

considered secondary documents because the recorded construction date had been taken from County Treasurer Tax Records no longer available.

A second source of documentation used was the City Water Works' records. It had maintained records of original permits granting hook-ups to the City's water supply. The historic committee assumed that a house must have been constructed in order for water hook-ups to have been installed then. The permits noted the installation date. To access the permit records, researchers first had to record permit numbers from an address file. The chronologically-stored permit files were then inspected to secure the installation date.



1045 22nd Street
Built by 1898

This approach worked only if the original installation was still in operation. If it had been replaced over the years, their indexing address files only recorded the most recent permit granted. 40% of the original hook-ups had been replaced. Thus original installation dates could be secured for only 60% of the district's homes.

The Assessor's construction dates were then cross-referenced with the water company's installation dates available. More than 90% of the homes with both dates were found to be within five years of each other. The bulk of the remaining 10% were homes built prior to the 1890's when the City extended water lines to University Place. Each home was then recorded according to the decade probably built in. University experts consulting with the historic study considered this approach statistically acceptable.

A third cross check of each house was done by consulting City Directories at 10 year intervals beginning with 1888. In no cases were any homes found to have been built later than the construction dates shown in the Assessor's records. In fact more than 10% were found to have been built a few years earlier than tax records indicated. More than 100 hours were invested in determining the district's age.



26th Street south of Kingman Blvd.
Built in 1889

The district's age was tabulated by street and plat as shown in Exhibit F. The University Place Historic District was found to be "a turn of the century" neighborhood. About 75% of the homes were built between 1890 and 1910. All but 22 of the 524 homes had been built by 1920. More than half of those are replacements for the original homes destroyed by fires.

The district was halfway constructed by 1900. The oldest homes were built in 1853 (2130 Drake Park) and 1860 (1060 26th). The street with the oldest homes is 22nd; with Kingman's homes the youngest. Most significant though is that almost all the homes built then still remain today. While many show their age, few have serious structural weaknesses - a tribute to the quality of homes built and the people who built them.

Having established the district as a turn-of-the-century neighborhood, the historic committee began to research the people who have lived in it over the years. A systematic survey was conducted at ten year intervals of City Directories which listed people by address, occupation and place of employment. 1908 was randomly selected as the test year. A list was first compiled of persons within the district by address. Then consulting the directory's alphabetical listing, a list was made of their occupations and places of employment. The committee became so excited by the number and type of "historically significant" people living in the district that the focus of the research project was expanded.

The committee with the concurrence of the board decided that its research should culminate in the publishing of a book about the neighborhood's 100 year history. The book itself would then be the basis for seeking designation on the National Register.

During the spring and summer months of 1981 committee researchers pored thru City Directories. The years 1919, 1928, 1938, 1949, 1958, 1968 and 1978 were compiled as 1908 had been. More than 300 hours were invested in this compilation alone. The same compilations were then done for 1888 and 1900, but with a slightly different approach. The 1906 City Directory was the first to list persons by address and alphabetically. Before then a directory was merely an alphabetized listing. Researchers sifted thru the entire 1888 directory extracting only those whose address was found in the district. For 1900 names by address were first taken from Federal Census Records on microfilm at the Drake Library. The City Directory was then used to record the occupations and places of employment.

City Directory Compilations



May 1981

The compilation of this data provides the historic committee the basis to analyze:

- * Significant people who have lived in the district;
- * Types of occupations populating the district;
- * Shifts in occupation types;
- * Predominant companies represented;
- * Continuity of family generations in the district;
- * Shifts in ownership patterns; and
- * Social trend and life-style evolutions.

Currently Drake sociology professors are preparing a procedures chart for the committee. The chart will enable the committee to systematically categorize occupation types historically. A Drake architecture professor and student are defining and classifying the 500 homes according to architectural styles. This fall interviews will be conducted with long time district residents. Individual profiles will be prepared on significant persons. Finally plot profiles will be sketched in narrative. By year's end the research phase will end and editing of the book begin. When published it will offer a permanent resource of pride and heritage to coming generations in University Place. In doing so it will hopefully contribute to the preservation and restoration of a truly historic neighborhood.