



Nebraska State HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Here open to all is the history of this people.

May 22, 2025

Joy Beasley
Keeper of the National Register
National Park Service
National Register Program
1849 C Street, NW (7228)
Washington, DC 20240

RE: Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places for Property in Nebraska

Dear Ms. Beasley,

This submittal contains a true and correct copy of the Multiple Property Documentation Form for Nebraska Women in Trades, submitted to the National Register of Historic Places.

Notification

The property owner(s) was (were) notified of the proposed nomination on April 8, 2025.

- No objections to the nomination were submitted to the State Historic Preservation Office during the public comment period.
- An objection to the nomination was submitted to the State Historic Preservation Office during the public comment period.
- A letter of support for the nomination was submitted to the State Preservation Office during the public comment period.

Certified Local Government

- The nominated property is not located in a CLG community.
- The nominated property is located in a CLG community and a copy of the local commission's review is attached.

Historic Tax Credits

- The federal historic tax credit is being used in the rehabilitation of this property.

NPS Grant-Funded Submissions

- Not funded with an NPS grant
- African American Civil Rights Grant
- Historically Black Colleges & Universities Grant
- History of Equal Rights Grant

- Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization Subgrant Program
- Save America's Treasures Grant
- Semiquincentennial Grant
- Tribal Heritage Grant
- Underrepresented Communities Grant

State Review Board

The Nebraska State Historic Preservation Board reviewed the draft nomination materials at its meeting on May 9, 2025. The Board voted that the property meets the National Register Criteria for Evaluation. The State Historic Preservation Officer has approved the nomination.

If you have any questions concerning this nomination, please do not hesitate to contact me at michael.belding@nebraska.gov or (402) 613-1591.

Sincerely,



Michael M. Belding III
National Register and Historic Markers Coordinator
Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office
michael.belding@nebraska.gov
Phone: 402-613-1591

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Nebraska Women in Trades
Name of Multiple Property Listing

Nebraska – Statewide
State

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceSection E Page 1 Nebraska Women in Trades - Statewide**Preface***By Rachel Alison, MS, Architectural Historian*

Researching women's history presents a unique set of challenges, particularly in finding reliable primary and secondary sources. Until relatively recently, women's contributions were largely minimized or excluded from historical research leaving vast amounts of potential pioneering research undiscovered. In particular, the written record of women's contributions to the built environment and the building trades in Nebraska and the American West has yet to be extensively studied in great detail. Furthermore, primary sources that do exist often contain biases that require careful analysis. These challenges intensify when intersected with race, class, and gender identity, making the task of uncovering and understanding women's history even more complex.

The academic field of women's history, and the broader field of social history, emerged only half a century ago alongside the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, including Second-wave Feminism, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Counterculture Movement.¹ Prior to this, academic study largely focused on political, economic, and military history that was centered around powerful (mostly White) men.² Even politically prominent White women were rarely the subject of historical study, and when they were, they were often trivialized or misrepresented.³ The history of working-class women received even less attention, and women of color were often not considered serious subjects of historical study even during the early development of the women's history field.⁴ As a result, scholarly secondary sources related to women's history can be scarce.

Locating, interpreting, and analyzing primary sources is also complicated. In official historical documents, women are often subsumed within masculine language or entirely ignored. The use of masculine language, specifically the universal "he," may misrepresent the actual demographic composition of a group. The use of the word "journeymen" in early records of trade unions, for instance, obscures the existence of both journeymen and journeywomen.⁵ Older census data may survey only traditionally male jobs, disregarding women who undertook intermittent jobs or worked within the home.⁶ Finally, historic source materials like newspapers often refer to women simply by their husband's name (e.g. Mrs. George Wallace) or do not list women's names at all.

Information found in mainstream historical reports, newspapers, and journals can be influenced by the overwhelmingly White, middle- to upper-class, and male viewpoint of their authors and often misrepresent women and their involvement in society. For example, mainstream newspaper coverage and government reports throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries often concentrated on working women as failed wives and mothers who contributed to a perceived moral disintegration of society by neglecting their domestic responsibilities, rather than highlighting their contributions to the workforce and economy.⁷

Primary source materials created by women can also contain bias. Women privileged with the time and resources to publish material were mainly middle- to upper-class and White, leaving the voices of working-class women and systematically marginalized women underrepresented.⁸ Marginalized groups are also not immune to holding the same socially ingrained biased viewpoints that negatively affect them, and they may adapt their actions to navigate biases of which they are aware. For instance, some nineteenth-century women's journals wrote about women's rights to education

¹ Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (Columbia University Press, 1999), 21.

² Post Oak's capitalization of racial identifiers like the terms White and Black is based on current guidance provided by the National Association of Black Journalists, the MacArthur Foundation, and other national organizations with the understanding that language preferences are highly individualized and not one-size-fits-all: <https://nabjonline.org/blog/nabj-statement-on-capitalizing-black-and-other-racial-identifiers/>. June Purvis, "Using Primary Sources When Researching Women's History from a Feminist Perspective," *Women's History Review* 1, no. 2 (1992): 273.

³ Purvis, "Using Primary Sources," 283.

⁴ Purvis, "Using Primary Sources," 283.; Ziggi Alexander, "Let It Lie Upon the Table: The Status of Black Women's Biography in the UK," *Gender & History* 2, no. 1 (1990): 29.

⁵ Purvis, "Using Primary Sources," 278.

⁶ Purvis, "Using Primary Sources," 280.

⁷ John Scott, *A Matter of Record: Documentary Sources in Social Research* (Polity Press, 1990), 98.; Purvis, "Using Primary Sources," 281.

⁸ Purvis, "Using Primary Sources," 289.

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and professional paid work but refused to cover anything related to women's suffrage or to challenging the legal barriers that limited women's civil rights.⁹

The absence of women in official documents often does not reflect reality. When omissions and biases in primary sources can be identified and examined, they provide useful insights into prevailing social attitudes toward women. Women have actively contributed to all aspects of society; however, the lag in academic attention toward social and women's history, as well as the unequal availability of historical records related to women, has led to a dearth of representation in the overall historical narrative. This incomprehensive and deficient body of knowledge works to perpetuate gendered oppression by downplaying women's actions and experiences while reinforcing the institutions and power structures that have historically dominated society.¹⁰ History helps shape how society understands itself, who is valued, and whose experiences are considered important. Navigating challenges in historical research related to women's history can be difficult, but doing so allows us to realize a more comprehensive, inclusive, and accurate history.

⁹ Purvis, "Using Primary Sources," 288-289.

¹⁰ Marilyn Frye, "The Possibility of Feminist Theory," in *Women, Knowledge, and Reality: Explorations in Feminist Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 34.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceSection E Page 3 Nebraska Women in Trades - Statewide**E. STATEMENT OF HISTORIC CONTEXTS****Introduction**

Patriarchal structures dominated American culture and society during and after European settler colonization of what is now the United States. The legacy of such structures is evident not only in their past imposition of barriers—such as women’s entry into the building trades—but also in the imposition of barriers to completing thorough historical research on the obstacles women faced as they tried to enter the building trades, and women’s history in general. The scope of this MPDF was a broad, statewide study of Nebraska’s women in the building trades. Research on the topic was organized first by the overarching trends and events in the history of Nebraska and the Great Plains, then by historic events in the U.S. that impacted the lives of American women and their entry into various building trades on a national scale, and lastly by the unique and specific role women had in shaping the built environment of Nebraska and the Midwest. Each Historic Context is roughly organized in this order to provide both broad and specific background on the context in which women in Nebraska were operating. Finally, within each subheading on women in trades in Nebraska, tradeswomen are categorized into five overarching groupings:

- *The Technical Professionals:* Architects, Landscape Architects, Draftswomen, Engineers, etc.
- *The Tradeswomen:* Carpenters, Contractors, Blacksmiths, Masons, Plasterers, etc.
- *The Designers:* Visual Artists, Interior Designers, Muralists, etc.
- *The Planners:* Real Estate Developers, Urban Planners, Historic Preservationists, etc.
- *The Independents:* Indigenous Women, Homesteaders, Land Managers, Agriculturalists, etc.

In order to encompass the myriad ways that Nebraska women influenced the physical landscape, the guiding principle of this MPDF has been that women in the building trades includes any woman (or women) who directly shaped the built environment of the state.

Not all categories of tradeswomen were called out individually in each Historic Context, but that does not preclude the contributions of women in these categories from being listed under this MPDF if they are identified in future research. Included at the end of each context is a brief discussion of example property types that were constructed or designed within that time period, if any were identified. These are not exhaustive and there are many more property types that could be listed under this MPDF.

In the process of researching, documenting, and illuminating the contributions of Nebraska’s women in trades to the built environment, it is important to understand the social, political, and economic circumstances that dominated the U.S. and Nebraska and directly impacted women’s roles in the public and private spheres. Long before the arrival of European and Euro-American colonists to the country, Indigenous women of the Great Plains had a substantial role in the construction and decoration of Indigenous dwellings and had a significant level of personal autonomy.

As Europeans continued to migrate westward over the nineteenth century, they introduced very different gender roles to the Great Plains, although many were upended by the realities of life in the region. In the early days of Euro-American settlement, shortages of resources and labor necessitated women’s participation in nearly all aspects of life, including the construction and maintenance of homesteads on the frontier. As railroads built more lines through Nebraska in the late nineteenth century, cities and towns became progressively more developed. Since Nebraska women had already, by necessity, become informally involved in the building trades, they began to agitate for more active involvement in the built environment, although they were still largely barred from accessing educational opportunities and the professional workforce. By the turn of the twentieth century, the ideal of the Gilded Age “New Woman,” followed by the subsequent Progressive Era when women pushed for more active roles in the public sphere, some educational and professional opportunities opened for women, albeit slowly. In the First and Second World Wars, many women entered previously male-dominated fields, including the building trades, at higher rates than ever before, and were reluctant to return to the domestic sphere. In the post-war era, the growing Civil Rights Movement inspired more activism amongst other marginalized groups, and as a result of the Women’s Rights Movement of the 1970s women began to make more substantial strides in entering the building trades.

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While some academic study of women's role in the building trades has been conducted in recent decades, most of the existing scholarship of women's early contributions concentrates on the cities and towns of the eastern U.S.. Thus, many of women's documented early forays into the building trades occurred either before Nebraska achieved statehood, or while it was still in the early decades of Euro-American development. Since many of the prominent women working in the building trades in the eastern U.S. during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries influenced the advancement of women in the field elsewhere, and their work provides broad context for the evolution of women in the trades across the U.S., the Midwest, and in Nebraska.

Many of the early American women pioneers in the building trades who are best documented were White, middle- or upper-class inhabitants of urban or more densely populated areas. Less well documented and recognized are women building tradeswomen with low-income, systematically marginalized, Indigenous, LGBTQ+, and rural identities. Across the country, they too participated in the building trades, but much more research is needed to fully understand the contributions of women of all identities to the built environment of Nebraska and, more broadly, the U.S. Where possible, the historic contexts presented by this MPDF incorporate less well documented figures and their stories, identifying and interpreting the myriad ways in which any woman or group of women influenced part of Nebraska's physical landscape by practicing one or more of the building trades.

On a worldwide scale, women's participation in the building trades can be traced back millennia, and examples of women tradeswomen can be found in historic records from across the globe. Some of the earliest known written notations of women working in the building trades document women laborers in thirteenth century Spain, although women were also noted as laborers on construction sites throughout Europe. These women, who were likely either enslaved or destitute, were documented doing manual labor including digging ditches for foundations, thatching walls, and mixing mortar. Due to patriarchal structures that dominated society and subsequently exclusive trade guilds, earning wages and supporting a family was the deemed the sole responsibility of men. It was therefore socially unacceptable to record women's work, particularly wage labor, which was deemed immoral. However, some women were able to enter one of the building trades via a family connection, apprenticing with their fathers or other male relatives to learn masonry, carpentry, or another trade.¹¹ Aristocratic women were also known to have taken strong leadership roles in the design and management of large-scale construction projects, evident in the examples of Queen Melisende of twelfth century Jerusalem and Hadice Turhan Sultan in the seventeenth century Ottoman Empire.¹²

In Africa, women of the semi-nomadic Maasai tribes led (and continue to lead) the construction of the oval-shaped dwellings built of mud, grass, and sticks known as *enkaji*. Indigenous cultures of the U.S. Southwest and Latin America also have a long history of women in the trades. In the Pueblo communities in present-day New Mexico, women historically led housebuilding, maintenance, and repairs. *Enjarradoras* were (and are) women plasterers whose work can be traced back over 900 years to the pre-contact era, when the craft was passed down as oral tradition amongst women.¹³ Women's long history of contributions to the built environment can be found in records from across the globe, and while scholarship of these contributions continues to expand, their work and achievements are still under recognized in the historic record.

¹¹ Yilmaz Hatipkarasulu and Shelley E. Roff, "Women in Construction: An Early Historical Perspective." San Antonio: 47th ASC Annual International Conference Proceedings, 2011, accessed September 10, 2024, <http://ascpro0.ascweb.org/archives/2011/CEGT353002011.pdf>;

¹² Lucienne Thys-Senocak, *Ottoman Women Builders, The Architectural Patronage of Hadice Turhan Sultan* (Taylor & Francis, 2017); H.A. Gaudette, "The Spending Power of a Crusader Queen: Melisende of Jerusalem" in Earenfight, T. (eds), *Women and Wealth in Late Medieval Europe. The New Middle Ages*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230106017_8.

¹³ Kate Reggev, "Breaking New Ground: She Builds (And Hammers, And Walks Beams, And Lays Brick)," *Madam Architect*, March 29, 2022, <https://www.madamearchitect.org/in-ink/2022/3/29/breaking-new-ground-she-builds-and-hammers-and-walks-beams-and-lays-brick>; Anita Rodriguez and Katherine Pettus, "The Importance of Vernacular Traditions," *APT Bulletin: The Journal of Preservation Technology* 22, no. 3 (1990): 2–4. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1504320>.

United States Department of the Interior
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Built Environment: Built environment is a term that refers to human-made buildings, structures, or other physical features that support human activity and impact the way land and space are utilized. The built environment is distinguished from the natural environment.

Great Plains: Although definitions vary and regional boundaries are nebulous, for the purposes of this MPDF, the Great Plains region in the U.S. is generally defined as the central region of the country bounded on the west by the Rocky Mountain range, on the north by the Canadian border, on the east by the somewhat arbitrary 98th meridian, and the Rio Grande River and Balcones Escarpment to the south. The region is characterized by sweeping horizons and open grasslands and prairies, largely devoid of dense vegetation and tree cover except near waterways.

Trade(s): Dictionaries include various definitions of the term trade(s). Some definitions presuppose an act of commercial or capitalist exchange for goods, services, or labor. However, due to the limiting circumstances for American women throughout much of history, many women who labored in or adjacent to the building trades were never compensated for their efforts. Several definitions of trade(s), however, are more inclusive, for example:

- a job, especially one that needs special skill, that involves working with your hands;
- a particular business or industry;¹⁴
- an occupation requiring manual or mechanical skill: **craft**;
- the business or work in which one engages regularly: **occupation**.¹⁵

Furthermore, while these definitions include language about jobs or occupations, dictionary definitions of these words suggest that neither necessitates payment or exchange for work completed and includes examples of unpaid jobs and occupations. Thus, to account for the barriers facing women whose labor shaped the built environment in the United States and Nebraska, this MPDF utilizes the broadest interpretations of the term trade(s).

¹⁴ Cambridge Dictionary, "Trade," accessed February 20, 2025, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/trade>.

¹⁵ Merriam Webster, "Trade," accessed February 20, 2025, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/trade>.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceSection E Page 6 Nebraska Women in Trades - Statewide**1. *Gone, the Quiet of Midnights' Past: Pre-Euro-American Exploration and Settlement (C. 1000 CE-1850)****

**Archeological sites dating to the Paleoindian and Archaic periods (approximately 13,000 to 9,000 years ago) are rare but have been uncovered at various sites in central and western Nebraska, including on the buttes in North Platte valley. Ancestors of present-day Indigenous nations, including the Pâri (Pawnee) were thought to have moved into present-day Nebraska in the eleventh century. Little is known about the gender dynamics of the early nomadic Indigenous peoples who occupied Nebraska prior to the nineteenth century. The first permanent European/Euro-American settlements were established in present-day Nebraska beginning in the 1820s, however the earliest substantial wave of non-Indigenous migration and settlement in Nebraska occurred following the passage of the 1841 Preemption Act. The rapid influx of settlers altered the movement and settlement patterns of Indigenous inhabitants of the region, displacing many Indigenous communities. Thus, the recommended period of significance begins ca. 1840, when historical source materials are available which document the movement, settlement, and building practices of Indigenous, European and Euro-American, African American, and other groups in present-day Nebraska.*

1.1. NEBRASKA HISTORY (C.1000-1850)

The history of Nebraska and its inhabitants is one that is intrinsically linked to the soil and the earth. Often characterized as vast grasslands and treeless prairies, referred to by early explorers as the ‘Great American Desert,’ Nebraska stretches from wooded areas in the east, through prairies of the central and western central portions of the state, to the Sandhills and Pine Ridge of the northwest.¹⁶ Despite droughts, dust storms, insects, and floods, Indigenous peoples and, later, Euro-Americans and immigrants, carved a living out of the seemingly inhospitable land.

Nomadic Indigenous groups inhabited the Plains region for millennia before the Central Plains tradition people, who were less nomadic than their predecessors, established small farmsteads and hamlets over a thousand years ago where they hunted and farmed corn and beans.¹⁷ These farmers were distant ancestors of the Pâri (Pawnee) people who established large earthlodge towns of thousands of people in the Loup River region of present-day Nebraska sometime around the late sixteenth century Common Era (CE). In the sixteenth century, Spanish explorer Francisco Vásquez de Coronado initiated European exploration into the Plains seeking gold.¹⁸ By the early eighteenth century, Don Pedro de Villasur led an expedition into present-day Nebraska, where much of his crew perished in conflict with Indigenous nations. At the time, present-day Nebraska was inhabited by the Páⁿka tóⁿde uk^hé^{thi}ⁿ (Ponca), Umoⁿhoⁿ (Omaha), Jíw^ere–Ñút[’]achi Máyaⁿ (Oto-Missouria), Báxoje Máyaⁿ (Ioway), and four Pâri (Pawnee) bands, along with nomadic or semi-nomadic groups like the N[’]dee (Plains Apache), Kul Wicasa (Lower Brulé) and Oglala Lakota, Numúnuu Sookobitu (Comanches), Ka’igwu (Kiowas), Tsésthó[’]e (Cheyenne), and hinono’eino’ biito’owu’ (Arapaho).¹⁹

By the late eighteenth century, trading posts, including Fort Charles near present-day Dakota City, Nebraska, were established along the Niobrara and Missouri Rivers. In 1803, the Louisiana Purchase expanded U.S. territory, spurring settler colonization of the western part of the country. Soon after, explorers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark undertook their first expedition through present-day Nebraska, documenting the region's landscape.²⁰ In 1812, President James Madison formalized the Missouri Territory, encompassing present-day Nebraska. That year, Manuel Lisa, a Spanish fur trader, established a trading post named Fort Lisa, strengthening trade networks along the Missouri River.²¹ A decade later, in 1822, the Missouri Fur Company erected its headquarters nine miles north of the Platte River’s mouth. Named Bellevue, this outpost became the first permanent Euro-American settlement in what is now Nebraska, marking a pivotal moment in the region’s transformation as Euro-American settlers began to establish enduring communities in the new western territories.²²

¹⁶ Dorothy Weyer Creigh, *Nebraska, A Bicentennial History* (W.W. Norton & Company, 1977), 3-4.

¹⁷ Ronald C. Naugle, John J. Montag, and James C. Olson, *History of Nebraska* (Nebraska, 2014) 6-7, 10.

¹⁸ Naugle, Montag, and Olson, *History of Nebraska*, 13, 14.

¹⁹ Naugle, Montag, and Olson, *History of Nebraska*, 20; Pawnee Nation, “Culture - Pawnee History,” accessed October 22, 2024, <https://pawneenation.org/pawnee-history/>; Creigh, *Nebraska, A Bicentennial History*, 18.

²⁰ Bruce H. Nicoll, comp. *Nebraska, A Pictorial History* (University of Nebraska Press, 1975), 14.

²¹ Naugle, Montag, and Olson, *History of Nebraska*, 28. The Indigenous names of Great Plains nations that historically or currently reside in Nebraska and the Great Plains region were taken from the Native Land Map (<https://native-land.ca/>).

²² Richard E. Jensen, “Bellevue: The First Twenty Years,” *Nebraska History* 56 (1975): 339-374, https://history.nebraska.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/doc_publications_NH1975Bellevue.pdf.

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The passage of the 1841 Preemption Act enabled U.S. citizens and prospective citizens to purchase up to 160 acres of federal land at \$1.25 per acre, provided they “erect a dwelling thereon,” facilitating and European and Euro-American settlement in the territories of the western U.S.²³ In 1843, a wave of migrants traveled along the Platte River Trail into the Great Plains region on their way to Oregon.²⁴ The California Gold Rush in 1849 prompted a second wave of migration, with around 40,000 “forty-niners” traveling the Platte River Trail, some of whom settled in Nebraska.²⁵ Possibly spurred by the vast movement of peoples, these migrations coincided with a cholera epidemic that reduced the Indigenous Pâri (Pawnee) population to 4,500. At the peak of migration in 1852, nearly 70,000 travelers were reported on the trail, although momentum diminished by the following year.²⁶ Nonetheless, the Platte River Trail was hugely important to the colonial development of the Great Plains, resulting in the establishment of numerous forts, trading posts, and way stations along the route.²⁷

1.2. WOMEN IN TRADES IN THE U.S. (C. 1000-1850)

Readily available documentation of American women in the building trades in the early nineteenth century is almost non-existent. At that time, married women were bound by common law coverture, which vested all their legal rights with their husbands. Women were unable to retain sole rights to any inheritance or property and were required to forfeit any earnings to their husbands.²⁸ Most women were solely dependent upon their husbands, fathers, or other male relatives for financial support, and had little legal recourse to manage their own daily lives. Women were unable to sign contracts, bring civil suits in court, trade items independently, or even be legal guardians of their own children.²⁹

However, in the early 1800s, modest advances in technology, including those in textile manufacturing, unburdened some women, largely upper and middle-income White women, of at least some of the laborious tasks traditionally in their purview. This added leisure time resulted in a slow shift in the expectations of women’s roles. During the Colonial era, women had very little say in the governance or management of either the public or private spheres. However, while it would hardly be called liberation by modern standards, during the early nineteenth century the idea of separate spheres, where women dominated the private and men the public, began to slowly emerge.³⁰

Although vastly restricted by legal, economic, and social structures, women did exercise their technical, engineering, and design skills, and there are several documented cases of early women inventors. **Sybilla Masters** was touted as the first person, woman or man, living in the U.S. to receive an English patent. After witnessing the methods used by Indigenous peoples to pound corn, Masters invented a corn milling device that pounded, rather than ground, kernels into flour. Due to coverture laws, Masters was unable to file the patent under her own name and instead used her husband’s name. However, her husband was proud of Sybilla’s invention and made sure to credit it as her design when the patent was formalized in 1715.³¹ Nearly a century later, **Mary Dixon Kies** of Connecticut became the first woman to receive a U.S. patent in her own name, for her straw weaving device that was quickly adopted by milliners across New England. While Masters and Kies are clear examples of women’s interest and aptitude for technical design, only twenty patents were issued to women in the U.S. prior to 1840.³²

²³ “1841, September 4 - 5 Stat. 453 - Preemption Act of 1841” (2016), US Government Legislation and Statutes. 8.

https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/hornbeck_usa_2_d/8.

²⁴ Naugle, Montag, and Olson, *History of Nebraska*, 63.

²⁵ The Platte River Trail encompassed portions of various wagon trails, including those often referred to as the Oregon Trail, California Trail, and the Mormon Trail. Creigh, *Nebraska, A Bicentennial History*, 33.

²⁶ Naugle, Montag, and Olson, *History of Nebraska*, 70-71.

²⁷ Naugle, Montag, and Olson, *History of Nebraska*, 77.

²⁸ B. Zorina Khan, “Married Women’s Property Laws and Female Commercial Activity: Evidence from United States Patent Records, 1790-1895,” *The Journal of Economic History* 56, no. 2 (1996): 356–7.

²⁹ “Inventive Women,” National Women’s History Museum, accessed December 11, 2024, <https://www.womenshistory.org/exhibits/inventive-women>.

³⁰ Graham Warder, “Women in Nineteenth-Century America,” *VCU Social Welfare History Project*, accessed December 11, 2024, <https://socialwelfare.library.vcu.edu/woman-suffrage/women-in-nineteenth-century-america-2/>.

³¹ “Inventive Women,” National Women’s History Museum.

³² “Mary Dixon Kies,” National Inventors Hall of Fame, accessed December 11, 2024, <https://www.invent.org/inductees/mary-dixon-kies>.

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During the early nineteenth century, some women also entered the worlds of architecture and design through literature. Through her fiction writings in the 1830s, author **Mary Griffith** of New Jersey was an early advocate of historic preservation and urbanism, which she believed offered women more opportunities and freedom than rural life.³³ Writing at a time when many states did not allow women to own property independent of marriage or male relatives, Griffith argued that women needed the social stimulation of urban communities rather than rural isolation.³⁴ In 1848, **Louisa C. Tuthill** published one of the first histories of American architecture, dedicating her work to the women of America, whom she called the “Acknowledged Arbiters of Good Taste.”³⁵

1.3. NEBRASKA WOMEN IN TRADES (C. 1000-1850)

Early nineteenth century anthropologists and ethnographers of Indigenous Plains peoples recorded their customs, traditions, and ways of life at a time when their existence was under active threat. While these early studies must be viewed with some skepticism from a modern lens, they are nonetheless some of the rare written records of early Plains Indigenous life. Ethnographers noted that women had relatively equal standing in society and thus were expected to participate in equal measures to maintain the home and village, as long as they were healthy and able. Plains women cut wood, dressed hides, hoed the ground, and planted corn, among other responsibilities. Umo^{ho} (Omaha) women and girls were not forced by their parents to marry and could leave unhappy marriages of their own volition.³⁶

However, the arrival of European and Euro-American settler colonists to the Great Plains region in the mid- to late-nineteenth century upended many of the cultural and building traditions of Indigenous Plains nations.³⁷ White settlers killed off the buffalo that had roamed the Plains and been vital to the traditional way of life for Plains peoples, as well as a significant source of dwelling materials.³⁸ White women pioneers were also instrumental in reframing and imposing Euro-American ideals of patriarchy, domesticity, and maternalism on Indigenous women, which had sweeping consequences for Indigenous communities and families that reverberated for centuries.³⁹

1.3.1. The Independents

Recent scholarship has reconceptualized Euro-American expansion into the western U.S. as a form of settler colonialism—a localized imperialism characterized by European/Euro-American settlers establishing political dominance over Indigenous peoples, creating a heterogeneous society with complex class, ethnic, and racial dynamics.⁴⁰ This process involved the reproduction of colonists' social norms and institutions, including patriarchy, racial hierarchies, and ecological dominance. White women played a crucial role in this system, benefiting from and participating in its policies while also subject to its patriarchal and misogynistic structures.⁴¹

Prior to the arrival of European/Euro-American settlers in Nebraska, women of Indigenous Plains nations were known for their skill with leather and hides. Women’s craftsmanship, artistry, and skill conferred significant status and economic benefits for themselves and their families.⁴² In many communities, women participated in, or were completely in charge of, procuring, preparing, and constructing many of the items required for daily life, including the design, construction, and decoration of tipis and dwellings. The level of participation and control over these activities varied by community,

³³ Nathaniel Walker, “Women, urbanism, and the birth of the historic preservation movement,” in *Suffragette City: Gender, Politics and the Built Environment*, ed. Elizabeth Darling and Nathaniel Walker. 1st ed. (Routledge, 2020), 59.

³⁴ It is notable that Griffith’s writings also preceded the work of Frenchman Eugene Viollet-le-Duc, considered a founding father of the historic preservation movement in Europe and France.

³⁵ Walker, “Women, urbanism, and the birth of the historic preservation movement,” 64.

³⁶ Owen J. Dorsey, Rev. “Omaha Sociology,” Smithsonian Institution. Bureau of Ethnology, *Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution*. Washington: G.P.O., 1881-1897.

³⁷ Preparers of this nomination have used the term nations rather than ‘tribes’ to describe specific groups of Indigenous peoples based on guidance provided by: Native Governance Center, “How to Talk About Native Nations: A Guide,” <https://nativegov.org/resources/how-to-talk-about-native-nations/>.

³⁸ Miller, *Women of the Frontier*, 311 (Ebook).

³⁹ Margaret D. Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880 – 1940*, (University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 23.

⁴⁰ Margaret D. Jacobs, “Getting Out of a Rut: Decolonizing Western Women’s History,” *Pacific Historical Review* 79, no. 4 (2010): 600-601, <https://doi.org/10.1525/phr.2010.79.4.585>.

⁴¹ Tonia M. Compton, “Challenging Imperial Expectations: Black And White Female Homesteaders In Kansas,” *Great Plains Quarterly* 33, no. 1 (2013): 51, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23534358>.

⁴² Creigh, *Nebraska, A Bicentennial History*, 19.

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although women in most Indigenous Plains nations were at least partially, if not fully, responsible for preparing, cleaning, tanning, and utilizing animal hides for clothing, containers, objects, ropes, and tipis/dwellings.⁴³

Women often worked cooperatively to complete items, making the process quicker while also allowing women to work together in community and to share traditional knowledge and craftsmanship skills. In some Indigenous nations, women were solely responsible for the decoration of tipi-covers, and sometimes specific women were deemed specialists. The Oglala had a society of women tipi-makers, while the Tsésthó'e (Cheyenne) had a society of women tipi decorators. Women could receive payment for their work, increasing their family's status through specialization in a particular skill. For the Apsáalooke (Crow), a lodge designer could receive four items for her work, a Pâri (Pawnee) woman could receive merchandise and meals for the full time (typically four days) that she worked on the tipi, the Tsésthó'e designer could receive a pair of moccasins, a robe, a blanket, or other items, and the Nêhiyawak (Plains Cree) woman or women hired to design tent covers were given a feast and other compensation.⁴⁴

1.4. EXAMPLE PROPERTY TYPE: *Indigenous Dwellings*

Before the 1400s CE, homes built by central and northern Plains agricultural communities were square or rectangular wattle and daub and timber structures. The iconic round, dome-shaped 'earthlodge' of the region was probably first developed by the Pawnee and Arikara tribes in the 1400s or 1500s CE in central Nebraska or central South Dakota, perhaps in response to the cooler temperatures of the Little Ice Age. Other tribes soon adopted the style including the Mandan, Hidatsa, Omaha, Oto-Missouria, Kansa and others. Typically lodge design and ownership was overseen by women.⁴⁵

In the 1880s, early anthropologist Alice Fletcher spent time with the Nîjşoc Hoocąk (Ho-Chunk/Winnebago) and Umo^ohoⁿ (Omaha) people in Nebraska, documenting the way of life on reservation land at that time (Figure 6). She noted that the Nîjşoc Hoocąk (Ho-Chunk) people often used "wickiup" shelters, consisting of branches tied together and sheathed in bark (Figure 3). The Umo^ohoⁿ people were known to live in earth lodges, although also utilized tents and tipis while on hunting excursions (Figures 1 and 2).⁴⁶ Fletcher stated, "the tent is the Indian woman's castle. Everything within the little dwelling, and the tent itself, belongs to the wife; the man owns nothing which pertains to the household."⁴⁷ Fletcher also noted that the earthen lodges of the more permanent villages were also constructed by the women, although men assisted with stripping logs for the lodge posts.⁴⁸ Since all aspects of the home were the ownership of women, they were also in charge of the preparation of homes, including tanning and shaping the skins, and sewing them into covers. They also practiced subsistence farming of corn, beans, pumpkins, and storing foodstuffs. In Fletcher's observations, Indigenous Plains women were incredibly independent, in control of their own labor, time, and possessions, and were free to leave their husband if mistreated.⁴⁹

The most likely location for preserved buried archeological ruins of earth lodges dating after 1840 are at the Pawnee village near Genoa, the Oto-Missouria village near Barnston, and several places on the Omaha Tribe of Nebraska Reservation near Macy.⁵⁰

⁴³ Mary Jane Schneider, "Women's Work: An Examination of Women's Roles in Plains Indians Arts and Crafts," in *The Hidden Half: Studies of Plains Indian Women*, ed. Patricia Albers and Beatrice Medicine (University Press of America, 1983), 104.

⁴⁴ Schneider, "Women's Work," 114.

⁴⁵ Information regarding the history of Indigenous peoples in Nebraska and extant archeological remains was graciously provided to preparers by Rob Bozell, retired State Archeologist for Nebraska State Historical Society, May 2025. Walter R. Echo-Hawk, *The Sea of Grass: A Family Tale from the American Heartland* (Fulcrum Publishing, Golden, CO, 2018); Donna C Roper and Elizabeth P. Pauls, eds., *Plains Earthlodes: Ethnographic and Archaeological Perspectives* (The University of Alabama Press, 2005); Gilbert L. Wilson, *The Hidatsa Earthlodge. Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History*, Volume 33 (Part 5). New York City, 1934.

⁴⁶ Susan Cummins Miller, *A Sweet, Separate Intimacy: Women Writers of the American Frontier 1800-1922*, (Chicago Distribution Center, 2000), 158, EBook.

⁴⁷ Alice C. Fletcher, *Life Among the Indians, First Fieldwork among the Sioux and Omahas*, (University of Nebraska Press, 2013), 163.

⁴⁸ Fletcher, *Life Among the Indians*, 257.

⁴⁹ Fletcher, *Life Among the Indians*, 164.

⁵⁰ Information provided to preparers by Rob Bozell, retired State Archeologist for Nebraska State Historical Society, May 2025.

United States Department of the Interior
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In 1854, the controversial Kansas-Nebraska Act officially created the Nebraska Territory and fledgling frontier towns were quickly established, including Grand Island, Beatrice, Columbus, Fremont, Brownville, Omaha, and Nebraska City, while other “paper” towns were planned by speculators.⁵¹ The first wave of Jewish immigrants to the Plains region came in the 1850s and like others of this era, were mostly young, single men, although many later sent for their wives and children to join them.⁵² A small number of free or enslaved Black persons also migrated west into Nebraska and beyond.⁵³

Initially, women were not intended to be beneficiaries of land grants, although eventually Congress realized they needed (White) women to participate in settler colonialism to grow populations and assist men with the laborious task of establishing new farms and colonies.⁵⁴ For Black and immigrant women in the western U.S., settler colonialism largely maintained the status quo, relegating them as part of the labor force necessary for empire building and for supporting development and agricultural production.⁵⁵ During the 1840s and 1850s, single, married, and widowed women arrived in Nebraska along with other settlers to stake their claims to land and new opportunities. In Nebraska, the fight for women's suffrage began as early as 1855 when Amelia Bloomer addressed the territorial legislature, although she was ultimately unsuccessful at getting women's suffrage codified.⁵⁶

As Euro-American, European, Jewish, African American, and other groups moved into Nebraska and established homesteads and settlements, the Indigenous populations of the Plains region were increasingly removed from their ancestral lands. In 1854, the UmoꞤhoꞤ (Omaha) people of Nebraska were removed to reservations along the Missouri river. In 1865, the PáꞤka tóꞤde ukꞤéthiꞤ (Ponca) people were removed to a reservation in northeast Nebraska, however, by 1876 were forced to relocate to Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma), where ultimately nearly a third of their population perished. The PáꞤri (Pawnee), after forcibly ceding their ancestral lands to the U.S. government, relocated to a small tract along the Loup River, then to Indian Territory in the 1870s.⁵⁷ Throughout the 1860s and 1870s, nomadic bands of Siouan peoples, along with hinono'eino' biito'owu' (Arapaho), fought back against Euro-American encroachment, defeating General Custer in the renowned Battle of Little Big Horn in 1876. However, in 1890 the infamous Wounded Knee Massacre, wherein U.S. forces killed hundreds of Lakota people, was one of the last significant confrontations in the process of settler colonization of Nebraska and the Great Plains.⁵⁸

2.2. WOMEN IN TRADES IN THE U.S. (C.1850-1870)

In Nebraska and the territorial western U.S., women's circumstances were markedly different from those in the larger cities on the U.S. coasts and upper Midwest. During Nebraska's Territorial Era (1854-1867), as Indigenous populations fought for their ancestral homelands and women homesteaders staked land claims, in the eastern U.S. women trepidatiously dipped their toes in the building trades, at first through published writings, then through historic preservation advocacy, and eventually toward promoting more educational opportunities for women.

In the 1850s and 1860s, **Catherine Esther Beecher** expounded upon the virtues of the ideal homemaker and established herself as one of the earliest influential interior decorators. The **Mount Vernon Ladies' Association's** efforts to preserve

⁵¹ Frederick C. Luebke, *Nebraska, An Illustrated History* (University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 43; “Nebraska centennial history,” University of Nebraska School of Journalism, Depth Report No. 5. 1967, Bennett Martin Public Library – Lincoln, 9.

⁵² Jonathon Rosenbaum and Patricia O'Connor, eds. *Our Story, Recollections of Omaha's Early Jewish Community* (National Council of Jewish Women, 1981), 32.

⁵³ Naugle, Montag, and Olson, *History of Nebraska*, 74.

⁵⁴ Compton, *Challenging Imperial Expectations*, 51-52.

⁵⁵ Compton, *Challenging Imperial Expectations*, 59.

⁵⁶ Eileen Wirth, *The Women Who Built Omaha* (Bison Books, 2022) 42.

⁵⁷ Creigh, *Nebraska, A Bicentennial History*, 73.

⁵⁸ Creigh, *Nebraska, A Bicentennial History*, 77.

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George Washington's home sparked the U.S. historic preservation movement, and in 1848 **Sarah Worthington Peter** opened the Philadelphia School of Design for Women, providing an early opportunity for women to learn design skills.⁵⁹

In 1857 the American Institute of Architects (AIA) was founded, formalizing architecture as a profession in the U.S. and defining the professional standards and responsibilities of architects. Women were not admitted for another three decades.⁶⁰

2.3. NEBRASKA WOMEN IN TRADES (C.1850-1870)

In the mid-nineteenth century, most early settlers in Nebraska were engaged in farming, as lack of transportation provided little incentive for lawyers, artisans, or shopkeepers to settle there without access to goods. However, even in the early years "the building trades were in great demand, since every structure in sight had been erected in the past six years."⁶¹ In 1867 a state-sponsored normal school was established in Peru, Nebraska, allowing women to gain access to higher level art instruction.⁶²

The passage of the Homestead Act in 1862 (formalized in 1863) allowed women to both participate in, and challenge, imperial westward expansion. The Act allowed any head of a family over 21, regardless of race or sex (including widows), and any citizen or person who declared intent to become citizen, to stake a claim. Women made up between 10 to 20 percent of the homesteading population, including both single and married women, primarily dominated by White Euro-American women, although African American and immigrant women also staked homestead claims.⁶³ Furthermore, women homesteaders "proved up"⁶⁴ their claims at a rate of over 42 percent, compared with 37 percent of men.⁶⁵

In the 1860s, the onset of the U.S. Civil War dramatically altered the life of Nebraska women. Ongoing warfare in Kansas interrupted overland freight and disrupted steamboat transportation along the Missouri River, limiting the already meager supplies available.⁶⁶ As nearly one third of all Nebraska men were called to serve, women remained on the frontier assisting the war effort however they were able. However, the onset of the war did give women more opportunities to participate in public life. As men were drafted into service, many women oversaw their families' large farms and ranches, served as nurses, and even filled in the industrial workforce.⁶⁷ The increased independence that women were afforded during the Civil War sowed the seeds of a growing movement for women's participation in public life.

Research did not uncover the names or properties of women formally engaged as architects, engineers, tradeswomen, designers, or artists in Nebraska during that time, when many were bound by common law coverture and had few legal rights. Women on the frontier were typically either homesteaders, homemakers, or teachers. While it is likely that many participated informally in the building trades to some degree due to the lack of resources and labor during that time, documentation from that era is severely limited.

⁵⁹ Jan Cigliano Hartman, *The Women Who Changed Architecture*, (Princeton Architectural Press, 2022), 16; Walker, "Women, urbanism, and the birth of the historic preservation movement," 59; Anna M. Lewis, *Women of Steel and Stone, 22 Inspirational Architects, Engineers, and Landscape Designers* (Chicago Review Press, 2014), 10 Ebook.

⁶⁰ Judith Paine, "Pioneer Women Architects" in *Women in American architecture: a historic and contemporary perspective: a publication and exhibition organized by the Architectural League of New York through its Archive of Women in Architecture*. ed. Susan Torre (Whitney Library of Design, 1977), 52.

⁶¹ "Nebraska centennial history." University of Nebraska School of Journalism, 55.

⁶² "Peru State College," Nebraska State Historical Society, <https://mynehistory.com/items/show/165>, accessed January 9, 2025.

⁶³ Compton, *Challenging Imperial Expectations*, 50, 53.

⁶⁴ The Homestead Act and other applicable legislation required land claimants to reside on the property for a predetermined length of time (typically 5 years), to "improve" or cultivate their acreage, and sometimes construct dwellings or other permanent structures on the property before the U.S. government would relinquish full ownership and title over to the homesteader. Gaining final land title was alternatively referred to as "proving up," "making good," or "making final proof," on the land claim.

⁶⁵ Glenda Riley, *The Female Frontier: A Comparative view of women on the prairie and the plains* (University Press of Kansas, 1988), 133.

⁶⁶ Luebke, *Nebraska, An Illustrated History*, 71.

⁶⁷ John Gentry and Sarah Vonesh, *Women in Maryland Architecture, 1920-1970 Multiple Property Documentation Form* (National Park Service, 2022) accessed August 27, 2024, https://apps.mht.maryland.gov/medusa/PDF/NR_PDFs/NR-MPS-27.pdf, E-2.

United States Department of the Interior
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Carrie Roach was an early Nebraska pioneer who joined a wagon train in 1856 as a single woman. After becoming ill in Nebraska, Roach decided to put down roots in the territory, using a shovel and hunting knife to carve out a sod house for herself, later planting seeds she had brought on the journey to start a subsistence farm.⁶⁸

In 1867, ecologists **Caroline Joy French Morton** and her husband J. Sterling Morton arrived in Nebraska from Michigan.⁶⁹ Soon after, they began constructing their homestead, a simple, two-room, wood frame house, later named Arbor Lodge (NHL 1975).⁷⁰ Over subsequent decades, numerous additions and renovations were undertaken, and Caroline “Carrie” Morton was heavily involved in the property’s development, although her contributions are underrepresented in the historic record (Figures 7 and 8).⁷¹ Carrie Morton did all the landscaping at Arbor Lodge, selecting all the plant species, laying out drives, walks, and gardens, and planting trees herself. Carrie also painted many of the pictures that adorned the walls of their home and designed the interior decor. As her husband often traveled, Caroline was responsible for the home, farm, and raising the children. She died in 1881. While her husband, and later her son Joy, received most accolades for the property, according to Joy, “Had it not been for her, none of us—including father—would have amounted to much.”⁷²

Another early female homesteader, **Harriet S. Dakin MacMurphy** (b. 1849) came to the Nebraska Territory from Wisconsin in 1863 at age 12 and first settled in Decatur near the Omaha Reservation. She later filed a homestead claim on 480 acres in Holt County, where she fenced the land and helped build her own “claim shanty.” Around 1919, MacMurphy built and lived in a cottage, “Ti Zhinga,” on Bellevue Road in Omaha.⁷³ She established a newspaper and writing career, authored works about household economics, and served as domestic science editor for *Omaha World Herald*.⁷⁴ In 1864, twice widowed **Esther Carter Griswold Warner**, along with her three children, filed a homestead claim near Roca in Lancaster County. Warner’s first home in Nebraska was a small 14x14 shack with a lean-to, although she later built a log cabin, and then a large stone house ca. 1870 (see Figure 10).⁷⁵ As a single mother simultaneously raising children and running a farm, Warner became an outspoken proponent of women's suffrage. She successfully farmed her homestead claim until her death in 1901.⁷⁶

In 1870, 22-year-old **Ann Schleiss**, a single woman from Bohemia (present Czech Republic), established a homestead on a claim near Beatrice where she settled in a dilapidated sod building already on the property. Ann hired local men to sow some crops on the land and briefly returned to her family home nearby. She later returned to her claim, cultivated 19 acres, and started work on a new block house.⁷⁷

In the 1880s, women living in the predominantly African American settlement at Spoon Hill Creek near Westerville in Custer County also staked land claims, including several members of the **Speese** family, including **Rosetta, Mary, Lizzie,** and **Susan Speese**.⁷⁸ Lizzie Speese later moved to Empire, Wyoming where she homesteaded a land claim and built a frame house.⁷⁹ Other early Black female homesteaders in Nebraska were **Theodosia Scroggins** and at least two other

⁶⁸ Mary Virginia Fox, *The Story of Women who Shaped the West* (Children's Press, 1991), 18.

⁶⁹ Peggy A. Volzke Kelley, *Women of Nebraska Hall of Fame* (Nebraska International Women’s Year Coalition, 1976), 12; Histories about Arbor Lodge emphasize J. Sterling Morton’s involvement with the property’s development, and later their son Joy Martin’s hand in subsequent additions and renovations. The history of the property does little to highlight Caroline’s involvement in the development, design, or construction of the residence and surrounding grounds. However, scholarship does suggest that Caroline was heavily involved in the landscape design, interior design, and furnishings of the home, and it is likely she was actively involved in the numerous renovation projects while her husband worked.

⁷⁰ “Becoming Arbor Lodge,” Nebraska State Historical Society, accessed August 27, 2024, <https://history.nebraska.gov/becoming-arbor-lodge/>.

⁷¹ Gail DeBuse Potter, “The Evolution of Arbor Lodge, 1855-1904,” *Nebraska History* 73 (1992): 54-68.

⁷² Kelley, *Women of Nebraska Hall of Fame*, 12.

⁷³ “Nebraska News In Brief,” *The Riverton Review*, July 16, 1925, 2. It is unclear if this cottage is extant.

⁷⁴ Kelley, *Women of Nebraska Hall of Fame*, 22.

⁷⁵ Kelley, *Women of Nebraska Hall of Fame*, 4. It appears this stone house is still extant outside of Roca, Nebraska, although may have undergone several alterations.

⁷⁶ Naugle, Montag, and Olson, *History of Nebraska*, 191.

⁷⁷ Compton, *Challenging Imperial Expectations*, 49.

⁷⁸ Todd Guenther, “The Empire Builders, An African American Odyssey in Nebraska and Wyoming,” *Nebraska History* 89 (2008): 179-180 https://history.nebraska.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/NH2008Empire_Builders.pdf.

⁷⁹ “Lizzie Speese,” National Park Service, accessed December 17, 2024, <https://www.nps.gov/people/lizzie-speese.htm>.

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unnamed, unmarried, formerly enslaved women who lived independently on their homestead claims.⁸⁰ It is possible that these women were involved in the design or construction of homes or other buildings on their properties, and likely facilitated agricultural development. African American **Matilda Robinson** moved to Dawson County, Nebraska with her husband and children to establish a homestead. After her husband left Matilda and her children in 1883, she applied for a homestead claim, where she constructed a sod frame house and agricultural outbuildings and cultivated the land. Matilda Robinson was awarded final deed to her patent (9886) in 1893.⁸¹

2.4. EXAMPLE PROPERTY TYPE: *Dugouts and Sod Houses*

For early women homesteaders in Nebraska, the lack of timber and other construction materials, along with poor transportation networks, limited options for shelter construction. Thus, dugouts or sod houses (“soddies”) were the primary early dwellings of colonists in the Great Plains region (Figure 9). Dugouts were typically the first shelter, requiring only digging into the side of a hill or ravine, with several posts to support a door or window.⁸² Once a semi-secure dugout shelter had been made, these would be combined with slightly more laborious sod houses. Constructing a sod house required turning over furrows of thick, strong sod, then using a spade to cut the sod into “bricks,” which were then laid around the foundation. The cracks were filled with dirt and an additional two layers of brick were then laid in the same manner. Typically sod houses featured a door and possibly several windows, and a gable roof, either of sod or frame. Some sod houses were eventually plastered with clay and ash. Construction took very few tools and could be completed by most anyone. Early windows and doors were made of hides or blankets, and interiors were crudely furnished.⁸³

Although quick and affordable, sod houses lacked ventilation and light, did not hold up well to heavy rains, and often leaked excessively. However, they kept cool in the summer and warm in winter, protected against strong winds, and were largely fire resistant. Unreinforced sod houses could last 6-7 years, long enough to establish oneself on the property and get a subsistence farming operation up and running.

As families eventually graduated to frame dwellings, sod homes were often repurposed for livestock. Sod structures were also often constructed as outbuildings even after frame dwellings became commonplace.⁸⁴ Several sod houses associated with women in Nebraska include the **Anna Ellison** sod house (ca. 1897), the **Clara Wonch** sod house (c.1892), and the **Rebecca Perkins** sod house (ca. 1913), all in Custer County. As of a 2008 study, these houses were in various states of structural integrity.⁸⁵ Due to the fragile nature of sod dwellings, many no longer survive or are limited to archeological remains, although they may still retain valuable information potential.

3. *Tycoons in Petticoats - The Railroad, Statehood, and the Gilded Age (C. 1870-1900)*

3.1. NEBRASKA HISTORY (C. 1870-1900)

Prior to the U.S. Civil War, settlers were initially wary of relocating to the Plains region, largely due to the myth of the “Great American Desert,” the presence of Indigenous nations, and the region’s lack of trees and other building materials.⁸⁶ However, in the 1850s and 1860s numerous railroads, including the transcontinental railroad, completed lines through Nebraska, allowing the shipment of goods required to construct new settlements, and following the Civil War development in Nebraska skyrocketed.⁸⁷ The rapid influx of immigrants, including Czech (or Bohemian), Scandinavian, Irish, German (or Prussian), Welsh, and Jewish people saw the population of Nebraska surge from 28,826 in 1860 to 122,993 in 1870.⁸⁸ During Reconstruction, the Great Migration of African Americans out of the Deep South resulted in increased African American settlement in Nebraska, and between 1880 and 1892 the Black population of the state

⁸⁰ Guenther, “The Empire Builders, An African American Odyssey in Nebraska and Wyoming,” 187.

⁸¹ “Matilda Robinson,” National Park Service, accessed May 13, 2025, <https://www.nps.gov/people/matilda-robinson.htm>.

⁸² Everett Newfon Dick, *The Sod-house Frontier* (Johnsen, 1954), 71, Ebook.

⁸³ Dick, *The Sod-house Frontier*, 73-74.

⁸⁴ Dick, *The Sod-house Frontier*, 75.

⁸⁵ Andrea R. Kampinen, *Sod Houses of Custer County, Nebraska (Thesis)* (University of Missouri, 2002), https://getd.libs.uga.edu/pdfs/kampinen_andrea_r_200805_mhp.pdf, 145.

⁸⁶ Naugle, Montag, and Olson, *History of Nebraska*, 190.

⁸⁷ Naugle, Montag, and Olson, *History of Nebraska*, 133, 157.

⁸⁸ Naugle, Montag, and Olson, *History of Nebraska*, 158, 188, 199-203.

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increased from 2,300 to 6,000.⁸⁹ By the turn of the century, Japanese immigrants also slowly started to arrive in Nebraska to work in the burgeoning agricultural industries, including the sugar beet fields and canning factories.⁹⁰

In 1867 Nebraska achieved statehood, and shortly thereafter women once again took up the cause of suffrage, with renowned suffragettes **Susan B. Anthony** and **Elizabeth Cady Stanton** making several trips to Omaha to advocate for its passage in Nebraska. In Beatrice, **Clara Bewick Colby** published *The Woman's Tribune*, a suffragette newspaper. However, after another failed referendum in the 1880s, Anthony and other suffragettes shifted their focus to the national stage.⁹¹ Nonetheless, some small progress for women's rights advanced. In 1871 the Nebraska legislature passed an act allowing married women to buy and sell property independently of their husbands, marking a small erosion in common law coverture. This was partly due to the fact that marriages in the region were often made hastily or out of convenience, and thus women often found themselves tied to unscrupulous, abusive, or absent husbands.⁹²

Following the passage of the 1862 Morrill Act, the University of Nebraska was chartered in 1869 in Lincoln (formerly Lancaster) and opened in 1871.⁹³ As one of the earliest land grant colleges established in the western U.S., University of Nebraska in Lincoln (UNL) admitted women from the outset and was coeducational.⁹⁴ A College of Practical Science, Civil Engineering, and Mechanics was one of six colleges included in the initial charter.⁹⁵ In 1876 Alice Frost was the first female graduate of UNL.⁹⁶ In 1888, Rachel Lloyd joined the UNL faculty in the Chemical Laboratory.⁹⁷ In 1898 UNL regents formed the School of Domestic Science, and that year the first dean of women was appointed.⁹⁸ At the time, many female students resented the appointment of a separate dean, preferring to be included in the broader student body as equals.⁹⁹ In the UNL alumni directory of women graduates between 1869 and 1899, many did not list an occupation. For those who did, the majority were teachers, school administrators, and a few professors. There were also a small handful of lawyers and doctors, but none who listed occupations in or adjacent to the building trades.¹⁰⁰

The 1870s were a particularly demanding decade for Nebraskans. A financial panic in 1873, followed by a devastating blizzard, subsequent droughts, and grasshopper infestations, made conditions on the Plains arduous. Despite the hardships, by 1880 Nebraska had risen to 425,405 residents, and the state entered a decade of prosperity and urban development, with numerous townsites platted and schools, churches, homes, and neighborhoods constructed. Speculative construction skyrocketed in Lincoln and Omaha, with smaller settlements at Beatrice, Kearney, Hastings, Grand Island, Fremont, and Norfolk also caught up in the boosterism.¹⁰¹ In Omaha, the advent of streetcars and cable cars enabled residents to live further distances from their places of work, and new suburban neighborhoods were platted and developed.¹⁰²

In Nebraska, in the late nineteenth century more women entered college or wage labor, many finding work in newly established South Omaha packinghouses. Working women made some inroads into previously male dominated fields like journalism and medicine, although most found wage work in clerical jobs or low paying domestic service. In 1870, the U.S. Census reported that Nebraska's labor force consisted of 41,943 men and 1,894 (4.3 percent) women.¹⁰³ Wealthy

⁸⁹ Wirth, *The Women Who Built Omaha*, 155; Compton, *Challenging Imperial Expectations*, 57.

⁹⁰ Hiram Hisanori Kano, *The History of the Japanese in Nebraska* (Nebraska: Cottonwood Press, 1984), p6.

⁹¹ Naugle, Montag, and Olson, *History of Nebraska*, 121; Wirth, *The Women Who Built Omaha*, 45.

⁹² Betty Stevens, *Dangerous Class, A History of Suffrage in Nebraska and the League of Women Voters* (League of Women Voters, 1995), 4.

⁹³ "History 1869-Present," University of Nebraska – Lincoln, accessed December 17, 2024, <https://www.unl.edu/about/history/>.

⁹⁴ Andrea G. Radke-Moss, *Bright Epoch: Women & Coeducation in the American West* (University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 22.

⁹⁵ Robert R. Manley, *Centennial History of the University of Nebraska Volume 1* (University of Nebraska Press: 1969), 16.

⁹⁶ Annette Wetzel, "Nebraska's pomp and circumstance through the years," May 3, 2019, accessed December 12, 2024, <https://news.unl.edu/article/nebraskas-pomp-and-circumstance-through-nearly-150-years>.

⁹⁷ Manley, *Centennial History of the University of Nebraska Volume 1*, 111.

⁹⁸ Manley, *Centennial History of the University of Nebraska Volume 1*, p143.

⁹⁹ Robert R. Manley, *Centennial History of the University of Nebraska Volume 2* (University of Nebraska Press: 1969), 241.

¹⁰⁰ "University of Nebraska: A Complete List of Officers and Alumni," (University of Nebraska, 1900),

<https://archive.org/details/alumnidirectoryg01univ/page/n1/mode/2up>.

¹⁰¹ Nicoll, comp., *Nebraska, A Pictorial History*, 14.

¹⁰² Mead & Hunt, Inc. *Reconnaissance Survey of Portions of South Central Omaha*, July 2006, accessed December 17, 2024, https://preservation.cityofomaha.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/5_Survey_South_Central_Omaha_2006_reduced.pdf.

¹⁰³ Riley, *The Female Frontier*, 121.

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women participated in the public sphere through social activism and welfare organizations, although many also had covert influence in the political, economic, and social arenas.¹⁰⁴

Despite the intentions of the Homestead Act, a study by historian Paula Petrik of middle-class [White] women in Helena, Montana in the 1890s shows that women's roles in settling the western U.S. often challenged societal expectations and the goal of maintaining the status quo. Property ownership granted by the Act provided them with significant autonomy, and many forged new and unconventional paths. This was particularly true of second-generation pioneer women who were more likely to earn wages, never marry, or divorce.¹⁰⁵ Petrik noted that despite outward appearances, pioneer women "only superficially resembled the 'true woman' of the nineteenth century. Behind their facade of refinement and conformity lurked small-time tycoons in petticoats, tough administrators, school board kingmakers, and cartographers of class lines."¹⁰⁶

As development of Nebraska's towns and cities became more organized, with gridded neighborhoods, sidewalks, and boulevards, single men returned to the east to marry, bringing their educated, wealthy wives back to the Great Plains. These women brought books, luxury items, artistic sensibilities, and a desire for the refinement and "gentility" of the eastern metropolises they had grown up in.¹⁰⁷ They organized literary societies, art classes, and musical groups and became active in civic and social affairs.¹⁰⁸

3.2. WOMEN IN TRADES IN THE U.S. (C. 1870-1900)

In 1862 the U.S. government passed the Morrill Act establishing public land grant colleges. While the act did not specifically stipulate women be admitted, by 1890 every state included women's admission in their charter. This gradually opened more opportunities for women to earn degrees, although many universities still precluded women from studying in technical fields like architecture, design, and engineering.¹⁰⁹

The earliest formal curriculum in architecture in the U.S. was offered by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 1865, followed by the University of Pennsylvania in 1868.¹¹⁰ In 1870, the Franklin Institute Drawing School in Philadelphia began accepting women into its drafting program. One of the earliest women to earn a degree in the field was **May L. Page**, who graduated from the University of Illinois in 1879, followed by **Margaret Hicks** from Cornell in 1880.¹¹¹ In 1885, the prestigious MIT opened their school of architecture to women applicants, and by the turn of the century had graduated at least a dozen women.¹¹² In 1893 Franco-American architect Emmanuel Louis Masqueray founded his Atelier Masqueray, a school for teaching the École des Beaux-Arts program of design in New York. In 1899, Masqueray opened an extension to his atelier at 123 E. 23rd Street to teach women, of whom he reportedly stated "...he has unbounded faith in women's ability to succeed in architecture...provided they go about it seriously."¹¹³ The second atelier trained notable women architects, including **Isabel Roberts**, who later worked in the office of Frank Lloyd Wright.

In the Midwest, **Elmina Wilson** became the first woman to graduate from the Iowa Agricultural College (present-day Iowa State University) with a degree in civil engineering in 1892, later expanding her studies at Cornell and MIT and going on to work as a structural engineer for several firms in New York. Her sister **Alda Wilson** also graduated from MIT, going on to work with various architecture firms in New York and Chicago.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁴ Wirth, *The Women Who Built Omaha*, 39.

¹⁰⁵ Elizabeth. Jameson, "Toward a Multicultural History of Women in the Western United States." *Signs* 13, no. 4 (1988): 770, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3174111>.

¹⁰⁶ Paula Petrick qtd. in Jameson, "Toward a Multicultural History," 770.

¹⁰⁷ Creigh, *Nebraska, A Bicentennial History*, 104.

¹⁰⁸ Creigh, *Nebraska, A Bicentennial History*, 121.

¹⁰⁹ Lewis, *Women of Steel and Stone*, 10-11.

¹¹⁰ Lewis, *Women of Steel and Stone*, 11.

¹¹¹ Hartman, *The Women Who Changed Architecture*, 16.

¹¹² Hartman, *The Women Who Changed Architecture*, 26.

¹¹³ "Emmanuel Louis Masqueray," Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, accessed February 20, 2025, <https://wichitacathedral.com/en/component/content/article/73979>.

¹¹⁴ Radke-Moss, *Bright Epoch*, 177-178.

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Despite limited access to formal education in the building trades, many women in the U.S. found unique approaches to entering the design or architecture fields, working as apprentices or hiring private tutors. Some women established their own women's technical or design colleges, often instigated by frustrated female students or wealthy female patrons. In 1892 philanthropist and painter **Ellen Dunlap Hopkins** founded the New York School of Applied Design for Women to give low-income and immigrant women practical training in arts, design, and craftsmanship. In 1901 **Judith Eleanor Motley Low** founded the Lowthorpe School in Groton, Massachusetts, which taught women landscape design and gave them hands-on experience on the college's own grounds.¹¹⁵ Prominent graduates included **Edith Henderson, Gertrude Kuh (née Eisendrath), Elizabeth Lord, and Edith Schryver**, all of whom went on to have careers in landscape architecture.

Women entered the various educational programs for the building trades almost as soon as they became available to them; however, the challenge of admittance and graduation from a program paled in comparison to facing career prospects. "Those who departed from the Victorian code of babies, blushes, and bustles risked being labeled improper, peculiar or both. These stigmas were especially dangerous to acquire in architecture, the practice of which depends upon securing commissions."¹¹⁶ Thus, women in the building trades were forced to be inconspicuous to not attract negative attention and were hesitant to publicly promote their work. Nonetheless, many pressed forward, including **Harriet Warner** who designed the Lake Geneva Seminary in Wisconsin in 1884, **Mary Nolan** of Missouri who exhibited a prototype house at the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial, and **Emma Kimball** who worked as a professional draftsman in Massachusetts in the 1870s.¹¹⁷

As colleges and universities added architecture programs to their curriculum, and slowly opened applications to women, women made modest advances in the field. In 1870, the U.S. Census listed a single woman architect in the U.S., by 1890 the number had increased to 22.¹¹⁸ Despite more opportunities for advanced education, women found that once they graduated, securing employment was even more difficult than gaining access to the necessary education.¹¹⁹ However, wealthy women served a crucial role as patrons to women architects and artists, often hiring them to design their homes or other large projects.¹²⁰

The 'New Woman' of the Gilded Age

During the Gilded Age, the ideal of the "New Woman" emerged as a backlash against traditionalist Victorian gender roles. As the U.S. became more urban and industrialized, women pushed for more access to education, employment, and political influence.¹²¹ The unprecedented wealth and excess of the Gilded Age, while highly concentrated among White Euro-American and Europeans, did afford women opportunities to market their skills as interior designers, artists, and landscape designers. In 1897, the *Omaha Bee* reprinted an article on women's professional inroads, which noted that some had established "footing for themselves as artistic interior decorators." The article acknowledged that women still faced barriers, particularly fear of competition from men and "the old idea that decoration means paint and ladders, and hence must be a masculine undertaking." The article named "**Mrs. Bodine** of New York, who was so stylish she had been hired to design a prominent household in London," **Miss Brush**, who executed the "famous jewel work in the Vanderbilt mansion," and **Miss Tillinghast** who specialized in stained glass and tapestries.¹²²

Nationally, women continued breaking down barriers in the building trades. **Mary Colter** earned a degree at the California School of Design in 1890 and was later hired by hotel proprietor Fred Harvey as master architect and decorator of the Fred Harvey Company in 1910. Colter went on to have a prolific career, designing several structures at the Grand Canyon, including the Hopi House (NR 1987) and numerous hotels along the AT&SF railway.¹²³ **Lois Lilley Howe** also

¹¹⁵ Kate Reggev, "Open Only To Women": Three Early Female-Focused Design Schools," May 10, 2021, *Madam Architect*, <https://www.madamearchitect.org/in-ink/2021/5/10/open-only-to-women-three-early-female-focused-design-schools>.

¹¹⁶ Paine, "Pioneer Women Architects" in *Women in American Architecture*, 54.

¹¹⁷ Paine, "Pioneer Women Architects" in *Women in American Architecture*, 54-55.

¹¹⁸ Lewis, *Women of Steel and Stone*, 11.

¹¹⁹ Reggev, "Open Only To Women": Three Early Female-Focused Design Schools."

¹²⁰ Paine, Judith, "Pioneer Women Architects" in Torre, *Women in American architecture*, 69.

¹²¹ Wirth, *The Women Who Built Omaha*, 37.

¹²² "In the Domain of Woman." *The Omaha Daily Bee*, February 28, 1897, p11.

¹²³ Hartman, *The Women Who Changed Architecture*, 6.

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graduated in 1890 from MIT and started out as a draftsman at Allen and Kenway. In 1894 she opened her own firm, later adding **Eleanor Manning** and **Mary Almy**, which became one of the few all-women architecture firms in the U.S. and led over 425 projects during its operation.¹²⁴ **Louise Blanchard Bethune** is often cited as one of the first known women professional architects in the U.S., and the first female member of the American Institute of Architects (AIA), admitted in 1888.¹²⁵ Bethune opened her own practice in 1881, was an outspoken advocate for equal pay for women, and completed over 180 known projects during her career.¹²⁶ In 1890, Philadelphia boasted a female architect and designer in **Minerva Parker**, who supervised all the projects she designed, which ranged from railroad bridges, railroad stations, small dwellings, and stables, among others.¹²⁷ In 1893, the World's Columbia Exposition in Chicago put women architects and builders on the world stage when the Board of Lady Managers constructed a Women's Building. They chose the design of **Sophia Hayden**, a 21-year-old born in Santiago, Chile and one of the first female graduates of MIT's architecture program in 1890.¹²⁸

In New York, **Elsie de Wolfe**, earned a reputation as the first professional female interior designer in the U.S. After a brief career as an actress, she shifted her focus to design full time by the 1890s. Living with her partner, theater agent Elisabeth "Bessie" Marbury in New York, de Wolfe bucked both social norms and traditional design trends of the time. De Wolfe designed the interior of the Colony Club, and was hired by many wealthy East Coast families, including the Morgans and Vanderbilts.¹²⁹

Women pursuing careers in landscape architecture encountered less overt discrimination than their counterparts in engineering and architecture. This relative acceptance stemmed from societal associations between women and gardening, rooted in Victorian ideals that romanticized femininity and its connection to nature. Furthermore, since landscape design was generally less costly than building construction, it was considered more appropriate for women, who were not traditionally entrusted with large sums of money to "exercise their creativity."¹³⁰ **Beatrice Jones Farrand** was an early trailblazer in the field of landscape architecture. Born into an influential and affluent New York family, Farrand benefited from both social privilege and formal education. By 1896, she established her own practice at her family's home in New York, leveraging her extensive social network to promote her work. In 1899, she became the first and only woman admitted into the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) at the time.¹³¹

In 1880 the American Society for Civil Engineers (ASME) was founded, formalizing the field of engineering. One of the most renowned women engineers of the late nineteenth century was **Emily Warren Roebling**, who oversaw the design and construction of the Brooklyn bridge after the passing of her father-in-law and husband, both engineers.¹³² In 1895, **Marian Sara Parker** of Detroit was reportedly the first woman to earn a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from the University of Michigan.¹³³

In the Midwest, **Laura White** was a practicing architect in Ashland, Kentucky in 1889.¹³⁴ That same year, Columbia, Missouri reported having a female architect in **Mamie Hale**, who had designed several houses in that community, later going on to have her design for the 'Colony for the Epileptic and Feeble Minded' accepted in 1900.¹³⁵ **Marion Mahony Griffin** of Chicago became the first woman licensed as an architect in the U.S in 1898.¹³⁶ Mahony was later hired by Frank Lloyd Wright as his first employee, initially as a draftsman. After Wright left for Europe in 1909, Mahony

¹²⁴ Hartman, *The Women Who Changed Architecture*, 22.

¹²⁵ Hartman, *The Women Who Changed Architecture*, 6.

¹²⁶ Hartman, *The Women Who Changed Architecture*, 16-18; Lewis, *Women of Steel and Stone*, 15.

¹²⁷ "A Woman Architect," *Keytesville Chariton Courier*, April 10, 1890, p5.

¹²⁸ Lewis, *Women of Steel and Stone*, 18.

¹²⁹ Kate Reggev, "A Boston Marriage, An LGBTQIA+ Design Pioneer: Interior Decorator Elsie de Wolfe," *Madam Architect*. June 7, 2023, <https://www.madamearchitect.org/in-ink/2023/6/27/a-boston-marriage-an-lgbtqia-design-pioneer-interior-decorator-elsie-de-wolfe>.

¹³⁰ Lewis, *Women of Steel and Stone*, 120.

¹³¹ Lewis, *Women of Steel and Stone*, 121-123.

¹³² Lewis, *Women of Steel and Stone*, 75.

¹³³ "Young Woman architect," *Webster County Argus*, August 1, 1895, p6.

¹³⁴ *The Beatrice Daily Express*, July 1, 1889, p4; "Feeble Minded Colony," *Jefferson City Tribune*, July 11, 1900, p1.

¹³⁵ "Missouri Notes," *Keytesville Chariton Courier*, July 28, 1899, p6.

¹³⁶ "Marion Mahony Griffin," *Pioneering Women in Architecture*, accessed August 27, 2024, <https://pioneeringwomen.bwaf.org/marion-mahony-griffin/>.

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declined his offer to take over supervision of his office, however when Hermann V. von Holst agreed to take over Wright's commissions, it was on the condition that Mahony take on the role of lead designer. Marion Mahony later married Walter Burley Griffin, and the couple relocated to Australia, working together on projects in Australia and India.¹³⁷

Other pioneering women in trades included **Clio Hinton Huneker**, a New York sculptor, **Katherine T. Prescott**, a Boston plasterer, and **Julie M. Bracken**, a Chicago sculptor.¹³⁸ Gender non-conforming people also worked in the building trades in the nineteenth century. In 1892, *Vanity Fair* reported on Chicago contractor and carpenter **J. Piatkiewicz**, who was married with two children. The article, which was reprinted across the U.S., described them as a shrewd businessperson with considerable political influence, which allowed Piatkiewicz to live openly despite bucking social norms. It discussed Piatkiewicz's practice of wearing "the costume of the opposite sex," "form improvers," and earrings, rouge, and blond wigs which it described as "eccentric," and "strange."¹³⁹ Despite their nonconformity with the era's gender norms, and the risk of harm and arrest at a time when "impersonating the opposite sex" was against the law, **Piatkiewicz** was resolute in presenting as their true self.¹⁴⁰

On the national scale, the late nineteenth century marked the gradual emergence of women in the building trades. Although limited by societal norms and structural barriers, women began to shape the built environment, pushing the boundaries of what was possible within the constraints of the time. These women forged new paths into various industries in the buildings trades, eventually breaking down barriers in formal education and training by earning degrees in architecture and adjacent fields. Their work not only influenced domestic architecture but also marked early strides in historic preservation and public design. By the turn of the century, there were reportedly more than 200 women practicing architects in the U.S.¹⁴¹ There were also 40 known civil engineers, 44 women plasterers, 409 electricians/electrical engineers, and 531 female carpenters.¹⁴²

3.3. NEBRASKA WOMEN IN TRADES (C. 1870-1900)

In the late nineteenth century, the Anglo/European communities of Nebraska, including Nebraska City, Falls City, Bellevue, Plattsmouth, Tecumseh, and Brownsville, were spirited and raw townsites occupied by rough and tumble settlers. In many of the Nebraska frontier towns, saloons and brothels were amongst some of the earliest permanent buildings constructed.¹⁴³ However, between 1880 and 1890 the population of Nebraska more than doubled to 1,058,910.¹⁴⁴ The railroads facilitated the import of building materials, and European immigrants with skilled crafts, including decorative fretwork and tracery, stained glass, and stone and marble masons, adorned the built environment with architectural flourishes.¹⁴⁵ In rural areas, sod houses and schoolhouses were increasingly replaced with, or supplemented by, frame structures.¹⁴⁶ In more urban areas, many of the simple cottages and frame dwellings gave way to more substantial dwellings reflecting the broad design preferences of the time.

During that time, women's participation in the Nebraska labor force increased from 6.8 percent to 11.5 percent of the overall workforce. However, in 1890 women remained scarcely visible in the enumerated building trades, with only three blacksmiths, three brick and tile layers, one builder or contractor, nine carpenters, and five 'designers, draftsmen, or inventors.'¹⁴⁷ Agriculture remained the primary driver of the economy, although some manufacturing industries were

¹³⁷ Hartman, *The Women Who Changed Architecture*, 6.

¹³⁸ "A Girl Who 'Sculps,'" *The Beatrice Daily News*, September 29, 1899, p3.

¹³⁹ "They Are Eccentric," *Vanity Fair*, February 02, 1892, p8.

¹⁴⁰ "Wears Woman's Togs," *Chicago Tribune*, February 9, 1892, p1.

¹⁴¹ Hartman, *The Women Who Changed Architecture*, 17.

¹⁴² U.S. Census Bureau, "1900 U.S. Census Occupations at the Twelfth Census; States and Territories," accessed October 29, 2024, <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1900/occupations/occupations-part-8.pdf>.

¹⁴³ Creigh, *Nebraska, A Bicentennial History*, 110.

¹⁴⁴ Naugle, Montag, and Olson, *History of Nebraska*, 188.

¹⁴⁵ Creigh, *Nebraska, A Bicentennial History*, 117.

¹⁴⁶ Nicoll, comp., *Nebraska, A Pictorial History*, 74.

¹⁴⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, "Special Report on the Occupations of the Population of the United States at the Eleventh Census: 1890," accessed December 4, 2024.

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established, largely centered in Omaha, including meat processing, brickyards, soap factories, textile and clothing, and others.¹⁴⁸

3.3.1. The Technical Professionals

While no specific technical professional women in Nebraska were identified during this period, census records from 1900 indicate one female civil engineer in the state.¹⁴⁹

3.3.2. The Tradeswomen

While research did not reveal the names or stories of tradeswomen in Nebraska between 1870 and 1900, census records indicate that some women were in fact working in the trades, although the overall numbers decreased between 1890 and 1900. This was likely due to harsh weather conditions and the Panic of 1893, when many settlers left the state. Between 1890 and 1900, the number of female carpenters increased from 9 to 12, while female blacksmiths decreased from 3 to 2, brick and tile makers from 3 to 0, designers/draftsmen/inventors from 5 to 0, and painters/glaziers/varnishers from 21 to 14.¹⁵⁰

3.3.3. The Designers

The Panic of 1893 led to economic hardship in Nebraska, prompting the organization of the Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition in 1898, also known as the Omaha's World's Fair. Inspired by the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, the Trans-Mississippi Exposition allowed Omaha women, and particularly those in the arts and the building trades, an opportunity to participate in a public forum.¹⁵¹ Omaha socialite **Sarah Joslyn** led the cultural and educational activities at the fair, although she was not listed in any of the formal publications or pamphlets.¹⁵² In planning the 1890s exposition, some professional women with art studios along Paxton Block near the exposition headquarters contributed graphics and exhibit design work, although they remained unnamed. The Exposition attracted 2.6 million visitors to Omaha in 1898.¹⁵³

3.3.4. The Planners

In the late nineteenth century, most of the Indigenous peoples of the Great Plains were forced to relocate to Indian Territory in Oklahoma or sequestered on reservation lands. In the 1880s, **Rosalie LaFlesche Farley**, daughter of Omaha Chief Joseph LaFlesche, tried to walk the tightrope between the Indigenous and Anglo worlds (Figure 5). In her attempt to chart a meaningful path forward for the Omaha people amid widespread erasure, in the 1880s, Rosalie, along with White anthropologist **Alice Fletcher**, worked to enact allotment procedures and manage the Omaha Reservation lands (Figures 4, 5 and 6).¹⁵⁴

After the U.S. government broke its treaty with the Ponca and gave much of their reservation land in Nebraska to various Lakota, Oglala, and other Indigenous nations, Fletcher advocated for the passage of the Omaha Allotment Act to preserve Omaha lands. The act, which passed in 1882, allotted 1,194 individual plots to Omaha people by 1884, encompassing 76,810 acres.¹⁵⁵ Fletcher oversaw the allotment process, created a system of small loans for Indigenous people to purchase land and build houses, and later acted as allotment agent for the Nijšoc Hoocak (Ho-Chunk/Winnebago) and Nimi'ipuu (Nez Perce) reservations.¹⁵⁶ LaFlesche Farley oversaw management of Omaha lands, serving as the bookkeeper and business manager for the Omaha people. She distributed and managed funds earned from the sale or lease of Omaha land and managed the communal pasture on remaining land after allotments were apportioned.¹⁵⁷ While the efforts of both **Alice Fletcher** and **Rosalie LaFlesche Farley**, and their enduring impact on the Indigenous peoples of the

¹⁴⁸ Naugle, Montag, and Olson, *History of Nebraska*, 291.

¹⁴⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, "1920 Census: Fourteenth Census of the United States, State Compendium," accessed October 29, 2024, <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1920/state-compendium/06229686v26-31.pdf>

¹⁵⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, "1920 Census: Fourteenth Census of the United States, State Compendium."

¹⁵¹ "Women's Participation in the Exposition - Criticism and Defense of Their Plan," *Evening World Herald*, February 6, 1897, p11

¹⁵² "The Omaha World's Fair," Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition, accessed December 18, 2024, <https://trans-mississippi.unl.edu>; Wirth, *The Women Who Built Omaha*, 38.

¹⁵³ Wirth, *The Women Who Built Omaha*, 88.

¹⁵⁴ Morin, *Frontiers of Femininity*, 171-172.

¹⁵⁵ Morin, *Frontiers of Femininity*, 171-172.

¹⁵⁶ Miller, *A Sweet, Separate Intimacy*, 148; "Milestone Documents - Dawes Act (1887)," National Archives, accessed July 30, 2024, <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/dawes-act>.

¹⁵⁷ Morin, *Frontiers of Femininity*, 171-172, 190.

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Plains, were highly controversial and are worthy of analysis with a modern lens, they nonetheless serve as early examples of women's participation as land managers in Nebraska.

3.3.5. The Independents

In Nebraska, women continued staking homestead claims, establishing sod houses, and eking out a modest living on the western frontier. **Margaret Ann Woodward Canaday** married Riley Canaday in Iowa in 1847, and the following decade the couple set out for Nebraska in a covered wagon. They struggled to make ends meet on their preemption land near Nebraska City for eight years before filing for a homestead claim in Cass County near Weeping Water in 1865. After Riley's death, Canaday continued farming their property, and in 1870 became one of the earliest women to receive a homestead certificate when she was granted Homestead Certificate No. 123, giving her sole title to 153 acres. She remained on the homestead for 30 years before her death in 1907.¹⁵⁸ **Sarah Shaw Wisdom**, a widow, filed a claim in remote, rural Nebraska in 1886, where she raised her three children, improved her claim, and made final proof.¹⁵⁹

3.4. EXAMPLE PROPERTY TYPE: NA

Since no specific properties associated with women in trades were identified during this era, an example property type is not described here. However, property types from this time could include rural schools, frame dwellings, allotment houses, or agricultural properties, among others.

4. From Wind to Wing to Heron - Industrialization, Early Progressive Era, and WWI (C. 1900-1920)

4.1. NEBRASKA HISTORY (C. 1900-1920)

The turn of the twentieth century ushered in a period of relative prosperity for Nebraskans, as advances in farming equipment, the proliferation of the automobile, and the introduction of modern amenities like electricity, telephones, and radio all reduced the toil and isolation of Nebraska farmers.¹⁶⁰ In 1900 the population of Nebraska was 1,066,910, 47 percent of whom were women.¹⁶¹ At that time, women made up 12.5 percent of the state's overall workforce.¹⁶²

For rural women living on farmsteads in Nebraska, life improved moderately. Coal-burning stoves made housework easier, and telephones allowed women to communicate with their neighbors, ending much of the isolation that had weighed heavily on many early women homesteaders.¹⁶³ In 1904, passage of the Kincaid Act opened the last of the Nebraska frontier, and regions in the western part of the state saw increased development.¹⁶⁴ Finally, the arrival of the automobile changed the landscape and culture of Nebraska, enabling efficient connectivity between the state's principal urban centers and its more remote towns and rural homesteads, thereby transforming patterns of settlement, commerce, and social interaction across vast distances.¹⁶⁵

The early years of the 1910s were known as the Golden Age of Agriculture in Nebraska as advancements in technology bolstered the agricultural industry, and the state saw another large surge of immigration.¹⁶⁶ Between 1910 and 1920 the population of Nebraska rose from 1,193,214 to 1,296,372.¹⁶⁷ By 1914 all neighboring states had granted women's suffrage, although it was strongly opposed in Nebraska, in large part by the liquor businesses which feared that women would ban the sale of alcohol.¹⁶⁸ As automobile ownership proliferated, in 1912 real estate developer Carl G. Fisher

¹⁵⁸ Kelley, *Women of Nebraska Hall of Fame*, 9.

¹⁵⁹ Sheryll Patterson-Black, "Women Homesteaders on the Great Plains Frontier," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 1, no. 2 (1976): 73, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3346070>.

¹⁶⁰ Nicoll, comp., *Nebraska, A Pictorial History*, 123.

¹⁶¹ Naugle, Montag, and Olson, *History of Nebraska*, 188; "Historical Census Statistics on Population Totals by Race, 1790 to 1990, and by Hispanic origin, 1970 to 1990, for the United States, Regions, Divisions, and States," U.S. Census Bureau, accessed October 29, 2024, <https://www2.census.gov/library/working-papers/2002/demo/pop-twps0056/pop-twps0056.pdf>.

¹⁶² "1900 U.S. Census Occupations at the Twelfth Census; States and Territories," U.S. Census Bureau, accessed October 29, 2024, <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1900/occupations/occupations-part-8.pdf>

¹⁶³ Nicoll, comp., *Nebraska, A Pictorial History*, 132.

¹⁶⁴ Nicoll, comp., *Nebraska, A Pictorial History*, 133.

¹⁶⁵ Stevens, *Dangerous Class*, 23.

¹⁶⁶ Naugle, Montag, and Olson, *History of Nebraska*, 296-7.

¹⁶⁷ Naugle, Montag, and Olson, *History of Nebraska*, 188.

¹⁶⁸ Wirth, *The Women Who Built Omaha*, 45.

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launched a campaign for a transcontinental highway from Jersey City to San Francisco by way of Omaha, later known as the Lincoln Highway (present-day US 30), opening increased transportation and opportunities for auto tourism.¹⁶⁹

In 1915, only a handful of public colleges and universities in the Midwest region had architecture departments or schools, including the University of Michigan, Washington University in St. Louis, University of Kansas, the Armour Institute in Chicago, the University of Illinois, and the University of Notre Dame.¹⁷⁰ In the fall of 1913, University of Nebraska – Lincoln (UNL) opened its architecture courses to its first two unnamed female students, however, they “did not have the mathematics which would enable them to take the courses in mechanics that an architect needs.” However, in the Spring of 1914, one unnamed female student with the prerequisite mathematics intended to enroll.¹⁷¹

As women pushed for more public visibility, their representation in the labor force also dramatically increased. In 1910, women amounted to over 37 percent of the Nebraska workforce. While a majority worked as teachers or in domestic service, a large number were also engaged in agriculture.¹⁷²

4.2. WOMEN IN TRADES IN THE U.S (C. 1900-1920)

The increased activism and participation of women in the public sphere that originated in the late nineteenth century coalesced into a sweeping movement in the early twentieth century known as the Progressive Movement. Women became more vocal in organizing and advocating for a stronger presence in public life, founding numerous social welfare organizations, club groups, volunteer associations, and advocacy organizations. Women became more politically involved, particularly in the areas of Women’s Suffrage, the Temperance Movement, education and sanitation reform, public housing, and child welfare. In some cases, women used the stereotype of homemakers to their advantage, combining it with social reform issues of the era. Women like **Caroline Bartlett Crane** designed housing for low- and moderate-income families, including tenement housing and small cottages for working families. In 1911 **Jane Bowne Haines** established another school for women interested in agriculture, landscape design, and architecture when she founded the School of Horticulture at Ambler, Pennsylvania.¹⁷³

Concurrently, the rise of the Woman’s Club Movement saw women increasingly hired to design buildings for women’s groups, including YWCAs.¹⁷⁴ One example is **Elizabeth Carter Brooks**, born to a formerly enslaved mother Martha Webb in New Bedford, Massachusetts. Brooks pursued a degree in architecture at the Swain Free School of Design and later worked in real estate development and architecture. She founded and designed the New Bedford Home for the Aged, which opened in 1908, and planned and supervised the construction of the Phillis Wheatley YWCA building in Washington, D.C.¹⁷⁵

During the Progressive Era, Indigenous women who had been raised during the period of forced assimilation and education in western school systems utilized their knowledge of both Indigenous and Euro-American cultures and customs to advocate for the rights of Indigenous Americans. **Laura Cornelius Kellogg**, born on the Oneida Reservation in Wisconsin and educated at an Episcopal school, emerged as a strong proponent of Indigenous rights, political sovereignty, financial independence, and the innate independence and power of Indigenous women.¹⁷⁶ Kellogg fought back against the unlawful seizure of Indigenous lands by the Committee on Indian Affairs and crafted a detailed plan for economic revitalization on Indigenous known as her ‘Lolomi Plan.’ Her plan was predicated upon cooperation and community amongst Indigenous peoples, rather than the rugged individualism expounded on by Anglo/European Americans.¹⁷⁷

¹⁶⁹ Naugle, Montag, and Olson, *History of Nebraska*, 320.

¹⁷⁰ “Bulletin: (1915) - No.41, Significant School Extension Records,” U.S. Bureau of Education, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1925.

¹⁷¹ “University of Nebraska,” *Lincoln Nebraska State Journal*, January 27, 1914, p5.

¹⁷² Riley, *The Female Frontier*, 122, 127, 132.

¹⁷³ Elizabeth Kemper Adams, *Women Professional Workers*, 110; “A Century of Cultivation: Preserving Campus History,” Ambler Arboretum, accessed December 14, 2024, <https://ambler.temple.edu/arboretum/about/history/century-cultivation>.

¹⁷⁴ Paine, “Pioneer Women Architects” 69.

¹⁷⁵ “Elizabeth Carter Brooks (1867-1951),” New Bedford Historical Society, accessed September 18, 2024, <https://nbhistoricalsociety.org/portfolio-item/elizabeth-carter-brooks-1867-1951/>.

¹⁷⁶ Catherine Faurot, “Laura Cornelius Kellogg,” Rematriation, accessed February 21, 2025, <https://rematriation.com/laura-cornelius-kellogg-reclaiming-an-indigenous-visionary/>.

¹⁷⁷ Laura Cornelius Kellogg, *Our democracy and the American Indian* (Kansas City.: Burton publishing company, 1920).

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Following World War I, nationally women remained scarce in the fields of architecture, design, and the building trades. In 1903, **Emily Helen Butterfield** of Detroit graduated from Syracuse University with a bachelor's degree in architecture.¹⁷⁸ Butterfield later became the first licensed woman architect in Michigan, opening a private practice with her father in 1917, Butterfield and Butterfield, and designing numerous churches and residences throughout Michigan.¹⁷⁹

In 1916 Harvard, at that time an all-male institution, established a separate Cambridge School of Architecture and Landscape Design for Women.¹⁸⁰ However, the same year, the Bureau of Education reported only four women graduates with architecture degrees in the entire country, although sources suggest this is an undercount. Some women were employed in independent architecture practices or as salaried workers in larger firms, regardless of their educational background. Within the building trades, architecture was the most challenging field for women to break into due to the high standards for professional qualifications. Thus, women were more likely to work as landscape architects or interior designers.¹⁸¹ During the early decades of the twentieth century, many of the women working professionally in the trades were immigrants, who had received technical or industrial education in their native countries. **Edith Mortensen Northman** emigrated to the U.S from Denmark in 1914. Having attended art school in her homeland, she became a draftsman. In 1920 she moved to Los Angeles where she found work as chief drafter, became licensed as an architect in 1931, and eventually opened her own firm.¹⁸²

In 1910, on a national scale women in trades remained scarce. That year, the U.S. Census enumerated 302 women architects, although that number declined to 137 in 1920.¹⁸³ In 1910 there were also a reported 5 women civil engineers, 15 masons, 38 carpenters, 2,986 women designers/draftspeople, 15 'landscape gardeners' and 797 'real estate agents and brokers.' The only field within or adjacent to the building trades where women made up a significant portion of the workforce were 'artists and teachers of art,' with women occupying 45 percent of the total workforce in 1910.¹⁸⁴

4.3. NEBRASKA WOMEN IN TRADES (C. 1900-1920)

In the early twentieth century, the demographic makeup and lifestyle of Nebraskan women ranged dramatically, from rural homesteaders, Indigenous women living on reservations or allotments, immigrant women laboring in the sugar beet fields or packinghouses, prostitutes and madams in densely settled urban areas, and the middle and upper-income White women of Eastern states seeking to bring 'refinement' to their burgeoning Nebraska cities. However, one concern nearly all the women of Nebraska shared was securing their financial stability. In the early decades of the 1900s, as the urban areas of Omaha and Lincoln experienced rapid residential development booms, real estate quickly became a popular pastime of many upper- and middle-income women.

At that time, women in Nebraska were already participating in various industries in the building trades, although their contributions were rarely highlighted, and were rather noted in passing without mention of their names, if at all. In 1900, it was reported that the Hebb Motors Co. shop in Havelock employed a woman carpenter, and the newspaper stated, "the pride of this factory is the little woman carpenter who is making tops for the trucks...she has already won the fame of being the best carpenter at the shop."¹⁸⁵ A single line in the *Gering Courier* noted in 1893 simply that "Caldwell has a woman carpenter."¹⁸⁶

¹⁷⁸ "Senate Ratifies List of Degrees," *The Syracuse Post-Standard*, June 10, 1907, p6.

¹⁷⁹ "Emily Butterfield," MichiganWomenForward, accessed February 25, 2025, <https://miwf.org/celebrating-women/michigan-womens-hall-of-fame/emily-butterfield/>.

¹⁸⁰ Hartman, *The Women Who Changed Architecture*, 6.

¹⁸¹ Adams, *Women Professional Workers*, 318.

¹⁸² Kate Reggev, "From There to Here." *Madam Architect*. March 28, 2024, <https://www.madamearchitect.org/in-ink/2024/3/22/from-there-to-here-immigrant-female-architects>.

¹⁸³ Adams, *Women Professional Workers*, 23.

¹⁸⁴ "1910 U.S. Census Occupations at the Thirteenth Census; States and Territories," U.S. Census Bureau, accessed October 29, 2024, <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1910/volume-4/volume-4-p4.pdf>

¹⁸⁵ "New Auto Factory at Havelock," *Sunday State Journal*, May 12, 1918, p 29.

¹⁸⁶ "Caldwell," *The Gering Courier*, June 6, 1893, p3.

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The onset of WWI saw over 57,000 Nebraska men and women join the armed forces. As men enlisted, national campaigns to recruit women workers into the previously male-dominated industrial, mechanical, and agricultural sectors abounded. The Women's Land Army program recruited women to work as farmers and fields hands. Across the country, millions of American women volunteered for the Red Cross, and over 11,000 American women joined the U.S. Navy, including New York born artist **Hildreth Meière** (see *Section 6.3.3*) who worked as a draftsman.¹⁸⁷ In 1918, real estate agent **Alice F. Nelson** (see *Section 4.3.4*, below) was recommended by Omaha's Mayor for a position as field examiner for the war risk insurance bureau and **Golda Verlene Peckman** (later Suttie - see *Section 6.3* for more information) of Lincoln served as a member of the Women's Motor Corps.¹⁸⁸

Despite their exemplary work however, at war's end women were encouraged to vacate their positions to provide employment for returning servicemen.¹⁸⁹ A 1914 editorial published in numerous newspapers across Nebraska promulgated men's fears of working women. After witnessing half a dozen women carpenters in the Swift produce plant, the unnamed author, despite the manager telling him the "women carpenters could make more boxes in a day than his men,"¹⁹⁰ cautioned Nebraskan men:

The American home is the best stone in the foundation upon which the republic rests, but that stone is fast crumbling under the acid tests now being applied by the advocates of that un-American cult which is seeking to make men unmanly, and women un-womanly. And if the fad is fast making women carpenters, how long will it be before we have women brick-layers and women horse-shoers, women firemen and women engineers...? I must be always appealing to the men of Nebraska to stop and do some earnest thinking before giving support to a fad which is fraught with so much of harm to women, and so much of danger to the republic.¹⁹¹

Reactionary fears of societal and moral decay were frequently cited as a justification for keeping women out of traditionally male dominated fields like the building trades.

4.3.1. The Technical Professionals

Women in the technical building trades remained scarce in Nebraska during the early decades of the twentieth century. No women architects or engineers were recorded in the 1910 or 1920 census, although one landscape gardener was recorded in both. In 1910 there were six reported designers/draftsmen/inventors, although the 1920 census did not enumerate that field.¹⁹² However, these figures do not account for the many women who likely practiced these trades informally. For a few women, their initial informal forays into the building trades began on a small scale, but later developed into full scale careers, like that of Alice Leet of Lincoln.

Alice "Allie" May Leet (née White) - (1864-1951)

Alice "Allie" May Leet (né White) designed and built numerous homes in Lincoln in the early twentieth century. Allie May began as a teacher but after marrying decided to design her own home, the first of which was in Tobin, Nebraska. The couple later moved to Fairbury, Nebraska, where Leet remodeled an existing home. After briefly living in an architect-designed home in Lincoln, Leet sold the home and designed a residence at 1908 B Street, which was reportedly the first stucco and brick house in the city when completed in 1911 (see Figure 11). Her design attracted immediate attention and shortly after its completion, the Leets received numerous offers to purchase it, and they ultimately sold it.¹⁹³

Allie Leet designed and drew her own blueprints, then hired a contractor to bring them to life. The *Lincoln Star* noted that "never has she drawn a set of plans that could not be carried out successfully."¹⁹⁴ After seeing her completed home, her

¹⁸⁷ "Women in World War I," National Park Service; Gentry and Vonesh, *Women in Maryland Architecture*, E-27.

¹⁸⁸ "Peckham-Suttie Wedding," *Brady Vindicator*, June 16, 1921, P1; "Omaha at a Glance," *Omaha World Herald*, October 5, 1918, p6.

¹⁸⁹ "Lincoln Women Who Entered the Industrial World As Patriotic Duty, Ready to Give Up Places," *The Lincoln Star*, January 5, 1919, p17.

¹⁹⁰ "Notes of a Journey," *The Columbus Telegram*, June 12, 1914, p6.

¹⁹¹ "Notes of a Journey," *The Columbus Telegram*, June 12, 1914, p6.

¹⁹² "1910 U.S. Census Occupations at the Thirteenth Census; States and Territories," U.S. Census Bureau; "1920 U.S. Census Occupations at the Fourteenth Census; States and Territories," accessed October 29, 2024, <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1920/volume-4/41084484v4ch02.pdf>

¹⁹³ Effie Leese Scott, "Lincoln Women and Their Fads," *Lincoln Sunday Star*, August 15, 1915, p19.

¹⁹⁴ Scott, "Lincoln Women and Their Fads."

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friends asked if she would share the architectural plans, and several additional homes were constructed from Leet's blueprints. Allie Leet also designed a bungalow on Sheridan Street, later the home of Mrs. and Mr. E.O. Stiehm, the plans for which were also utilized for several other residences, some as far as Denver. She designed another bungalow at 2017 S. 23rd, where Allie and her husband Eugene ultimately settled, as well as her daughter Fern's home at 2017 S. 26th.¹⁹⁵ Despite having designed and overseen construction of numerous dwellings in Lincoln, U.S. census records do not list an occupation for Allie Leet, highlighting the difficulty in researching and uncovering the many women who were practicing the building trades. Furthermore, the *Lincoln Star* article which outlined Leet's work as an architect and home designer referred to her interest in design as a "fad," undermining her professional capabilities and instead painting them as a mere hobby.

4.3.2. The Tradeswomen

While no specific women were identified by name during this MPDF as directly working as tradespeople in Nebraska during this time, census statistics indicate that women were in fact participating in the building trades and adjacent fields. Thus, there may be yet-to-be-identified tradeswomen who were operating in the state during that time. In 1910 the census reported two Nebraska women 'builders or contractors,' three painters/glaziers/varnishers, three 'paper hangers,' and 181 laborers in the building and hand trades.¹⁹⁶ In 1920, five women carpenters were reported, while painters/glaziers/varnishers increased to 69.¹⁹⁷

4.3.3. The Designers

The introduction of commercially processed food, ready-made clothing, and advancements in household technology significantly increased leisure time for urban women in the upper- and middle-income brackets in the United States.¹⁹⁸ This newfound leisure time enabled some women to pursue their interests in design and architecture on a small scale, in their own personal homes. **Avery Rundell Abbott**, a known short-story writer in Nebraska, developed a keen interest in art and interior design. Her home was showcased in "The House Beautiful," wherein "almost every article of furniture in her home was designed by Mrs. Abbott and made especially from her design."¹⁹⁹ Other women pursued more formal avenues, like **Anna Burckhardt**, noted in newspapers as "of negro blood," who resided in Lincoln and had a studio at 1236 Washington Street.²⁰⁰ Burckhardt also taught art classes and reportedly painted the memorial windows at the A.M.E. church in Lincoln featuring figures of Christ and the Virgin Mary.²⁰¹

In 1908, **Virginia Couzens** (né Lucas) was touted as the 'only woman sculptor' in Nebraska. Couzens was the daughter of a wealthy Nebraska family, and "so keen was her ambition to study art, that when opposed by her family, who objected to a young woman leaving family and friends for study abroad, she determined to make her own way and to owe her success to no one but herself." After studying in Holland, Couzens achieved significant success in the art world, later opening studios in New York, Paris, and Honolulu, spending much of her life living in those locations. In addition to sculpting, Couzens was also a painter and singer.²⁰²

In 1912, **Florence Pretz**, originator of the "Billiken," settled in Lincoln after marrying husband Robert Smalley. After graduating from manual training school in 1903, Pretz worked as an interior designer in Kansas City and was employed there by several furniture design firms. She later attended the Chicago Art Institute and Fischer Art School in Philadelphia and taught art at the manual training high school.²⁰³ In 1906 she was inspired to create her "billiken" idol, a small, mythical figure which she later made into clay. The figure became a national sensation and in 1908 Pretz patented her

¹⁹⁵ Scott, "Lincoln Women and Their Fads."

¹⁹⁶ "1910 U.S. Census Occupations at the Thirteenth Census; States and Territories," U.S. Census Bureau.

¹⁹⁷ "1920 U.S. Census Occupations at the Fourteenth Census; States and Territories," U.S. Census Bureau.

¹⁹⁸ Judith N. McArthur and Harold L. Smith, *Texas Through Women's Eyes, The Twentieth Century Experience*. (University of Texas Press, 2010), 2.

¹⁹⁹ "Nebraska Women Who Do Things," *Omaha World Herald*, June 5, 1910, p42.

²⁰⁰ "Talented Artist Resides in Lincoln," *The Lincoln Star*, December 26, 1901, p16.

²⁰¹ "Lincoln Department," *The Monitor*, March 24, 1917, p8.

²⁰² "Nebraska Woman Sculptor Will Make a Bust of William Jennings Bryan," *Omaha World Herald*, August 23, 1908, p27.

²⁰³ "What is a Billiken?," Saint Louis University, accessed February 25, 2025, <https://www.slu.edu/about/key-facts/what-is-a-billiken.php#:~:text=The%20Billiken%20is%20a%20mythical,he%20was%20a%20national%20sensation.>

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figurine, later selling the rights for its production to a Chicago company. The Billiken later became the official mascot of St. Louis University.²⁰⁴

In 1910 the only field within or adjacent to the building trades where women made up a majority of the workforce was ‘artists, sculptors, or teachers of art,’ of which there were 187 (67 percent of the total workforce).²⁰⁵ In 1920, the census reported there were also two women in Nebraska engaged as decorators/drapers/window dressers.²⁰⁶

4.3.4. The Planners

During the Progressive Era, women’s clubs often organized fundraisers and led efforts towards city beautification improvements and recreational facilities for their communities. In Milligan in Fillmore County, Nebraska, in 1913 the Women’s Club initiated a cleanup of an old site west of Highway 41. They cleared the lot and were responsible for the construction of an arbor, table, and benches in what they later named Tourist Park. The club women also planted cedar trees and shrubs.²⁰⁷

Women in Real Estate Development

While real estate agents are generally not directly involved in shaping the built environment and are thus unlikely to qualify as women in the building trades (see Section F. Registration Requirements), many women realtors also developed properties. These women may have hired contractors or architects to complete buildings or structures based on their designs or had a substantial impact on the way a property developed. In these cases, women real estate developers may be considered within the purview of Women in Trades and are thus discussed herein.

At the turn of the century, Nebraska had no laws allowing women to automatically inherit real estate from a deceased husband, unless he had no other living relatives. A 1904 article stated, “However much the widow may have contributed toward the earning of the real estate of her deceased husband, yet she cannot inherit it if there be any relative of the husband, howsoever remote he may be.” Alternatively, it appears that husbands of deceased wives also had no legal rights to automatically inherit their wives’ real estate.²⁰⁸ With few laws that ensured women financial independence or inheritance should their husbands die, a common occurrence at that time, women were left to seek out alternative sources of income that were permitted within the parameters of the era’s limited gender roles.

Amid skyrocketing building activity in Lincoln and Omaha, newspapers noted numerous women involved in real estate and development, including **Alice F. Nelson** who was a principal member at the firm Gallagher and Nelson. Nelson “handles chiefly city property and women clients” and was the “only woman insurance agent licensed in Omaha.”²⁰⁹ That year, Alice Nelson became the first woman elected to the Omaha Real Estate Exchange in a unanimous vote.²¹⁰ **Mrs. E.N. Deuel** of 5348 N. 28th in Omaha was also in the real estate business, which she undertook after her husband fell ill and could no longer support the family.²¹¹ Other women involved in real estate included **Mrs. C.W. Hayes**, **Mrs. Lola Vincent**, and **May E. Riale**, all of Omaha. Riale was known to buy vacant lots and have them developed and in 1908 she purchased a lot at 27th and Harney where she developed a series of “St. Louis flats” (possibly extant).²¹² **Lola Vincent** was the former proprietor of the Vincent Hotel and a prominent club woman. In 1914 she enrolled in law classes at the University of Omaha to learn contracts so she could manage her real estate holdings.²¹³ In 1922 she applied to take the Nebraska bar exam. The *Omaha World Herald* stated, “She is an extensive property owner and took up law to enable her to handle her business interests more intelligently.”²¹⁴

²⁰⁴ *Lincoln Nebraska State Journal*, February 17, 1912, p5.

²⁰⁵ “1910 U.S. Census Occupations at the Thirteenth Census; States and Territories,” U.S. Census Bureau.

²⁰⁶ “1920 U.S. Census Occupations at the Fourteenth Census; States and Territories,” U.S. Census Bureau.

²⁰⁷ RDG Planning & Design, *A Historic Survey of Fillmore County, Nebraska*, May 2020, accessed December 17, 2024, https://history.nebraska.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/SHPO_Fillmore-County-Final-Report.pdf.

²⁰⁸ “Nebraska Law of Descent,” *Omaha Daily Bee*, January 26, 1904, p7.

²⁰⁹ “A Million In New Buildings,” *Lincoln Daily Star*, July 23, 1905, p3; “Three Omaha Women Real Estate Brokers,” *Omaha World Herald*, March 19, 1911, p37.

²¹⁰ “Woman Made Member of Real Estate Exchange,” *The Omaha Daily News*, September 6, 1911, p1.

²¹¹ “Club Women Shrewd Real Estate Buyers,” *Omaha World Herald*, December 5, 1912, p7.

²¹² “Omaha Woman Successful Real Estate Investor,” *Omaha World Herald*, March 18, 1908, p5.

²¹³ “Omaha Woman in Law Class; Mrs. C. Vincent a Student,” *Omaha World Herald*, December 12, 1914, p4.

²¹⁴ “Two Omaha Women to Take Bar Examination,” *May 27, 1922*, p6.

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In 1910 the census enumerated 27 women ‘real estate agents and officials’ in the state of Nebraska, although by 1920 that number had climbed to 69.²¹⁵ While not all women involved in the real estate industry are associated with properties eligible for listing under this MPDF cover document, many, including those who developed their properties, *may* qualify if they meet the registration requirements outlined in **Section F**.

4.3.5. The Independents

For some women in rural Nebraska, conditions often necessitated women’s informal participation in the building trades. Rural women teachers were often tasked with finding a location to teach, providing the necessary water which needed to be hauled, and sometimes constructing a schoolhouse herself. This was the case for **Lucy Bowen**, an early pioneer schoolteacher who upon finding no schoolhouse, endeavored to build one herself.²¹⁶ **Dr. Georgia Arbuckle** (later Fix) was one of few female doctors in nineteenth century Nebraska. She staked a homestead claim near present-day Minatare and later moved to Gering and established her practice in a small brick building. She eventually purchased a larger property, had two houses moved there, and renovated the buildings into a two-story “Sanitarium,” where teachers and students often boarded. Arbuckle personally planted sapling trees around the property, which became a community gathering place, the site of weddings, and other community events.²¹⁷

During the early twentieth century, single women continued to file land claims in Nebraska. In the historically African American settlement of DeWitty, **Peryle Woodson** worked as a schoolteacher to the area’s Black students while also farming her homestead property. She later added a frame house, sod barn, well with pump, and planted numerous pine and locust trees on the property. After receiving her homestead patent, she relocated to Kansas.²¹⁸

Winona Branch (aka **Mrs. Andrew Jackson Sawyer**) of Lincoln pursued her interest in design informally. Sawyer, who had already been a music teacher, studied law and passed the bar exam, and became Nebraska’s first female lawyer, later became interested in planning and designing houses. Although Sawyer did not draw plans herself, she hired architects to draw them according to her designs, consisting of octagonal rooms (1718 F Street, no longer extant). She also designed the Orlo apartments at 14th and K Streets (no longer extant), which was billed as one of the “most up-to-date apartments in the west” in 1915.²¹⁹

4.4. EXAMPLE PROPERTY TYPE: *Early Modern Suburban Homes*

In the early twentieth century, architects in the U.S., including Frank Lloyd Wright and **Marion Mahony Griffin**, began experimenting with new and unique forms and materials, which eventually evolved into a distinct American modernism that would eventually be exported abroad. Wright’s Prairie style was characterized by low pitched (often hipped) roofs, with wide overhanging eaves and exposed rafter tails, and prominent front porches supported by squared or tapered porch supports and piers.²²⁰ The Prairie style, which originated in Chicago, quickly spread across the Midwest and throughout the country, in part through women’s magazines and pattern books, with its peak popularity between 1905 and 1915. Concurrently, California architects Greene and Greene, influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement, were credited with the proliferation of another distinctly American modern style, the Craftsman bungalow. The Craftsman style shared elements of the Prairie style, with its broad overhanging eaves, exposed rafter tails, and prominent porches with heavy supports. However, Craftsman style residences were typically one or one and half stories, had gabled rather than hipped roofs, often featured decorative brackets, and were most popular between 1910 and 1930.²²¹

Allie Leet’s design for the house at 1908 B Street in Lincoln is an excellent example of an early twentieth century, modest Prairie style residence (Figure 11). The two and a half story home, with its American four-square form, features a hipped

²¹⁵ “1910 U.S. Census Occupations at the Thirteenth Census; States and Territories,” U.S. Census Bureau; “1920 U.S. Census Occupations at the Fourteenth Census; States and Territories,” U.S. Census Bureau.

²¹⁶ Governor’s Commission on the Status of Women, *Nebraska Women Through the Years 1867-1967* (Johnsen Publishing Co., 1967), 17-18.

²¹⁷ Judy Alter, “Pioneer Doctor” in *Women Who Made the West* (Western Writers of America, 1980), 137-8.

²¹⁸ “Peryle Woodson,” National Park Service, accessed December 17, 2024, <https://www.nps.gov/people/peryle-woodson.htm>.

²¹⁹ Scott, “Lincoln Women and Their Fads.”

²²⁰ McAlester, Virginia, *A Field Guide to American Houses: The Definitive Guide to Identifying and Understanding America's Domestic Architecture*, (Alfred A. Knopf, 2013), 551-2.

²²¹ McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 568, 578.

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roof with projecting hipped dormers, wide, overhanging eaves with exposed rafter tails, and prominent full-width front porch supported by brick piers topped with tapered wood porch supports. Contrasting organic materials, like the brick lower level and stucco on the upper levels, are also characteristic of the new, distinctly American style. Leet's design for her daughter's home at 2017 S. 26th Street in Lincoln is a more restrained, modest dwelling. Similar in the two-story, four-square form with hipped roof, it features a prominent full-width front porch with tapered columns, overhanging boxed eaves, and clapboard siding. Both residences are extant.

5. *They Dance Toward the Approaching Storm: Suffrage, Roaring Twenties, and Late Progressive Era (C. 1920-1930)*

5.1. NEBRASKA HISTORY (C. 1920-1930)

Like elsewhere in the U.S., the proliferation of the automobile in the 1920s created a dire need for better transportation networks, and the state instituted a gasoline tax to help fund improved and new roads. Several auto manufacturers, including a Ford Motor Company plant in Omaha and a Patriot Motors plant in Lincoln, were established and helped bolster the economy.²²²

In 1920, the state legislature passed a bill to construct a new Capitol building in Lincoln, and after a nationwide design competition, architect Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue of New York's distinctive design was selected. The new Capitol featured a large, square, three-story base punctuated by a slender domed tower rising from the center and was completed in several phases between 1922 and 1932. Clad in Indiana limestone, the building featured numerous artworks, including mosaics, murals, and sculptures that reflected the history of the state, including several by then-relatively unknown artist **Hildreth Meière**.²²³

In the rural regions of the state, the agricultural sector struggled after WWI, as many Nebraska farmers had overextended their mortgages or purchased more acreage when wartime prices for corn and wheat skyrocketed. However, when prices plummeted after the war, over a quarter of Nebraska farms failed, along with numerous banks.²²⁴ As a result, many rural Nebraskans relocated to urban areas in search of work. By the early 1920s urbanization, combined with returning veterans, a wartime moratorium on construction, and the establishment of new industries, saw urban centers in Nebraska facing acute housing shortages. In 1921, the *Omaha World Herald* reported that "in Omaha alone there is a need for several thousands of new homes. In numerous other cities and towns like condition exists."²²⁵ Leadership encouraged the construction of new houses and apartments, and the real estate industry boomed.²²⁶ In Omaha alone, roughly 1,800 residences were constructed in 1925 and by the following year the *Omaha Bee* reported that housing shortages had eased.²²⁷

5.2. WOMEN IN TRADES IN THE U.S. (C. 1920-1930)

In large part due to women's patriotic contributions to the war effort, the U.S. Congress finally passed the 19th Amendment granting women's suffrage, which was ratified in 1920.²²⁸ Despite these developments, in the 1920s, save for the few land-grant colleges that admitted women into their architecture, engineering, or design programs, women's opportunities for gaining technical education and experience in the building trades remained limited.²²⁹ For Black women, opportunities for advanced education in the building trades was nearly non-existent, even at private Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).²³⁰ Thus, women in the building trades employed their skills in adjacent professions.

²²² Naugle, Montag, and Olson, *History of Nebraska*, 323.

²²³ "History of the Nebraska Capitol Building," accessed December 14, 2024, <https://capitol.nebraska.gov/building/history/>.

²²⁴ Creigh, *Nebraska, A Bicentennial History*, 185.

²²⁵ "The Building and Loan Tax," *Omaha Evening World Herald*, February 15, 1921, p10.

²²⁶ "A Comprehensive Program for Historic Preservation in Omaha," Omaha City Planning Department: 1980, accessed October 28, 2024, https://preservation.cityofomaha.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Plans-Surveys-Comp_Program_Hist_Preserv_in_Omaha_1980.pdf, 61.

²²⁷ "Track Sites and Housing in Omaha Ample for Needs," *Omaha Daily Bee*, August 20, 1926, p9.

²²⁸ Wirth, *The Women Who Built Omaha*, 39.

²²⁹ Reggev, "Open Only To Women": Three Early Female-Focused Design Schools."

²³⁰ Kate Reggev, "'Dared to Enter': Black Female Architects and Their Architecture Education," February 15, 2023, *Madam Architect*, <https://www.madamearchitect.org/in-ink/2023/2/15/dared-to-enter-black-women-and-their-early-architecture-education>.

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In the 1920s, many were engaged as interior designers, and a 1921 study on women's employment for the Women's Educational and Industrial Union noted an uptick in women mural or decorative painters and stained-glass artists, including celebrated muralist, illustrator, and member of the LGBTQ+ community **Violet Oakley** of New Jersey (Violet Oakley Studio, NRHP 1977).²³¹

Despite decades of evidence that women were capable of excelling in the building trades, gender discrimination against women builders was an enduring problem. An editorial in *Architect and Engineer* from 1920 exemplifies the constant uphill battle women faced, particularly regarding the perception of women's aptitude for the work. The author stated, "nature has not fitted women for engineering, and though here and there one may break away from the normal, just as we may find now and then a great woman novelist or a tolerable woman artist, so a few times a century women may reach eminence in engineering."²³² Or from an article in the 1919 *Engineer Bulletin* reading "You will notice that women are now and have been for some time entering the engineering profession. This should be stopped and stopped as quickly as possible.... Marry them as fast as the company hires them. Better to have them working for you in your own home than for you to be working for them in the office."²³³

Nonetheless, women persisted. **Lillian Moller Gilbreth** graduated UC Berkeley in 1900, earning her master's in literature in 1902. She married Frank Gilbreth in 1904, who also worked in the building trades. Gilbreth eventually earned several doctoral degrees, all while managing the family's construction business and raising their 12 children.²³⁴ In 1926 she became the first female member of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME). A friend of Gilbreth, **Kate Gleason** was a pioneer in the use of concrete, the first woman to graduate from Cornell's College of Mechanical Engineering and later designed a low-income housing complex.²³⁵

Ellen Biddle Shipman, a Radcliffe College graduate, came to be known as the 'Dean of American Landscape Architecture.' After Shipman's husband abandoned her and their children in 1910, she needed to make a living. Her friend, architect and landscape designer Charles Platt, enlisted her to work with him designing landscapes and gardens for prominent estates across the U.S. Shipman eventually opened her own firm and continued working until age 78, retiring in 1947.²³⁶ **Gertrude Deimel Kuh (neè Eisendrath)**, a graduate of the Lowthorpe School of Landscape Architecture (1917), interned in Shipman's office before eventually moving to Chicago in 1921 to establish her own practice. Throughout the 1930s Kuh honed her skills on private gardens, later garnering commissions for larger commercial clients throughout Illinois and partnering with architects for new construction projects. Kuh continued working through the 1970s and became a sought-after and influential voice in mid-century landscape design.²³⁷

In 1928 **Helen Robertson** of Madison, South Dakota was reported as the only woman contractor in the Midwest.²³⁸ That year, she was the only female delegate to the South Dakota Contractor's Convention out of 200 in attendance and oversaw construction of the \$90,000 parochial Catholic school in Madison, South Dakota after her contractor father became ill.²³⁹

Amid broader labor movements in the early twentieth century, by the 1920s women started forming nascent organizations for women in the building trade industries. In 1921 **Elizabeth Martini**, the only woman architect in Illinois, put out a call in the newspaper to meet other women architects, forming the Chicago Woman's Drafting Club, (later the Women's Architectural Club). In 1922 women of the Midwest held a convention in St. Louis, later formalized as Alpha Alpha

²³¹ Adams, *Women Professional Workers*, 319.

²³² *The Architect and Engineer*, Vol. LXI. San Francisco: 1920, accessed August 28, 2024, https://www.google.com/books/edition/Architect_and_Engineer/5_4SAAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1.

²³³ *Engineers' Bulletin*. No. 15. United States: 1919. Accessed August 28, 2024. 1919. https://www.google.com/books/edition/Engineers_Bulletin/_xJyixGtJfMC?hl=en&gbpv=0, 5.

²³⁴ Gilbreth's life as a working mother of twelve children inspired a book written by two of her children, which was later turned into a feature film, "Cheaper by the Dozen." Lewis, Anna M. *Women of Steel and Stone*, 89 (Ebook).

²³⁵ Lewis, *Women of Steel and Stone*, 90 (Ebook).

²³⁶ Lewis, *Women of Steel and Stone*, 132.

²³⁷ The Cultural Landscape Foundation, "Gertrude Deimel Kuh," accessed February 20, 2025, <https://www.tclf.org/pioneer/gertrude-deimel-kuh>.

²³⁸ "Dakota Boasts Woman Contractor," *The Omaha Morning Bee*, December 27, 1928, p3.

²³⁹ "Woman Contractor Will Have Part in Convention," *Lead Daily Call*, December 26, 1928, p1; "Miss Helen Robertson Has Been on the Job Three Weeks," *The Sioux City Journal*, September 13, 1928, p2.

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Gamma with chapters in Minnesota, Texas, and California.²⁴⁰ **Lou Alta Melton**, a senior in civil engineering at University of Colorado formed the short-lived American Society for Women Engineers and Architects.²⁴¹ During the interwar period, these organizations of sisterhood “were probably the most rewarding involvements open to women in practice...because it was through the clubs rather than as individuals that women architects could expect to receive public recognition for their work.”²⁴²

As women’s visibility in the public sphere increased, a concurrent backlash against female autonomy emerged, often initiated by other women. In 1922, Marie Meloney launched the ‘Better Homes in America movement’ to showcase the possibilities of home ownership for low-income families following WWI. Although a seemingly noble enterprise, the Better Homes in America movement pushed back against Progressive Era reforms and women’s increased role in the public sphere, while also reflecting pervasive fears about skyrocketing immigration. The movement promoted the ideal of the single-family, owner-occupied home as a core American value, which became so prolific it was adopted as the ‘American Dream.’ The movement also espoused ‘housewife training’ (particularly directed at immigrants to assimilate them into American values) and rebuked the Progressive Era woman who neglected her home amidst the newly won freedoms that came with suffrage, urbanism, the automobile, and other social reforms.²⁴³

In 1930 the U.S. Census recorded 379 women architects, 202 women builders and contractors, 50 female carpenters, 9,212 designers and draftspeople, 9,308 women real estate agents, and 21,644 women artists in the U.S.²⁴⁴

5.3. NEBRASKA WOMEN IN TRADES (C. 1920-1930)

Despite consistent barriers and prejudice, in the 1920s the Progressive Movement led to a growing understanding and respect for women working outside the home. More women architects and builders emerged at a time when the immense growth in the U.S. created an urgent need for affordable housing. Low production during wartime, demand from immigrants and soldiers returning home, and overall low home ownership led to calls for well-designed, affordable housing.²⁴⁵ Women also became active in housing reform, making inspections of tenement housing, working conditions in factories, and conducting surveys of broad living conditions across the U.S., like **Harriet S. Dakin MacMurphy** (see *Section 2.3*) the first woman food safety inspector in Nebraska.²⁴⁶

5.3.1. The Technical Professionals

Only one female engineer was enumerated in the 1930 census in Nebraska, while no women architects were noted. That year, there were reportedly eight women working as draftspeople in the state.²⁴⁷

5.3.2. The Tradeswomen

While no tradeswomen were identified in Nebraska during this time period, census data from 1930 lists one woman builder/contractor, one woman electrician/electrical engineer, and 17 ‘paper hangers.’²⁴⁸

5.3.3. The Designers

Helene Mitchell (later Foe) advertised herself as an interior decorator in Lincoln in 1923.²⁴⁹ Mitchell gave talks at various meetings, including one for the association of collegiate alumnae, urging collegiate women to consider interior design as a career. Mitchell asserted that interior design required more study and preparation than one would think, “In her opinion the successful decorator in order to secure the cooperation of the workmen whom she directs must have working

²⁴⁰ Stevens, Mary Otis, “Struggle for Place: Women in Architecture 1920-1960” in Torre, *Women in American Architecture*, 88.

²⁴¹ *Engineers' Bulletin*. No. 15. United States: 1919, accessed August 28, 2024.
1919.https://www.google.com/books/edition/Engineers_Bulletin/_xJyixGtJfMC?hl=en&gbpv=0.

²⁴² Stevens, Mary Otis, “Struggle for Place: Women in Architecture 1920-1960” in Torre, *Women in American Architecture*, 88.

²⁴³ Borys, Ann Marie, “The ‘Minister of Municipalities,’” in Darling and Walker, eds. *Suffragette City*, 99-101.

²⁴⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, “Persons Gainfully Occupied by Sex, 1870-1930,” accessed October 29, 2024,
<https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1930/population-volume-4/41129482v4ch07.pdf>.

²⁴⁵ Borys, Ann Marie, “The ‘Minister of Municipalities,’” in *Suffragette City*, 99.

²⁴⁶ Adams, *Women Professional Workers*, 145.

²⁴⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, “1930 U.S. Census Occupations at the Fifteenth Census; States and Territories.”

²⁴⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, “1930 U.S. Census Occupations at the Fifteenth Census; States and Territories,” accessed October 29, 2024,
<https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1930/population-volume-4/41129482v4ch07.pdf>.

²⁴⁹ “Ad,” *Lincoln State Journal*, January 7, 1923, p66.

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knowledge of any number of trades from mixing paints to electric wiring.”²⁵⁰ Mitchell also lectured at the Fine Arts department of the Woman’s Club. In 1923 she opened an office at 318 S. 12th in Lincoln and completed the interior design for the Lincoln University Club at 333 N. 12th.²⁵¹ Foe continued running her design business following her marriage to attorney Glen Foe in 1923. The economic crisis wrought by the Great Depression impacted Foe’s design business, and it appears by the 1930s may have entered the real estate business, as Helene M. Foe (along with husband Glen) was listed in numerous real estate transfers in Lincoln throughout the 1930s. Foe remained actively involved in the arts and design, and in 1950 was elected president of the Nebraska Art Association.²⁵²

Throughout the 1920s, Nebraska women remained a prominent share of the overall workforce occupied as artists or teachers of art, although their total percentage in that field had declined from the previous decade to 48.8 percent.²⁵³

5.3.4. The Planners

Despite societal pressure to retreat from the public sphere and direct their focus inward after WWI, many women continued to pursue part-time or full-time careers. A 1921 study on women’s employment noted an increase in women entering the real estate industry, which required less “professional qualifications.” The study noted that “real estate requires a smaller amount of capital than any other comparable business. This is perhaps one reason why a good many women have gone into it in a modest way for themselves.”²⁵⁴

Real estate investments and property development had already become a well-established means of “acceptably” earning an income for Nebraska women at the turn of the twentieth century. As men left to fight in the war, and later as crop prices dropped significantly, Nebraska women continued the tradition of their foremothers. Several women who appeared to be active in real estate and development included **Alice Pauley** (building permit for 2300 B Street), **Mary E. Kelly** (building permit for 1927 Pepper Street), **Myrtle Johnson** (building permit for 627 S. 37th) and **Laura B. Wood** (see below), all in Lincoln. By 1930, Nebraska boasted 186 women real estate agents, nearly 10 percent of the overall workforce in that field.²⁵⁵

Laura B. Wood (née McFarland) (b.1874-d.1942)

Laura McFarland was born to farmers in Ohio in 1874, and her family relocated to Burt, Nebraska in 1882. Eventually, the McFarlands moved to Lancaster County, and by 1910 Laura had been married several times, had a daughter, Alta Mae Ward, and moved to Lincoln.²⁵⁶ In her early adult years, Wood’s experience embodied the spirit of early life on the western frontier, complete with several divorces, arrests, and allegations of running a house of ill repute.²⁵⁷ While the details and circumstances surrounding these events are difficult to verify, they illuminate the often-tumultuous nature of life for women in the early stages of Nebraska’s development. In the 1920s, **Laura B. Wood** began investing in residential real estate in Lincoln, slowly expanding her business (Figures 15 and 16).²⁵⁸ During the 1920s, Wood was listed on building permits and as general contractor, along with E.L. Lowell, for numerous Revival style residences in the Woodsvew Addition of south Lincoln (Figure 15).

In the early 1930s, Laura started listing herself as a builder on building permits along with architect Clyde Botkins. Throughout the 1930s, Laura continued developing residential properties in Lincoln, primarily concentrated in the rapidly growing Axtell Heights, Indian Village, and Irvingdale neighborhoods (Figures 16 and 17). Wood, whose home and office was at 2655 S. 13th, was a prolific self-promoter, regularly placing ads in newspapers touting herself as “Nebraska’s only female builder.”²⁵⁹ Wood frequently worked with other builders or architects in her development projects, however throughout the 1930s and early 1940s she continued to serve as general contractor/builder. Following her death in 1942,

²⁵⁰ “Helene Mitchell Discusses Interior Decorator’s Work,” *Lincoln Nebraska State Journal*, March 20, 1921, p16.

²⁵¹ “University Club is Active,” *Lincoln State Journal*, September 4, 1923, p8.

²⁵² *Lincoln Evening Journal*, May 6, 1950, p3.

²⁵³ U.S. Census Bureau, “1930 U.S. Census Occupations at the Fifteenth Census; States and Territories.”

²⁵⁴ Adams, *Women Professional Workers*, 277.

²⁵⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, “1930 U.S. Census Occupations at the Fifteenth Census; States and Territories.”

²⁵⁶ “Mrs. Elizabeth McFarland,” *Lincoln Star Journal*, April 29, 1929, p4.

²⁵⁷ “Make Raid in East Lincoln,” *Lincoln Star Journal*, February 19, 1912, p8.

²⁵⁸ “Real Estate Transfers,” *Lincoln Journal Star*, July 18, 1923, p3.

²⁵⁹ “Laura B. Wood Ad,” *The Nebraska State Journal*, April 19, 1942, p17.

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her obituary stated that Wood had built roughly 375 buildings in southeast Lincoln during her career. Wood focused on small, affordable homes, many in the Minimal Tradition style common in the mid-century.²⁶⁰

Following Laura Wood's death, her daughter **Alta Mae Ward** took over her mother's business, first as Laura B. Wood Agency and later as Ward Real Estate in 1953. Alta Mae oversaw the development of at least six additional homes on Pawnee Street in Lincoln. Alta filed for bankruptcy in 1954 and died the following year.²⁶¹

5.3.5. The Independents

While women living in more populated coastal areas and in the Midwestern U.S. were working towards professional careers in architecture, engineering, landscape architecture, and other building trades, women in Nebraska continued the long tradition of informal work in the building trades. Newspapers frequently referred to their efforts as "fads" or "hobbies," minimizing their contributions.

Flossie "Floss" Groves de Arnold was born in Missouri in 1886, and in 1904 married Samuel Roy McKelvie in Lincoln, Nebraska. Samuel McKelvie was elected Governor of Nebraska in 1919, a position he held until 1923. Floss was an independent and self-motivated woman with a variety of interests, including geology and art. As an artist, she taught at Nebraska Conservatory, studied at Chicago Academy of Fine Arts, and had an art studio in Lincoln.²⁶² Her artwork featured landscapes of the western U.S., and she traveled to remote locations in Yellowstone and elsewhere to get inspiration from her work.²⁶³ McKelvie also constructed a log cabin outside of Deadwood in the Black Hills of South Dakota, which she named "Tipi Winnie-Taska" where she took her mother and adopted daughter for respite, time in nature, and to concentrate on her art. "Practically every bit of the cabin has been made by Mrs. McKelvie herself, the great stone fireplace the result of more than ten wagon loads of rock carried by her mother and herself from the hill above them..."²⁶⁴ "She built most of the cabin with her own hands. When the roofer failed to "get busy" she climbed up on the ladders and put the roof on herself... There are twenty-two wagon loads of rocks in the chimney and fireplace, she helped get out the rock from a nearby ledge and she built the fireplace and chimney all by herself."²⁶⁵

5.4. EXAMPLE PROPERTY TYPE: *Early Twentieth Century Revival Homes*

In the early twentieth century, improved transportation networks throughout Nebraska brought an abundance of building materials, the agricultural economy boomed, and residential development in the state's urban centers skyrocketed. Many of the simple frame dwellings constructed during the Territorial period were replaced with more substantial structures, while the advent of streetcars allowed new subdivisions to be platted on the outskirts of cities like Lincoln.

In the first half of the twentieth century, the Colonial Revival style was the dominant architectural style for domestic buildings in the U.S., with its peak between 1910 and 1930. Colonial Revival homes are characterized by their symmetry, accentuated front door with pediment, pilasters, fanlights, or other adornments, and decorative cornices. Colonial Revival residences took inspiration from the earlier Georgian and Federal styles, but often incorporated elements of English and Dutch Colonial styles. These residences were typically two stories with either hipped or side gable roofs, although numerous variations in heights and roof styles can be found depending on the time period they were constructed.²⁶⁶

When **Laura B. Wood** started her career as a real estate developer and contractor in Lincoln in the early 1920s, some of her early homes exhibited elements of the Colonial Revival style, including the two-story home at 1652 Woodview which she frequently advertised as the "ideal home."²⁶⁷ The residence (Figure 15) featured a hipped roof, mostly symmetrical front façade with a central entrance and ornamental door surround, brick veneer, and six-over-six lite

²⁶⁰ "Laura B. Wood, long Lincoln builder, dies," *Lincoln Star Journal*, May 19, 1942, p1.

²⁶¹ "Alta Ward Dies in Downey, Calif.," *The Lincoln Star Journal*, January 17, 1955, p.2.

²⁶² Reeves, Winona Evans, *The Blue Book of Nebraska Women, A History of Contemporary Women*, 1916.

²⁶³ "Mrs. McKelvie's Art Reception," *The Lincoln Star*, April 9, 1911, p20.

²⁶⁴ "Hobbies of Lincoln's Women," *Nebraska State Journal*, April 11, 1920, p. 19.

²⁶⁵ "Wife of Nebraska's Governor Does All the Work in Her 21-Room House," *Omaha World-Herald*, June 5, 1921, p6; "Hobbies of Lincoln's Women," *Nebraska State Journal*, April 11, 1920, p. 19.

²⁶⁶ McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 412-414.

²⁶⁷ "The Ideal Home," *Lincoln State Journal*, May 9, 1929, p12.

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windows with sidelights on the ground floor, and without sidelights on the second floor. A single-story sun parlor is situated on the east elevation. A detached, two car garage with hipped roof and matching brick veneer was accessible via a driveway along the west elevation. On the interior, ornament was minimal save for the prominent millwork, arched openings, brick fireplaces, and ornate light fixtures. As Laura B. Wood expanded her business, she continued to reference the Colonial Revival style (1730 Pawnee St., 1800 High St.), although also experimented with a number of other stylistic elements of various Revival styles throughout the 1930s and 1940s, including Tudor, French Eclectic (1825 Pawnee St.), and Neoclassical. Often, Wood would adopt the styles on new house forms, including Minimal Traditional, which were increasingly popular and affordable in the 1930s and 1940s.

6. *From Blackened Clouds Above: The Dust Bowl, the New Deal, and WWII (C. 1930-1945)*

6.1. NEBRASKA HISTORY (C. 1930-1945)

The economic collapse of 1929 saw a dramatic drop in farm prices. Across the Plains region, farm strikes and unrest proliferated amid farm foreclosure auctions, confiscations, and repossessions.²⁶⁸ Droughts, which had begun in the 1920s, persisted into the 1930s. Combined with grasshopper infestations, floods, and dust storms, unfavorable farming conditions resulted in an era of substantial hardship known as the Dust Bowl.²⁶⁹ Rural farm women, already faced with a considerable labor load, had to work even harder to keep their families above water. Subsistence gardening increased, along with rainwater harvesting, planting large potato patches, and grinding their own grain. Farm women supplemented their incomes with new sources, selling garden plants, baby ducks, canned goods, cheese and cakes, and hooked rugs. Women raised large vegetable gardens, canned excess produce, and made their own soap, toothpaste, lotion, and other household products. Some rural women found work outside the home, as teachers or in wage labor.²⁷⁰ During the difficult years of the Dust Bowl, out-migration from rural areas in Nebraska became acute. In 1930 Nebraska had 1,377,963 residents.²⁷¹

Although women faced harsh conditions, there were some modest signs of improvement for women on the Great Plains. In the 1920s and 1930s, water systems in urban areas piped water directly into homes, electricity was installed, and streets were paved. On farms, many families were finally able to move from their sod houses into frame houses, which were better insulated against the harsh elements of the Nebraska Plains.²⁷² However, by 1940 the population of Nebraska had declined to 1,315,834.²⁷³

6.2. WOMEN IN TRADES IN THE U.S. (C. 1930-1945)

While women's employment opportunities increased because of Progressive Era activism and the wartime labor shortage, the onset of the Great Depression only deepened the pressure on women to return to the home, as much needed employment opportunities were reserved for men.²⁷⁴ Nonetheless, by the 1930s, degree programs for women in the trades expanded, and the ability of women to join the ranks of "professional" architects, landscape architects, designers, or other trade fields slowly opened opportunities for women. Renowned Arts and Crafts architect Frank Lloyd Wright, a women's suffrage advocate, notably supported women architects and hired them to work in his office, including **Lois Davidson Gottlieb**. In 1932 Wright and his then-wife Olgivanna established an apprenticeship program called Taliesin Fellowship and 20-25 percent of students admitted were women.²⁷⁵ Women held prominent roles in Wright's practice, although were often glossed over in the scholarship of his work. According to author and historian of women's architecture Beverley Willis:

Typically, we find scholars on a topic we want to discuss. But there is no scholarship on women professionals...The fact that there's nothing out there doesn't mean to me that there's nothing out there. A

²⁶⁸ Wunder, Kaye, and Carstensen, eds., *Americans View Their Dust Bowl Experience*, 17 (Ebook).

²⁶⁹ Schwieder and Fink in Wunder, Kaye, and Carstensen, eds. *Americans View Their Dust Bowl Experience*, 126 (Ebook).

²⁷⁰ Schwieder and Fink in Wunder, Kaye, and Carstensen, eds. *Americans View Their Dust Bowl Experience*, 130-133 (Ebook).

²⁷¹ Naugle, Montag, and Olson, *History of Nebraska*, 188.

²⁷² Governor's Commission on the Status of Women, *Nebraska Women Through the Years 1867-1967*, 28.

²⁷³ Naugle, Montag, and Olson, *History of Nebraska*, 188.

²⁷⁴ Hartman, *The Women Who Changed Architecture*, 17.

²⁷⁵ Hartman, *The Women Who Changed Architecture*, 6.

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woman's designs are similar to chalk on a blackboard. You can write all of your accomplishments, but there's an eraser following behind. I knew that there was a lot of information that had been lost.²⁷⁶

Black women in America seeking an education in the trades had to apply to the few public land-grant universities that accepted women, contending with dual discrimination based on their race and gender. HBCUs did not see women graduates of architecture programs until the 1930s at Tuskegee University, and not until the 1950s at Howard University, roughly around the same time period that the first Black women graduated with these types of degrees from land-grant or private universities.²⁷⁷ **Beverly Loraine Greene** became the first Black woman to graduate with a bachelor's in architectural engineering at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 1936, and later became the first known, licensed, Black female architect in the U.S. in 1942. Greene later went on to work with many prominent architects of the modern movement, including Edward Durrell Stone and Marcel Breuer.²⁷⁸

Women able to practice the building trades professionally had few options for independent work, and many chose to form practices with their architect husbands, like **Elizabeth Scheu** and Winston Close in Minneapolis and **Frances (neè Schepp)** and Leslie **Wilkie** of Omaha. However, the onset of WWII, which effectively halted all non-defense related construction, disrupted many of these firms.²⁷⁹

Despite low representation in formal statistics, numerous women and gender non-conforming, transgender, and LGBTQ+ architects and tradespeople were noted in newspapers across the country in the 1930s and 1940s. These included **Mrs. M.L. Fuller** of Iowa, a landscape architect and lecturer who designed landscapes and gardens for over 600 residences, colleges and schools, country clubs, and parks.²⁸⁰ In 1941, a transgender interior designer in California was given legal approval to transition and officially change her name to **Barbara Price Richards**.²⁸¹ In Virginia, African American **Amaza Lee Meredith** designed her distinct, modern, white stucco residence dubbed *Azurest South* (NHL 2024), where she lived with her partner Edna Colson, and both taught at nearby Virginia State College.²⁸²

In Charleston, South Carolina, **Susan Pringle Frost** became an outspoken proponent of historic preservation. As a single, working woman, she was active in the suffrage movement. Utilizing her knowledge of historic architecture to broker real estate, she used her personal savings to purchase derelict buildings, rehabilitate them, and then re-sell them, later entering the real estate industry full time. Frost encouraged other progressives to join her efforts in saving Charleston's architectural treasures, which ultimately resulted in the passage of the first historic district protection zoning ordinance in the world in 1931. It was later followed by similar measures in New Orleans, Santa Barbara, Santa Fe, and Boston.²⁸³

During the Great Depression, women lost employment at a faster rate than men, who were considered the family breadwinners while women were "secondary earners."²⁸⁴ However, for many women, either single, divorced, or widowed, earning an income was a necessity for survival. During the Great Depression, President Roosevelt's New Deal ushered in numerous federal relief programs that aided Nebraska residents. In 1933 the passage of the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) aimed to control agricultural production and maintain prices, while the 1936 Rural Electrification Administration (REA) brought electricity to many rural areas in western Nebraska.²⁸⁵ Other New Deal programs promoted and funded the expansion of irrigation systems, dams, and hydroelectric plants. The Public Works Administration (PWA), Works Progress Administration (WPA), and the United States Treasury Section of Painting and Sculpture (later Fine Arts), were

²⁷⁶ McCann, Hannah, "The Women in Frank Lloyd Wright's Studio," *Architect Magazine*, August 10, 2009, accessed August 28, 2024, https://www.architectmagazine.com/design/culture/the-women-in-frank-lloyd-wrights-studio_o.

²⁷⁷ Reggev, "Dared to Enter": Black Female Architects and Their Architecture Education."

²⁷⁸ Reggev, "That [Most] Exceptional One": Early Black Female Architects."

²⁷⁹ Stevens, Mary Otis, "Struggle for Place: Women in Architecture 1920-1960" in Torre, *Women in American Architecture*, 92.

²⁸⁰ "Mrs. M.L. Fuller Dies; Noted Woman Architect," *Freeport Journal Standard*, September 16, 1941, p14.

²⁸¹ Barbara's dead name was omitted here out of respect for their transition. "Barbara Richards," *Madison, Wisconsin State Journal*, October 10, 1941, p4.

²⁸² Taylor, Jaqueline, "Modern architecture and the 'New Negro' woman," in Darling and Walker, eds. *Suffragette City*, 33.

²⁸³ Walker, "Women, urbanism, and the birth of the historic preservation movement," in *Suffragette City*, 75-76.

²⁸⁴ Wirth, *The Women Who Built Omaha*, 102.

²⁸⁵ Naugle, Montag, and Olson, *History of Nebraska*, 337, 341.

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all New Deal era programs aimed at providing employment through infrastructure improvements, construction projects, and public art.

By 1940, of the 20,000 architects and landscape architects in the U.S., 477 (2.3 percent) were women, with the largest populations being in New York, California, and Michigan.²⁸⁶ That year, women made up less than 0.3 percent of a quarter of a million American professional engineers.²⁸⁷ Many women had also established careers as farm or garden consultants.²⁸⁸

The onset of WWII in Europe in the late 1930s resulted in another wave of immigration to the U.S. Many Europeans fled their homelands as the Nazi regime gained power, and numerous women artists and architects were among the new arrivals. These creatives brought their educational backgrounds, and distinct European design sensibilities, including those of the Bauhaus movement, to the United States, helping spark the American Modern Movement. Women architects who emigrated to the U.S. in the mid-century included **Elsa Gidoni** and **Sibyl Moholy-Nagy**. While some managed to restart their careers, despite the barriers of language, gender, and culture, in the face of dual discrimination as women and immigrants many left the field entirely.²⁸⁹

During World War II, women's increased participation in the workforce, and particularly in fields formerly perceived as the purview of men, saw a dramatic increase in women in the building trades. In 1940, there were roughly 13 million civilian women in the U.S. labor force, constituting nearly a quarter of the overall labor force and a quarter of all adult women in the country. During the peak of WWII, the number of women in the labor force had climbed to roughly 19 million, roughly one third of the overall labor force.²⁹⁰ Women's enrollment in collegiate architecture programs declined during the war, as many women were focused on the war effort, either in the labor force or maintaining the home front, and non-defense related building generally halted.²⁹¹

Wartime changes in women's employment were most notable in the fields of craftsmen, foreman, operatives, and laborers, which increased 119 percent nationwide, while women working in domestic service dropped 20 percent between 1940 and 1944.²⁹² During this period, for the first time married or widowed women overtook single women as the leading demographic of women in the workforce.²⁹³

During World War II and immediately following, women created unique roles for themselves in the building trades and wartime defense industry through consultancy. Some women architects were selected to design small-scale objects or structures, develop interior spaces for factories or housing facilities, although they occupied far less visible roles than their male counterparts.²⁹⁴ In the 1940s, **Hattie Scott Peterson** of Virginia became the first known Black woman to earn a degree in civil engineering in the U.S. when she graduated from Howard University in 1946. During WWII she worked for the U.S. government auditing government contracts for heavy equipment, sparking an interest in engineering. After graduating from Howard, she moved to California where she worked for the USGS before joining the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 1954, becoming the first woman engineer for that federal agency.²⁹⁵

After WWII ended, women's gains in the wartime workplace slowed, and a movement to romanticize domesticity and maternalism once again urged women to return to their roles as homemakers. However, despite the pressure to return to

²⁸⁶ Marguerite Wykoff Zapoleon, *The Outlook for Women in Architecture and Engineering*, U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau. Bulletin No. 223-225 (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1948), 5-1, 5-2.

²⁸⁷ U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau. Bulletin, *Employment of Women in the Early Postwar Period with Background of Prewar and War Data*. U.S. Government Printing Office, 1948.

²⁸⁸ Adams, Elizabeth Kemper, *Women Professional Workers*, 113.

²⁸⁹ Reggev, "From There to Here."

²⁹⁰ Erin McKellar, "Adapting and Anticipating: The home planning consultancy work of Hilde Reiss and Jane Drew, 1943-45," in Darling and Walker, eds. *Suffragette City*, 153.

²⁹¹ Zapoleon, *The Outlook for Women in Architecture and Engineering*, 5-8.

²⁹² *Employment of Women*, U.S. Department of Labor, 3.

²⁹³ *Employment of Women*, U.S. Department of Labor, 11.

²⁹⁴ McKellar, "Adapting and Anticipating," 139.

²⁹⁵ Kate Reggev, "Then in Infrastructure: The "Facile Fingers" Of Early Female Engineers." August 17, 2021, *Madam Architect*, <https://www.madamearchitect.org/in-ink/2021/8/2/now-in-infrastructure-the-facile-fingers-of-early-female-engineers>.

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pre-war norms, women's forays into technical jobs during WWII had proved to themselves, and others, that they were no less capable of the work than their male counterparts. Women had more than proven their abilities, and whether due to financial necessity, ambition, interest, or skill many refused to be thrust back into a life of domesticity.

6.3. NEBRASKA WOMEN IN TRADES (C. 1930-1945)

In the early 1930s, the Department of Architectural Engineering at UNL was changed to the Department of Architecture, and bachelor's degrees and master's degrees in architecture were authorized followed by degrees in Architectural Engineering in 1939.²⁹⁶ Following U.S. entry into WWII, Nebraska women were recruited to join many of the fields previously dominated by men. In a column in the *Scottsbluff Republic* the Women's Army Corps (WAC) recruiting officer L.T. Lindberg was quoted saying, "Women with art training or engineering ability and experience are now needed by the women's army corps to make military maps and take over the drafting jobs essential to winning the war."²⁹⁷ In particular, the WAC recruited women for cartography and drafting positions. The article noted "Whether fashion designer, poster artist, interior designer or architect, the army needs you... Architects and interior designers are especially valuable in military work since they are trained in model making as well as drawing." While women were needed to work as electrical, mechanical and structural draftsmen, they needed engineering experience. The U.S. government offered Nebraska women artists several weeks of special training to prepare them for the job.²⁹⁸

6.3.1. The Technical Professionals

In 1928, **Frances Mary Schepp Wilkie** (see *Section 7.3.1* for more information) became the first woman to graduate from the Kansas State University architecture program. During the Depression, **Frances** and her husband got by completing small "make-work" housing projects as part of federal relief programs, and by operating a gas station.²⁹⁹ During WWII, Omahan **Sgt. Alice Schuelzky**, a graduate from the Army's School for Engineers at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, served as a draftsman for the WAC.³⁰⁰ Similarly, a "Mrs. Scharvin" (Dorothy Blauhorn Scharvin) worked as draftsman at Kearney Air Base and Douglas Aircraft.³⁰¹

Meredith Thoms (b.1908-d.1997)

In 1931 the *Lincoln Star* reported on three groundbreaking women earning degrees from University of Nebraska at Lincoln in fields noted as "no woman's land," engineering and law. In 1929, **Meredith Thoms** of Lincoln was the first woman to graduate from UNL with a civil engineering degree, and in 1931 was the first woman to earn her master's degree in engineering from UNL (Figure 14). The *Lincoln Star* noted, "As a woman pioneering what had been at Nebraska a strictly man's field, Miss Thoms admits that she found herself an outcast most of the time in her undergraduate work." Thoms claimed, "At first, it was most unpleasant, but I soon got used to it."³⁰² Following her graduate program, Thoms worked as an assistant to the head of the civil engineering department at UNL assembling data for the Tri-County funding application to the PWA.³⁰³ The "Tri-County" project was initiated in response to the harsh Dust Bowl conditions that swept Nebraska in the early 1930s, aiming to expand irrigation to south-central Nebraska and provide relief to the agricultural economy. The Tri-County project, which was approved by the PWA, resulted in the construction of the Kingsley Dam and Lake McConaughy.³⁰⁴ In 1935, Meredith Thoms was hired to the technical force of the Tri-County headquarters in Lincoln, becoming the only woman out of more than 100 engineers on the project. (see Figure 14).³⁰⁵ In 1942, Thoms accepted another government position as assistant hydraulic engineer for the U.S. Army in Mobile, Alabama.³⁰⁶

²⁹⁶ Manley, *Centennial History of the University of Nebraska Volume 1*, 77.

²⁹⁷ "WAC is Using some Members, Drafting and Engineering," *Scottsbluff Republican*, December 30, 1943.

²⁹⁸ "WAC is Using some Members, Drafting and Engineering," *Scottsbluff Republican*, December 30, 1943.

²⁹⁹ "Houses Feminine, Says 'Pioneer'," *Omaha World Herald*, December 3, 1978, p111.

³⁰⁰ "Few Omahans in the WAC to Spend Christmas at Home," *Omaha World-Herald*, December 24, 1944, p41.

³⁰¹ "Double Wedding Held at Wm. Blauhorn Home," *The Palmer Journal*, June 26, 1947, p1.

³⁰² Munro Kezer, "Co-Eds Graduate from 'Men's Colleges'," *The Lincoln Star*, May 5, 1931, p34.

³⁰³ "Personal Mention," *The Hastings Daily Tribune*, December 2, 1935, p6.

³⁰⁴ "Tri-County Project: Drought and the Dust Bowl," *Nebraskastudies.org*, accessed September 12, 2024.

<http://netwagtaildev.unl.edu/nebstudies/en/1925-1949/tri-county-project-drought-and-the-dust-bowl/>

³⁰⁵ "Lone Woman Among 100 Engineers, but Miss Thoms Undisturbed by that," *The Hastings Tribune*, January 25, 1936, p8.

³⁰⁶ "Miss Meredith Thoms Has Position with Army," *The Lincoln Star*, May 16, 1942, p2.

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Golda Verlene Peckham was born in 1900 in Lincoln, Nebraska. In 1921, Golda married James Suttie, a merchandiser, and the couple had three children.³⁰⁷ Suttie's interest in architecture began as a child of 10 or 12 when she began drawing house plans and reading literature about architecture and design. As an adult, Suttie assisted in the design of her home in the "California bungalow" style, which whet her appetite for more design work. However, it took over seven years for her to work up the courage to enter speculative building. In 1932 Suttie told *The Gothenburg Times*:

I've built a few houses when I've had time, six in all. I'm crazy about the work and have been ever since I was a youngster. At first, I apprenticed myself to a local architect in order to gain some practical experience and to learn a bit about the business side of the game, but lately I've been relying on my own efforts and ingenuity. To me, it's more fun than anything else in the world. Once I have finished a home I feel that I have definitely created something. Then, too, the work incident of being a feminine architect and builder has other compensations, for in the process of construction, I meet scores of interesting people –souls that I know I would never encounter around a bridge table.³⁰⁸

Her design preference leaned towards historic and revival styles, evident in the 'Early American' home she designed on the north shore at the peak of Wyman Heights, which she named Braeha. According to the *Omaha World Herald*, the "Suttie home is entirely the work of its talented mistress. Not only did Miss Suttie draft the plans, but aided by the practical experience she gleaned from six other houses she has built, she has ably superintended all of the construction of her future homes."³⁰⁹ She also designed Le Petit Chateau at 5810 Nicholas (now 5812 Nicholas, extant - Figure 13) and the Normandy (5819 Nicholas, extant – Figure 12), the Craftsman style residence at 2558 Titus Avenue (extant) and others (see **Table 1** in **Section K**).³¹⁰ Golda Suttie was a graduate of Nebraska Wesleyan University, a charter member of Douglas County Historical Society, and a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR). She died in 1989.³¹¹

6.3.2. The Tradeswomen

Although many women found employment as part of New Deal era initiatives, other women continued to work independently in the building trades and adjacent fields, or in cooperation with their husbands. In Michigan, **Minnie (née Steel) Lott** a married mother of two "claims to be the only woman stone mason in the world." Along with her husband Jesse, also a carpenter and stone mason, they completed a distinct masonry bungalow at 625 N. State Street in Big Rapids, Michigan (extant).³¹² In Nebraska, **Hazel Hempel Abel** co-founded the Abel Construction Company with her husband George P. Abel in 1916. Hazel served as the company's secretary-treasurer until her husband's death in 1937, at which time she assumed the presidency. She later became the third woman elected to the U.S. Senate in Nebraska.³¹³

6.3.3. The Designers

The 1930s and 1940s were also an influential time for women artists in the U.S., and New Deal Era programs provided opportunities for women to gain prominent paid commissions. **Elizabeth Honor Dolan** emerged as one of the most well-known Nebraska artists of her time (Figure 18). Born in Iowa, **Dolan** moved to Tecumseh, and later Lincoln, as a child. After studying at the Chicago Art Institute, the Art Students League in New York, and eventually furthering her studies in France, Dolan worked as an artist and mural painter who also dabbled in stained glass. In Nebraska, Dolan's murals adorn Morrill (aka Elephant) Hall (1926) on the UNL campus and the Nebraska Supreme Court Ladies' Lounge.³¹⁴ One of her most famous commissions, however, is her mural *Spirit of the Prairie* in Nebraska's State Capitol, completed c. 1930 (Figure 19 - NRHP 1970). The mural centers women's roles in the history of the Plains, featuring a woman, infant, child,

³⁰⁷ "Obituary: Mrs. Elizabeth McFarland," *Lincoln Journal Star*, April 29, 1929.

³⁰⁸ "Mrs. Golda Suttie is Omaha's Only Woman Architect," *The Gothenburg Times*, September 21, 1932, P4.

³⁰⁹ "Mrs. Golda Suttie is Omaha's Only Woman Architect," *The Gothenburg Times*, September 21, 1932, P4.

³¹⁰ "Le Petit Chateau' Satisfies Ambition," *Omaha World Herald*, August 28, 1927, P55; "Ad," *Omaha World Herald*, September 2, 1928, P18.

³¹¹ "Memorial Planned for Golda V. Suttie," *Omaha World Herald*, August 17, 1989, P66.

³¹² *Omaha World Herald*, October 8, 1930, p5.

³¹³ Kelley, *Women of Nebraska Hall of Fame*, 78

³¹⁴ "Elizabeth Dolan," Kiechel Art, accessed October 16, 2024, <https://kiechelart.com/artist/elizabeth-dolan/>.

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and dog perched atop a hill in the windswept prairie. Dolan died in 1948; however, many of her works in Nebraska and elsewhere are extant.³¹⁵

As Dolan completed her work in the Nebraska State Capitol, another woman muralist was also putting her unique artistic touch on the building. Architect Bertram Goodhue took a chance on the young artist **Hildreth Meière**, who went on to achieve notoriety for her unique ability at “filtering historic styles through an Art Deco lens.”³¹⁶ Her distinct mosaics on the dome of the capitol building announced her arrival on the national art scene (Figures 19 and 20). Over the course of her career, she completed over 100 commissions, including the Great Hall for National Academy of Sciences in Washington, D.C., the roundels for the facade of Radio City Musical Hall in New York, St. Bartholomew’s Church in New York, and numerous other schools, theaters, commercial and civic buildings, churches, restaurants, and ocean liners.³¹⁷ Meière died in 1961, but her artistic legacy continues to be celebrated.

In 1939, **Kady B. Faulkner**, an artist, muralist, and professor in the UNL art department, was hired by the United States Treasury Section of Painting and Sculpture (later the Section of Fine Arts) to complete a mural at the new WPA-funded post office building in Valentine, Nebraska. The project was only the second treasury project done in the state, and the first to be completed by a Nebraska artist.³¹⁸ Faulkner’s mural *End of the Line* depicted a scene of Nebraska’s pioneer days, with men unloading supplies from covered wagons, a coal fired locomotive, mothers and children, set amid the backdrop of Nebraska’s rolling grassy hills (Figure 22). Later that year, Faulkner also supervised the work of two UNL art students, **Elizabeth Callaway** and **Mildred Kopac** (later Haas), who completed a mural on the Student Union building at UNL.³¹⁹ Faulkner went on to complete at least several murals in churches across Nebraska and continued to teach in UNL’s art department until her retirement in 1950.³²⁰

Around the same time and under the same Treasury project, three other Nebraska post offices were adorned with murals completed by women artists. Twin sisters **Ethel** and **Jenne Magafan** of Colorado Springs painted post office murals in Nebraska, *Threshing* in Auburn (1938) and *Winter in Nebraska* in Albion (1939), respectively (Figures 24-26). Artist **Eldora Lorenzini**, also from Colorado, completed her mural *Stampeding Buffaloes Stopping Train* in the new post office in Hebron, Nebraska (Figure 23).³²¹

6.3.4. The Planners

Continuing the long tradition of real estate developers, during the 1920s Lincolnites **Laura B. Wood** and **Golda Suttie** (see *Section 6.3.1*) both embarked on real estate and development businesses that evolved into full-time careers. **Anna E. Julien**, along with her husband August, was another speculative real estate developer based out of Omaha, who developed bungalows throughout the city (see below). It appears she likely also worked as a contractor on her development projects.³²²

Anna E. Julien (b.1895-d.1967)

Anna was born in South Dakota in 1895. At the age of 18, Anna married August Julien, who later became a building contractor. In 1920, the couple lived in Omaha where August worked on the railroad.³²³ Throughout the 1930s, Anna developed numerous properties in the Country Club neighborhood of Omaha (NR 2004). In 1940 they lived at 1716 N. 52nd Street in a neighborhood that the couple helped develop. Census records from 1930 and 1940 do not list an occupation for Anna, but she was listed in the newspapers and various building permits as the permit holder for many

³¹⁵ Kelley, *Women of Nebraska Hall of Fame*, 76

³¹⁶ Catherine Coleman Brawer and Kathleen Murphy Skolnik, *The Art Deco Murals of Hildreth Meière* (Andrea Monfried Editions LLC, 2014), 20.

³¹⁷ Brawer and Skolnik, *The Art Deco Murals of Hildreth Meière*, 19.

³¹⁸ “First All-Nebraska Mural for Valentine Post office,” *Omaha World Herald*, February 26, 1939, p30.

³¹⁹ “Senior Art Students Begin Work on Large Mural in Student Union,” *Lincoln State Journal*, December 17, 1939, p8.

³²⁰ Elizabeth Anderson, “Depression Legacy: Nebraska’s Post Office Art,” accessed October 16, 2024. <https://www.tfaoi.org/aa/4aa/4aa47.htm>.

³²¹ “Stampeding Buffaloes Stopping Train,” Smithsonian National Postal Museum, accessed October 16, 2024.

<https://postalmuseum.si.edu/exhibition/indians-at-the-post-office-murals-encounter/stampeding-buffaloes-stopping-train#:~:text=Eldora%20Lorenzini%20submitted%20Stampeding%20Buffaloes,post%20office%20in%20Hebron%2C%20Nebraska.>

³²² “New Bungalows Springing Up, West Districts,” *Omaha World Herald*, April 8, 1934, p24.

³²³ *Fourteenth Census of the United States 1920 - Omaha Ward 1, Douglas, Nebraska; Roll: T625_987; Page: 7B; Enumeration District: 2,* U.S. Census Bureau, available on Ancestry.com.

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properties that she developed. In the 1950 census, Anna was listed as an “office employee” in real estate, while her husband was listed as a “supervisor” in real estate.³²⁴

Many building permits for residences within the Country Club district list Anna specifically by name, while others simply list A. Julien, which could be Anna or her husband August.³²⁵ She was specifically noted as a contractor for the construction of a residence at 2524 N. 52nd in Omaha in 1933.³²⁶ A majority of the homes the Juliens developed were modest Tudor Revival residences with brick siding and integrated single car garages (see **Table 1** in **Section K**).

The residence at 1716 N. 52nd (1936 – CAD) is representative of many of the homes developed by the Juliens. It is a one and half story brick Tudor revival Bungalow with steeply pitched rooflines and multiple front-facing gables, the most prominent of which sweeps downward from one eave to shelter the integrated, single car garage. The design features a stepped chimney on the main façade and a smaller sloping eave on the north end of the primary (eastern) façade that shelters an arched open walkway element also characteristic of Tudor Revivals. The residence that Anna Julien developed at 1702 N. 52nd was the only residence identified during preparation of this MPDF that was not in the Tudor Revival style. The one and half story residence features a symmetrical front façade with modest Colonial Revival elements, the most dominant residential style of the time.³²⁷ The residence features brick siding, prominent entrance with wood surround and sidelights, and three evenly spaced, projecting front gable dormers clad in horizontal siding to contrast the brick.

6.3.5. The Independents

Continuing the long history of wealthy women patrons, prominent Omaha socialite **Sarah Hannah Selleck Joslyn** became instrumental in promoting the arts in Omaha and across Nebraska. In 1922, after numerous attempts at starting an art museum failed, Sarah took it upon herself to make it a reality. She purchased a lot on 24th and Dodge Street, and determined she would pay for the museum herself in honor of her late husband.³²⁸ Joslyn hired architects John and Alan McDonald to design the building, which opened as the Joslyn Art Museum in 1931, adding a concert hall the following year.³²⁹ Over her lifetime, it is estimated she donated over \$4.6 million to the museum, plus an additional \$2.5 million after her death in 1940.³³⁰

6.4. EXAMPLE PROPERTY TYPES: *New Deal Era Murals*

Following the Mexican Revolution in the early twentieth century, the muralism tradition that had long been a part of Mexican culture and storytelling re-emerged as a form of political and cultural expression grappling with themes including social justice, Indigenous history, poverty, and labor reform. Diego Rivera, **Frida Kahlo**, and José Clemente Orozco were some of the foremost Mexican muralists of the era. The Mexican muralism movement had a profound influence on American artists, who soon adopted and incorporated many of the stylistic and thematic elements into works across the U.S.³³¹

During the 1930s, the New Deal funded numerous arts programs to keep creatives out of poverty. The New Deal was unique in its progressive attitude towards seeking out women, African Americans, Indigenous Americans, and other systematically marginalized groups for public commissions.³³² However, for most mural commissions, the selection process was anonymous, and the regional jury had no knowledge of the applicants until a finalist was selected.³³³

³²⁴ *Seventeenth Census of the United States 1920 - Omaha, Douglas, Nebraska; Roll: 2265; Page: 32; Enumeration District: 95-309*, U.S. Census Bureau, available on Ancestry.com.

³²⁵ Lynn Meyer and Geoff Tripp, *Country Club Historic District National Register Nomination, Omaha, Nebraska*, (National Park Service, 2004), <https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/GetAsset/32f229e1-6f3d-49ab-a3b2-70c8a5aa4a72>.

³²⁶ “Builders Here Notice Effects of ‘Renovizing,’” *Omaha World Herald*, June 18, 1933, p29.

³²⁷ McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 414.

³²⁸ Wirth, *The Women Who Built Omaha*, 91.

³²⁹ Wirth, *The Women Who Built Omaha*, 90, 101.

³³⁰ Kelley, *Women of Nebraska Hall of Fame*, 24.

³³¹ “Los Tres Grandes,” Living New Deal, February 18, 2022, <https://livingnewdeal.org/tag/new-deal-murals/>.

³³² Eudora Welty and René Paul Barilleaux, *Passionate observer: Eudora Welty among artists of the thirties*, (Mississippi Museum of Art, 2002), 62.

³³³ Elizabeth Anderson, “Depression Legacy: Nebraska’s Post Office Art,” accessed October 16, 2024, <https://www.tfaoi.org/aa/4aa/4aa47.htm>.

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Under the federal arts programs, commissioned works were intended to be accessible to the general public and thus were located in prominent public places frequented by those from all walks of life, like post offices, civic buildings, and public schools. Up until that time, most public art in the U.S. was grounded in European/Euro-American artistic traditions. However, the scenes depicted in many New Deal era murals were not pastoral landscapes or elegant portraits of aristocrats but rather took the then-radical approach of depicting everyday scenes of ordinary, hardworking Americans.³³⁴ Concurrent with the emergence of the Modern Movement's influence on the forms, materials, and design of American architecture, the emerging globalism contributed to the development of a distinct artistic style of many New Deal murals. It incorporated elements of Modernist art movements like the Cubists, Surrealists, Expressionists, and Abstracts, but with a specific regional emphasis.

Because New Deal era murals were intended to be easily accessible to the public, they needed to retain a sense of simplistic realism and focus on the specific local history and circumstances of the region. In Nebraska, murals typically depicted one of two themes based on the geographical make-up of the state. In the eastern portion, where agriculture was prevalent, murals often showed sentimental and nostalgic scenes of agricultural endeavors and hard-working farmers, like **Ethel Magafan's** *Threshing* in Auburn (NR, 1992). Her sister **Jenne Magafan's** work in Albion, *Winter in Nebraska*, similarly showcased the difficulty of farming on the Plains, depicting a farmer herding his cattle towards a barn during a blizzard.³³⁵ In the arid, less settled regions of the western half of the state, murals like **Eldora Lorenzini's** *Stampeding Buffaloes Stopping Train*, show little evidence of farming or "small town life," and rather illuminated the westward expansion into the frontier. The mural shows men standing by a stopped train with raised rifles aimed at a herd of buffalo, the lifeblood of the Indigenous peoples, to clear the path for 'progress.'³³⁶

The only native Nebraskan woman to complete a post office mural in the state was **Kady B. Faulkner**. Her mural *End of the Line* in Valentine shows the railroad terminus with steam engine train, railroad depot, and dynamic figures bustling around the station (NR 1991). The Nebraska Sandhills, with grazing cattle on the open range, are seen in the background.³³⁷

7. Skies Smile Down Upon Her Plains: Post-War, Baby Boomers, and Women's Movement (1945-1975)

7.1. NEBRASKA HISTORY (1945-1975)

In 1950 the population of Nebraska reached 1,325,510.³³⁸ WWII and the Vietnam War had ended Nebraska's isolationism as military installations were established across the state, including the Air Command Headquarters at the Offutt Air Force Base at Bellevue. Passage of the Relocation Act in the 1950s encouraged Indigenous assimilation, and some Indigenous Nebraskans left their reservations and relocated to urban areas. Many initially moved to Omaha, starting out in packinghouse jobs, while women worked in "unskilled" manufacturing.³³⁹ In 1951, Creighton University's College of Arts and Sciences finally opened its architecture department to women.³⁴⁰

The mechanization of farming, the consolidation of small farms, and subsequent urbanization of the post-war era saw dramatic demographic shifts in Nebraska.³⁴¹ By 1960, the population of Nebraska was 1,411,330.³⁴² However, in the post-war era, the state's lack of employment opportunities resulted in significant outmigration of Nebraska's youth, a problem that persisted for the remainder of the twentieth century.³⁴³ In 1970 the population of Nebraska was 1,485,333, with ten communities outside of Omaha and Lincoln with a population over 10,000, up from six communities in 1940.

³³⁴ Connie W. Kieffer, "New Deal Murals: A Legacy for Today's Public Art and Art Education." *Art Education* 53, no. 2 (2000): 40–45. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3193849>.

³³⁵ Anderson, "Depression Legacy: Nebraska's Post Office Art."

³³⁶ "Stampeding Buffaloes Stopping Train," Smithsonian National Postal Museum.

³³⁷ Carol Ahlgren, *Valentine United States Post Office National Register Nomination*, (National Park Service, 1991), Sec. 7, P2.

³³⁸ Naugle, Montag, and Olson, *History of Nebraska*, 403-404.

³³⁹ Wirth, *The Women Who Built Omaha*, 35.

³⁴⁰ "History of Creighton University," Creighton University, accessed October 28, 2024, <https://www.creighton.edu/about/mission-history/history#:~:text=In%201878%2C%20the%20College%20of,was%20finished%20the%20following%20year.>

³⁴¹ Creigh, *Nebraska, A Bicentennial History*, 204; Naugle, Montag, and Olson, *History of Nebraska*, 188.

³⁴² Naugle, Montag, and Olson, *History of Nebraska*, 188.

³⁴³ Naugle, Montag, and Olson, *History of Nebraska*, 419.

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7.2. WOMEN IN TRADES IN THE U.S. (1945-1975)

A representative study of wartime women workers in ten locations across the U.S. reported that 75 percent of women wartime workers planned to continue working following the war.³⁴⁴ Echoing the backlash to women workers after WWI, the mid-century saw another effort to romanticize of the home, the nuclear family, and the traditional housewife. By January 1946, women in the workforce had declined to roughly 16 million nationwide.³⁴⁵ While for some women, leaving their jobs was voluntary, in many cases, women were asked to leave their jobs to make room for male employment, and nearly one in four women employed in factories were let go.

The U.S. Department of Labor estimated that in 1946-1947 there were 15,000 professional working architects in the country, with only 300 women among them. Similarly, of the 317,000 working American engineers, only 950 were women.³⁴⁶ By the mid-century, registration of professional architects was required in all but six U.S. States, with the stated purpose of ensuring that buildings were structurally sound. The increased standards and professionalization of the field prohibited many women from practicing architecture unless under the supervision of a licensed (most often male) architect.

In 1948, in collaboration with the Women's Architectural Association, *Architectural Forum* undertook a survey to document the experiences of female architects practicing in the U.S.³⁴⁷ The survey found that overall, women architects and builders were most often contracted for residential work, which was deemed within their area of expertise, and were paid considerably less than their male peers. Despite all the barriers to women in the trades, however, those who had successfully carved out roles for themselves in the field found a high level of satisfaction with their work. "While quite a few reported occasional trouble with the contractors or laborers in the field, and several admitted to having been taken more or less frequently as secretaries in their own offices, not a single one indicated any disappointment whatever in her chosen career."³⁴⁸

During the mid-century, more women also taught architecture and the building trades rather than just practicing. In previous decades, many institutions either overtly, or discreetly, prohibited or limited women's ability to gain professional training in the building trades, and thus many were not "qualified" to teach at institutions. However, as more universities and institutions opened their programs to women, more were able to gain the "professional" qualifications that would enable them to teach. Teaching offered women a stable source of income, rather than the ebb and flow of contract-based trades work. Women also frequently held second careers in adjacent fields, including photography, decorative arts, furniture design, writing, and others.³⁴⁹

In 1954, **Norma Merrick Sklarek** of New York became one of the earliest Black women licensed as an architect in the U.S, and the first in New York State. Born in Harlem, Sklarek graduated from Columbia in 1950 with a bachelor's degree in architecture. In an address given at the "Minority Women in Architecture: A Sense of Achievement" conference held at Howard University in 1983, Sklarek opined on the dual prejudice Black women faced in the field, although indicated that her gender may have been more of a barrier to her career than her race. She stated, "Prejudice is mostly focused against women, period. Being black adds another dimension, and upward mobility and advancement may be the most difficult problem black women architects may face."³⁵⁰ During her over 35-year career, Sklarek oversaw projects including the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo, San Bernadino City Hall, and a commuter terminal at LAX Airport.³⁵¹

While more women were entering the building trades, they still had to contend with bias, unequal opportunity and compensation, and prejudice against their capacity, particularly in the engineering of large-scale projects. However, by

³⁴⁴ Sylvia Rosenberg Weissbrodt, "Women Workers in Ten War Production Areas and Their Postwar Employment Plans," (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1946), 10.

³⁴⁵ *Employment of Women*, U.S. Department of Labor, 2; McKellar, "Adapting and Anticipating: The home planning consultancy work of Hilde Reiss and Jane Drew, 1943-45," 153.

³⁴⁶ *Employment of Women*, U.S. Department of Labor, 1-5.

³⁴⁷ "A Thousand Women in Architecture: Part I," *Architectural Record* 103, no. 3 (March 1948): 105.

³⁴⁸ "A Thousand Women in Architecture: Part I," *Architectural Record* 103, no. 3 (March 1948): 105.

³⁴⁹ Hartman, *The Women Who Changed Architecture*, 61.

³⁵⁰ "Howard Conference A Rallying for Black Female Architects," *The Washington Post*, December 15m, 1983, pD4.

³⁵¹ "Howard Conference A Rallying for Black Female Architects," *The Washington Post*, December 15m, 1983, pD4.

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mid-century women started taking active roles in designing large-scale urban projects, like **Anne Griswold Tyng**'s work on the City Tower project with Louis Kahn in the 1950s.³⁵²

Post-war Women's Movement

Following World War II, the U.S. entered a period of economic prosperity, vast development and infrastructure improvements, and a dramatic rise in young people entering college and universities. The nascent Civil Rights Movement picked up momentum, and with the baby boomers coming of age in the 1960s there were widespread national advancements in the fight to end racial discrimination. Following the successes of the Civil Rights Movement, women's advocacy for gender equality surged, spurred in part by the publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*. In 1963, the Equal Pay Act was passed to redress wage disparities based on sex, and in 1966 the National Organization for Women was organized, followed by numerous others aimed at addressing widespread gender discrimination in all aspects of American life. In the mid-1960s through 1970s, women continued advocating for their rights and ultimately gained access to contraceptives and reproductive care that allowed women the autonomy to make decisions about their family planning, thus enabling many women to remain in the workforce.³⁵³

Despite the increased visibility of the discrimination facing American women in the workplace, many employers continued to overtly discriminate against women. While some women were making names for themselves in the building trades, national statistics illuminate the slow pace of progress. In 1969 women still accounted for less than one percent of registered architects in the U.S. Licensing and education requirements for architects also proved a burden on both finances and time. Of architecture students, women constituted less than five percent.³⁵⁴ The discrepancy was largely attributed to lingering stereotypes:

The image of the architect as a masculine figure is a holdover from an earlier era when architects were closely related to unprofessional, skilled craftsmen, and much of their work involved considerable physical strength and direct contact with construction crews, often in a supervisory capacity.³⁵⁵

Despite their lack of representation overall, women who did choose to enter the building trades showed a notable aptitude and commitment to their work. In 1969 Emil Fischer, Dean of the College of Architecture and Design at Kansas State University noted that, "Although only 2 percent of our students are women, they usually rank in the upper 5 percent of their class. In general, women seem to be more definitely motivated and try to excel. Once they choose the profession of architecture, they apply their total energy toward becoming as proficient as possible."³⁵⁶ Another barrier to women entering the building trades was a lack of encouragement. In fact, studies found that high school and college counselors continued to actively discourage women from entering the profession.³⁵⁷

In 1975, women still constituted less than one percent of licensed architects in the U.S., although census figures listed women as 3.5 percent of total architects at that time. Architect **Peggy Cochrane Bowman** attributed that disparity partially due to finances and poor pay in the field overall. Bowman noted that some studies at the time found that women and non-White architects earned, on average, half of what White male architects earned, and that women architects abroad achieved much higher status and earnings than their American counterparts. Bowman noted that male architects routinely tried to prevent women from joining the field, fearing added competition in an already competitive environment.³⁵⁸ By 1972-73 women made up 8.4 percent of graduate and undergraduate students in architecture, up from 6 percent four years prior.³⁵⁹

³⁵² Hartman, *The Women Who Changed Architecture*, 60.

³⁵³ "History of the Women's Rights Movement," National Women's History Alliance, accessed December 17, 2024, <https://nationalwomenshistoryalliance.org/history-of-the-womens-rights-movement/>.

³⁵⁴ Beatrice Dinerman, "Women in Architecture," *Architectural Forum* 131, no. 5 (December 1969): 50.

³⁵⁵ Dinerman, "Women in Architecture," 50.

³⁵⁶ Dinerman, "Women in Architecture," 50.

³⁵⁷ Dinerman, "Women in Architecture," 50.

³⁵⁸ Peggy Cochrane Bowman, "Women in Architecture," *L.A. Architect*, February 1975, 3.

³⁵⁹ Susan Torre, "Women in Architecture and the New Feminism" in *Women in American Architecture*, 149.

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While women working in the ‘professional’ or ‘formal’ building trades like architecture, engineering, and landscape architecture were few and far between, many women continued working in the trades outside the confines of the formalized standards.

7.3. NEBRASKA WOMEN IN TRADES (1945-1975)

Following World War II, with the GI bill enabling thousands of veterans to attend college and with the dramatic nationwide building boom across the country, interest in the building trades skyrocketed. At UNL, enrollment (male and female) in the College of Engineering increased from 1,076 in 1945-1946 to 1,909 in 1948-1949. In 1947 the College was renamed the College of Engineering and Architecture, and the curriculum expanded.³⁶⁰ The program trained numerous graduates, and it was reported that over 6.5 percent of UNL graduates of the program were listed in the *Who’s Who of Engineering*, the highest percentage second only to Dartmouth.³⁶¹ However, of the 9,000 students who enrolled in the university in 1946 (up from 5,000 in 1945), only 2,400 were women.³⁶²

Despite the high success rate of the UNL architecture and engineering programs, women were hardly represented. In the list of the 38 recipients of honorary doctorates in engineering awarded by UNL between 1919 and 1969, none were women.³⁶³ In 1964, the Department of Architecture at UNL was redesignated the School of Architecture and two years later a Bachelor of Science degree in construction science was added to the program.³⁶⁴

7.3.1. The Technical Professionals

In 1960, Hungarian **Madelaine Lazar**, worked briefly as a draftsman at the City of Omaha’s engineering department.³⁶⁵ **Linda Pounds Olson** was also a practicing architect in Nebraska in the late 1970s. Olson worked alongside her architect husband, and together they designed commercial buildings and residential remodels. By 1978 Olson said she’d had six of her residential designs constructed.³⁶⁶

Frances Schepp Wilkie (b.1904–d.1986)

Frances Mary Schepp was born to Irish immigrants on a cattle ranch in Manhattan, Kansas on May 27, 1904.³⁶⁷ In 1928, Schepp became the first woman to graduate from the Kansas State University architecture program. Later reflecting on her time at Kansas State, Frances recalled that female architecture students were not permitted to go out into the field in survey class, and instead she had to substitute the class with a history of costume design. While attending school, Frances met fellow architecture student Leslie E. Wilkie, and the couple married in 1929.³⁶⁸ In the 1930s Frances and her husband lived in Tulsa, where both were listed as architects.³⁶⁹ However, by 1940 the couple had moved to the Omaha area, Leslie was listed as an Assistant Architect with the National Park Service, while Frances was listed as a housewife.³⁷⁰

Amidst the post-war building boom, Frances and Leslie formed the firm Wilkie Architects in 1945. Over the course of her career, Frances designed more than 6,000 homes, while her husband concentrated on churches, warehouses, and other properties around Omaha (Figure 28).³⁷¹ Most of Wilkie’s work was in Omaha and western Iowa, although she also designed buildings in places as far as Malaysia and Switzerland.³⁷² Frances also designed a round vacation home for her family in Estes Park, Colorado and renovated her family ranch home on Deep Creek Road outside of Manhattan, Kansas.³⁷³ Frances reportedly designed the “manse” or parsonage for the Murray Presbyterian Church in Omaha in the 1960s.³⁷⁴

³⁶⁰ Manley, *Centennial History of the University of Nebraska*, - Volume 2, 136.

³⁶¹ Manley, *Centennial History of the University of Nebraska* - Volume 2, 189.

³⁶² Robert E. Knoll, *Prairie University: A History of the University of Nebraska*. (University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 180.

³⁶³ Manley, *Centennial History of the University of Nebraska* - Volume 1, 265.

³⁶⁴ Manley, *Centennial History of the University of Nebraska* - Volume 1, 243.

³⁶⁵ “Draftswoman for City Engineer Now, She Was Hungarian Freedom Fighter in 1956,” *Lincoln Star*, March 20, 1960, p15.

³⁶⁶ Williams, “Women Architects Pause for Dreams,” *Omaha World Herald*, December 3, 1978, p106.

³⁶⁷ “Architect Frances M. Wilkie, 81, Designer of 6,000 Homes, Dies,” *Omaha World Herald*, January 27, 1986, p28.

³⁶⁸ “Houses Feminine, Says ‘Pioneer,’” *Omaha World Herald*, December 3, 1978, p111.

³⁶⁹ *Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930. Tulsa County, Oklahoma*, U.S. Census Bureau, available on Ancestry.com.

³⁷⁰ *Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940. Douglas County, Dundee Precinct, Nebraska*, U.S. Census Bureau, available on Ancestry.com.

³⁷¹ “Funeral today for L.E. Wilkie,” *Omaha World Herald*, August 30, 1988, p34.

³⁷² “Architect Frances M. Wilkie, 81, Designer of 6,000 Homes, Dies,” *Omaha World Herald*, January 27, 1986, p28.

³⁷³ “Houses Feminine, Says ‘Pioneer,’” *Omaha World Herald*, December 3, 1978, p111.

³⁷⁴ “Ground Broken for Manse for Murray Presbyterian,” *The Plattsmouth Journal*, August 22, 1963, p1.

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As far as Wilkie was aware, she was the only female architect in Omaha during her career. Frances and husband Leslie both retired in the 1960s. Following Frances's death in 1986, her husband established the Frances Schepp Wilkie Memorial Scholarship for architecture students at Kansas State, with preference given to women applicants.³⁷⁵

Susan McClendon (b.1948 -)

Susan McClendon was born in 1948 and grew up in Lincoln. By the time she was a student at Lincoln Southeast High School she had already declared an interest in becoming an architect, as was noted when she was listed as a merit scholar semifinalist.³⁷⁶ McClendon went on to study architecture at UNL in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and in 1971 she earned an award from the Nebraska Chapter of the AIA.³⁷⁷ McClendon later became an architect at the firm Leo A. Daly Co., where she specialized in adapting existing commercial buildings, including the Orpheum Theater in Lincoln, and designed homes "for fun."³⁷⁸ According to McClendon, she did not like to think of herself as a 'woman architect,' but rather, "I'm a person first, an architect second and a woman third."³⁷⁹ McClendon later worked for Building Systems Design, Inc. out of Atlanta, Georgia, serving as Director, Executive Vice President, and a Certified Construction Specifier before retiring in Bellingham, Washington.³⁸⁰

7.3.2. The Tradeswomen

In the 1970s, several women in Nebraska broke into the carpentry trade, although were still notable as a rarity. In 1978, 23-year-old **Peggy Murphy** became the only woman member of the Carpenters Local No. 253 and was the only woman actively at work at the construction site of University of Omaha's School of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation building. She was an apprentice with Peter Kiewit Sons Co.³⁸¹ Around the same time, **Julie McGuire** claimed the title as the first professional woman carpenter in Kearney, where she worked for Brandt Construction Co (Figure 29).³⁸² In Lincoln, **Cynthia Slade** had the distinction as the "first female carpenter apprentice in Lincoln," although the *Lincoln Star* noted there were a total of 13 women carpentry apprentices throughout Nebraska. Slade stated she "wanted to learn how to build houses," but lamented, "that's the place I most likely won't be able to get a job. People don't want women working for them just yet."³⁸³ Despite the significant strides women had made in the trades nationally and in Nebraska, by the 1970s, gender discrimination and stereotypes continued to impact women in the industry.

7.3.3. The Designers

In 1965, Omaha firm Orchard Interior Design had several women interior designers, including **Jan Buckingham, H. Jessica Wilson, and Grace Harlan Kennedy** (see Figure 31).³⁸⁴ In 1968 Lincoln-based interior design firm Brandeis listed **Linda G. Holm, Barbara Oglesby, Grace Harlan Kennedy** (formerly at Orchard), **Jan Sue Armstrong, and Karlyn Kuper**.³⁸⁵ The following year, Brandeis had several women interior designers, Jan Buckingham, **Alma Strough,** and Jan Sue Warren (formerly Jan Sue Armstrong in 1968).³⁸⁶

Women also increased their representation in the visual arts in the mid-century. To celebrate Nebraska's centennial in 1967, the state held several competitions for new artworks to adorn the Nebraska State Capitol. Abstract expressionist mosaicist **Jeanne Reynal** of New York was awarded several of the commissions, including her work *The Blizzard of 1888*.³⁸⁷ In the 1970s **Catherine Ferguson** achieved notice as an environmental artist and sculptor from Omaha. Ferguson created textile art and often worked in a medium of batik. Ferguson graduated from Creighton University in 1965 and also

³⁷⁵ "Funeral today for L.E. Wilkie," *Omaha World Herald*, August 30, 1988, p34.

³⁷⁶ "25 Lincoln Scholars Are Merit Semifinalists," *The Lincoln Star*, September 23, 1965, p9.

³⁷⁷ "19 Students Honored," *Lincoln Star Journal*, June 5, 1971, p3.

³⁷⁸ Susan Darst Williams, "Women Architects Pause for Dreams," *Omaha World Herald*, December 3, 1978, p106.

³⁷⁹ Williams, "Women Architects Pause for Dreams," p111.

³⁸⁰ "Susan McClendon," LinkedIn, accessed February 26, 2025, <https://www.linkedin.com/in/susan-mcclendon-5aa80917/>.

³⁸¹ "Woman Carpenter Builds Career," *Omaha World Herald*, August 13, 1978, p24.

³⁸² "Female Carpenter Learns Building Trade," *Kearney Hub*, May 21, 1975, p1.

³⁸³ "Her World is Comprised of Hammers and Nails," *The Lincoln Star*, August 34, 1974, p6.

³⁸⁴ "Ad," *Omaha World Herald*, May 30, 1965, p51.

³⁸⁵ "Ad," *Omaha World Herald*, November 20, 1968, p9.

³⁸⁶ "Ad," *Lincoln Journal Star*, September 25m 1969, p5.

³⁸⁷ "Murals and Paintings," Nebraska State Capitol, accessed October 16, 2024, <https://capitol.nebraska.gov/building/artwork/murals-and-paintings/>.

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taught batik techniques.³⁸⁸ She was an ‘artist in residence’ at Omaha’s Old Market Craftsman Guild.³⁸⁹ Artist, costumer, and theatrical set designer **Mary Elizabeth “Emmy” Gifford**, who also co-founded the Omaha Junior Theater in 1948, was a multi-talented creative. She painted the murals that adorned the Omaha Community Playhouse in 1959, among numerous other works.³⁹⁰

Amid the ongoing Women’s Movement of the 1960s and 1970s, Omaha native and ceramic artist **Ree Kaneko** (née Schonlau) was instrumental in fostering and growing Omaha’s art scene (Figure 30). After graduating from the University of Omaha in 1967 she established an art studio in one of Omaha’s aging warehouses in the Old Market District in the early 1970s. Soon, she founded the Craftsmen Guild and transformed a long-vacant, 12,000-square-foot produce warehouse into a massive studio and art gallery for local artists and creatives. The facility hosted art classes, workshops, lectures, and exhibitions. In 1981, along with her husband, Kaneko started the Alternative Worksite/Artists in Industry program which encouraged artists to incorporate their works into the built environment, and particularly industrial sites. Through the program, over 100 artists produced works at industrial sites and within five years she co-founded The Bemis, an artist-in-residency program in the vacant Bemis Bag Co. warehouse in Omaha. In the subsequent decade, Kaneko continued efforts to expand and renovate the facility and the program, which became the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts in 1995.³⁹¹

7.3.4. The Planners

Women’s participation in the real estate industry flourished in the post-war era. In 1962 **Arlene Geschwender**, along with her husband, founded her own real estate firm. In the late 1960s, she founded the Randall School of Real Estate in Omaha to train prospective licensees and later served as director of the Real Estate Educators Association and president of the National Women’s Council of Realtors in Nebraska.³⁹² **Frances “Fran” Rice** of Fran Rice Realty in Omaha also started her own agency in 1968 when her husband became ill and she needed to supplement the family income. She became the first president of the Omaha Board of Realtors in 1977. According to Rice, “it’s one business where you’re compensated exactly the same regardless of sex, race, or creed.”³⁹³

In the field of historic preservation, in the early 1950s **Mildred Bennett** led a crusade to preserve the Willa Cather home in Red Cloud, Nebraska (Figure 27). The author, historian, and Cather biographer spent years researching and writing about the renowned Nebraska author and in 1955 gathered friends and other interested parties to form the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial Foundation (later Willa Cather Foundation), of which she was president. The organization established a Cather museum, first in the old Red Cloud auditorium, where Bennett oversaw all the work to get the museum up and running and designed the displays.³⁹⁴ In 1966, Bennett led the charge to preserve the Red Cloud Depot, a location featured in Cather’s writings, and in the late 1960s was instrumental in getting numerous sites associated with Cather listed on the NRHP.³⁹⁵

7.3.5. The Independents

In the mid-century, women continued to be active in shaping the landscape of their communities, either through informal participation in the building trades or in adjacent fields. In the town of Mullen in west-central Nebraska, **Maud Schooler Briggs Nelson** was an active and enterprising businesswoman and hotelier who also promoted efforts to create a city park.³⁹⁶ In the early 1950s, Nelson pushed city leadership to create a city park near the courthouse square and in 1953 took on

³⁸⁸ “Art work of Nebraskans on NW Bell calendar,” *The Gordon Journal*, November 8, 1972, p3.

³⁸⁹ “Artist to Present Workshops in G.I.,” *The Grand Island Independent*, October 25, 1975, p2.

³⁹⁰ “Mary Elizabeth (Emmy) Gifford,” MONA Museum of Nebraska Art, accessed December 17, 2024, <https://mona.unk.edu/mona/mary-elizabeth-gifford/>.

³⁹¹ “Ree Kaneko,” Ree & Jun Kaneko Foundation, accessed December 17, 2023, <https://reeandjunkanekofoundation.org/ree-kaneko/>.

³⁹² “1988 Nebraska Directory of Professional Women,” Midland Business Journal, 1988, available at Nebraska State Historical Society Archive – Lincoln, 25.

³⁹³ “1988 Nebraska Directory of Professional Women,” 6; “Geschwenders Are Honored as Omaha Realtors of Year,” *Omaha World Herald*, December 20, 1980, p20.

³⁹⁴ Eileen Bess Day, “Mildred Bennett’s Crusade,” *Omaha World Herald*, December 9, 1953, p114.

³⁹⁵ Dean Terrell, “Red Cloud Depot to Be Willa Cather Memorial,” *Lincoln Journal Star*, November 2, 1965, p8.

³⁹⁶ “New Hotel Owners,” *The Sandhill News*, August 12, 1954, p1.

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the supervision of the new Mullen City Park.³⁹⁷ The following year, Maud sold the Hotel and purchased the Starr Apartments across the street, which she extensively remodeled.³⁹⁸

7.4. EXAMPLE PROPERTY TYPE: *Mid-century Residences*

In the late 1930s and early 1940s, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) provided home buyers with federally insured loans for the construction and purchase of small, single-family homes that were needed to house the abundant wartime workers in the production plants being established across the U.S. This gave rise to a new, dominant house form in the U.S. which remained popular through the 1950s. Minimal Traditional residences are characterized by their small, massed footprint, single or one and half story height, gable roofs with minimal overhang, and minimal adornment.³⁹⁹ In 1939, **Frances Schepp Wilkie** designed a modest, cross gable Minimal Traditional residence at 5002 Emmett Street in Omaha (extant). However, Wilkie added a distinct design flourish not typical of the style, with a projecting bay window and distinctive projecting front gable that meets a partially hexagonal roof. The rest of the home is simplistic with little architectural adornment. That year, she also designed a residence for the Millers at 3351 N. 48th, a charming, side gable Minimal Traditional cottage with random flagstone siding and projecting front gable dormers on the symmetrical front façade.⁴⁰⁰

Following WWII, the GI bill enabled returning veterans to purchase homes with low-cost, FHA-backed mortgages, and the need for single-family residences skyrocketed. In Nebraska, residential contracts increased by 67 percent between 1949 and 1950 alone.⁴⁰¹ As the U.S. economy surged exponentially, automobile ownership skyrocketed, new building materials became available, and suburbanization led to sprawling new subdivisions, Americans wanted larger homes with more amenities. To meet this need, the Ranch style, with its broad, single-story form, integrated garages, large picture windows, low sloped roofs, and typically asymmetrical facades became the dominant house form between the late 1930s through 1970s.⁴⁰²

Amid the growing post-war building boom, **Frances Schepp Wilkie** and her husband Leslie formed Wilkie Architects in Omaha in 1945, where Frances focused primarily on residential design. In 1950, Frances helped clients Mr. and Mrs. Hintz design their home at 5426 Charles Street (extant). The simple, hipped roof residence has a moderate footprint, a hybrid of the Minimal Traditional and Ranch styles. Brick siding adorns the primary (south elevation) with horizontal board on the remaining elevations. An inset, single-car garage and modest, partial-width front porch reflect the growth of the automobile and the increased financial means of middle-class Americans during the 1950s. However, like her Emmett Street house, Wilkie did add a small architectural feature on the primary façade, with a contrasting exterior wall faced in limestone punctuated by a single round window.

In the 1960s, Wilkie's homes began to reflect the increased prosperity of the era, and featured larger, longer building footprints characteristic of the Ranch style. Her design for the Gordon residence at 11325 Frances Street in Omaha featured a hipped roof, brick siding on the lower half and horizontal board siding on the upper half, picture windows, and an integrated three car garage on the side elevation. In addition to designing exteriors and interior floorplans, Wilkie also assisted homeowners with their interior design. At the Gordon residence, Wilkie's interior featured white walls with red and blue accents, a full height Texas stone fireplace in the sunken living room, white marble and blue vinyl floors, wrought iron railings, gold foil wallpaper and trim, and thick, heavy draperies (Figure 28).⁴⁰³

³⁹⁷ "City Park Under the Supervision of Maud Nelson!" *The Sandhill News*, July 30, 1953, p1.

³⁹⁸ *Hooker County Tribune*, February 11, 1954, p4.

³⁹⁹ McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 588.

⁴⁰⁰ "House Designed by Two Women Compact, Efficient," *Omaha World Herald*, August 6, 1939, p19.

⁴⁰¹ "State Building Above 1949," *Omaha World Herald*, June 4, 1950, p73.

⁴⁰² McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 597-600.

⁴⁰³ "Home Distinctive," *Omaha World Herald*, December 31, 1961, p39.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceSection E Page 46 Nebraska Women in Trades - Statewide **8. *Invisible a Timeliness Unfurled: Women in the Trades Today (1975-Present)*****8.1. NEBRASKA HISTORY (1975-PRESENT)**

In the mid-1970s, the Farm Crisis impacted Nebraska farmers who had increased their debt to purchase the expensive agricultural equipment needed to run a competitive business. Along with rising interest rates, competition from corporate agribusiness, and changes in the global economy, many Nebraska farmers left the industry or foreclosed on their properties. As a result of the crisis, which led to protests and occasional violence, in 1982 amendments were made to the state constitution limiting corporate farming in the state. In the 1990s, the telecommunications industry had a brief impact on the economy, although foreign competition ultimately prevented its long-term success.⁴⁰⁴

In 2020, the population of Nebraska was 1,978,379 of which 49 percent were women.⁴⁰⁵ At that time, the overall population was 61.6 percent White, 12.4 percent Black, 18.7 percent Hispanic, 6 percent Asian, and 1.1 percent Indigenous American.⁴⁰⁶ In 2018-2019, women outnumbered men out of those graduating with postsecondary degrees in the state, making up 57 percent of overall graduates. The most prominent occupational fields in the state for both men and women were office and administration, transportation and goods movement, and sales.⁴⁰⁷

8.2. WOMEN IN TRADES IN THE U.S. (1975-PRESENT)

Although women continue to face many of the same barriers to entry that have persisted for centuries, including unequal pay, gender discrimination, limited advancement opportunities, and a patriarchal culture that devalues women's contributions, some recent studies point to areas of positive change. In many of the building trades, advancements in technology have rendered obsolete the notion that building trades that historically required manual labor and physical strength were incompatible with womanhood, particularly in the areas of construction and construction management.⁴⁰⁸

In 1981, **Carol Ross Barney** founded Ross Barney Architects in Chicago, designing numerous projects throughout that city, along with the Oklahoma City Federal building. Barney went on to win numerous design awards from prestigious architecture and design organizations. In 2023, **Barney** won the 2023 Gold Medal from the AIA, recognizing her astounding contributions to the field.⁴⁰⁹

In 1983 there were less than 200 Black registered female architects in the U.S. By 2020, there were over 500 Black women (living) registered as architects in the U.S., however as of 2022 Black women were less than 1 percent of the overall population of architects in the U.S.⁴¹⁰ In 2019, the U.S. Department of Labor reported that women made up 15 percent of those working in engineering, up from 3 percent in 1970.⁴¹¹ In 2016, women made up over 14 percent of the overall labor force, and over 10 percent of the full-time labor force in the construction industry.⁴¹² In 2023, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics indicated women made up roughly 31 percent of Americans employed as architects, almost 17 percent of civil engineers, over 24 percent of industrial engineers, 3.1 percent of carpenters, 1.5 percent of brick, block, and stone masons, 4.5 percent of construction laborers, 10.6 percent of construction managers, and 4.7 percent of cement masons and concrete and terrazzo finishers. At the same time, women comprised 85.3 percent of interior designers and 57 percent

⁴⁰⁴ "1975-1999," NebraskaStudies.Org, accessed December 14, 2024, <https://nebraskastudies.org/en/1975-1999/>.

⁴⁰⁵ "Quick Facts Nebraska 2020," U.S. Census Bureau, accessed December 14, 2024, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/NE/SEX255223#SEX255223>.

⁴⁰⁶ "NEBRASKA: 2020 Census," U.S. Census Bureau, accessed December 14, 2024, <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/state-by-state/nebraska-population-change-between-census-decade.html>.

⁴⁰⁷ "Nebraska Economic Insight and Outlook," Nebraska Department of Labor, September 2021, accessed December 17, 2024, https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/eta/Performance/pdfs/annual_economic_reports/2021/NE%20Economic%20Insight%20and%20Outlook%2021_FINAL.pdf.

⁴⁰⁸ Hatipkarasulu, and Roff, "Women in Construction: An Early Historical Perspective."

⁴⁰⁹ "Founder and President, Ross Barney Architects," The Chicago Network, accessed February 20, 2025, <https://www.thechicagonetwork.org/member/carol-barney/>.

⁴¹⁰ Reggev, "'Dared to Enter': Black Female Architects and Their Architecture Education."

⁴¹¹ "Women in the Labor Force," U.S. Department of Labor, accessed September 18, 2024, <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/wb/data/facts-over-time/women-in-the-labor-force>.

⁴¹² "Female construction Industry Workers in Nebraska Earn Adjusted \$52K Each Year," *Eastern Progress*, accessed December 17, 2024, https://www.easternprogress.com/female-construction-industry-workers-in-nebraska-earn-adjusted-52k-each-year/article_500fd6f1-5623-509f-93e2-a2108063408b.html.

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of real estate brokers and sales agents.⁴¹³ In 2023, the AIA reported nearly 2 percent of their membership self-identified as LGBTQIA+. Similarly, the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture (ACSA) reported that 3 percent of their faculty members self-identified as LGBTQIA+.⁴¹⁴

While these statistics suggest that women's participation and representation in the building trades has increased over the past century, women still make up only a fraction of those working in the various building trades nation-wide.

8.3. NEBRASKA WOMEN IN TRADES (1975-PRESENT)

Between 1980 and 1986 the number of women in Nebraska's workforce increased by 35,925 to 338,237. Real estate remained a popular field for Nebraska women, evident in the fact that in 1988, the Women's Council of Real Estate in Nebraska had roughly 180 members and 51 percent of the real estate sales force was women.⁴¹⁵

As of 2024, there were no known Black women licensed as architects in the state of Nebraska, and there were only four licensed Black male architects in the state.⁴¹⁶ While formal statistics on the number of women working in the trades in Nebraska was unavailable, desktop research indicated an abundance of women architects, engineers, interior designers, landscape architects, real estate agents, and other women in various industries within and adjacent to the building trades.

8.3.1. The Technical Professionals

In the 1980s and 1990s, **Kelley Rosburg** was a female architect practicing in Nebraska. Rosburg graduated from Doane College, and after a series of jobs took a position with the City of Lincoln. She stated when she entered college, she was one of four women architecture students, however when she graduated in 1982 that number had climbed to 25.⁴¹⁷ During that time, **Paula Broady Wells** studied engineering at UNL, and according to her, "I was the first woman engineering student they had had in 30 years." Paula worked for various engineering firms in Omaha before starting her own firm, Wells Engineering, out of a bedroom in her home. She later earned a doctorate degree from UNL. At one point, her firm had 50 employees and offices in Phoenix, Chicago, Denver, and Omaha. In 1993 she sold her business to go into full-time consulting.⁴¹⁸

More recently, in 2016 licensed architect **Lenora A. Nelson** joined the Nebraska Board of Engineers and Architects, serving as the board's chair until 2019.⁴¹⁹ **Kate Hier** of Lincoln was elected to the AIA Board of Directors and was recognized with an AIA Young Architect's Award in 2024.⁴²⁰ These women are among many other practicing women architects, engineers, and landscape architects throughout the state.

8.3.2. The Tradeswomen

In the twenty-first century, women have made vast strides in increasing representation in the building trades. In 2016, women made up over 10 percent of Nebraskans employed in the construction industry.⁴²¹ **Maranda Adams** and **Ashley Kuhn** founded the first Class A contractor business run by Black women in Nebraska, Blair Freeman. Their firm specializes in serving low-income neighborhoods.⁴²² **Kim Stewart** of Omaha, who had entered the construction industry in 1978, started her own design build firm Jill of All Trades. She stated, "Today there are many more women in the trade industry. However, I know it is still a male dominated industry."⁴²³ **Crystal Collins** is another Nebraska tradeswomen and

⁴¹³ "Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey (2023)," U.S. Department of Labor and Statistics, accessed September 18, 2024, <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.htm>.

⁴¹⁴ Chris Daemmrich, Michelle Barrett, My-Anh Nguyen, and Kendall A. Nicholson, "Where are my People? Queer in Architecture," Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture, October 18, 2024, <https://www.acsa-arch.org/resource/where-are-my-people-queer-in-architecture/>.

⁴¹⁵ "1988 Nebraska Directory of Professional Women," 5, 7.

⁴¹⁶ "Nebraska," The Directory of African American Architects, accessed September 18, 2024, <https://blackarchitect.us/#NE>.

⁴¹⁷ "Designing a Better Tomorrow," *Lincoln Star Journal*, November 7, 1995, p24.

⁴¹⁸ "Engineer Uses Skills At Home and at Work," *Omaha World Herald*, October 8, 1994, p35.

⁴¹⁹ "State of Nebraska Board of Engineers and Architects," Nebraska.gov, accessed December 14, 2024, <https://ea.nebraska.gov/lenora-nelson-ncarb>.

⁴²⁰ "Kate Hier, AIA," accessed December 14, 2024, <https://www.aia.org/design-excellence/award-winners/kate-hier-aia>.

⁴²¹ "Female construction Industry Workers in Nebraska Earn Adjusted \$52K Each Year," *Eastern Progress*.

⁴²² "'I feel proud of it': The rise of Nebraska's only Black female-led construction company," *3NewsNowOmaha*, February 27, 2023, <https://www.3newsnow.com/lifestyle/black-history-month/i-feel-proud-of-it-the-rise-of-nebraskas-only-black-female-led-construction-company>.

⁴²³ "Women in Business: Jill of All Trades Construction LLC: Kim Stewart," *Omaha Magazine*, November 22, 2023, <https://www.omahamagazine.com/today/women-in-business-jill-of-all-trades-construction-llc-kim-stewart/>.

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owner of Oak Electric in Lincoln. She also noted the common and enduring misconceptions faced by women in the trades, stating, “When we first started Oak Electric, we had a lot of people that would go around me and talk to my husband directly. He would always remind them that he wasn’t the one making the decisions – I was.”⁴²⁴ Despite enduring stereotypes, in the twenty-first century many women feel empowered to directly challenge the long-held prejudices women have faced in the building trades.

8.3.3. The Designers

In contemporary times, there are an abundance of women artists in Nebraska creating and designing large scale installations that intersect with the built environment. Among these numerous women, in 2023 Indigenous Nebraskan artist **Sarah Rowe** of Omaha created the large-scale mural *Star Seeds* that adorns 15 grain silos at Ardent Mills in South Omaha.⁴²⁵ In 2019, muralist **Jenna Johnson** created the *We Don’t Coast We Create* mural on the Hot Shops Art Center in downtown Omaha.⁴²⁶ Interior design also remains a prevalent field for women in the building trades, with **Julie Hockney** of Omaha, the all-female design team at **Ways Interiors** in Omaha, **Natasha Salem** of Inspiring Homes Designs in Lincoln, and **Natasha Lundy** of Willow Keys Design in Lincoln among many others.

8.3.4. The Planners

Real estate remained an accessible and lucrative field for women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In Council Bluffs, realtor **Tanya Argesinger** of Gateway Realtors stated, “It’s a really equalizing field,” and it provided women with independence and variety.⁴²⁷ Despite these assertions, overall, salaries in the 1980s showed marked differences for men and women, with the average for men in Nebraska at \$20,600, and \$15,800 for women.⁴²⁸

⁴²⁴ Caitlyn Gish, Megan Davey and Claire Spencer, “Nebraska women in male-dominated trade industries: “Show them you’re as good as anyone else”,” *Nebraska News Service*, Dec 17, 2023, https://www.nebraskanewsservice.net/multimedia/nebraska-women-in-male-dominated-trade-industries-show-them-you-re-as-good-as-anyone/article_a44f5450-e805-50c3-9591-58aa0609a9ba.html.

⁴²⁵ “Artist Sarah Rowe describes mural as ‘joyful celebration of the Nebraska sky’,” KMTB 3 News, accessed December 14, 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JFWOf-mjQ2Q>.

⁴²⁶ “*We Don’t Coast – We Create*: New Mural at the Hot Shops,” Hot Shops Art Center, December 20, 2019, <https://www.hotshopsartcenter.com/new-mural-at-the-hot-shops/>.

⁴²⁷ “1988 Nebraska Directory of Professional Women,” 6.

⁴²⁸ “1988 Nebraska Directory of Professional Women,” 11.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceSection F Page 49 Nebraska Women in Trades - Statewide**F. ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES**

Properties eligible for listing under this MPDF cover document include buildings, structures, sites, objects, or districts that were designed or built by women in Nebraska within the period of significance, between c. 1840 and 1975. These properties are significant for their ability to convey women's important contributions to shaping the built environment in Nebraska, including (but not limited to) buildings, landscapes, designed interiors, visual arts (murals, mosaics, stained glass, sculptures, etc.), and innovations in construction, design, or engineering. Eligible properties must establish a significant association with one of the historic contexts outlined in **Section E** as well as meet one or more of the National Register Criteria for Evaluation.

This MPDF was written in 2024-2025, and thus the historic-age cut-off for properties falling within the purview of the MPDF is 1975. However, the passage of time may render later properties in Nebraska associated with women in trades as historically or architecturally significant, and thus the document may require subsequent updates to incorporate historic resources constructed after 1975.

Existing guidance for listing properties on the National Register does not include Women's History or Gender History as a data field for significance, predicated on the premise that most listings would be "associated with both sexes in one way or another."⁴²⁹ However, good intentions notwithstanding, a 1997 study found that at that time, of the 9,820 NRHP-listed properties associated with significant persons, only 3 percent were found to be associated with women. The 1997 study also found that of the 25,000 names associated with builders and architects in the NRHP database, only around 90 were women.⁴³⁰ In 2022, the National Trust for Historic Preservation conducted another study of historic sites associated with women and found that only 18 percent of National Park Service historic sites are explicitly associated with women, and less than 4 percent of National Historic Landmarks.⁴³¹ The lack of representation of women in the NRHP and other historic designations underscores the necessity of documenting and celebrating the important roles that women have played in American place-making.

Women historically, and currently, face substantial barriers breaking into fields considered the dominion of men, including architecture, engineering, and the building trades. As a result, women who successfully created careers in the building trades to a degree where their contributions were recognized in newspapers, trade publications, magazines, or in other media are, by virtue of their relative rarity, likely to be significant within the broader history of the building trades. That said, it is also likely that many women who made significant contributions to the Nebraska landscape were not documented or noted in typical historic source materials. Furthermore, while numerous women working in the building trades in Nebraska were identified during the course of preparing this MPDF, due to the fact that many women's contributions are not accurately represented in the written record, they may have used pseudonyms, or were not credited for their work, it is expected that there are other women builders in Nebraska who have yet to be identified. Properties by Nebraska tradeswomen and builders not identified by name in this MPDF or other publications are not automatically precluded from being eligible for listing under this MPDF.

As noted in the preface of this MPDF, documentation of Nebraska's women in the building trades is limited, and the typical scholarly sources used to justify a property's eligibility for the NRHP may be unavailable. For a property to be listed under this MPDF, the woman's (or women's) contribution in the design, planning, construction, engineering, innovation, artistry, or craftsmanship must be demonstrated through supporting source material, including traditionally utilized sources such as journals, newspapers, building permits, plans, trade journals, magazines, or government publications. However, due to the aforementioned circumstances, other acceptable sources may include (but are not limited to) family histories, personal papers or records, diaries, oral histories, and ethnographies. Furthermore, the documentation must demonstrate that the woman's (or women's) contribution was *significant* per NPS guidelines.

⁴²⁹ Carol D. Shull, "Women's History in the National Register and the National Historic Landmarks Survey," *CRM* Volume 20, no. 3, (1997): 12, Accessed August 2, 2024. <https://archives.indianapolis.iu.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/42242826-105d-4f72-94cf-85ec11244604/content>.

⁴³⁰ Shull, "Women's History," 13-14.

⁴³¹ Kerrian France, "Building Connections: Recommendations for Centering Women's History at the National Park Service," November 10, 2022, <https://savingplaces.org/stories/womens-history-national-park-service>.

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Areas and Levels of Significance

Properties listed under this MPDF will be significant at either the local, state, or national level under Criterion A in the area of Social History: Women's History. The period of significance for this MPDF begins c.1840 and ends in 1975 to encompass the historic building and craftsmanship traditions of Indigenous Plains women which were documented following non-Indigenous settlement in Nebraska and extending into the late twentieth century when women still remained a fraction of the overall workforce in the building trades.

While most properties will be significant under *at least* Criterion A in the area of Social History: Women's History, some properties may also have significance under Criteria B, C, or D.

CRITERION A

Under Criterion A, a property must demonstrate an association with a woman or women's *significant* contributions in the building trades, either formally or informally, working in Nebraska within the period of significance (c.1840 - 1975). A property listed under Criterion A will be significant in the area of Social History: Women's History, although it may also be significant within other areas, including Ethnic Heritage or other themes.

Pre-contact Indigenous women of Nebraska were afforded a great deal more autonomy, independence, and responsibility than their Anglo/European counterparts, and thus Indigenous women working in the trades was common. However, the erasure of traditional building techniques, craftsmanship, and the enforcement of Euro-American gender roles during the settler colonization of the western U.S. makes any remaining physical evidence of these early Indigenous builders and craftswomen highly significant. For White Euro-American women in post-settler colonized Nebraska, the patriarchal structure of society and its prescribed gender roles placed substantial barriers on women working in the building trades, furthered by the lack of recognition for their work. Immigrant and Black women in Nebraska faced the same limitations as White women, although often with the added burden of dual discrimination based on their race, ethnicity, religion, or country of origin. Thus, women who achieved notoriety such that they were identified in newspapers, publications, oral histories, or other historic source material suggests their contributions may be significant.

National Park Service *National Register Bulletin 15, How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* notes that "Mere association with historic events or trends is not enough, in and of itself, to qualify under Criterion A: the property's specific association must be considered important as well." As noted above, because of the disproportionately low representation of women in the building trades, both historically and currently, properties associated with these women have a high likelihood of being historically significant as long as evidence supports the woman's (or women's) specific role in the property's design, development, decoration, planning, or construction.⁴³² By virtue of the rarity of women in the building trades in the U.S., and in Nebraska, and the fact that many women did not advertise or promote their work or were purposefully excluded from the historic record, public acknowledgement of women's work in the building trades connotes that they were notable in their field. Finally, the lack of representation of women in the building trades within the National Park Service's NRHP-listed properties database suggests that women's contributions to the built environment have long been overlooked and minimized. This MPDF seeks to redress these inequities and illuminate the myriads of ways that women shaped the built environment in Nebraska despite the outstanding impediments of patriarchal social structures, limits on education and access to the workforce, unequal wages, and gender discrimination.

Thus, properties eligible for listing under Criterion A are those that have *significant* associations with themes contained in **Section E** of this MPDF, and which illuminate and expand our understanding of women's contributions to the built environment in Nebraska within the period of significance. In order to be eligible for listing under Criterion A, a property must demonstrate that a woman, or women, played a substantial role in the property's design, construction, planning, workmanship, or development such that their contributions *significantly* shaped the built environment. For example, a

⁴³² *National Register Bulletin 15, How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, National Park Service, accessed October 25, 2024, https://nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/upload/NRB-15_web508.pdf, 12.

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property that was bought or sold by a woman realtor who did not contribute to the design, construction, development, or renovation of any buildings, structures, landscapes, or objects on the property would likely not be eligible for listing, unless the woman played a role in platting or laying out the neighborhood or parcel. However, a woman in the real estate industry who purchased property and had it developed *may* be eligible for listing under this MPDF if documentation confirms they made a substantial and *significant* contribution to the design, planning, or physical construction of features on the property.

Alternatively, a property that reflects or demonstrates the productive life of a woman, or women, that are significant for their contributions to the building trades in Nebraska *may* also be eligible for listing. For example, the office or workplace of a woman realtor who bought and sold properties without developing them, but who made *significant* contributions to the real estate or development industry in their community or Nebraska as a whole, *may* also be eligible for listing. The workshop or studio of a woman, or women, artist, craftswoman, or artisan may also be eligible for listing. The site of a school or training facility where women were trained in the building trades is another example of a property type that *may* be eligible for listing.

Properties listed under Criterion A must retain sufficient integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, association, and location. Generally, properties should remain in their original location, unless they were moved within the period of significance and their relocation does not impact their ability to convey their historic significance and association with Nebraska women in the building trades. Properties should retain their character-defining features, which may emphasize physical attributes like materials, workmanship, or design, or may focus on the associative characteristics of setting, feeling, and association, depending upon the property type. For example, an early twentieth century frame dwelling on a rural homestead may have been altered over time as materials and modern amenities became available, impacting integrity of design and materials. However, if the homestead remained in its original location in a rural setting and was easily readable, through massing or other qualities, as an early homestead associated with a significant woman builder it *may* retain enough character-defining features to convey its historic integrity.

CRITERION B

Under Criterion B, a property must demonstrate a direct association with a woman that was historically significant within one of the contexts outlined in **Section E**.

The historic contexts in this MPDF note numerous women in Nebraska who worked formally, or informally, in the building trades. In the source materials reviewed during the preparation of this MPDF, some women were mentioned briefly without even a name listed, while others were noted in passing with little detail. Several women identified during the preparation of this MPDF appeared more prominently in the historic record, likely through their own efforts at publicizing their work. More in-depth information about these women is included in the historic contexts within which they are associated. However, as previously stated, due to the statewide scope of this study, it is likely that only a small portion of significant women in the building trades in Nebraska are identified by name in this MPDF cover document. Thus, the work of women not specifically identified in this MPDF may still be eligible for listing under this cover document.

Properties listed under Criterion B may be associated with a woman (or women) who made *significant* strides in advancing the role or visibility of builders and tradeswomen in Nebraska or had a notable impact on shaping the built environment in their community or the state. To be eligible for listing under Criterion B, a property or properties should demonstrate an association with the productive life of a woman or women who contributed to the advancement of women in the building trades or who were significant for their role in the design, planning, construction, development, craftsmanship, or technological innovations that shaped the built environment of Nebraska. Properties listed under Criterion B should represent the most significant achievement of the individual with whom it is associated or best represent their careers or productive lives in the building trades.

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Properties listed under Criterion B must retain sufficient integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, association, and location such that they can convey their direct association with a *significant* woman or women in the building trades.

CRITERION C

Though properties listed under this MPDF will be eligible for listing under Criterion A in the area of Social History: Women's History, they may also have significance for their design, engineering, construction, artistic value, craftsmanship, or other physical characteristics and may also be eligible under Criterion C. Properties listed under Criterion C may be significant if they were designed, planned, created, or constructed (formally or informally) by a woman, either individually or as part of a joint effort, provided that their role was instrumental in the creation of the final product. This includes properties that were original designs, as well as properties that were later redesigned, renovated, or rehabilitated by a woman or women. Properties eligible under Criterion C may be the work of a designer, planner, architect, landscape architect, engineer, artist, or other tradeswoman and should reflect the woman, or women's, unique or distinct artistic vision, technical prowess, or skill set.

Properties listed under Criterion C must retain sufficient integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, association, and location such that they can convey the craftsmanship, skill, technological or engineering expertise of women in the building trades. Properties should retain sufficient character-defining features to convey their historical significance, although these features will vary based on property type. For example, a property associated with a woman who worked as an interior designer should retain interior finishes such as wallpapers, paint choices, flooring, light fixtures, and possibly furnishings, while the building's exterior may have been altered over time. For a designed landscape, a property's character-defining features may emphasize its scale, setting, distinct plantings, circulation patterns, and integrated works of art.

CRITERION D

Properties eligible under Criterion D are commonly archeological resources or ruins, although may also include other resource types. Properties eligible under Criterion D are those that have the potential to yield important information about women's roles in shaping the built environment of Nebraska, and may include the archeological remains of Indigenous villages, homesites, dwellings, lodges, or other structures, as long as existing documentation can confirm that the property was created, planned, designed, or built by a woman or women and that their contribution was significant. They may also include the remains of sod houses, frame dwellings, or schoolhouses designed or constructed by early women homesteaders and pioneers, or they may include earthworks, irrigation systems, agricultural properties, or other resources known to have been planned, created, designed, or constructed by a woman or women. In order to be eligible for listing, a site's association with women builders or tradeswoman must be identifiable through written or oral histories, and archeological testing must have the potential to illuminate or expand on the knowledge of the techniques, methods, craftsmanship, or traditions of women builders and tradeswomen in Nebraska.

For properties listed under Criterion D, integrity of design, materials, and workmanship may be compromised, particularly for ruins of former standing structure resources that have deteriorated. However, properties listed under Criterion D should retain sufficient integrity such that they can convey important information potential illuminating the significant contributions of Nebraska women on the built environment. .

Registration Requirements

To be eligible for listing under this MPDF, a property must:

- Be located within the state of Nebraska; and
- Have been designed, constructed, planned, developed, created, decorated, engineered, preserved, or substantially renovated, restored, or rehabilitated within the period of significance (c.1840 - 1975); *or* reflect the most productive life of a significant woman in trades (for example, an office or workshop); *or* have significance as an educational or training facility for women in the building trades; and
- Have significant associations with one of the historic contexts identified in **Section E**; and

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- Demonstrate the *significant* contributions of a woman, or women, in the design, construction, engineering, creation, planning, preservation, or development of the property. This includes properties where a woman or women made substantial contributions to a property but worked with a larger team that was not exclusively women. It may also include substantial renovations or rehabilitations of a property *or* demonstrate a woman's efforts in the historic preservation of a property.

Associated Property Types:

Per NPS's *National Register Bulletin 16B, How to Complete the National Register Multiple Documentation Form*, property types covered under an MPDF should have "common physical and/or associative attributes."⁴³³ Since the types of properties (e.g. landscapes, public art, buildings, etc.) that may be associated with women in trades are numerous, properties listed under this MPDF will most commonly share associative characteristics rather than physical ones. The common attributes of properties listed under this cover document are their *association* with significant contributions of women in the building trades and their impact on shaping the built environment in Nebraska. In contrast, property types listed under an MPDF of Historic Truss Bridges would likely share *physical* characteristics in their design, materials, or engineering.

Furthermore, *Bulletin 16B's* guidelines for selecting property types for an MPDF state, "the fullest extent of the significant historic values of a group of related resources should be considered."⁴³⁴ Thus, in order to encompass the broad range of possible property types eligible for listing under this MPDF, the property types follow those identified by the National Park Service's *National Register Bulletin 16A, How to Complete the National Register Registration Form* which outlines five different property types: buildings, sites, structures, objects, and districts.

BUILDINGS

NPS defines buildings as a form of shelter principally constructed for human activity, which includes ancillary buildings like barns and sheds that may indirectly support human activity.⁴³⁵

For the purposes of this MPDF, nominated buildings may include (but are not limited to) residential, commercial, religious, educational, civic, industrial and agricultural, or recreational properties that were designed, built, developed, planned, created, decorated, or constructed by a woman or women. They may also include buildings that were substantially restored, renovated, or rehabilitated by a woman or women. Buildings that showcase a woman's innovative engineering, technology, or construction techniques or unique design, artistry, or aesthetic qualities may also be considered. Buildings that were preserved due to the efforts of a woman or women, particularly those that would likely no longer be extant without their efforts, may also be eligible. Nominated buildings may also include those that most reflect the productive life of women in the building trades, such as art or design studios, professional offices, workshops, or meeting places where groups of women traditionally gathered to communally produce their crafts. The location of schools or training facilities where women were taught specific building trades, skills, or craftsmanship may also be eligible.

SITES

A site is the location of a significant event, occupation, or activity which may include buildings, structures, ruins, or remains, and that possesses "historic, cultural, or archeological value" regardless of whether physical evidence remains above ground. For the purposes of this MPDF, associated sites may include (but are not limited to) archeological remains of Indigenous lodges or homesteader sod dwellings. Sites may also include gardens, designed landscapes, and parks, the site of metal forges or kilns, and urban plazas or planned agricultural fields, among others. For example, the remains of the sod houses belonging to women homesteaders, like those of Anna **Elison**, Clara **Wonch**, or Rebecca **Perkins**, may be eligible for listing under this MPDF as a site.

⁴³³ *National Register Bulletin 16B, How to Complete the National Register Multiple Documentation Form*, National Park Service, accessed October 25, 2025, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/upload/NRB16B-Complete.pdf>, 14.

⁴³⁴ *National Register Bulletin 16A, How to Complete the National Register Registration Form*, National Park Service, accessed October 25, 2025, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/upload/NRB16B-Complete.pdf>, 15.

⁴³⁵ *National Register Bulletin 16A*, 15.

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National Park ServiceSection F Page 54 Nebraska Women in Trades - Statewide**STRUCTURES**

A structure is a physical construction that is distinguished from a building in that its primary purpose is for something other than human shelter. Structures listed under this MPDF may include (but are not limited to) bridges, dams, irrigation features, earthworks, and other infrastructure that were designed, created, constructed, engineered, or built by a woman or women within the period of significance.

OBJECTS

An object refers to constructions that are “artistic in nature or are relatively small in scale and simply constructed.”⁴³⁶ Objects include works of public art, like mosaics, murals, fountains, or sculptures that are most often associated with a specific setting or environment. They may also include monuments, statues, or boundary markers. For example, the murals of **Kady B. Faulkner** in Nebraska churches may be eligible for listing under this MPDF.

DISTRICTS

Districts are concentrations of sites, buildings, structures, or objects that share a common historical association or aesthetic plan, design, or physical development. They may include wholesale planned neighborhoods, landscaped parks, farms or ranches, large estates, irrigation systems, or groups of buildings located within close proximity that were designed, planned, developed, constructed, or created by a woman or women with a shared historic association. For example, a cohesive collection of buildings constructed by real estate developer **Laura B. Wood** in Lincoln in the 1930s reflects Wood’s career and overall impact on the development of the Axtell Heights neighborhood.

⁴³⁶ *National Register Bulletin 16A*, 15.

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G. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

The state of Nebraska.



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National Park ServiceSection H Page 56 Nebraska Women in Trades - Statewide**H. SUMMARY OF IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION METHODS**

The Nebraska Women in Trades MPDF was developed to provide a broad framework for the identification, evaluation, and future listing of historic resources in Nebraska associated with women in the building trades. The study was initiated by the City of Lincoln, Nebraska with grant funding provided by the National Park Service. The historic contexts cover the entire geographic area of the state of Nebraska. Due to the long history of the habitation by Indigenous Plains peoples in present-day Nebraska, and the significant role that Indigenous Plains women played in the design, construction, and maintenance of dwellings and other structures, the historic contexts and period of significance (c.1840-1975) encompasses the period when non-Indigenous settlement in Nebraska forced the relocation or displacement of Indigenous communities. The period of significance coincides with earliest possible time period when documentation of the building traditions and customs of Indigenous Plains peoples and early settlers may appear in the historic record. The approach to researching and documenting the significant role that women played in the built environment of Nebraska was to provide comprehensive and inclusive narratives that explored the intersections of race, ethnicity, gender and gender identity, socioeconomic status, and urban versus rural environments. As noted in the Preface and Introduction of this cover document, there were numerous challenges that preparers faced in researching women's significant contributions to the built environment. These included the lack of scholarship on the subject, the frequent erasure of women in existing documentation, and the common practicing of referring to women by their husband's names, if they were identified by name at all.

Existing documentation and historic contexts of women in the building trades at the national level was used to inform the broader understanding of how women's involvement in the trades evolved over time. The study of the overarching history of Nebraska also provided a foundation for the specific, regional circumstances that influenced the lives of women in Nebraska and thus informed the themes and property types associated with each historic context. Books, journal articles, census data, NPS theme studies, and National Register nominations were utilized to provide broad context. Primary source material, including newspapers, government publications, first-hand accounts and diaries, historic photographs, and other materials were used to provide more specific information on individual women and associated properties that illuminate the myriads of ways that women shaped the built environment of Nebraska.

During preparation of this MPDF, preparers also reached out a local, state and national organizations associated with women, the building trades, Indigenous nations, the LGBTQ+ community, and systematically marginalized groups in an effort to uncover any persons or places that may not have been revealed in primary and secondary sources. Finally, during preparation of the MPDF, preparers of this cover document identified numerous women throughout Nebraska who appeared to participate in the building trades, either formally or informally. Preliminary research indicated that the women included in **Table 1** of **Section K** of this MPDF *may* have made important contributions to shaping the built environment of the state, however; properties associated with these women would need to meet the registration criteria outlined in **Section F** to be eligible for listing under this MPDF. Furthermore, this list is not exhaustive, and there are likely many other women who participated in the building trades throughout the state who have yet to be identified.

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J. PHOTOGRAPHS AND FIGURES

Figure 1: 1868 photograph of woman and child outside tipi on the Omaha Reservation in Nebraska. Courtesy Smithsonian Institute. While the builder of the structure is unknown, it depicts a typical dwelling type of the Omaha people in the late nineteenth century.



Figure 2: 1871 photograph of a Pawnee earth lodges at the Pawnee (Pâri) Reservation at Loup Fork Village near Genoa, Nebraska. Courtesy Smithsonian Institute. While the builders of the structures are unknown, the scene depicts typical dwelling types of the Pawnee people in the late nineteenth century.



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Figure 3: 1892 photograph of a Ho-Chunk (Winnebago) birchbark lodge and frame on the Ho-Chunk Reservation in Nebraska. Courtesy Smithsonian Institute. While the builder of the structure is unknown, the image shows typical dwelling types of the Ho-Chunk people in the late nineteenth century.



Figure 4: C. 1925 photograph showing the wood frame allotment house of Lucy Lincoln on the Ho-Chunk (Winnebago) Reservation, courtesy of Nebraska State Historical Society. While it is unknown if the residence was constructed by Lincoln, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, or someone else, the residence is indicative of efforts to assimilate Indigenous Americans to Euro-American customs in the early twentieth century.



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Figure 5: Undated photograph of Rosalie La Flesche Farley, land manager for the Omaha people in Nebraska. Courtesy <https://www.kwit.org/podcast/small-wonders/2022-02-28/rosalie-laflesche-stayed-home-to-fight-for-and-love-her-people>.



Figure 6: Ca. 1888 photograph showing anthropologist/ethnographer/allotment agent Alice Cunningham Fletcher (left) with Indigenous women. Courtesy Smithsonian Museum.



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Figure 7: 1864 photograph of Caroline Morton’s residence, later Arbor Lodge. Courtesy <https://history.nebraska.gov/becoming-arbor-lodge/>.



Figure 8: Caroline Morton’s residence, Arbor Lodge, after numerous additions, renovations, and Neo-Classical Revival façade in the early twentieth century. Courtesy <https://history.nebraska.gov/becoming-arbor-lodge/>.



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Figure 9: C. 1880s photograph showing Miss Mary Longfellow with her sod house on her claim near Broken Bow, Nebraska. Courtesy of Nebraska State Historical Society.



Figure 10: Esther Warner stone residence near Roca, Nebraska. Courtesy of *Lincoln Journal Star*, March 4, 1988.



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Figure 11: Residence at 1908 B Street in Lincoln designed by Allie Leet in 1915 (*Lincoln Sunday Star*, August 15, 1915), and in 2024 (Post Oak).



Figure 12: Residence at 5819 Nicholas Street in Omaha designed by Goldie P. Suttie in 1928 (*Omaha Bee*, September 9, 1928) and in 2024 (Post Oak).



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Figure 13: Le Petit Chateau residence at 5812 (formerly 5810) Nicholas Street in Omaha designed by Goldie P. Suttie in 1928 (*Omaha World Herald*, January 1, 1928) and in 2024 (Post Oak).

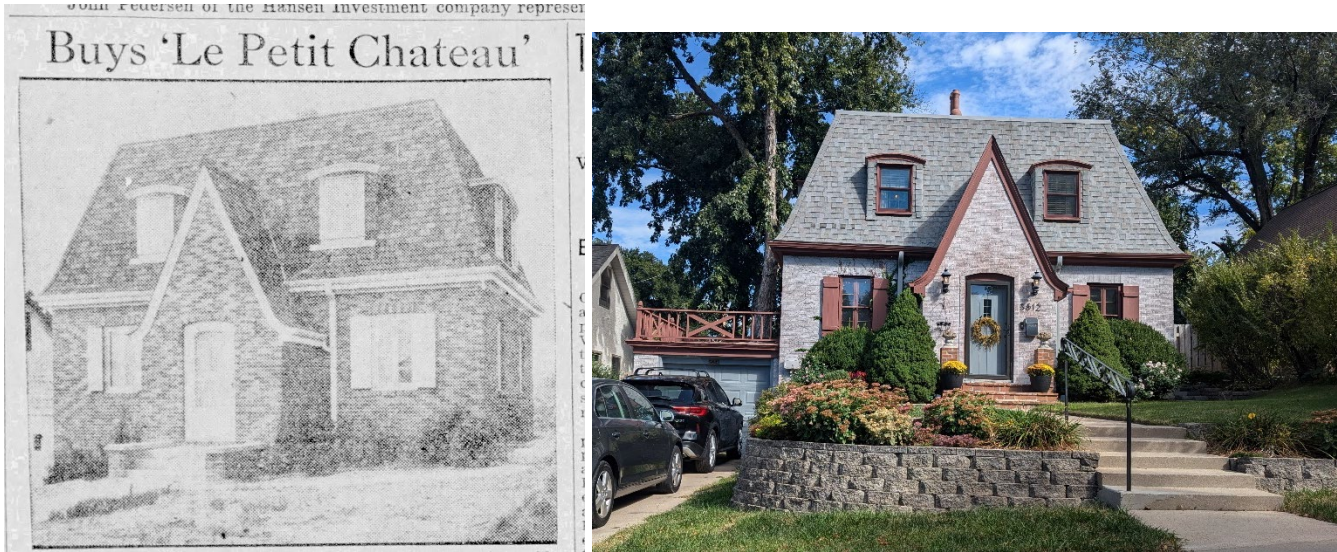


Figure 14: Engineer Meredith Thoms at work on the Tri-County Dam project, courtesy *Lincoln Star*, May 31, 1931.



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Nebraska Women in Trades - Statewide

Figure 15: "Ideal Home" by Laura B. Wood and E.L. Lowell at 1652 Woodsvie in Lincoln, courtesy *Lincoln State Journal*, June 9, 1929, p12 and in 2022 (Google Streetview).

"THE IDEAL HOME"
Open for Inspection Today
2:00-6:00 P. M.
1652 Woodsvie Ave.

An attractive 8 room home with sun parlor, breakfast room, fireplace and many built-in features. Also 2 stall garage and 60 foot frontage lot. Don't miss seeing this home today! For sale on easy terms.

LAURA B. WOOD
E. L. LOWELL
General Contractors

Co-Workers of the "Ideal Home"

Master Painters & Decorators of Lincoln	Paper Hanging
Griffiths-Cornstock Co.	Shades and Linens
Scott and Chapin Lumber Co.	Lumber and Millwork
Schaefer Plumbing Co.	Plumbing
Ryanse Corsets & Roofing Co.	Johns Manville Shingles
Moorth The Co.	Cement Blocks and Tile
Western Brick & Supply Co.	Brick
Allied Electric Co.	Electric Fixtures
Linco Wallpaper & Paint Enterprises	O'Brien Varnishes-Wallpaper
Lincoln Steel Co.	Steel
Frank Cooper	Electric Wiring
W. H. McFarland	Painting
Jones & McKeen	Terrid Zone Furnace



Figure 16: Builder Laura B. Wood shown in front of residence she developed at 1730 Pawnee in Lincoln at left, courtesy City of Lincoln, and in 2024 at right (Post Oak).



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Figure 17: Advertisement for Laura B. Wood homes in Lincoln, courtesy *Nebraska State Journal*, August 27, 1939.

Nebraska's Only Woman Builder

Completing Her 11th NEW HOME This Year

The New MODEL Home OPEN ALL DAY



1730 PAWNEE ST.

This is by far the loveliest home I have constructed this year. Located in a growing community, it is truly comfortable and moderate in every respect. The house is of brick construction, is air conditioned, insulated and weather stripped. The attached garage is fireproof and has a sun deck on its roof. The living room is 20x14 feet with a Belgium marble fireplace, and the cherry dining room is of ample size. The kitchen is of latest design, having many CURTICE built-in appliances covered with linoleum, an electric draw fan, and built-in linoleum with a safe base on the floor. Upstairs the two bedrooms are large and airy, and include large closet spaces. The bath is at the top of the stairs and is appointed to suit the most fastidious housewife. The basement is of FABRINWALL CONSTRUCTION, has a large recreation room with fireplace. The furnace and laundry room contain an automatic gas furnace, shower and toilet. The home is entirely equipped with CURTICE SILENTITE Pre-Fix windows, with over-locked basement windows. The doors are New London Shag Blond Woodwork. There are 7 closets in the home. Truly built for comfort and appearance, it is for sale at a price and on terms that will astound you. See it today.

Now Under Construction

1509 Burr and 1529 Burr St.


Here are two dandy five room English type brick bungalows that will be completed in a few weeks. These homes will feature all the latest features of quality building, and will be completely insulated, weather stripped, and air-conditioned. Each will have an attached garage, and will be equipped throughout with CURTICE SILENTITE Pre-Fix windows.

Buy one of these dandy homes NOW and we will decorate it to suit you. See Laura B. Wood, let her show you how you can purchase one of these homes with payments less than rent.

We have all the facilities to build YOUR home: lists, blueprints, financing, etc. Ask us about building on our easy payment plan.


NOT FOR SALE!

These Homes Built by LAURA B. WOOD and Occupied by Satisfied Owners.



2757 SO. 16TH

Mr. H. A. White, the proud owner of this dandy home says, "It is one of the most comfortable and economical."



2769 SO. 16th

Mr. Melv. Hatch, who purchased this home at 2769 So. 16th, says, "We are well satisfied. In fact, we couldn't be better pleased with a home."

Open For Inspection

See These from 2 to 7 Today.
3785 "A" St.—New 5 rm. home. 2 stall garage. All latest building features.
2781 Garfield—2 story home, owners leaving city.
Also Many Rentals and Lots.

LAURA B. WOOD
BUILDER

2655 So. 13 3-6650

Completed and Sold This Year

2757 So. 16
1501 Burr
1825 Pawnee
2769 So. 16th
1828 Pawnee
4128 Randolph
3155 So. 25th
1840 Pawnee
1730 Pawnee

Some of the Outstanding Features of Laura B. Wood's Home Building

CURTIS SILENTITE Pre-Fix windows and frames, easy of action and far superior to ordinary usage. Also CURTIS overhead garage doors—easy of action, space savers, and an addition to the appearance of any home. Also CURTICE Regency Woodwork.

For long life and quality construction, Laura B. Wood recommends FABRINWALL CONSTRUCTED BASEMENTS in all her new homes.

Quality Venetian blinds installed by THE MIDWEST VENETIAN BLIND CO.

Builder's hardware of superior quality supplied by ROBECK SUPPLY STORE.

Long life masonry and concrete work by E. C. WESTCOTT, sub-contractor.

Master painting and paper hanging by T. J. VALENTINE.

Beautiful Architecture by E. J. KRIZ.

Figure 18: Muralist Elizabeth Dolan, courtesy *Lincoln Star*, April 25, 1938.

Miss Dolan Chosen Artist For New York World Fair Exhibit Of Museum Of Natural History

Miss Elizabeth Dolan, noted muralist who has been residing in Lincoln for several years, has been selected as the artist for the American Museum of Natural History exhibit at the World's fair to be held in New York in 1939. Miss Dolan returned Sunday morning from a week in New York, where she consulted with Barnum Brown, curator of the museum, on the proposed murals. About four years ago, the Lincoln muralist did a habitat background for a pre-historic elephant group at the American museum, and Mr. Brown chose Miss Dolan for the World's fair commission when it was determined the museum would participate in the exposition displays.

Miss Dolan has just completed a mural, "World Peace," for the women's lounge in the new Student Union building. It is dedicated to Edna McDowell Barkley (Mrs. W. E. Barkley) who was the first dean of women at the university and has been active in many groups. Miss Dolan has done habit groups for the museum in Morrill hall, and has murals in the capitol, the Masonic temple at Seventeenth and L. streets, All Souls Unitarian church, and the Y. W. C. A. Miss Dolan also ex-



MISS DOLAN.

ecuted a fresco in the thirteenth century cathedral in Fourqueux, France.

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Figure 19: Mural *Spirit of the Prairie* by Elizabeth Dolan in the Nebraska State Capitol building in Lincoln, courtesy <https://nebraskacapitolart.com/art/spirit-of-the-prairie/>.



Figures 20 and 21: Intricate mosaics by Hildreth Meière in the Nebraska State Capitol building in Lincoln, courtesy of <https://capitol.nebraska.gov/building/history/team/hildreth-meiere/#5>.



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Nebraska Women in Trades - Statewide

Figure 22: Kady B. Faulkner Mural *End of the Line* in the Valentine Post Office completed 1939 with federal relief funds provided by the U.S. Treasury Department. Courtesy of Smithsonian American Art Museum.

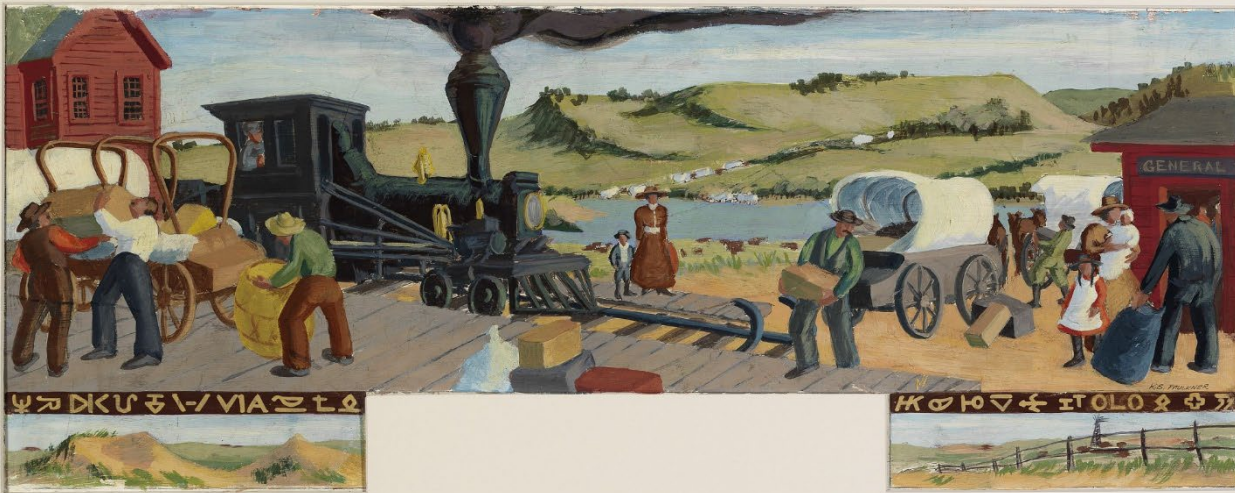


Figure 23: Image showing Eldora Lorenzini's *Stampeding Buffaloes Stopping Train*, mural in Hebron, Nebraska post office. Courtesy of Smithsonian National Postal Museum.



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Figure 24: 1937 photograph of artists Jenne Magafan (ladder) and Ethel Magafan (far right) working on a mural in Colorado. Courtesy of *Omaha World Herald*, November 15, 2012, p25.



Figure 25: Image showing Ethel Magafan's *Threshing* mural in Auburn, Nebraska post office completed 1938. Courtesy of the Library of Congress



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Figure 26: Image showing Jenne Magafan's *Winter in Nebraska* mural in Albion, Nebraska post office completed 1939. Courtesy of LivingNewDeal.org.



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Figure 27: Photographs of Mildred Bennett, author and historic preservationist who led the midcentury efforts to preserve the built heritage associated with the works of Nebraska author Willa Cather. Courtesy *Omaha World Herald*, December 9, 1956.

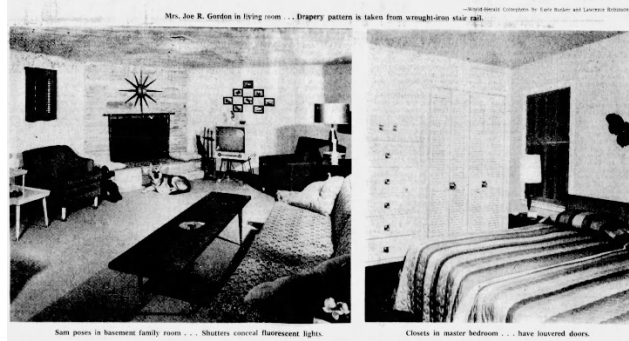
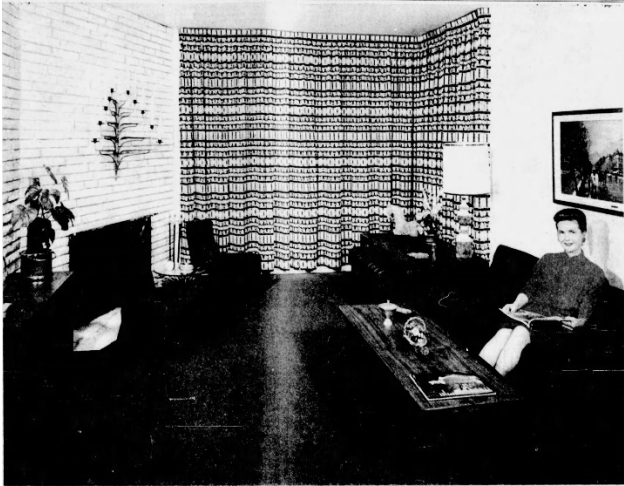


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Figure 28: Residence at 11325 Frances Street in Omaha designed by Frances Wilkie (*Omaha World Herald*, December 31, 1961) and in 2024 (Post Oak).



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Figure 29: Photo of Kearney Carpenter Julie McGuire, courtesy of *Kearney Hub* May 21, 1975.



Figure 30: Photo of ceramic artwork by Ree Schonlau (later Kaneko), courtesy *Omaha World Herald*, April 4, 1973.



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Nebraska Women in Trades - Statewide

Figure 31: Designers showcase interior design by Grace Harlan Kennedy and Ruth Noel, *Omaha World Herald*, April 21, 1985, p117.



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National Park ServiceSection K Page 89 Nebraska Women in Trades - Statewide**K. INVENTORY TABLE OF IDENTIFIED NEBRASKA WOMEN POTENTIALLY ASSOCIATED WITH THE BUILDING TRADES****Table 1: Nebraska Women Identified as operating in fields in or adjacent to the Building Trades (not exhaustive)**

<i>Name (Last, First)</i>	<i>Trade</i>	<i>Time Period</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Known associated properties/projects</i>
Abel, Hazel Hempel	Construction/Development	1930s-1940s		Abel Construction Company
Arbuckle (Fix), Georgia	Urban Planning (informal)	1900s-1920s	Gering	Gering Sanitorium
Armstrong, Jan Sue Warren	Interior Design	1969	Lincoln	
Beach, Mary	Real Estate	1920s	Lincoln	
Bennett, Mildred	Author/Historic Preservationist	1950s-1970s	Red Cloud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willa Cather Home (NR) • Red Cloud Depot (NR)
Bowen, Lucy	Schoolteacher	1900-1920s		
Branch, Winona (AKA Mrs. Andrew Jackson Sawyer)	Real Estate/Development	1910s-20s	Lincoln	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orlo Apartments at 14th and K Street (likely not extant) • Octagonal residence at 17th and F Streets – likely not extant)
Buckingham, Grace Jan	Interior Design	1960s	Lincoln/Omaha	
Burckhardt, Anna	Artist	1900-1920s	Lincoln	1236 Washington Street (Art Studio) – appears extant.
Butler, Mary Elizabeth	Real Estate Investor/ Developer	1900s	Lincoln	
Byer (née Beach), Cora	Real Estate	1920s	Lincoln	
Canaday, Margaret Ann Woodward	Homesteader	1850s-1870s	Cass County	
Couzens, Virginia	Artist/Sculptor	1910s	Omaha	
Dawson, Marion F.	Draftsperson			
Deuel, Mrs. E.N.	Real Estate	1910s	Omaha	
Dolan, Elizabeth Honor	Artist/Muralist	1920s-1930s	Lincoln	<i>Spirit of the Prairie</i> in Nebraska's State Capitol.
Ellison, Anna	Homesteader	1890s	Custer County	Sod house– likely ruin.
Farley, Rosalie LaFlesche	Land manager	1880s	Omaha Reservation	
Faulkner, Grace B	Artist/Muralist	1930s	Valentine, Lincoln	

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National Park ServiceSection K Page 90 Nebraska Women in Trades - Statewide**Table 1: Nebraska Women Identified as operating in fields in or adjacent to the Building Trades (not exhaustive)**

<i>Name (Last, First)</i>	<i>Trade</i>	<i>Time Period</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Known associated properties/projects</i>
Ferguson, Catherin	Artist	1970s	Omaha	
Fitzgerald, Helen	Real Estate	1910s	Lincoln	
Fletcher, Alice	Anthropologist/ Allotment Agent	1880s-1900		
Garman, Mrs. George	Real Estate	1910s	Omaha	
Geschwender, Arlene	Real Estate	1960s	Omaha	
Gifford, Mary Elizabeth "Emmy"	Artist/Set design	1940s-1960s	Omaha	Omaha Community Playhouse (murals).
Groves de Arnold (née McKelvie), Flossie "Floss"	Artist/Builder	1910s-1920s	Lincoln	"Tipi Winnie-Taska" near Deadwood, SD.
Hawkins, Zera M.	Draftsperson	1930s	Unknown	
Hayes, Mrs. C. W.	Real Estate Investor	1910s	Omaha	
Holm, Linda G.	Interior Design	1968	Lincoln	
Johnson, Myrtle	Real Estate Investor/ Developer	1920s	Lincoln	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 627 S. 37th (1922) • 745 S. 37th (1923) • 3535 J Street (1921)
Joslyn, Sarah Hannah Selleck	Patron	1920s	Omaha	Joslyn Art Museum
Julien, Anna E.	Real Estate Developer/ Contractor	1920s-1940s	Omaha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5015 Decatur • 2511 N. 51st • 2619 N. 52nd • 2421 N. 52nd • 2527 N. 53rd • 2011 N. 53rd • 5140 Grant • 5012 Parker • 2507 N. 51st • 1716 N. 52nd
Kaneko (née Schonlau), Ree	Artist/Sculptor	1960s-Present	Omaha	Old Market District Art Studio/The Bemis
Kelly, Mary Evelyn	Real Estate Investor/Developer/ Contractor	1910s-1920s	Lincoln	1927 Pepper Street
Kennedy, Grace Harlan	Interior Design	1960s	Lincoln/Omaha	
Kupe, Karlyn	Interior Design	1968	Lincoln	
Lazar, Madelaine	Draftsperson	1960s	Omaha	

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National Park ServiceSection K Page 91 Nebraska Women in Trades - Statewide**Table 1: Nebraska Women Identified as operating in fields in or adjacent to the Building Trades (not exhaustive)**

<i>Name (Last, First)</i>	<i>Trade</i>	<i>Time Period</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Known associated properties/projects</i>
Leet, Alice "Allie" May	Real Estate/Architecture	1910s-1920s	Lincoln	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2017 S. 23rd • 2017 S. 26th • 908 B. Street (extant)
Lorenzini, Eldora	Artist/Muralist	1920s	Hebron	<i>Stampeding Buffaloes Stopping Train</i> mural in Hebron post office.
MacMurphy, Harriet S. Dakin	Homesteader	1890s-1920s	Holt County; Omaha	“Ti Zhing,” on Bellevue Road in Omaha (unknown if extant).
Magafan, Ethel	Artist/Muralist	1920s-1930s	Auburn	<i>Threshing</i> mural in Auburn post office (extant – NR).
Magafan, Jenne	Artist/Muralist	1920s-1930s	Albion	<i>Winter in Nebraska</i> mural in Albion post office (extant, NR).
McClendon, Susan	Architecture	c. 1970s	Lincoln	
McGuire, Julie	Carpenter	1970es	Kearney	
Meière, Hildreth	Artist/Muralist	1920s-1930s	Lincoln	Murals and mosaics Nebraska State Capitol (extant).
Mitchell (later Foe), Helene	Interior Design	1920s	Lincoln	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lincoln University Club at 333 N. 12th • 320 S. 12th (office)
Morton, Caroline Joy French	Ecologist/Landscape architect (informally)	1850s	Nebraska City	Arbor Lodge (NHL) – extant.
Murphy, Peggy	Carpenter	1970s	Omaha	
Nelson, Alice F.	Real Estate	1910s	Omaha	
Oglesby, Barbara	Interior Design	1968	Lincoln	
Olson, Linda "Lindie" Pounds	Architect	1970s		
Pauley, Alice	Real Estate/Contractor	1920s	Lincoln	
Perkins, Rebecca	Homesteader	1910s	Custer County	Sod house– likely ruin.
Price, Frances "Fran"	Real Estate	1960s	Omaha	
Reynal, Jeanne	Artist/Muralist	1960s	Lincoln	
Riale, May E.	Real Estate Investor/Developer	1910s	Omaha	“St. Louis Flats” at 27th and Harney – likely no longer extant.
Roach, Carrie	Homesteader	1850s		

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National Park ServiceSection K Page 92 Nebraska Women in Trades - Statewide**Table 1: Nebraska Women Identified as operating in fields in or adjacent to the Building Trades (not exhaustive)**

<i>Name (Last, First)</i>	<i>Trade</i>	<i>Time Period</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Known associated properties/projects</i>
Robinson, Matilda	Homesteader	1880s-1890s	Scotts Bluff	
Schleiss, Ann	Homesteader	1870s-?	Beatrice	
Schooler-Briggs-Nelson, Maud Ham	Urban Planning/Renovations/Entrepreneur	1930s-1950s	Mullen	Mullen City Park
Schuelzky, Alice	Draftsperson	1940s	Kearney	
Scroggins, Theodosia	Homesteader	1880s	Unknown	
Slade, Cynthia	Carpenter	1970s	Lincoln	
Speese, Rosetta, Mary, Lizzie, and Susan	Homesteaders	1880s	Custer County	
Sprong, Emma Witte	Real Estate Investor/Developer	1900s	Lincoln	
Strough, Alma	Interior Design	1969	Lincoln	
Suttie, Golda "Goldie" Peckman	Architecture	1930s	Omaha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5812 Nicholas • 5819 Nicholas • 5204 Izard St • 9646 N. 30th • 2558 Titus Avenue
Thoms, Meredith	Engineer	1920s-1930s		The Tri-County project (dam).
Vincent, Lola	Real Estate Investor	1910s	Omaha	
Ward, Alta Mae	Real Estate/Developer	1940s	Lincoln	
Warner, Esther Carter Griswold	Homesteader	1860s-1900	Roca	Stone residence in Roca – likely extant.
Wilkie, Frances Schepp	Architecture	c.1928-1979	Omaha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3351 N. 48th (extant) • 11325 Frances St. (extant) • 4834 Spalding St. (extant) • 5002 Emmet St (extant) • 5426 Charles Street (extant)
Wilson, Emma	Developer	1910s	Lincoln	
Wilson, H. Jessica	Interior Design	1960s	Omaha	
Wisdom, Sarah Shaw	Homesteader	1880s	Unknown	
Wonch, Clara	Homesteader	1890s	Custer County	Sod house– likely ruin.

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National Park ServiceSection K Page 93 Nebraska Women in Trades - Statewide**Table 1: Nebraska Women Identified as operating in fields in or adjacent to the Building Trades (not exhaustive)**

<i>Name (Last, First)</i>	<i>Trade</i>	<i>Time Period</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Known associated properties/projects</i>
Ward, Alta Mae	Real Estate/Developer/ Architecture	1930s-1940s	Lincoln	
Wood, Laura B.	Real Estate/Developer/ Architecture	c. 1929 -1941	Lincoln	2655 S. 13 th (home office – extant).
Woodson, Peryle	Homesteader/Teacher	c.1900-1920s	DeWitty	Frame house, sod barn, well with pump at DeWitty homestead – unknown if extant.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**Section I Page 2 Nebraska Women in Trades - Statewide

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

- Tier 1: 60-100 hours (generally existing multiple property submissions by paid consultants and by Maine State Historic Preservation staff for in-house, individual nomination preparation)
- Tier 2: 120 hours (generally individual nominations by paid consultants)
- Tier 3: 230 hours (generally new district nominations by paid consultants)
- Tier 4: 280 hours (generally newly proposed MPS cover documents by paid consultants).

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting reports. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

MEETING MINUTES

Advanced public notice of the Historic Preservation Commission meeting was posted on the County-City bulletin board and the Planning Department's website. In addition, a public notice was emailed to the Lincoln Journal Star for publication on Wednesday, March 5, 2025.

NAME OF GROUP:	HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING:	Thursday, March 13, 2025, 2:00 p.m., County-City Building, Council Chambers, 555 S. 10 th Street, Lincoln, NE.
MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:	Melissa Gengler, Nancy Hove-Graul, Jim McKee, Greg McCown and Jim Johnson; Greg Newport and Dan Worth absent.
OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:	Paul Barnes, Jill Dolberg, and Clara McCully of the Planning Department; and other interested parties.

Chair McCown called the meeting to order and acknowledged the posting of the Open Meetings Act in the room.

McCown called for a motion approving the minutes of the regular meeting held February 13, 2025.

Motion for approval made by Johnson, seconded by Gengler, and carried 5-0: Melissa Gengler, Nancy Hove-Graul, Jim McKee, Greg McCown and Jim Johnson voting 'yes'; Greg Newport and Dan Worth absent.

ELECTIONS

McCown asked for a nomination for chair.

Hove-Graul nominated McCown, seconded by Gengler, and carried 5-0: Melissa Gengler, Nancy Hove-Graul, Jim McKee, Greg McCown and Jim Johnson voting 'yes'; Greg Newport and Dan Worth absent.

McCown asked for a nomination for Vice Chair.

Hove-Graul nominated Johnson, seconded by Gengler, and carried 5-0: Melissa Gengler, Nancy Hove-Graul, Jim McKee, Greg McCown and Jim Johnson voting 'yes'; Greg Newport and Dan Worth absent.

DISCUSS AND ADVISE

UDR25013- Women in Trades Multiple Property Documentation Form

Rebecca Laplam Wallisch, Poat Oak Preservation Solutions, came forward and stated she was the Senior Architectural Historian. The project began with the Underrepresented Communities Grant from the National Park Service. Wallisch provided an overview of the Nebraska Women in Trades Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF). A MPDF is thematically related historic properties, regardless of geographic distance. It is a 90-page draft document covering the contributions of women to the state's building trades between 1840 and 1975. The term, building trades, has broad applications, and means women who shaped the built environment. The MPDF identifies historic properties associated with women in architecture, construction, engineering, design, planning, and related fields. The document is divided into historical contexts, including homesteading, industrialization, and post-war workforce participation. The next deliverable from Post Oak is the Laura B. Wood nomination, which will be presented to HPC in September 2025.

Paul Barnes, Planning Department, 555 South 10th Street, came forward and asked Wallisch to describe the value of the MPDF to Nebraska, Lancaster County, and Lincoln. Also, to describe the difference between contributing and noncontributing.

Wallisch stated the initiative aims to connect properties throughout the entire state. It's not limited to just Lincoln or any specific area. If there are properties associated with significant women builders anywhere in Nebraska, they can now be included under this cover document.

Creating a National Register nomination typically requires a significant amount of research and time. However, if someone has identified a property, such as their home or a neighborhood, this cover document significantly reduces the burden of research needed to obtain a listing on the National Register. They can reference this cover document and provide only the information specific to their property without needing to include all the background context that is already in the nomination for this MPDF. This streamlines the process for any community or property owner looking to list their property on the National Register.

Additionally, a property listed on the National Register may become eligible for grant funds or historic tax benefits, which are among the various advantages that come with this designation.

Regarding contributing and non-contributing resources, we usually discuss this in the context of historic districts, where there are multiple historic resources. A boundary must be created for a historic district to determine which buildings are associated with the nomination. For example, Laura B. Wood developed a number of homes in a small area, but there may be other homes within that area that she did not design or develop.

Contributing resources are those that are associated with the individual being nominated, such as buildings designed or developed by Laura B. Wood. Non-contributing resources are those that do not have this association. Furthermore, contributing buildings need to retain sufficient historic fabric to convey their significance. If a building has been extensively renovated to the point that its original character is unrecognizable, it may be classified as non-contributing, even if it was originally developed or designed by Laura B. Wood. This classification helps determine which buildings still convey the significance of that historic district.

McCown asked how the MPDF gets disseminated.

Wallisch stated it becomes part of the National Parks Service records and documentation.

Dolberg stated the local promoter is SHPO.

Dolberg asked if there was interest from other states.

Wallisch stated there has been interest from Arizona and California. This is a new area of research, which is challenging but exciting. People can build off of this research and add to it over time.

McCown thanked Wallisch and Post Oak for the work and presentation.

Certified Local Government Annual report for Fiscal Year 2024

Dolberg presented the Certified Local Government (CLG) Annual Report, a required document that details the Commission's activities over the past year. The report documents survey projects, training sessions, Section 106 reviews, certificates of appropriateness, and other preservation efforts. Filing the CLG report is necessary to maintain CLG certification and funding from the National Park Service.

ACTION:

Motion for approval made by McKee, seconded by Hove-Graul, and carried 5-0: Melissa Gengler, Nancy Hove-Graul, Jim McKee, Greg McCown and Jim Johnson voting 'yes'; Greg Newport and Dan Worth absent.

Historic Preservation Commission Report for 2024

Dolberg presented the HPC Annual Report, which summarizes the Commission's work throughout 2024, including the development of the design guidelines, project reviews and approvals, notable preservation efforts, and photographic documentation of key sites.

ACTION:

Motion for approval made by McKee, seconded by Johnson, and carried 5-0: Melissa Gengler, Nancy Hove-Graul, Jim McKee, Greg McCown and Jim Johnson voting 'yes'; Greg Newport and Dan Worth absent.

HEARING AND ACTION

CZ24022- South Haymarket Local Landmark Historic District

PUBLIC HEARING:

March 13, 2025

Members Present: Melissa Gengler, Nancy Hove-Graul, Jim McKee, Greg McCown and Jim Johnson; Greg Newport and Dan Worth absent.

Dolberg stated this district has significant industrial and manufacturing history. The district contains 23 contributing buildings and 10 non-contributing properties. The area historically served as Lincoln's industrial and manufacturing hub, distinct from the wholesale and retail-focused Haymarket District. Designation as a local landmark district will provide preservation incentives, including modifications to floodplain regulations and zoning flexibility. There has been outreach to the community, and no negative comments.

Gengler asked whether other City departments gave input and referenced the attempt to locally landmark the K Street building. City Council denied the local landmark. Gengler asked if that position had changed and if it would impact this nomination.

Barnes stated the K Street building was a different scenario because it is publicly owned, and there is ongoing interest in reusing it. Some tenants are moving out, and storage would need to be relocated, making this situation distinct from today's discussions. Planning staff have closely coordinated with the mayor's office and

property owners, placing this project in a better position than with K Street. As Jill noted, this is National Register. This is in a better position with other city departments, including the Watershed Division. For locally landmarked properties, certain floodplain regulations are less applicable, allowing for easier reinvestment and reuse, which encourages historic preservation.

McCown asked if the area is still flood plain.

Barnes confirmed the majority is floodplain. The area primarily extends from the southwest to the northeast. Moving east, the depth decreases while it gets deeper toward the west, especially near Ninth Street. However, there is no floodplain in that area based on the current map. Future changes may occur when FEMA updates the map.

Dolberg stated the next steps would be Planning Commission review on April 2, then April 28 City Council review and vote.

Gengler asked about the owner notification process.

Dolberg stated all property owners were notified, in addition to anyone within 200 feet of the area.

Barnes stated they followed notification procedures consistent with a standard Change of Zone. Stephanie Rouse presented the project to the Haymarket Development Corporation at least twice.

Gengler asked if the city had plans to remove unused track remnants.

Barnes stated part of this designation serves as an incentive. If Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is applied, those funds could be used for projects that would benefit the public. However, much of this is discussed and negotiated on a project-by-project basis.

McCown asked if the railroad still owns the easements.

Barnes stated he can't recall.

ACTION:

Motion for approval made by Gengler, seconded by Johnson, and carried 5-0: Melissa Gengler, Nancy Hove-Graul, Jim McKee, Greg McCown and Jim Johnson voting 'yes'; Greg Newport and Dan Worth absent.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Barnes stated Kristi Merfeld was promoted to Office Specialist with Long Range Planning. She may fill in for HPC and she is going to be helping out with the other design review boards and other meetings.

Dolberg stated this is Melissa Dirr Gengler's last meeting. Gengler served on the board for nine years.

.Adjournment- 2:59 pm

The Historic Preservation Commission's agenda may be accessed on the Internet at <https://www.lincoln.ne.gov/City/Departments/Planning-Department/Boards-and-Commissions/Historic-Preservation-Commission>

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