

Elston Road 'Crooked Wagon Road'

The following history of the Mayfair neighborhood was provided courtesy of The North Side Real Estate Board.

The Mayfair area on the Northwest side of Chicago was an original government land grant given in 1800 to William Harding, grandfather of William H. Spikings, who for years lived on this original grant.

According to historians, Elston Road was known as "The Crooked Wagon Track." It led from Kinzie Street through Jefferson to the western part of Niles and thence through Northfield toward Deerfield. Elston Road was named after Daniel Elston, an early pioneer of Chicago, who settled there in 1832.

The McGranes and Browns had farms in the area of Elston and Lawrence Avenues. It has been said that Nels Kinberg was probably the earliest pioneer homesteader in what is now the North Mayfair area. The home that he built in 1870, at what is now 4639 Foster Avenue, was occupied by his family until March, 1946. Mr. and Mrs. Erickson founded their homestead in 1846 on what is now Kostner and Foster Avenue. Their grounds were used in the early days of motion pictures as a location for the filming of "Cowboy and Indian" pictures.

During the years of 1850 to 1865 there was a tremendous growth in the settlement of this section. The first grocery store was established in 1865 by Captain W. C. Hazelton on Elston Avenue. It was Captain Hazelton that gathered seed by net in the North Branch of the Chicago River and planted the seed for the enormous elm trees that now line many of the streets in this vicinity.

From an old letter written by Captain Charles Simpson Smith we learn that the little red school house at Kostner and Lawrence Avenue was ruled over by Miss Erickson some fifty years ago. The pupils were all ages and all classes, all in one room and Miss Erickson taught all.

It is also from Captain Smith's recollections that we are told of the ever flowing artesian well on the west side of the school. Each evening the farmers came out to fill their barrels with this water. It took but a few minutes to fill a barrel placed under the overhead spout.

The John M. Palmer Elementary School at Kostner, ~~Garmen, Kenneth~~ and Argyle Streets was named for a civil war hero and the 13th governor of the State of Illinois. The present building was opened in 1926 and replaced a group of five portables that originally stood at the corner of Karlov Avenue.

The Mayfair Methodist Church, founded as the Montrose Methodist Episcopal Church in 1890, grew from Sunday school classes started at the home of Georgiana Peters on Montrose Avenue opposite the Northwestern Railway station.

The Mayfair Bible Church was organized in 1903 with the Reverend Edgar Strother as the first minister and a membership of ten members.

St. Edward's parish was organized on December 10, 1899, under the direction of the Reverend Thomas McCormick, C.S.V. The first church building was built on Sunnyside and Kostner in 1899. The year 1910 saw the erection of the first school building at Sunnyside and Lowell Avenue.

On March 16, 1922, the Mayfair Presbyterian Church was organized with twenty-three charter members. For six years the tiny congregation was housed in a small frame building at the corner of Keeler and Ainslie Street.

The Mayfair Lutheran Church, 4335 Lawrence Avenue, was founded on February 4, 1931, with the Reverend C. N. Busse as the minister. The church was started with thirty-one charter members and met for the first year of worship in Carlene's Dancing Studio, 4869 Elston Avenue. From September 1932 to 1939 the congregation used "The Little Red School House" at Lawrence and Kostner Avenues.

This enterprising community that grew from open prairies can now boast of seven well-organized clubs, an excellent manufacturing district, and many progressive privately owned business establishments. All these grew from the hard work, foresight and cooperation of those early settlers who so generously gave of their strength and time so that we may enjoy the many modern conveniences that they dreamed of so long ago.

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