

**★ Start & End Location**

**1 Stop No. 1  
Corner of Broadway Place & Highland**



Cedar Crest, largely built between 1914 and 1930, is the Town of Normal's first planned subdivision and first local historic district. Prior to its development, the area was a nursery owned by Charles Fell, located a good distance from downtown Bloomington and uptown Normal.

In the early 1890s, local businessman and developer Burt Marley Kuhn purchased the land and built his home at 5 Broadway

Place. His Queen Anne home was an architectural style popular from 1880-1900. Key features of the style include irregular, asymmetrical massing and floor plans, varied types and textures of building materials, and extensive ornament. Divided into apartments in the 1940s, this house was restored in 1994.

**2 Stop No. 2  
Corner of Hillcrest & Broadway Place**

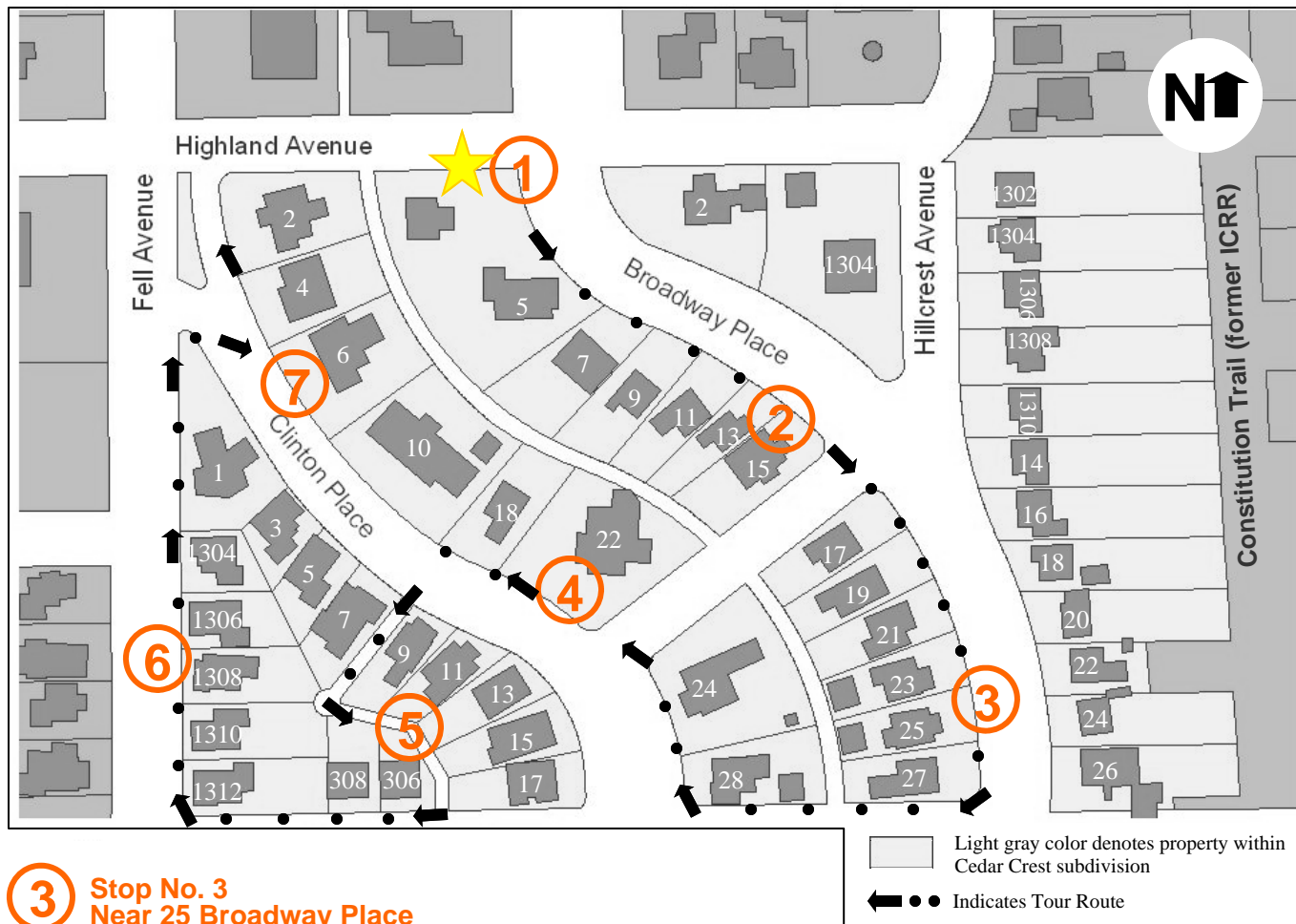
When Kuhn proposed the Cedar Crest subdivision at the February 3, 1914 Town Council meeting, the reaction was mixed. The plan was very different from previous plats where streets were straight and lots were fairly regular in shape and size. Some members objected to the narrow streets and others were concerned about the sharpness of the curves as a traffic hazard. On April 7, 1914, after two months of review by the "Street and Alley" and "Judiciary" committees, Cedar Crest was approved.



Ninety percent of Cedar Crest was built between 1914 and 1930 and was designed by one architect, Aaron Trabue Simmons, lending to a unity among the houses' architecture, form and style (all except 5 Broadway Place and three houses built between 1958 and 1966).



Many of the Cedar Crest houses can be classified as Craftsman or Prairie style; however, elements from other architectural styles, including Tudor Revival, Colonial Revival, and Mission/Spanish Eclectic have been incorporated into the designs. No two homes are exactly alike. Some key features of the homes are their simple designs with natural materials, low-pitched roofs, battered wall treatments, asymmetrical floor plans, exposed rafters and double hung windows.



**3 Stop No. 3  
Near 25 Broadway Place**

The building materials used in Cedar Crest were very important in not only local, but national trends of the time. The three primary building materials for Cedar Crest are wood, stucco and brick.



For 50 years the typical McLean County house had been constructed from northern softwoods brought in by rail and shaped at local mills. Foundations were of dull, red, locally burned brick, or, on rare occasion, of limestone.



By the early 1900s more manufactured house components were being imported, and many of the materials for Cedar Crest, including interior cabinets, doors, and window frames, were purchased from firms dealing in regional or national markets. Rug-face brick was a relatively new product that became popular just after 1900; however, it was not made locally and had to be shipped. Another product, colorful

clay roofing tiles, several of which are still intact, came in a variety of colors, styles, and shapes, and was a stylistic element from the Mediterranean world that was often incorporated into the Craftsman style. One of the distinctive visual effects of houses in Cedar Crest is a general reduction in window size. As electric light was becoming less expensive and of better quality, floor-to-ceiling windows were no longer necessary. Smaller window size was also related to the development of more efficient furnaces. An increasingly self-sufficient middle class prior to WWI also caused the change; houses were designed so that they could be maintained by the homeowners themselves and not live-in servants.

**4 Stop No. 4  
22 Clinton Place**

Designated in 1993, Cedar Crest was the first local historic district within the Town of Normal. This designation means that these properties are collectively important to the history of the Town of Normal and are subject to the Town's historic code and design



guidelines. In November of 2006 Cedar Crest became the first Normal district also listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) which is a separate designation. The NRHP is the nation's official list of places that are recognized for their historical, architectural, or archaeological significance and are considered worthy of preservation.

As a whole, Cedar Crest is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of the town's history that parallel national trends, specifically in relation to architecture and community planning and development, including the beginning of subdivision development and "suburbanization".

In Normal, there are two other local districts, Highland and Old North Normal. The only other Normal properties listed on the NRHP are Camelback Bridge, the Normal Theater, and Cook Hall.



### 5 Stop No. 5 Alley west of Clinton Place



Cedar Crest was the first large-scale subdivision in the twin cities that illustrates the impact of the automobile. This impact is seen in the very development of a residential subdivision so far from the existing commercial cores, the developer's insistence on paved streets and alleys and the way in which garages were integrated into many of the houses.



Before Cedar Crest, automobiles (like horses and carriages before them) were consigned exclusively to outbuildings. The existence of both historic detached and historic attached/basement garages place Cedar Crest in a transitional time period for the town and for the nation.

### 6 Stop No. 6 1308 S. Fell Avenue

The area around Cedar Crest was gradually sold off parcel by parcel beginning in the late 1880s. This process was slow and erratic as individual farms ceased their operations. Most of the subdivisions were only one or two blocks. Around 1900 a streetcar line was installed along Fell Avenue, making it much easier to live "outside of the urban area" as well as to travel between the downtowns. The brick streets in Cedar Crest were some of the earliest "paved" streets in Normal.

Today, Cedar Crest preserves a remarkable degree of historical integrity. Cedar Crest is still referred to by its historic neighborhood name and remains a desirable, socio-economically diverse neighborhood. Located in the midst of the community, its large, irregular lots with mature trees and brick, curvilinear streets complete with boulevards provide buyers an alternative to crowded urban lots as it once did, but to newer houses on the edge of the community that often lack architectural distinction.



Fell & Virginia, 1912, *The Legacy*

### 7 Stop No. 7 Facing 1 Clinton Place

1 Clinton Place, home of Cedar Crest architect, A.T. Simmons, was the first built in the subdivision in 1914. He and his family lived here from 1914 until the time of his death in 1963. Simmons was born to a farming family in Jerseyville, Illinois in 1876. He studied architecture at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. When much of downtown Bloomington was destroyed in a massive fire in the summer of 1900, Paul O. Moratz, a local architect and builder, took on young Simmons to assist with the rebuilding. Moratz was so pleased with Simmons' work that he requested Simmons work for him after graduation. In 1901, Simmons began working for Moratz and then later for himself until 1924.



Simmons designed 71 Carnegie public libraries in 13 states, as well as many high schools, court houses and large churches. In the community he designed such buildings as the (former) YMCA, the Lafayette Apartment Building and factory buildings for the Williams Oil-O-Matic company. He oversaw the remodeling of the Byrd C. Van Leer residence on Fell Avenue (now the Immanuel Bible Foundation) in the 1920s.



Simmons, *The Legacy*

1 Clinton Place, prominently positioned on a triangular parcel of land at the intersection of Fell Avenue and Clinton Place, demonstrates the kinds of strikingly modern ideas that Simmons brought to Cedar Crest. Simmons' long-time residence, which incorporates many Craftsman style features, including brackets, flower boxes, exterior chimneys and multiple rooflines, has remained substantially unaltered and is an identifiable landmark for many.



# cedar crest

## Historic district walking tour I