

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

747



National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Ross, Nimrod, House

other names/site number NeHBS# LC13:E8-236

2. Location

street & number 445 So. 30th St.

city or town Lincoln [N/A] not for publication [N/A] vicinity

state Nebraska code NE county Lancaster code 109 zip code 68510

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this [x] nomination [] request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property [x] meets [] does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant [] nationally [] statewide [x] locally. ([] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official [Handwritten Signature]

Date 5/24/99

Signature of certifying official

Date

Director, Nebraska State Historical Society

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria. ([] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

[x] entered in the National Register. [] See continuation sheet.

[] determined eligible for the National Register [] See continuation sheet.

[] determined not eligible for the National Register.

[] removed from the National Register.

[] other, (explain):

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

[Handwritten Signature: Edson H. Beall]

6/25/99

Nimrod Ross House

Name of Property

Lancaster County, Nebraska

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	1	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	1	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

African American Historic and Architectural
Resources in Lincoln, Nebraska

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling

DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	<u>smooth concrete block</u>
walls	<u>asbestos siding</u>
roof	<u>other</u>
other	<u></u>

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See Continuation Sheets.

Nimrod Ross House

Name of Property

Lancaster County, Nebraska

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See Continuation Sheets.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey
Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering
Record # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ETHNIC HERITAGE/BLACK

Period of Significance

ca. 1903-1917

Significant Dates

ca. 1903-1905

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

NA

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository:
Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Department

Nimrod Ross House

Name of Property

Lancaster County, Nebraska

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1.14 695950 4519800
Zone Easting Northing

2.

3. Zone Easting Northing

4.

[] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

See Continuation Sheet.

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Ta'Nesha Blackwell, Lillian Baxter, & Raven Wagner/Elliott Elem. School with E. F. Zimmer/Hist. Pres. Planner

organization Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Dept.

date April 1, 1999

street & number 555 South 10th Street

telephone (402)441-6360

city or town Lincoln

state NE

zip code 68508

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Gregory S. & Lisa B. Hoffman

street & number 445 S. 30th Street

telephone (402) 474-9611

city or town Lincoln

state NE

zip code 68510

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. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, ogathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Nimrod Ross House

Name of Property

Lancaster County, Nebraska

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DESCRIPTION

The Nimrod Ross House in the Woods Park neighborhood of Lincoln, Lancaster County, Nebraska is a small, single-story wood-frame cottage with a hip roof and a full-length front porch. The property consists of one contributing building—the house—and a non-contributing garage that was built after the period of significance. The property is related to the Multiple Property Documentation Form entitled "African American Historic and Architectural Resources in Lincoln, Nebraska," exemplifying the property type "dwellings." The frame dwelling was constructed ca. 1903. The house is an example of a rare property type in Lincoln, Nebraska and retains sufficient integrity for listing in the aspects of setting, location, overall design, feeling, and association, even though the main exterior material (wooden clapboards) has been hidden beneath asbestos shingle siding.

The Nimrod Ross House at 445 South 30th Street in the Woods Park neighborhood of central Lincoln, Lancaster County, Nebraska, from ca. 1903 to 1917 was the home of Nimrod Ross and his family, members of Lincoln's African American community. Ross and his family exemplified significant trends and achievements in employment and education, as documented in "African American Historic and Architectural Resources in Lincoln, Nebraska," a Multiple Property Documentation Form.

Deeds and directories indicate that the house was constructed around 1903, when Ellen Ross entered into an agreement to purchase the property. Probably the small frame cottage was built by Henry Brueckner, a carpenter who lived nearby and who owned the property from 1895 to 1903. The Nimrod Ross family, including Clinton and Glen, is listed in city directories as occupying the house by 1904 through 1917. Nimrod and Ellen apparently divorced around 1917, as she is later listed as "Ellen Bowie being nee Ellen Ross" and he is identified as married to Priscilla.

The Ross family home is a wooden, single-story building of rectangular plan with a truncated hipped roof. Smooth asbestos shingles cover the walls, which almost certainly were originally clapboard-covered. A full-length porch with four wooden pillars shelters the main, east facade, leading to an off-center entrance flanked by two one-over-one windows. The low porch has no railings; small ornamental brackets at the tops of the pillars are probably later embellishments. The main body of the house has two one-over-one windows on both side (north and south) facades. The east and north windows are framed with simple top moldings, while the south windows have plain frames. There are small, shed-roofed additions at the rear (west) of the house, which also jut further south than the main body of the house. The smooth concrete-block foundation probably is a replacement, either of limestone or of quarry-faced concrete blocks, both of which were in common use in Lincoln around 1903. An inconspicuous basement entrance has been added to the south side of the house, consisting of a concrete stairs in a plain stairwell, set against the south foundation.

A large ash tree looms over the house from the southeast part of the front yard. A gravel driveway extends along the north side of the house, providing access to a small, frame, gable roofed garage behind the house on the north property line. The garage was in place by 1928 but cannot be documented as extant during the Ross family use of the house, and therefore is not counted as a contributing feature of the site. The terrain slopes gently down towards the south in this area, and the long block between J and L Streets is developed with a variety of small houses, mostly frame and mostly of late 19th or early 20th century construction. The rear property line of the houses on the east side of S. 30th is the west edge of Woods Park, a municipal park created in the 1950s from a large open parcel known as the Rogers Tract. The relationship of the houses along 30th Street to the open space of the Park preserves the overall setting extant when the Ross Family occupied the house.

The Ross House retains a high degree of integrity of setting, location, overall design, feeling, and association. Its exterior materials have been altered by addition of asbestos siding and replacement of the foundation, but neither modification obscures

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Nimrod Ross House

Name of Property

Lancaster County, Nebraska

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the major features of the property. Among the rare property type of residences associated with early African-American residents of Lincoln, the house is relatively unaltered. It is maintained in fine condition and conveys very well an overall feeling from its original construction, which is the beginning of its period of significance.

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Nimrod Ross House

Name of Property

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Nimrod Ross House is significant on the local level under criterion A for its association with broad patterns of employment opportunity for the African American community in Lincoln, as illustrated in the lives of Nimrod Ross and his son Clinton. The Ross House is related to the Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) entitled "African American Historic and Architectural Resources in Lincoln, Nebraska." The period of significance of this property, ca. 1903-1917, overlaps both historic contexts described in that MPDF, entitled "Early Settlement Era including the First Exodus, 1870-1913," and "Institution Building in an Era of Segregation, 1914 - 1941." The Ross House's period of significance began with the house's construction and residency by the Ross family around 1903, and ends with the family moving from the house around 1917.

The house at 445 S. 30th Street in Lincoln, Lancaster County, Nebraska was occupied by the family of Nimrod and Ellen Ross from around 1903 to 1917. This association renders the house significant on the local level under criterion A, as Nimrod Ross and his son Clinton Ross were emblematic of significant patterns in occupational opportunity for African Americans in Lincoln, as described in the Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) entitled "African American Historic and Architectural Resources in Lincoln, Nebraska." The property relates to both historic contexts entitled "Early Settlement Era including the First Exodus, 1870-1913," and "Institution Building in an Era of Segregation, 1914 - 1941."

Nimrod Ross was born into slavery in Tennessee in 1863.¹ (His obituary places his birth at 1844 in Mississippi, and his burial record cites 1865. By his own account he was "just born in slavery" and recalled about it only what he had been told, debunking both the 1844 and 1865 dates.²) He grew up in Missouri then lived for a time in Kansas, before coming to Lincoln around 1900. Ross was one of the first African Americans to serve on the City of Lincoln police force, approximately from 1902-1905, and also served as a "tumkey" at the county jail a few years later.³ The Lincoln Police Department in the 1890s and 1900s consisted of about two dozen men; group portraits of the force included one man of African ancestry in 1895 and one in 1907. Ross is Lincoln's earliest African American policeman who can be identified by name and he may be the stocky, mustached man in the 1907 portrait. Ross recalled in 1938 that "I came to Lincoln over forty years ago when it was just a little burg. But things were a whole lot better for the colored folks then than they are now," recalling his employment as a policeman and at the county jail. This anecdotal report of a narrowing of occupational opportunity was documented by a community-wide study in 1933,⁴ and was

¹"Manuscripts from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1940," interview by Albert Burks of Nimrod Ross, Dec. 15, 1938. Accessed 12/28/98 through Library of Congress "American Memory" website, address <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?wpa...ib,alad,lhbumbib,hh,bbcads,mussm,rbpebib>

²"Charlie Ross, 106, Dies; Was City's Oldest Resident," obituary of Nimrod "Charlie" Ross, *Lincoln Star*, July 4, 1950, 1:7,8. Also burial record, Wyuka Cemetery, Lincoln, Nebraska.

³Federal Writers' Project, interview by Albert Burks of Nimrod Ross; *Lincoln City Directories of 1902 & 1903*; "Negro History of Lincoln 1888-1938," typescript in O. J. Burkhardt Collection, Nebraska State Historical Society.

⁴"Study of the Social and Economic Status of the Negro in Lincoln, Nebraska," by J. Harvey Kerns, cited in Dennis N. Mihelich, "The Formation of the Lincoln Urban League," *Nebraska History*, Summer 1987, p. 67.

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Name of Property

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typical of national trends towards greater segregation and narrower opportunities for African Americans, after the early 20th century. For the rest of Ross's long life in Lincoln, his occupation as listed in the city directories was laborer or janitor, though he cited in his 1938 interview that his final job as "caretaker" was essentially a pension, with few duties.

Despite these obstacles, Nimrod Ross continued to support his family and contribute to his community. The city directories reflect that also residing in the home were Glen L. and Clinton Ross, students at the University in mid-teens. Ross recalled with pride in 1938 that "I was able to give my boy a good education and he [Clinton] was one of the few Negroes to play on the University of Nebraska football team." Upon graduation, Clinton Ross was a lawyer in Lincoln in 1916 and 1917, then served as a 1st Lieutenant in the U. S. Army in 1918, before leaving Lincoln for Los Angeles, where he was still practicing law in the late 1930s. This out-migration from Lincoln of educated and professional-class African Americans was not unusual, and was attributed in studies to both discrimination, and the small size of Lincoln's black population to support professionals.⁵

The whole Ross family apparently left their home at 445 S. 30th St. at about the same time as Clinton left to join the U. S. Army. While Nimrod Ross did not have further opportunity for civil service employment, he continued to contribute to the community as a trustee of his church, Mt. Zion Baptist, including service in the 1920s when the congregation constructed a new church at 12th and F Streets.⁶

He recounted in 1938 that "Church work now takes up most of my spare time." This service extended even beyond his own congregation. Residing in Lincoln's increasingly segregated "north side" neighborhood north of O Street and east of the University, Ross helped lead a "literary club" for youth at Newman Methodist Church in that neighborhood. A long-time Lincoln resident recalls her childhood impressions of Mr. Ross as a tall, well-read, white-haired man who was very involved with children and very encouraging of their educations—"a really good role model."⁷

Nimrod Ross's contribution to Lincoln extended beyond his family's years of residence at 445 S. 30th St., but this nicely maintained small house is the best-preserved historic property closely associated with this individual whose long life illustrates well the themes developed in the MPDF "African American Historic and Architectural Resources in Lincoln, Nebraska" of shifting occupational opportunities, importance of church, and quiet community leadership.

⁵Kerns, cited in Mihelich; and "Lincoln Socio-Economic Survey," by Charles G. Blooah, typescript, FERA, Lincoln, NE, 1935, cited in Mihelich, 65.

⁷Interview with Charlotte Jackson, March 24, 1999, by Raven Wagner, Lillian Baxter, and Ta'Nesha Blackwell (Elliott Elementary School), typescript at Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Dept.

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Name of Property
Lancaster County, Nebraska
County and State

WORKS CITED

Blooh, Charles G., "Lincoln Socio-Economic Survey," typescript, FERA, Lincoln, NE, 1935, cited in Mihelich, "The Formation of the Lincoln Urban League," *Nebraska History*, Summer 1987, 65.

Burckhardt, Oliver J. (author?), "Negro History of Lincoln 1888-1938," typescript in O. J. Burckhardt Collection, Nebraska State Historical Society.

Graff, Jane Ramsay, *The History of the Lincoln Police Department*, Lincoln, Nebraska: Lincoln Police Union, 1996.

Gramling, C. J., ed., *Honor Roll of Lancaster County, Nebraska: An illustrated historical biography compiled from private and public authentic records*, Lincoln, Nebraska: C. J. Gramling, 1919.

Jackson, Charlotte, March 24, 1999, Interview by Raven Wagner, Lillian Baxter, and Ta'Nesha Blackwell (Elliott Elementary School), typescript at Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Dept.

Kerns, J. Harvey, "Study of the Social and Economic Status of the Negro in Lincoln, Nebraska," cited in Dennis N. Mihelich, "The Formation of the Lincoln Urban League," *Nebraska History*, Summer 1987, p. 67.

Lancaster County Register of Deeds.

Lincoln City Directories.

Lincoln Star. 1950. "Charlie Ross, 106, Dies; Was City's Oldest Resident," 4 July.

Mihelich, Dennis N., "The Formation of the Lincoln Urban League," *Nebraska History*, Summer 1987.

Ross, Nimrod, interviewed by Albert Burks, Dec. 15, 1938, in "Manuscripts from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1940." Accessed 12/28/98 through Library of Congress "American Memory" website, address <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?wpa...ib,alad,lhbumbib,hh,bbcads,mussm,rbpebib>

Wyuka Cemetery, burial record of Nimrod Ross, 7/3/1950, Lincoln, Nebraska.

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

This property consists of Lot 22 of Jansen's Addition, Lincoln, Lancaster County, Nebraska.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

These boundaries include all the property historically associated with the Ross House.

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National Park Service**

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PHOTOGRAPHS

Nimrod Ross House

Name of Property

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The following information applies to all photographs:

Nimrod Ross House

Lincoln, Lancaster County, Nebraska

Photos taken by Edward F. Zimmer

Photos taken April 1999

All negatives at Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Department

Photo 1 of 2

View looking southwest of Ross House

Photo 2 of 2

View looking northwest of Ross House