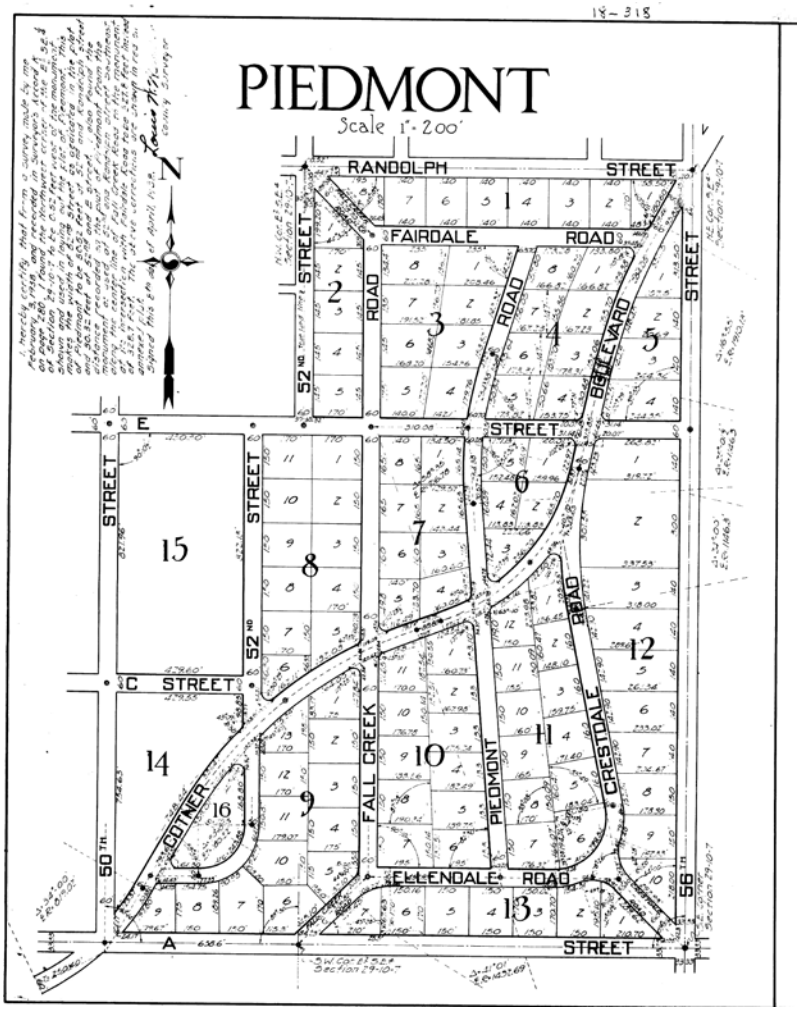


The Piedmont subdivision was platted in 1927 (at right) by the Stuart Investment Company (Charles Stuart, President). That was the same year Charles Stuart built the Stuart Building at 13th & P Streets downtown.

As a whole, Piedmont is a residential section characterized by large lots, large houses, and a gradual pattern of development so that building styles from most decades of the 20th century are well-represented.

While the overall plan is generally an extension of the grid plan of the original city, Cotner Blvd. creates a strong diagonal from NE to SW across the subdivision, and additional diagonal entry points were planned at the NW and SE corners, as well as near the center of the south (A St.) boundary. The result is an introduction of considerable variety in the sizes and shapes of lots, and a rather high degree of variation along the streets of what is generally a grid plan. There is also just one east-west street extending all the way through the subdivision (labeled as E Street, now called Valley Road), creating a north-south orientation to the subdivision as a whole and a rather insular quality to the area, heightened by the later closure of the SE diagonal entrance from the busy 56th & A intersection.

Piedmont's original deeds also covenanted to Stuart Investment Co. rights to approve building designs and decreed a rather unique method of locating houses on their parcels. Rather than specifying setbacks or specific yard requirements, the original covenants required that the "dead center" of the house be located within 15 feet of the "dead center" of the lot. The effect is to locate each house relative to its own parcel, rather than to a fixed front yard line, creating a degree of irregularity as the streets curve and the lot dimensions vary, and creating deep front yards. The covenants further required that those front yards be maintained solely as lawns, and that "no weeds, underbrush, or other unsightly growths shall be permitted to grow or remain anywhere upon said premises."

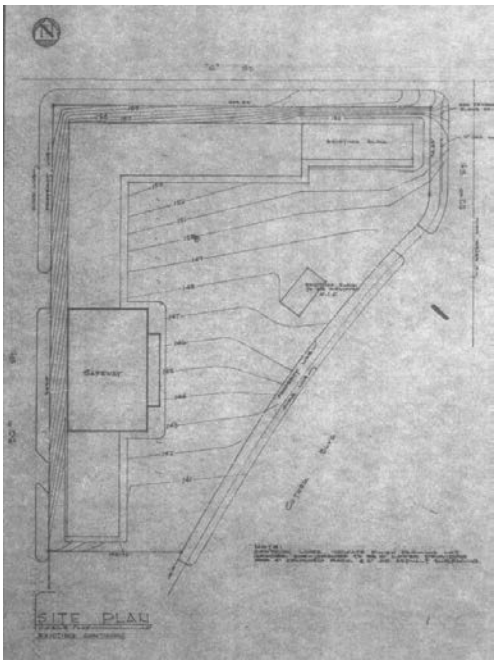
Stuart Investment's original covenants also included race restrictions, stating "For the period of fifty years from the date of this deed no person of other than the Caucasian race, shall be or become the

grantee or lessee of said property, or, except as a servant in the family living thereon, be granted the privilege of occupying the same." Similar restrictions were first imposed in the Sheridan Park area in 1916 by Harvey Rathbone and had become common in Lincoln by 1927, although some similarly prestigious subdivisions such as Woodsshire, did not used them. The *Lincoln City Guide* by the WPA's Federal Writers' Project, issued in 1937, described Piedmont as "one of the newest and most exclusive of the residential districts. From the three main entrances, each flanked by pillars, the boulevards wind between rows of elm and locust trees, across hilly, severely landscaped country. The houses are far apart, varied in style. Street-light globes are lantern-shaped." Only one of the monumental entrance treatments remains, as the NW corner where Fall Creek Road enters off Randolph Street.

Another aspect of the subdivision was to leave three blocks—14, 15, and 16—as whole blocks, not split into smaller lots. Blocks 15 and 16 became parkland as Piedmont Park and Kontras Park, respectively. The third block (originally Block 14) bounded by Cotner and Aldrich Road (formerly 52nd St.) on the east, C Street on the north, and 50th Street on the west, began to be developed in 1949 with the construction of the automotive service station at the southern end of the site.

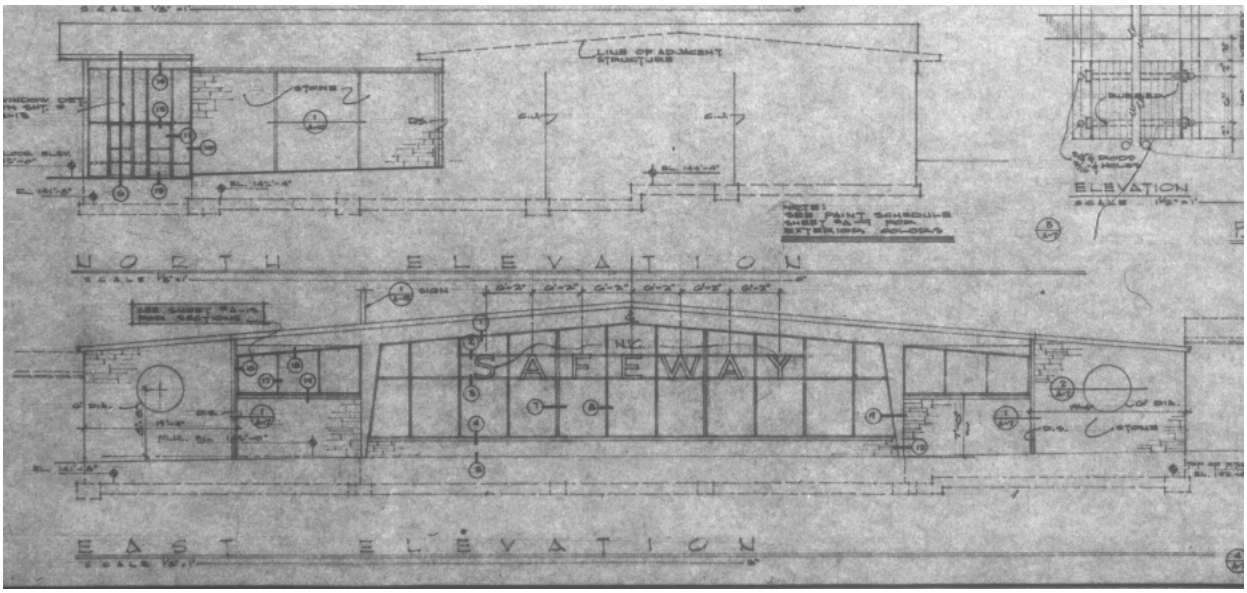
Aerial view, 1957

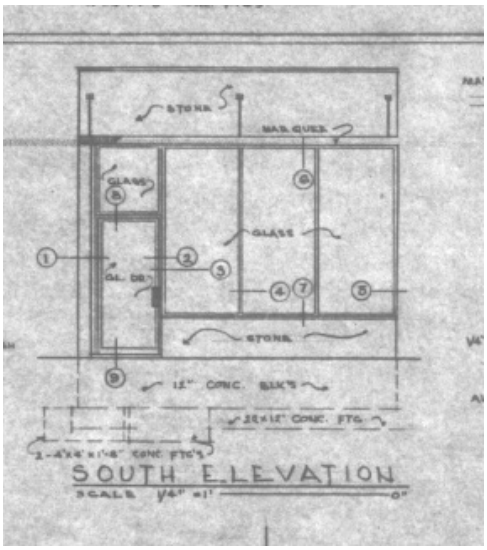
The first store was added in 1952, designed by S. A. Solheim and developed by Sunshine Homes, Inc. It stood near Cotner Blvd. towards the north end of the site (currently part of the parking lot) and in 1953 was occupied by "Ben Your Hairdresser." A larger drug store planned in 1952 to be attached to the north of "Ben's" was not built, instead the drug store was built in 1956 on the southwest corner of C and Aldrich, designed by Solheim but developed by C. C. Kimball, beginning the current inverted "L" of Piedmont Center.



Larger scale construction began in 1961, when Robert Gibb designed the anchor Safeway grocery store near the center of the west leg. The *1961 site plan* at left shows the initial building along Cotner, marked “Existing Bldg. to be Removed” and the drug store inscribed “Existing Building.”

Gibb’s drawings for the Safeway show a 14,000 sq. ft. store (100’x140’) with a shallow gable roof, projecting lobby with glazed east front, and stone veneered walls.



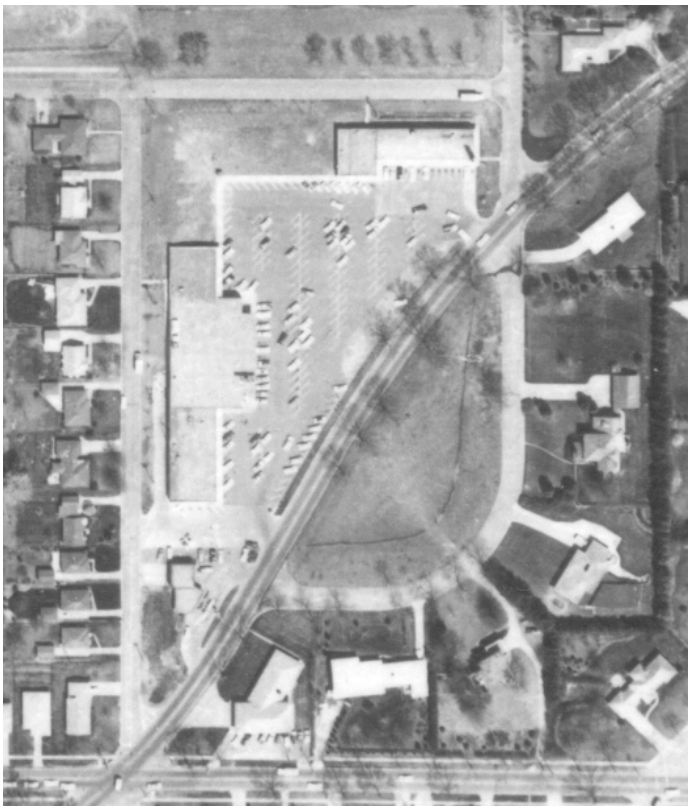


In 1962-68, the rest of the commercial spaces were built, beginning with Scotts Pancake House south of and Ben Franklin's north of the grocery, and small shops west of the drug store. An elevation for a *typical small storefront of 1962* is shown at left.

The *aerial view of 1964,* below, shows the early construction west of the drug store and north and south of the grocery store. Building permits for all of the stores were issued by Dec., 1967, with Gibb preparing the all the designs from 1961 through 1967.

The site plan accompanying the 1967 drawings listed the following establishments (from south to north, then west to east):

Coast to Coast at 1321
Scotts (Pancake House) at 1311
Safeway at 1301
Ben Franklin at 1297
Kitronics (1293)
Liquor (1289)
New Shops at 1285 (NW corner of "L"), 1281, 1277, 1273
Carlton Shoes (1269)
Barber Shop (1265)
Beauty Shop (1261)
Williams Cleaners (1259)
Drug Store (1255)
Café (1251)



Redevelopment site plan, 2013