

Adams St.--Statement of Significance

Adams St. was developed in three distinct phases: the 1840's the 1880's, and the 1920's. All but four or five structures on the street were constructed in these years.

Adams St. was entirely layed out by the 1840's. That was a prosperous decade for Burlington, and a large residential district grew out of the fields and forest lying to the south of Court House Square. In an area of eight or ten city blocks, bordered by St. Paul, Spruce, Union, and Main streets, and including Winooski Ave. (then called Elm St.), Maple, King, and Adams, there sprang up dozens of substantial, if not palatial, brick, Greek Revival homes. Adams St. ran up a steep hill, and was thus used more as a means of climbing the hill than as a residential street. Four houses remain on Adams from this era, including the much-altered David Smalley house just above St. Paul. Smalley was a lawyer, capitalist, railroader, and dispenser of political patronage for the Democratic party in Burlington. His son, B. B. Smalley, took over the father's legal practice, business interests, political power, and home. A considerable portion of the estate's grounds was given to the city by their descendents under the stipulation that it always be used as a playground for the children of the neighborhood. Smalley Park stands today at the bottom of the street.

Much of Adams St. was filled in by modest Queen Anne homes in the 1880's. This was an era of great economic growth for Burlington, fueled by the lumber trade and industrialization; the resulting pressure for housing was felt throughout the south end. As a rule, housing development moved south to keep pace with the southward growth of industry along the waterfront. A similar period of expansion occurred in the 1920's, and the few remaining building lots in the area were filled in with variations of Colonial Revival architecture.