1950—1959





1950 — 1959:
The Fabulous Fifties

Few decades in recent American history are remembered with as much nostalgia as are the 1950s. America's Middle Class was more prosperous than ever before; the Great American Dream (including the nuclear family unit, a home, and a car) seemed within reach. Television sets became more and more common in homes across America, bringing popular culture with them. A popular President, Dwight Eisenhower, was in office during eight of the ten years. Still, there was a darker side: Senator Joseph McCarthy's accusations of Communism among America's government workers and politicians threatened a number of careers. American soldiers lost their lives in Korea. And the Cold War with the Soviet Union created a certain amount of paranoia about "The Bomb."

City Concerns

Throughout the decade, OREB members continued active involvement in the following civic projects: solving the downtown parking problems, zoning, construction of a new auditorium, suburban shopping centers, rehabilitation efforts, public school improvement, taxation, and Missouri River development.

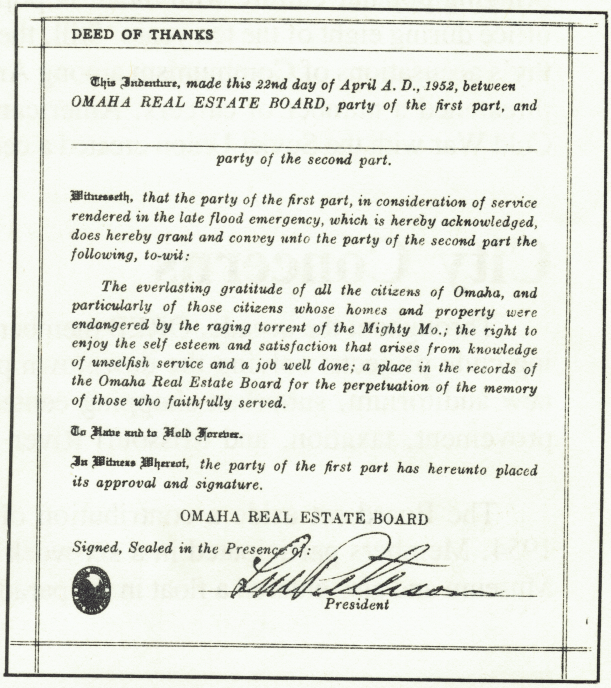
The Board set aside a contribution of $2,000 for the Omaha City Centennial in 1954. Members participated in a six-week exhibition of Omaha's history at the Joslyn Museum and also entered a float in the parade which marked the city's 100th anniversary.



A portion of Omaha's downtown skyline, looking east toward the river, is shown in this photo taken in the early '50s. It happens to include a Realtor firm which is still in business in 1986 — the offices of Wilkie & Company are at lower center in the photo.

The Missouri River flooded in 1952, cresting at 30.2 feet and leaving Omaha imperiled. The Board received a Certificate of Merit from the Omaha Red Cross for their service efforts during the flood. The OREB volunteered the use of its facilities and was declared a headquarters for housing of evacuees in the Omaha-Council Bluffs region. The Chairman of the Board's Advertising and Promotion Committee made a televised appeal for emergency housing and storage space. OREB Office Staff kept the office open around the clock to handle all telephone calls from displaced people seeking homes, temporary shelter, or transportation from the danger zone. Volunteer Realtors worked at shelter centers to help evacuees find new homes and make them livable in the shortest possible time; more than 300 people found housing with help from Realtors.

Right: The Board recognized the work of Omahans who labored during the Flood of '52 with certificates signed by OREB President Lloyd M. Peterson. Below: A copy of the Award of Merit presented to the Board by the American Red Cross.



DEED OF THANKS

This Indenture, made this 22nd day of April A. D., 1952, between OMAHA REAL ESTATE BOARD, party of the first part, and

party of the second part.

Witnesseth, that the party of the first part, in consideration of service rendered in the late flood emergency, which is hereby acknowledged, does hereby grant and convey unto the party of the second part the following, to-wit:

The everlasting gratitude of all the citizens of Omaha, and particularly of those citizens whose homes and property were endangered by the raging torrent of the Mighty Mo.; the right to enjoy the self esteem and satisfaction that arises from knowledge of unselfish service and a job well done; a place in the records of the Omaha Real Estate Board for the perpetuation of the memory of those who faithfully served.

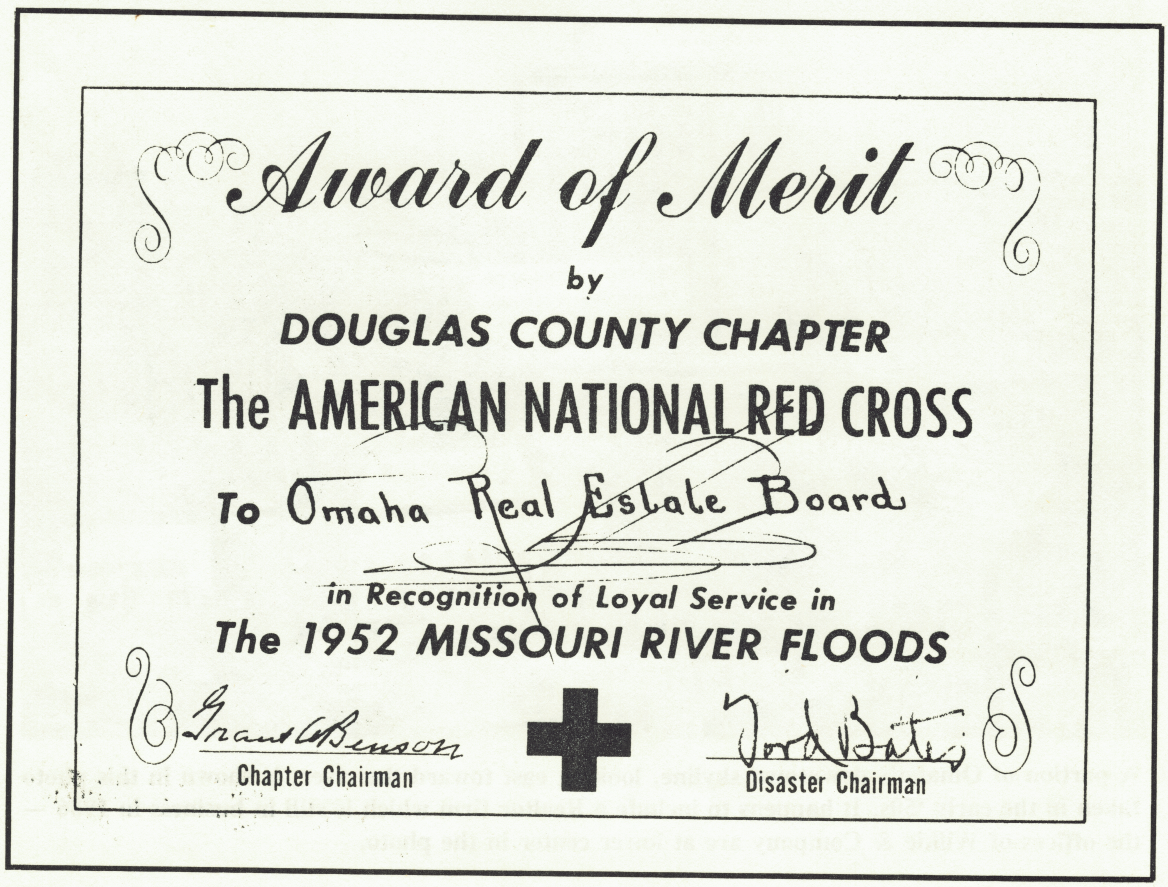
To Have and to Hold Forever.

In Witness Whereof, the party of the first part has hereunto placed its approval and signature.

OMAHA REAL ESTATE BOARD

Signed, Sealed in the Presence of:

President



Award of Merit

by

DOUGLAS COUNTY CHAPTER

The AMERICAN NATIONAL RED CROSS

To Omaha Real Estate Board

in Recognition of Loyal Service in

The 1952 MISSOURI RIVER FLOODS

Grant A. Benson
Chapter Chairman

Ford Bates
Disaster Chairman

Construction spending of $200,000,000 in and around Omaha in 1958 set a record; 1959 promised to be better. Proposed projects included missile bases, an interstate highway exchange, a new post office and federal building, additions to Offutt Air Force Base, expansions of gas and electric facilities, construction of schools and colleges, hospital improvements and expansions, and new city and county streets and sewers.

Housing starts in the first five months of 1958 totalled 763 units; the figure was 1,214 units for the first five months of 1959 — an increase of nearly 60 percent. Westgate Plaza Shopping Center opened for business in the late 1950s. Construction on the Crossroads Shopping Center began in 1959. Plans for an even larger shopping center were announced that year; the early proposals called for 800,000 square feet of floor space, parking for 7,000 cars, and room for more than 100 tenants. Completed nearly a decade later, Westroads became Nebraska's largest shopping center.



Christmas shoppers congested the streets and sidewalks at 16th and Douglas Street in November, 1957. A story in the World-Herald quoted merchants who were pleased at the early Christmas rush. Although some suburban shopping areas had begun to cut into business, downtown Omaha was still the place to shop on a Saturday afternoon.

News Highlights

Local headlines included the question of how Omaha should be governed — the Commission method versus the Mayoral process. In 1958, 19-year-old Charles Starkweather and his girlfriend went on a shooting spree across Nebraska; 11 people were murdered before Starkweather was apprehended just across the Wyoming border.

Contracts

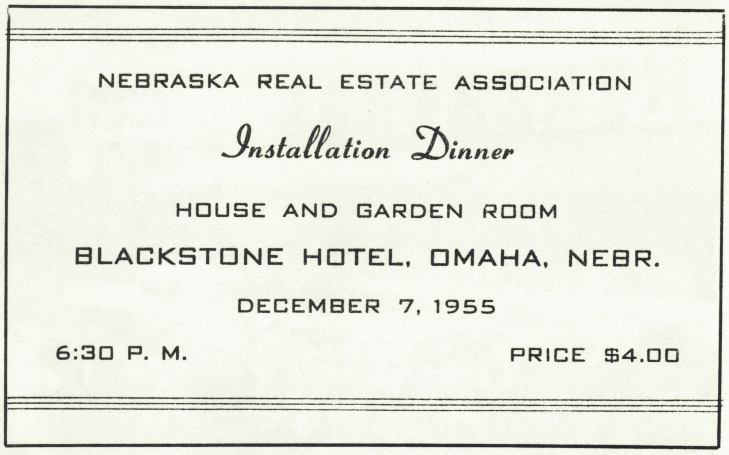
At a weekly meeting of the membership in 1959, Attorney Raymond Crossman, speaker of the day, discussed the purchase contract. He advised members to be sure to put all the facts in writing in the purchase agreement and to use language that is understandable.

Uniform rules for closing real estate were adopted in the early '50s.

Cost Of Living, Income

Nebraska's per capita personal income showed the second-largest percentage gain (7%) in the nation from 1957 to 1958. Employment figures for the Omaha Metropolitan Area broke all previous records in May 1959.

Nebraska Real Estate Association Annual Installation Dinner tickets rose in price to an all-time high of $4.00 in 1955. A full-size copy of the ticket is shown at right. The 1956 State Convention advance registration fee was $6.00 (as shown in the full-size illustration below); the two-day convention was held at the Sheraton-Fontenelle Hotel in Omaha.


NEBRASKA REAL ESTATE ASSOCIATION

Installation Dinner

HOUSE AND GARDEN ROOM

BLACKSTONE HOTEL, OMAHA, NEBR.

DECEMBER 7, 1955

6:30 P. M. PRICE $4.00

BROKERS AND SALESMEN

ADVANCE REGISTRATION

$6.00

REGISTRATION AT CONVENTION $8.00

SAVE $2.00 — SEND EARLY — SEND IT NOW!

No Registration Charge for Wives of Members

Enclosed is check for $..... covering..... registration for the Nebraska Real Estate Association's 39th Annual Convention, Omaha, Sheraton-Fontenelle Hotel, October 4, 5, 1956.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

Will Your Wife Be With You?.....

Some typical prices paid for various goods in the 1950s included:

Eggs (one dozen)	.51
Fab Detergent	.66
Dresses (on sale in 1956)	$1.00
5-1/2 Carat Diamond, 1956 advertisement	$750.00
One-year-old 1952 Ford Sedan	$1,695.00
New IBM Electric Typewriter (1955)	$482.00

According to an anonymous letter to "The Public Pulse" in the early 1950s, Omaha had an extremely high cost of living, with two-bedroom apartments renting for $165 per month. and nicer homes "overpriced" at $5,000 to $15,000.

Wherry Housing was originally built and owned by developers who rented the land to the Air Force for $1.00, acting as landlords for the government. After the Capehart Act in the Mid '50s, the Air Force decided to purchase the land. The sale was negotiated without an appraisal.

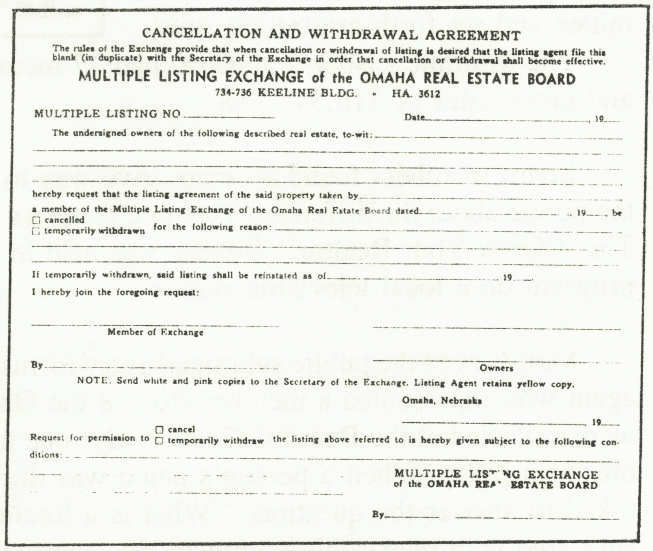
Financing

The average selling price in 1957 was $15,100. In 1952, Realtor J. F. Johnson reported that the top 50 sales in the last six months of 1951 averaged a sale price of more than $20,000.

Interest rates were 5 to 5-1/2 percent on conventional loans and 4 to 4-1/2 percent on FHA loans in 1958, according to Realtor Grant L. Miller. In 1959, Realtor Herbert L. Osborne remembers, interest on FHA loans was in the range of 5-1/4 to 5-3/4 percent.

Membership Figures

The Multiple Listing Exchange was perhaps the most controversial issue facing the Board in the early '50s, according to several Realtors. Realtor Hugh Van Alstine made a resolution in March, 1950, stating that a Multiple Listing Exchange should be established as a division of the Omaha Real Estate Board, with membership on a voluntary basis. Operating rules of the new Exchange were adopted in May, 1950, with two revisions later that year to fine-tune the system.



CANCELLATION AND WITHDRAWAL AGREEMENT

The rules of the Exchange provide that when cancellation or withdrawal of listing is desired that the listing agent file this blank (in duplicate) with the Secretary of the Exchange in order that cancellation or withdrawal shall become effective.

MULTIPLE LISTING EXCHANGE of the OMAHA REAL ESTATE BOARD

734-736 KEELINE BLDG. • HA. 3612

MULTIPLE LISTING NO. _____ Date _____ 19__

The undersigned owners of the following described real estate, to-wit: _____

hereby request that the listing agreement of the said property taken by _____

a member of the Multiple Listing Exchange of the Omaha Real Estate Board dated _____ 19__, be
☐ cancelled
☐ temporarily withdrawn for the following reason: _____

If temporarily withdrawn, said listing shall be reinstated as of _____ 19__

I hereby join the foregoing request:

_____ _____
Member of Exchange

By _____ _____
Owners

NOTE. Send white and pink copies to the Secretary of the Exchange. Listing Agent retains yellow copy.

Omaha, Nebraska

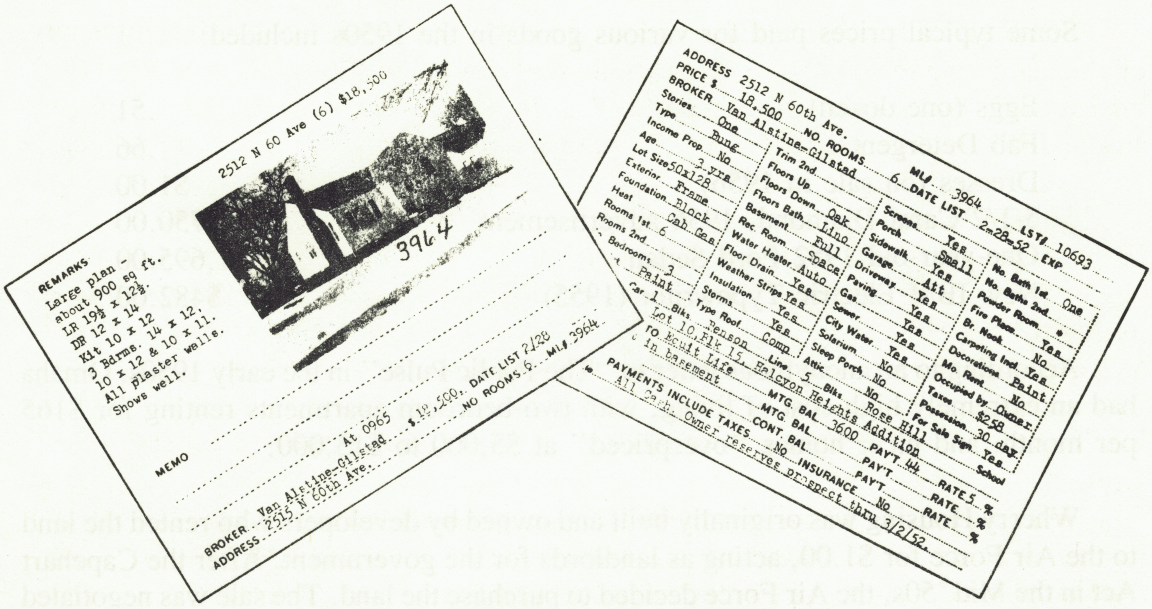
_____ 19__

Request for permission to ☐ cancel ☐ temporarily withdraw the listing above referred to is hereby given subject to the following conditions: _____

MULTIPLE LISTING EXCHANGE
of the OMAHA REAL ESTATE BOARD

By _____

Above: This Cancellation and Withdrawal Agreement was one of the forms created in the early 1950s. The actual size of this form was 7" x 8".



Above and below right: More examples of forms used by the Multiple Listing Exchange in the early 1950s. Members received 4'' x 6'' cards with listing information on both sides, rather than the weekly books used in 1986.

Multiple Listing Exchange of the Omaha Real Estate Board
784-786 KEELINE BLDG.—HA. 8612
Send this notice to the secretary of the Exchange, IMMEDIATELY, when property is sold.

SOLD NOTICE

Address of Property .....

Multiple Listing No. ..... Sold For $ .....
Sold to ..... Selling Agt. .....
Terms of Sale: All Cash ..... Assume Mtgs. .....
Sub. to FHA of ..... Sub. to Conv. Loan of .....
Sub. to Land Cont. of ..... Sub. to GI of .....

Est. Closing Date ..... Remarks .....

Date ..... 195 .....
Realtor
By .....

IMPORTANT: If sale is not consummated for any reason, it is the responsibility of the listing agent to notify the secretary of the Exchange at once.
The amount accruing to the Exchange on Cooperative Sales is due and payable on date of closing transaction.

Membership fees in the Exchange were $250.00 per firm in 1950; the fee was raised to $350.00 in 1952. Monthly dues were $6.00 per month per member. The Exchange also received a percentage of the commission on co-op sales made between members. The operating rules made provisions for a Grievance Committee and set forth arbitration rules.

The Multiple Listing Exchange had 47 member firms in 1951 with 3,388 listings and gross sales of $16,545,468.

Board members found an innovative way to promote membership and to educate the public about the difference between Realtors and other real estate brokers in 1952. The ''Know Your Realtor'' Contest was held in conjunction with a weekly real estate program on a local television station.

Members of the public submitted entry forms (which were available from any sales agent who represented a member firm of the Omaha Real Estate Board). The entries were collected at the Board Office weekly; one name per week was drawn to be eligible for a prize. When a person's name was drawn, he or she would be phoned and asked to answer the question, ''What is a Realtor?'' If the qualifying question were answered with reasonable accuracy, the contestant was asked to identify the photo of a local Realtor. A cash jackpot and other prizes were awarded.

In summarizing his year as President in 1952, Realtor Lloyd Peterson said, ''We feel that the television show and television contest were a great success. We are sure that 25,000 to 30,000 more people now know that there is a difference between a real estate man and a Realtor.''

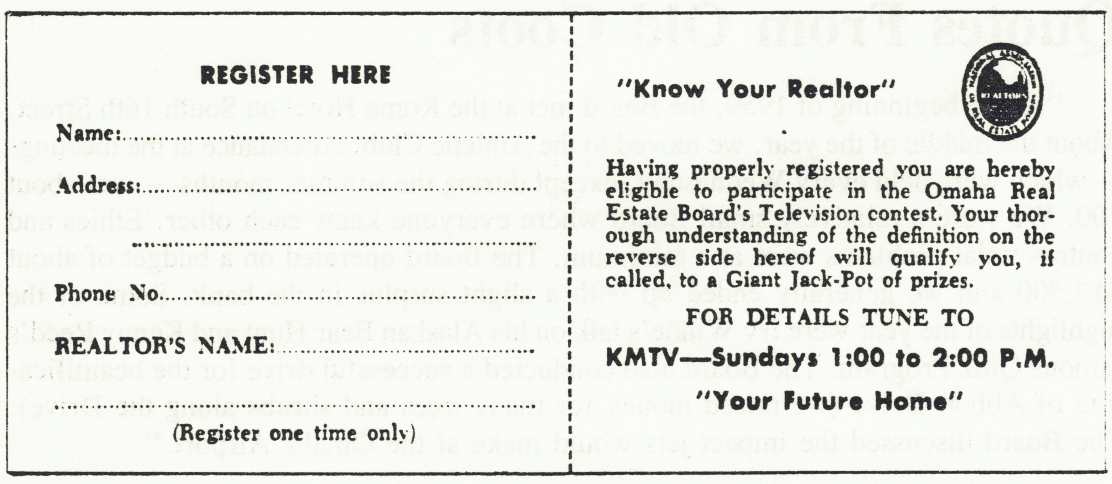
Board members played a large role in the teaching of real estate at the University of Omaha during the 1950s. In his year-end report, Realtor Charles Rasmussen (1953 Education Committee Chairman) reported that six Realtors taught courses at the University in 1953. OREB awarded a $50.00 scholarship annually to a deserving student.

In 1953, Mrs. Wilda T. Woodbury became the first woman to receive a certificate in real estate from the University of Omaha. (A certificate was given by the University upon completion of fifteen semester hours of work.) Also in 1953, the Board welcomed its first female stockholder member: Mrs. Lydia Buck took over ownership of Buck and Company after the death of her husband, Realtor David E. Buck.

Two committees studied the problem of part-time salespeople in 1953. Jack Lausterer, Chairman of the Salesmen's Advisory Committee, reported that year: "Quite a number of meetings were held regarding the use of part-time salesmen. Our group took a decided stand on this issue and recommended that a ruling be passed against their employment. After study, the association's attorney declared the plan to be unworkable under the present structure. However, it is the outgoing committee's hope that whatever can be done should be done to correct this condition which is a detriment to all those planning a career in real estate."

A building fund of $10,000 was established in 1957; as of 1986, the Board still does not own its own building.

Members of the Board spearheaded efforts to avoid advertising and the holding of open houses on Sundays during the late '50s. A survey taken at the time showed that 85% of the membership were in favor of Sunday Closing. Non-members joined in the campaign, which was adopted as a voluntary policy in January, 1958. Advertising was run to familiarize the public with the concept. "It was a membership victory, not a personal one," said 1958 OREB President Grant L. Miller. The Sunday Closing policy gradually lost momentum and was eventually discontinued.



REGISTER HERE

Name:.....

Address:.....

.....

Phone No.....

REALTOR'S NAME:.....

.....

(Register one time only)

"Know Your Realtor"

Having properly registered you are hereby eligible to participate in the Omaha Real Estate Board's Television contest. Your thorough understanding of the definition on the reverse side hereof will qualify you, if called, to a Giant Jack-Pot of prizes.

FOR DETAILS TUNE TO

KMTV—Sundays 1:00 to 2:00 P.M.

"Your Future Home"

Above: An entry form used in the "Know Your Realtor" Contest of 1952. On the back of each ticket stub was the sentence, "A Realtor is a person engaged in the real estate business who is a Board Member or an Individual Member of the National Association of Real Estate Boards, and is subject to its rules and regulations, observes its standards of conduct, and is entitled to its benefits."

Population Of The Area

The 1950 U. S. census showed 251,117 persons living within Omaha's boundaries. At the close of 1958, population in the Omaha Metropolitan Area reached 436,000. This was a gain of 16,000 people in one year. It was projected that Metro Area Population would reach one-half million by 1962.

Real Estate Ads

Advertising by the Board in 1950 totalled 8,218 lines in the Omaha World-Herald, twenty-three television ads and one month of radio spot ads. The total expenditure for advertising was $3,422.89.

In 1951, OREB's newspaper ads were cited as an outstanding example of advertising by the Bureau of Advertising of the American Newspaper Publishers Association. Shown at right is just one ad in the series; some ads emphasized the value of home ownership, while others pointed out the advantages of working with a Realtor. "Here's why it pays you to deal with a Realtor," read one ad. "He knows market values — and his title Realtor was conferred upon him by the National Association, and the Omaha Real Estate Board after his professional ability was proved..."



Quotes From Old Coots

"At the beginning of 1959, the Board met at the Rome Hotel on South 16th Street. About the middle of the year, we moved to the Athletic Club. Attendance at the meetings — which were held every Wednesday, except during the summer months — was about 100. We were a relatively small Board where everyone knew each other. Ethics and controversial problems were at a minimum. The Board operated on a budget of about $13,500 and we generally ended up with a slight surplus in the bank. Some of the highlights of the year were Irv Wilkie's talk on his Alaskan Bear Hunt and Kenny Reed's famous Quiz Program. The Board also conducted a successful drive for the beautification of Abbott Drive (we raised money for many trees and shrubs along the Drive). The Board discussed the impact jets would make at the Omaha Airport."

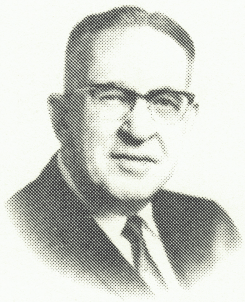
Herbert L. Osborne
Written in 1986

Presidents Of The Omaha Real Estate Board

1950—1959



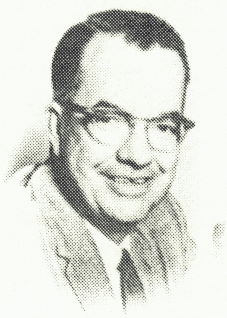
Harold C. Payne
1950



W. B. Hargleroad
1951



Lloyd M. Peterson
1952



Hal Easton
1953



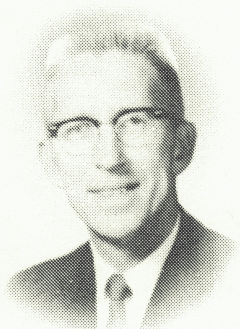
Jack Evahn
1954



N. P. (Phil) Dodge
1955



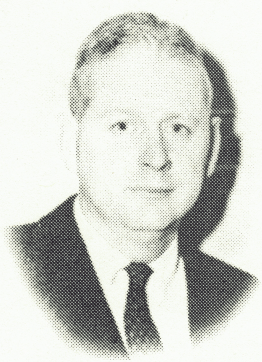
W. Irving Wilkie
1956



Howard Drew
1957



Grant L. Miller
1958



Herbert L. Osborne
1959

Executive Secretary: Prudence McMichael Wilkie

Presidents Of The Omaha Real Estate Board

1950—1959

Harold C. Payne
1950

W. E. Hargleroad
1951

Lloyd M. Peterson
1952

Hal Easton
1953

Jack Evahn
1954

N. P. (Bill) Dodge
1955

Wm. Irving Wilkie
1956-

Howard Drew
1957

Grant L. Milligr
1958

Herbert L. Gaborne
1959

Executive Secretary: Prudence McMichael Wilkie