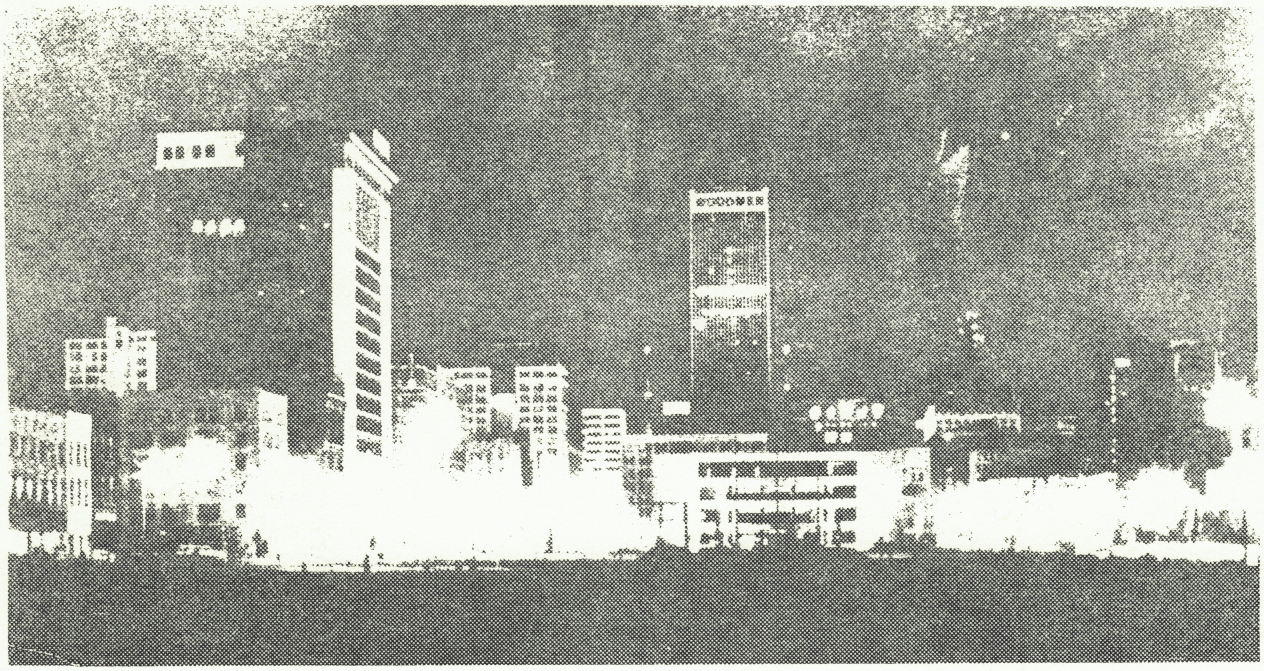
1970 — 1979





1970 — 1979:
Inflation High, Confidence Low

As the decade of the Seventies began, the nation's economy was plagued by inflation; unlike previous inflationary cycles, attempts to control the economy seemed to have no effect. A Wage and Price Freeze imposed by President Richard Nixon in 1971 did not stop inflation; nor did President Gerald Ford's "WIN" campaign. In President Jimmy Carter's term, inflation continued its assault on personal income — and the federal deficit also rose.

A bungled burglary at the Watergate Hotel in 1972 turned into the biggest political scandal America had ever seen. It resulted in the criminal convictions of White House aides, and finally brought the resignation of President Nixon. By the end of the decade, the confidence of Americans in their government and its leaders had sunk to its lowest level in decades; President Carter called it a "national malaise".

City Concerns

Like many other cities around the nation, Omaha was faced with school desegregation in the '70s. Although there was a certain amount of resistance to busing in Omaha, it was nothing compared to the outright violence experienced in some cities. Realtor Fran Rice served on the School Board Ad Hoc Committee in 1974; at the time, she reported to the OBR Directors that the group devoted a great deal of time and discussion to the matter, but noted that the committee's progress became stalemated. Busing to help achieve integration began in the Omaha Public School District in 1976.

In 1972, the Union Pacific Railroad offered to donate Union Station to the city of Omaha, for use as a Western Heritage and Transportation Museum. The Directors of OREB signed a resolution supporting the Union Pacific's offer. The city accepted, and the museum was eventually opened to the public. It is now known as the Omaha History Museum.

In 1975, Omaha Mayor Edward Zorinsky supported a hard-line budget and strongly opposed a proposal to raise the mill levy by 1.5 mills. 1975 Board President Jim Yowell wrote a letter on behalf of the board, thanking the mayor for his action. "Homeowners' real estate taxes are considerably higher in Omaha than in a lot of cities of comparable size," Yowell wrote. "Too many average citizens are finding it difficult today to afford to own their own homes... We admire your courage and good judgement."



1975 OBR President Jim Yowell (standing) with Omaha Mayor Ed Zorinsky at City Hall.

News Highlights

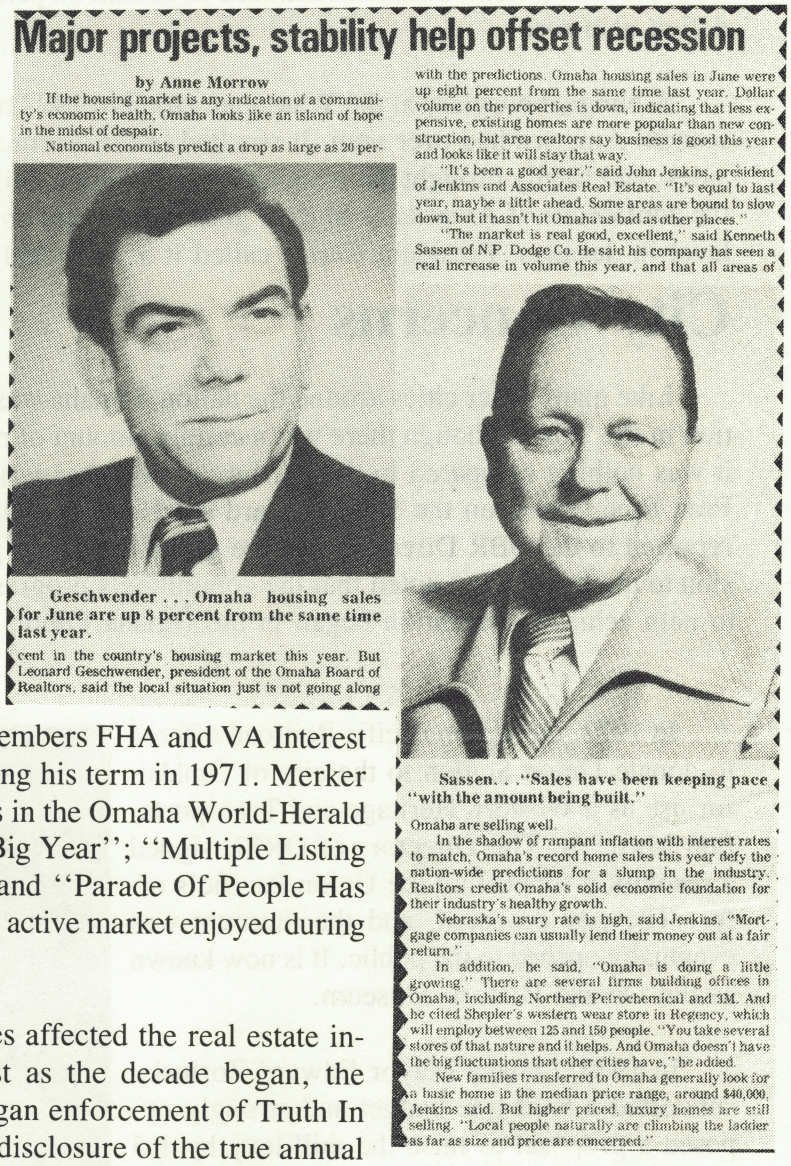
The Watergate scandal and the resulting resignation of President Richard Nixon was perhaps the biggest news story of the decade; never before had an American President been forced to resign his office. Gerald R. Ford, who was born in Omaha, was sworn in as the 38th President of the United States in 1974. The last American troops left Vietnam in March, 1973, and an end to fighting in Vietnam finally came in April of 1975. The taking of American hostages in Iran, and unsuccessful attempts to bring the Americans home, brought the decade to a close.

The biggest local news items of the '70s included two weather-related stories: the Blizzard of 1975, which brought up to 16 inches of snow to the Omaha area and killed 14 people in Eastern Nebraska; and the Tornado of 1975, which demolished 500 homes and apartments, injured nearly 150 people, and killed three persons. The Board voted to donate $500 to the disaster fund for victims of the tornado.

Financing

President Paul Merker remembers FHA and VA Interest Rates of about 7.5 percent during his term in 1971. Merker noted that some of the headlines in the Omaha World-Herald that year (''1971 Is Housing's Big Year''; ''Multiple Listing Sales Increase 13 Per Cent''; and ''Parade Of People Has Builders Smiling'') indicated the active market enjoyed during his term.

Consumer protection issues affected the real estate industry during the decade. Just as the decade began, the Federal Trade Commission began enforcement of Truth In Lending laws, which required disclosure of the true annual percentage rate to borrowers. In 1975, the Real Estate Settlement Procedures Act (often referred to as RESPA) required lenders to disclose the costs of a loan to the prospective borrower; the purpose of the act was to allow the borrower to search the marketplace for the best financing rates.



Major projects, stability help offset recession

by Anne Morrow

If the housing market is any indication of a community's economic health, Omaha looks like an island of hope in the midst of despair.

National economists predict a drop as large as 20 percent in the country's housing market this year. But Leonard Geschwender, president of the Omaha Board of Realtors, said the local situation just is not going along with the predictions. Omaha housing sales in June were up eight percent from the same time last year. Dollar volume on the properties is down, indicating that less expensive, existing homes are more popular than new construction, but area realtors say business is good this year and looks like it will stay that way.

"It's been a good year," said John Jenkins, president of Jenkins and Associates Real Estate. "It's equal to last year, maybe a little ahead. Some areas are bound to slow down, but it hasn't hit Omaha as bad as other places."

"The market is real good, excellent," said Kenneth Sassen of N.P. Dodge Co. He said his company has seen a real increase in volume this year, and that all areas of Omaha are selling well.

In the shadow of rampant inflation with interest rates to match, Omaha's record home sales this year defy the nation-wide predictions for a slump in the industry. Realtors credit Omaha's solid economic foundation for their industry's healthy growth.

Nebraska's usury rate is high, said Jenkins. "Mortgage companies can usually lend their money out at a fair return."

In addition, he said, "Omaha is doing a little growing." There are several firms building offices in Omaha, including Northern Petrochemical and 3M. And he cited Shepler's western wear store in Regency, which will employ between 125 and 150 people. "You take several stores of that nature and it helps. And Omaha doesn't have the big fluctuations that other cities have," he added.

New families transferred to Omaha generally look for a basic home in the median price range, around $40,000, Jenkins said. But higher priced, luxury homes are still selling. "Local people naturally are climbing the ladder as far as size and price are concerned."

Geschwender . . . Omaha housing sales for June are up 8 percent from the same time last year.

Sassen. . ."Sales have been keeping pace "with the amount being built."

Above: This article appeared in the Midlands Business Journal in the summer of 1979. Another article in that issue told of progress on a new shopping center at 132nd and Center Streets.

However, an unintended effect of the Act was a delay in processing of loan applications. The Omaha Board of Realtors worked with lenders and with the National Association of Realtors to try to find a solution.

Cost of Living, Income

The price of gasoline rose above $1.00 per gallon for the first time in the late '70s. There were shortages of gasoline and other petroleum products as OPEC nations set limits on exports of oil. Energy conservation measures were encouraged by U. S. President Jimmy Carter. Homeowners were asked to turn off gas lamp posts, and Christmas decorations in Omaha and most other American cities were kept to a minimum.

The late 1970s also saw double-digit inflation and double-digit unemployment in America for the first time in decades. Mortgage interest rates climbed to 15 and 16 percent in late 1979.

Population Of The Area

The U.S. Census Report for 1970 showed 358,452 persons living within the boundaries of Omaha.

Membership Concerns

The Board's offices were moved twice during the decade. The first move was accomplished in 1971, when the Board moved from the Keeline Building in downtown Omaha to offices on 115th Street, in the Omaha Housing Center. 1971 President Paul Merker called the move the most controversial issue of his term. ''Many of the older, centrally-located real estate offices objected to the move,'' he wrote. ''The move to the west Omaha location resulted in much greater participation by the members in serving on committees, and also contributed to the growth of the Multiple Listing Service.''



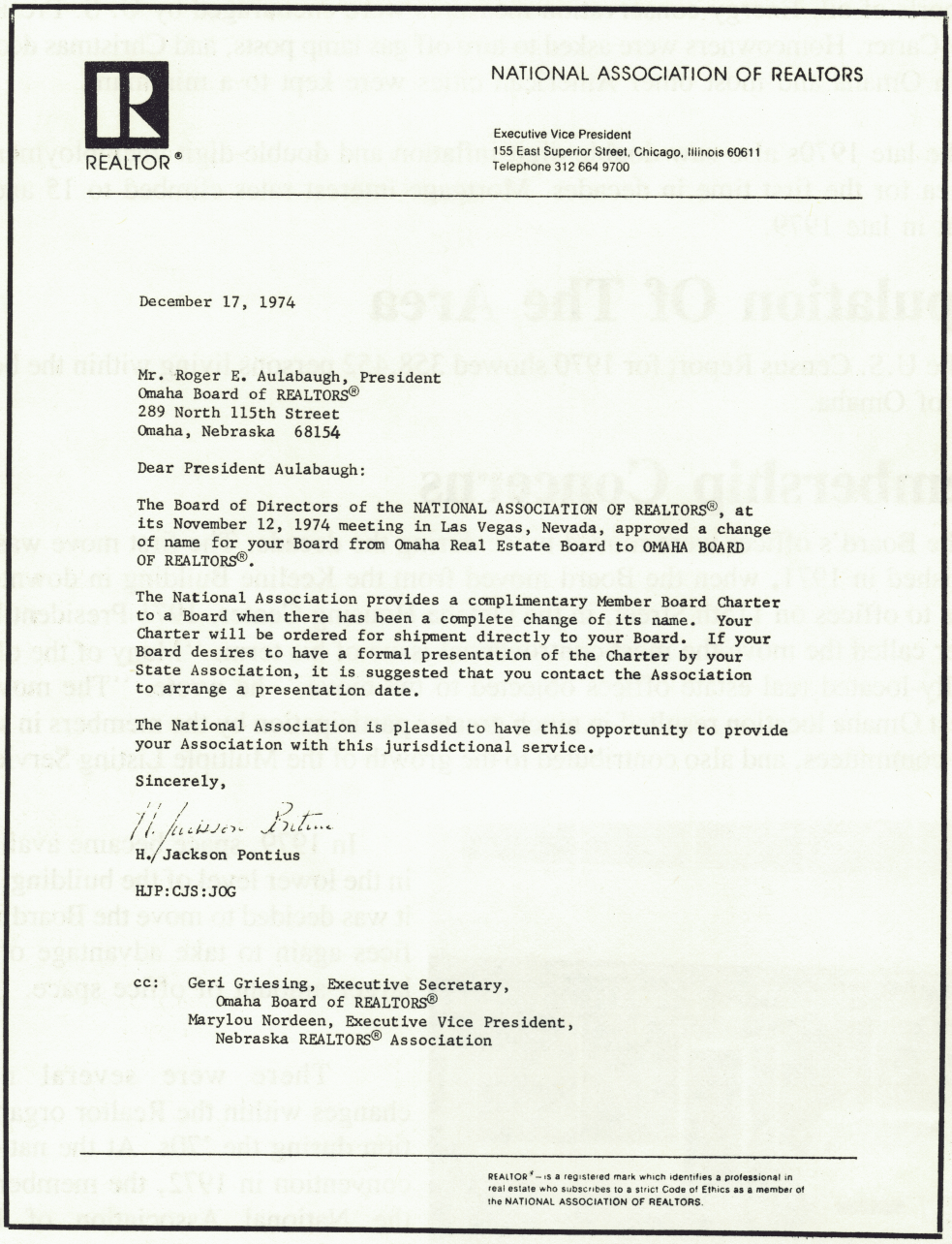
The Board Office as it looked in 1979, after the move to its present location at 11421 Davenport Street.

In 1979, space became available in the lower level of the building, and it was decided to move the Board's offices again to take advantage of the larger amount of office space.

There were several name changes within the Realtor organization during the '70s. At the national convention in 1972, the members of the National Association of Real Estate Boards voted to approve a name change for the organization to the National Association of Realtors; the change became effective on

January 1, 1974. Many state associations followed suit; the Nebraska association became known as the Nebraska Realtors Association.

In November of 1974, the Board's name was officially changed from the Omaha Real Estate Board to the Omaha Board of Realtors; the Board's jurisdiction was changed to include all of Douglas and Sarpy Counties. Before this, portions of both counties were included in the boundaries of the Board.



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS

REALTOR®

Executive Vice President
155 East Superior Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611
Telephone 312 664 9700

December 17, 1974

Mr. Roger E. Aulabaugh, President
Omaha Board of REALTORS®
289 North 115th Street
Omaha, Nebraska 68154

Dear President Aulabaugh:

The Board of Directors of the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®, at its November 12, 1974 meeting in Las Vegas, Nevada, approved a change of name for your Board from Omaha Real Estate Board to OMAHA BOARD OF REALTORS®.

The National Association provides a complimentary Member Board Charter to a Board when there has been a complete change of its name. Your Charter will be ordered for shipment directly to your Board. If your Board desires to have a formal presentation of the Charter by your State Association, it is suggested that you contact the Association to arrange a presentation date.

The National Association is pleased to have this opportunity to provide your Association with this jurisdictional service.

Sincerely,

H. Jackson Pontius

H. Jackson Pontius

HJP:CJS:JOG

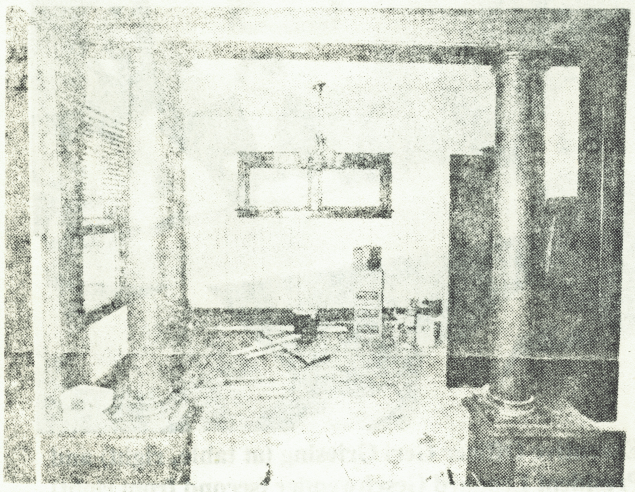
cc: Geri Griesing, Executive Secretary,
Omaha Board of REALTORS®
Marylou Nordeen, Executive Vice President,
Nebraska REALTORS® Association

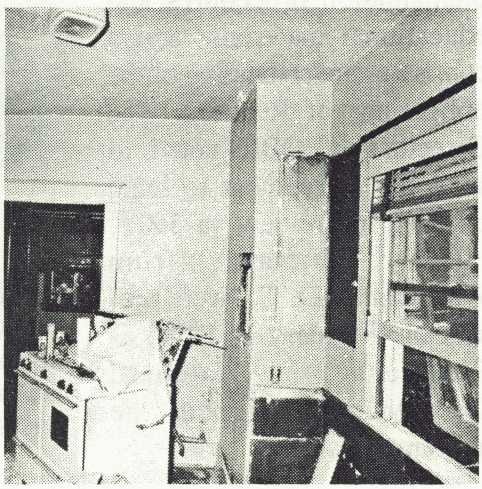
REALTOR® – is a registered mark which identifies a professional in real estate who subscribes to a strict Code of Ethics as a member of the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS.

This letter from National Association of Realtors Executive Vice President H. Jackson Pontius confirmed the approval of the Board's name change in 1974.

In 1972, the Women's Council of Realtors formed a chapter in Omaha and became an Affiliate of the Board. ''At that time, national guidelines deemed it necessary to ask permission of the Board of Directors,'' wrote Realtor Arlyne Geschwender. She went before the directors, who granted their approval on a six-month trial basis. ''After the six-month period, the cadre of women held a luncheon at Happy Hollow Club,'' she said. ''Mayor Zorinsky and State Senator Shirley Marsh of Lincoln were made honorary WCR members. At the next meeting of the Directors, the Omaha Chapter of WCR was sanctioned.'' Arlyne Geschwender was founding president. The Chapter continues to flourish.

In 1974, the Public Affairs and Make America Better Committees rehabilitated a house. The old house was purchased for about $10,000 and renovated at a cost of approximately $14,000. The photos on this page show the house during and after renovation.







Above left: The dining room before renewal. Above right: Kitchen during renovation. Left: the completed ''Make America Better'' rehabilitation project, located at 41st and California Streets. The committee hoped to show local homeowners and buyers that urban development could be an alternative to buying a new home.

The possibility of utilizing a Universal Lock Box system became a hot topic of discussion in 1974. A system was implemented in January, 1976. A new committee was formed to handle any problems and complaints involving the new system and to set up any policies necessary to assure proper usage of the keys.

Early in 1975, the U.S. Justice Department conducted an investigation of the Omaha Board. The request for Board records and documents came just shortly after a new Executive Officer, Geri Griesing, was hired and a new Board legal counsel was retained. The Justice Department's request was answered, and no further action was deemed necessary.

The National Association of Realtors adopted the Voluntary Affirmative Marketing Agreement in 1975. The National Association felt that a uniform policy for Realtors nationwide was needed to permit the development of implementation procedures and educational materials, and a consistent understanding of the obligations of Realtors. The Directors of OBR voted to send the Agreement to legal counsel for review in 1978. HUD Officials from Washington, D. C., were present on February 1, 1979, as President Leonard Geschwender signed the agreement.



Board Executive Officer Geri Griesing (at table, right) and Board President Leonard Geschwender (second from right) meet with officials of the Department of Housing and Urban Development in 1975 to sign the Voluntary Affirmative Marketing Agreement.

As a community service project, the Board's 1978 Public Relations Committee provided house numbers to any resident who requested them to replace lost or damaged numbers. The project received favorable attention from the media; more than 120 homes received new numbers during the first six months of the project.

The Directors of OBR and MLS voted to move forward with an on-line computer system for the Multiple Listing Service in 1979. In the autumn of 1978, a representative of International Graphics (later known as Moore Data Management Services) came to the Board to demonstrate a computer system. The computer could be used seven days per week, 24 hours a day, and would permit the Board to use a catalog-style book of listings.

The 1978 Dues for a Realtor member included $75.00 to the local board, $35.00 to the Nebraska Realtors Association, and $35.00 to the National Association of Realtors (a total of $145.00). Dues that year for a Realtor-Associate were $38.00 to the local

board, $35.00 to the state association, and $12.00 to the national association (a total of $85.00). In 1979, members voted to make the Omaha Board of Realtors an all-Realtor Board, doing away with the Realtor-Associate category.

There were more than 1,600 members in 1977, representing nearly 160 firms. The Board's membership reached the 2,000-member mark for the first time in November, 1978. The 2,000th member, Laurie Woodworth, was given a complimentary ticket to the annual Installation Dinner Dance. As the decade came to a close in December 1979, the Omaha Board of Realtors had 1,875 members and 202 member firms.

M L S REPORT
August

	1971	1970
Number of Listings Processed this Month	301	426
Number of Listings Processed Year to Date	2700	2929
Number of Final Sales this Month	112	158
Number of Final Sales Year to Date	1199	1141
Dollar Volume of Sales this Month	2,130,760	2,941,576
Dollar Volume of Sales Year to Date	22,868,049	21,486,734
Average Sale Price this Month	19,024	18,617
Average Sale Price Year to Date	19,072	18,831
Number of Co-op Sales this Month	21	26
Number of Co-op Sales Year to Date	213	189
Dollar Volume of Co-op Sales this Month	491,200	595,707
Dollar Volume of Co-op Sales Year to Date	4,681,210	4,335,411

In the early 1970s, MLS Reports like this one (above) were prepared each month. Computerization in the latter part of the decade made the job much easier.

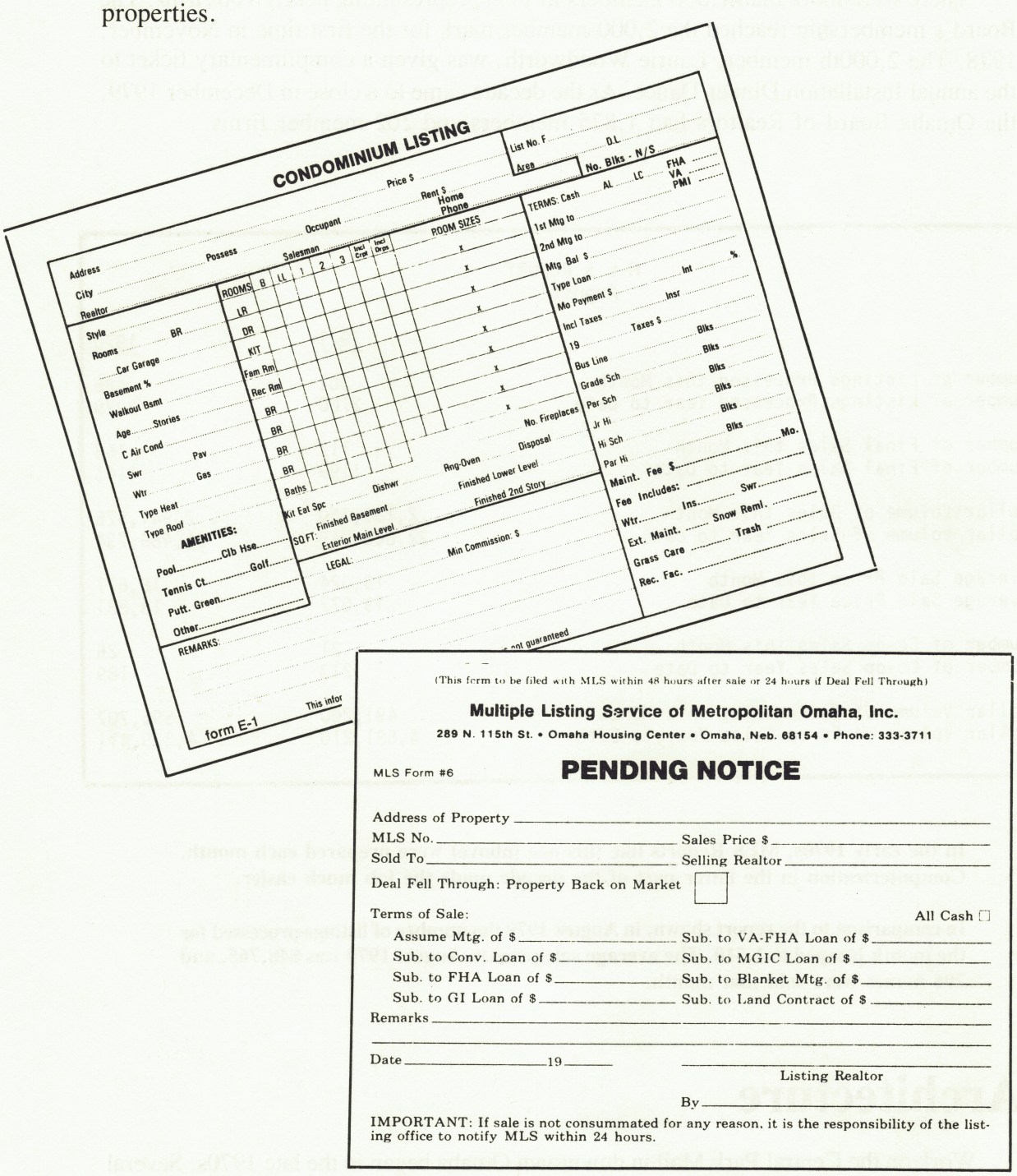
In comparison to the report shown, in August 1979 the number of listings processed for the month jumped to 1,510. The average sale price in August 1979 was $48,765, and 796 homes were sold that month.

Architecture

Work on the Central Park Mall in downtown Omaha began in the late 1970s. Several of the city's older, architecturally significant buildings met with the wrecking ball; new buildings (such as the InterNorth-ConAgra Twin Tower) took their place. Many of the older buildings were restored beginning in this time period, especially in the Old Market area.

Contracts

The forms and contracts printed by the Board in the 1970's reflected some changes in the lifestyles of Americans and the home market. Uniform listing contracts and data sheets were now available for condominiums, multi-family dwellings, and commercial properties.



Above: These are examples of forms used by Board members in the mid-'70s. Actual size of the Condominium Listing Data Sheet was 6-1/4'' x 4-5/8''. The other data sheets in use at the time (including Residential, Commercial, Ground or Lot, and Multi-Dwelling) were also of this size; each type of listing was printed on a different color of paper. The actual size of the Pending Notice was 5½''x4¼''.

Presidents Of The Omaha Board Of Realtors 1970-1979



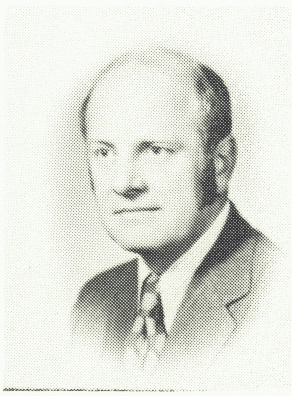
Harold B. Scott
1970



Paul L. Merker
1971



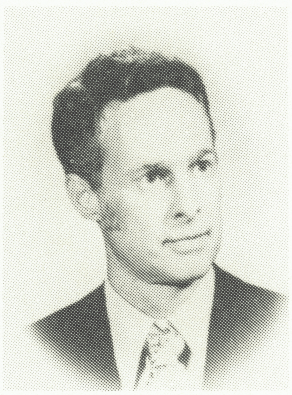
H. James Grove
1972



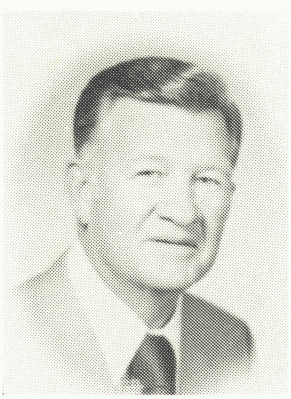
Rodger O. Lindwall
1973



Roger Aulabaugh
1974



James M. Yowell
1975



Melvin L. Strong
1976



Frances E. Rice
1977



Thomas D. Peschio
1978



Leonard Geschwender
1979

Ron Williams was Executive Officer at the beginning of the decade. He was replaced by Marylou Nordeen in 1972; she served the Board until late 1974, when she became E.O. of the Nebraska Realtors Association. She was later appointed Director of NAR's Executive Officer Liaison Department. Geri Griesing (whose name later changed to Geri Schrag) became Executive Officer in September, 1974.