1930 — 1939



1930 — 1939

1930-1939:
Pulling Out Of Depression

The early to mid-1930's were desperate years. The United States and the rest of the world faced the most widespread, most severe economic depression of modern time. Most banks were uninsured; many closed during the panic caused by the collapse of the stock market. Unemployment was high in the urban areas, and farmers watched crops wither during severe drought.

The early Thirties were difficult times for Realtors, too, as so few people were able to afford homes or to rent office space. "One would have to live through it to know how severe it was," wrote Clay Thomas. "As an example, one year in the middle 1930's the Keeline Building had a loss of $1200 after taking the depreciation charge."

News Headlines

In 1932, Franklin D. Roosevelt swept the presidential election and claimed victory over Herbert Hoover as President of the United States; Roosevelt and his "New Deal" brought profound changes to the government of the United States and the services provided to its citizens.

The historic Millard Hotel at 13th & Douglas burned in 1933; damage was estimated at $250,000.00. Seven firemen died and 22 others were injured while battling the fire in 15-degrees-below-zero weather. The German dirigible Hindenberg (804 feet long) crashed in 1939, killing 36 of the 97 persons aboard in 1939.

Tensions which had persisted in Europe since the end of World War I, coupled with the aggression of Adolph Hitler, resulted in war. The United States maintained a stance of neutrality during the decade of the Thirties, although our nation was being pushed closer toward involvement by the decade's close.

City And State Concerns

Nebraska farmers received only 24% of the average annual state income, while they paid 70% of the state property tax . . . a 1% tax limitation was urged for rural property.

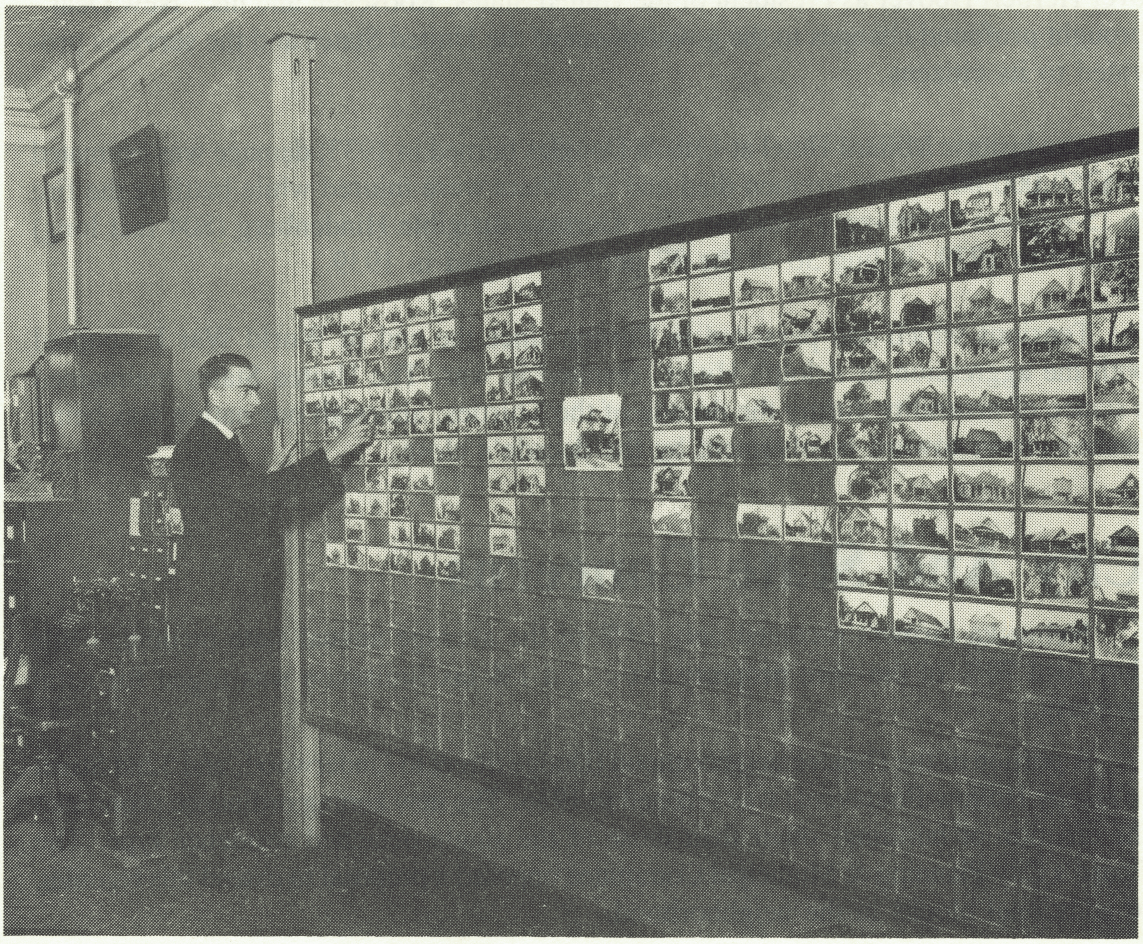
A portion of the Dundee neighborhood (Dodge Street to Underwood, and 52nd Street to Happy Hollow Boulevard) was rezoned in 1936. The new zoning ordinance prohibited the erection of buildings other than those of the single detached residence type. The Board's City Planning & Municipal Committee opposed a proposal to extend this rezoning to additional blocks in the neighborhood.

The Omaha Real Estate Board was actively involved in the promulgation, formation and passage of the Nebraska Real Estate License Law of 1936.

The Omaha Real Estate Board took strong opposition to a statewide Hydro-Electric system and to municipal ownership of the city's electric service company. The Nebraska Power Company was paying annual taxes of approximately $543,000.00 to the City of Omaha and $84,000.00 in taxes to the County and State. This issue came before the Board in 1938.

Termites took over portions of the city in 1938 and the board declared war on the "Hidden Enemies". The Chief Building Inspector for the City of Omaha spoke to the matter at a Board luncheon.

The Taxation and Legislation Committees of the Omaha Real Estate Board, operating as one unit, originated extensive drives for the collection of delinquent taxes in the late '30s. A considerable amount of money was raised from public-spirited citizens to support the plan, and great publicity was given these campaigns, with the result that hundreds of thousands of dollars in delinquent real and personal taxes were collected. A further result of this work was the strengthening of tax collection laws and the formation of the Tax Appraisal Board (which is a Board independent of the County Assessor) for the valuation of real and personal property. The work in Douglas County was so effective that it was continued on a state-wide basis.



Above: Before a weekly printed MLS Book service was available, Realtors relied upon other methods to facilitate the exchange of information about listings. A photo board like this one allowed the agents in an office to find at a glance the listings currently available through that office. (Photo from the Amos Grant Company.)

Cost of Living

A home could be built in north Omaha for $2,850.00. Less than 1% of the residences with a value of over $2,500.00 showed vacant. An appraisal cost $15.00 and contained eight pages of paperwork.

In 1934, the capital stock of all 12 Federal Land Banks totalled $240,000,000.00. The total capital stock of the Omaha Federal Land Bank was $26,000,000.00; the Omaha bank was the largest district, encompassing Nebraska, Iowa, South Dakota, and Wyoming. With a delinquency rate of only 20.2%, the Omaha Federal Land Bank had the lowest delinquency rate of any district in the United States.

Below: By the late 1930s, home appliances were increasingly affordable to larger numbers of Americans, thanks to an improving economy and mass production techniques. This ad was shown in a 1937 issue of the National Real Estate Journal.



Contracts

In 1936, the OREB Appraisal Committee did appraisals for the city of Omaha and was called upon to make eight appraisals, which included residential, commercial, and industrial properties. The total valuation of the property appraised was $333,050.00. The total fee collected was $661.70, and the Board received $353.69. The offices sending in appraisals received $35.76 and the appraisers received $272.25.

A resolution was passed by the members of the Board in 1935 to prorate taxes between the buyer and seller of real estate.

NO. CENTRAL REGIONAL CONVENTION, OMAHA

Delegates From Six States Attend Meetings

Chicago, Ill.—National developments in real estate conditions and methods, and the best ideas anywhere available for meeting present real estate needs were presented by national realty leaders at the North Central Regional Conference in Omaha last month. The meeting was open not only to Realtors but to real estate owners and those interested in real estate practice whether or not they were members of local boards. The region includes: Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, North and South Dakota, and Nebraska.

National President Paul E. Stark of Madison, Wis., was the principal speaker at the closing banquet of the two-day convention. Mr. Stark summed up the social significance of the daily work constituting the business of real estate as follows: "However much we have the will to serve, we shall not produce the fruit unless our good will is grounded in intelligence. That thought underlies the work of the specialized Divisions and Institutes of the National Association of Real Estate Boards. It is the realization from which has sprung also our plan to set up a National Real Estate Foundation that can go farther than our comparatively small business group alone could go to uncover needed foundation facts about real estate and coordinate the whole national effort for technical training in sound real estate method."

Robert B. Whitaker, Kenosha, Wis., vice-president for the Region, presided at the opening session. "In our North Central Region," Mr. Whitaker said, "to a higher degree than is true in any other section of the United States, the outlook for urban real estate advance is profoundly affected by the health of the farm outlook. I believe that we may say that on this basis urban real estate in our six North Central states has the most stable foundation that it has had any time in the present decade for sound rise of value and sound increase in market activity."

An outstanding speaker at the meeting was Sir Charles Morgan Webb, whose talk was published in the April issue of the NATIONAL REAL ESTATE JOURNAL.

Other prominent speakers on the program were:

Mark Levy, treasurer of the National Association, whose subject was "Commercial Leasing."

Hugo Porth, of Milwaukee, secretary of the Wisconsin Association, who presided at the special meetings for board presidents and secretaries.

E. L. Somerville, president of the Minneapolis Board, and vice-chairman of the National Committee on Real Estate Taxation. His subject was "Minneapolis' Real Estate Tax Campaign and Minnesota's Tax Program."

E. L. Ostendorf, M.A.I., Cleveland, president of the American Institute of Real Estate Appraisers.

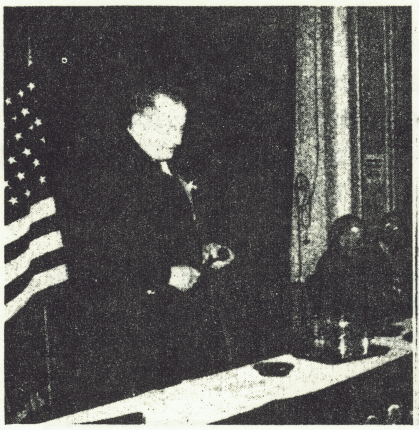
Charles S. Wanless, of Springfield, Ill., chairman of the Land Developers and Home Builders Division of the National Association.

Fred M. Lorish, president of the Chicago Real Estate Board.

David B. Neiswanger, M.A.I., Topeka, Kansas.

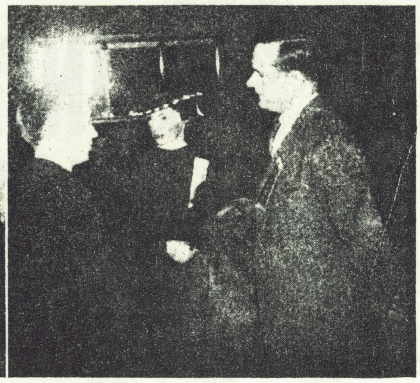
Linn P. Campbell of the Byron Reed Co., Omaha.

J. P. Claassen, vice-president, Farmers National Co., Omaha, whose address appears elsewhere in this issue.









Snap Shots at the North Central Conference, last month

The Home of the Month Plan under which homes are being built by Realtors over the country, the homes, open to public inspection, being listed and illustrated every month in McCalls Magazine, was discussed by J. Harold Hawkins, architectural editor of McCall's.

Another important small-group conference was that of the governing council of the Farm Lands Institute with W. D. Davis, Suiter Farms Company, Kansas City, presiding. Mr. Davis is president of the Institute and spoke also before the convention. Subject: "Thar's Gold in Them Farms!"

Kenneth F. Reed, Omaha, general chairman of the Omaha Board committee, made the introductions at the opening of the convention.

Realtors Backing Golden Gate Exposition

San Francisco, Cal.—Marked as an outstanding gathering, the Realtors' Exposition Banquet sponsored by the San Francisco Real Estate Board and held at the Fairmont Hotel recently brought together a representative group of the City's notables to hear of finance plan from Leland W. Cutler, the speaker of the evening and President of the Golden Gate International Exposition.

Toastmaster par excellence David Eisenbach, Realtor, and prominent member of the Bohemian Club, who, when he wanted it, did not fail to get the undivided attention of all present. President W. O. "Bill" Lang, official welcomer, won a huge ovation.



F. E. Dayton, president of the California Real Estate Association, broadcasting at the Realtors-Exposition Banquet, sponsored by the San Francisco Real Estate Board. The banquet was attended by some 600 Realtors, bankers and officials of the Golden Gate International Exposition to be held in San Francisco in 1939



SEE TODAY
METALLATION
A New Insulation Material

Being applied now and for the next two days on the new brick bungalow now under construction by Rasp Brothers at

5631 Western Ave.

It has the insulation value of three-fourths inch of cork, and two-thirds inch of blanket insulation. It's a shiny surface, pure aluminum foil mounted on kraft paper backing.

Visit the home today, or Monday or Tuesday. After that it will be too late, as insulation cannot be seen.

RASP BROS.
AT 0721
Realtors 210 Keeline Bldg.

Real Estate Loans 119

An announcement we all have been eagerly awaiting. 5, 5½, 5¾, 6, and 6½% Eastern Insurance Company money . . . all types of

REAL ESTATE LOANS

We are particularly pleased to be able to assist you to BUILD. Construction loans on owner-occupied one-family dwellings only.

RATE. To be determined by the desirability of the loan. From 5 to 6% plus the usual commission.

Applications Solicited On

1—One family owner occupied dwellings not over 10 years old, in approved locations.
2—Apartments not over 5 years old, in approved locations.
3—Mercantile buildings.
4—Construction. Loans on one family brick home owner occupancy, in approved locations.

Choose your own rate by the amount you ask. No loans less than $2,000. No loans on outlying one-story store buildings. No loans to speculators. No loans unless located in Omaha or Lincoln, Neb.

The National Company
OF OMAHA
500 First National Bank Bldg. AT 0729
Lincoln Office, 430 Stuart Building
Tel. B 2346

5% LOANS

On new or homes built recently. No delay in closing. See us for terms.

BINDER & OTIS
202-4-6 Keeline Bldg AT 3240

Above: Ads in a 1934 copy of the Omaha World-Herald show most real estate loans available at rates of 5% to 6%. Among the conditions of the loans: "No loans less than $2,000. No loans on outlying one-story store buildings. No loans to speculators."

Financing

The F.H.A. in 1938 insured mortgages to the following limits: Ninety percent on owner-occupied new construction of $6,000 or under for families of four or less, Eighty-six percent on new construction under $10,000; Eighty percent on new or old construction of $20,000.

FHA insured $1,248,000 in loans in 1937 and $3,248,000 in the first 11 months of 1938.

The Omaha Real Estate Board went on record fighting a tax increase and opposed any law tending to alter the State law relative to a maximum mill levy.

Membership Figures

1934 Dues: $30.00 for REALTORS; $10.00 for Salesmen; and $10.00 for Affiliate Members.

In 1934, the Directors of the Board approved an advertising campaign utilizing direct mail to the public (once a month for twelve months) for $1,200.00 and six radio ads for $65.00 on station KOIL.

The following monthly bills were typical of Board expenditures during the mid-'30s:

Rent	=	$12.65
Telephone	=	$11.06
Printing	=	$41.80

In 1937, Omaha Realtors hosted the North Central Regional Convention of the National Association of Real Estate Boards (NAREB). It drew quite a crowd, and several Omaha Realtors were among the speakers (see article at left, from the May, 1937, issue of the National Real Estate Journal). They included 1930 OREB President Kenneth Reed, J. P. Claassen of Farmers National Co., and Linn P. Campbell of Byron Reed Company. Realtor Amos Grant and his wife were among the Omaha members who provided hospitality to the visitors.



Above: We have not identified all of these gentlemen, but we do know that they are Realtors attending an OREB picnic in the early 1930s. Among them are at least three men who served as President of the Omaha Real Estate Board. Standing, second row: Hiram Manville (third from left); J.L. Schroeder (fourth from left); and Alfred C. Kennedy (second from right).

In 1936, the Annual July 4th picnic (held on July 25th) went on in spite of a few minor disasters: A temperature of 118 degrees, a fire and one headache. The 204 attendees consumed the following (as reported in the minutes):

101 pounds of spring chicken
35 pounds of roast beef
16 pounds of boiled ham
21 pounds of cheese
20 pounds of sausage
80 pounds of potato salad
34 pounds of baked beans
16 loaves of bread
200 buns
2 gallons of sweet pickles
1 gallon of dill pickles
3 pounds of coffee
24 pounds of potato chips
30 cases of beverages
4 half barrels of lager beer

Population

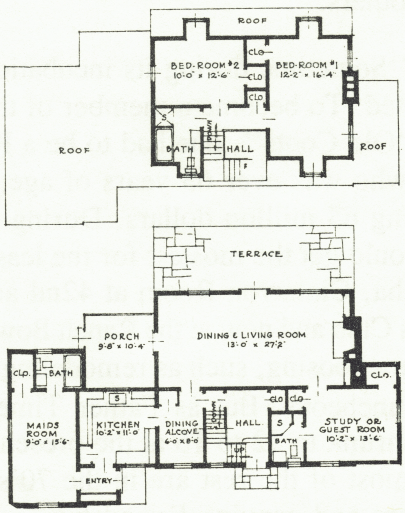
The population of Omaha was 214,006 in 1930.

Architecture

Among the most popular styles of architecture for single-family homes were Colonial (brick or frame) and Cape Cod. Brick Colonial seemed to be especially popular in Omaha among those who could afford such houses (advertised in the World-Herald in 1934 for prices ranging from about $5,500 to $12,000). For those on smaller budgets, the Bungalow style was very popular; these homes were advertised for about $2,500 to $5,000 new in 1934. Shown below is a home featured in a National Real Estate Journal article in 1937.



Cape Cod Cottage
by Arthur R. Rule
Westfield, N. J.



Cape Cod architecture is a popular type with visitors at Wychwood. And it is well suited to buyers of modest income. Rooms of this $9,000 house are generous in size, and floor plan is excellent.

Quotes From Old Coots

"In 1938, when I was President of the Board, we were still in the Great Depression. Business transactions were limited, and attendance at our meetings was small by today's standards.

"The World-Herald was hungry for real estate news and the sale of a duplex or small store building rated a "write-up" and a picture in the paper. The promotion of a new bridge at Dodge Street was very much in the news.

"Ways of collecting delinquent taxes was the subject of one of our Membership Meetings as was the site of the new Post Office. United States Senator Edward R. Burke drew the largest attendance of the year. He had just returned from Europe and gave us his observations on the governments of Hitler and Mussolini. His topic was, 'Challenge to Democracy.'"

Clay H. Thomas
Written in 1986

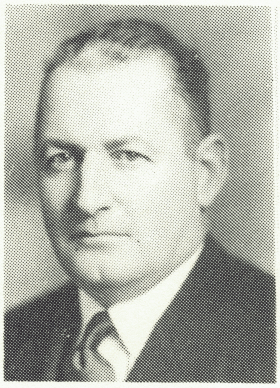
"The "Old Coots" of the Omaha Board of Realtors were started in the late 1939's or 40's by Fred Burr, Kenneth Reed, Wayne Selby, Jesse Schroeder, Ed. Undeland, Ed. Bedford and possibly one or two others. It started as a luncheon group, strictly social. But after a time, an exchange of ideas relating to Omaha real estate business developed. This included recent sales and construction, rumors of future developments and all-around gossip. This made the meetings interesting and informative, and the members began looking forward to the next gathering. Cost of the luncheons very seldom came to over $1.85.

"This was not a formal organization and had no officers or dues. Additional members to the group had to be invited by a member. Originally someone labeled the group "Cooties" and some years later, someone labeled them as the "Old Coots" and still later, I changed the label to "Venerable Coots", so now they are named both as the "Old Coots" and "Venerable Coots". I was invited by Kenneth Reed sometime in the early 50's and the following either already belonged or were invited shortly after, to-wit: Al Kennedy, Russell "Skip" Bailey, Rob Hastings, Ted Maenner, William Hargleroad, Harold Payne, Hiram Manville, Clay Thomas, Irving Wilkie, and one or two others.

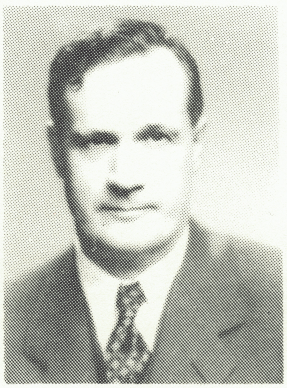
"Sometime during its incubation, the following rule, resolution, or whatnot was adopted: To become a member of this very august and select body of real estate men, the "Old Coots", one had to be a Past President of the Omaha Real Estate Board, or one who was over 65 years of age, or one who was well on his way of earning and making 65 million dollars. During my time, we met at various eating places (where we could get the mostest for the leastest) such as the Hill Top, Johnny's Cafe in South Omaha, Cimarron Room at 42nd and Center St., Marchio's Cafe on South 13th St., Elk's Club and now at the Ranch Bowl. The only time we changed meeting places was not of our choosing, such as remodeling, etc. In the past, as many as 30 to 32 would attend the luncheons. But as Father Time and Mother Nature took their toll, the number has shrunk to 12 to 16 at the present time, and half of them are over 80 years young, and most of the rest are in the 70's. What has kept this group together for so long? Sincere and genuine Friendship."

Lad Tesar
Written in 1981

Presidents Of The
Omaha Real Estate Board
1930-1939



Kenneth F. Reed
1930



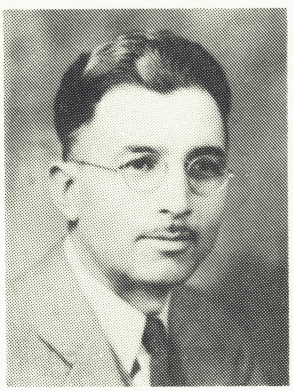
Amos Grant
1931



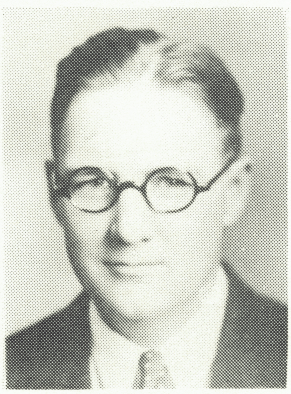
Robert Vance
1932



Grant Benson
1933



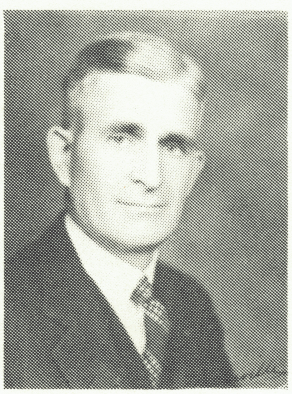
J. L. Schroeder
1934



Alfred C. Kennedy
1935



E. W. Bedford
1936



Hiram S. Manville
1937



Clay H. Thomas
1938



E. A. Undeland
1939