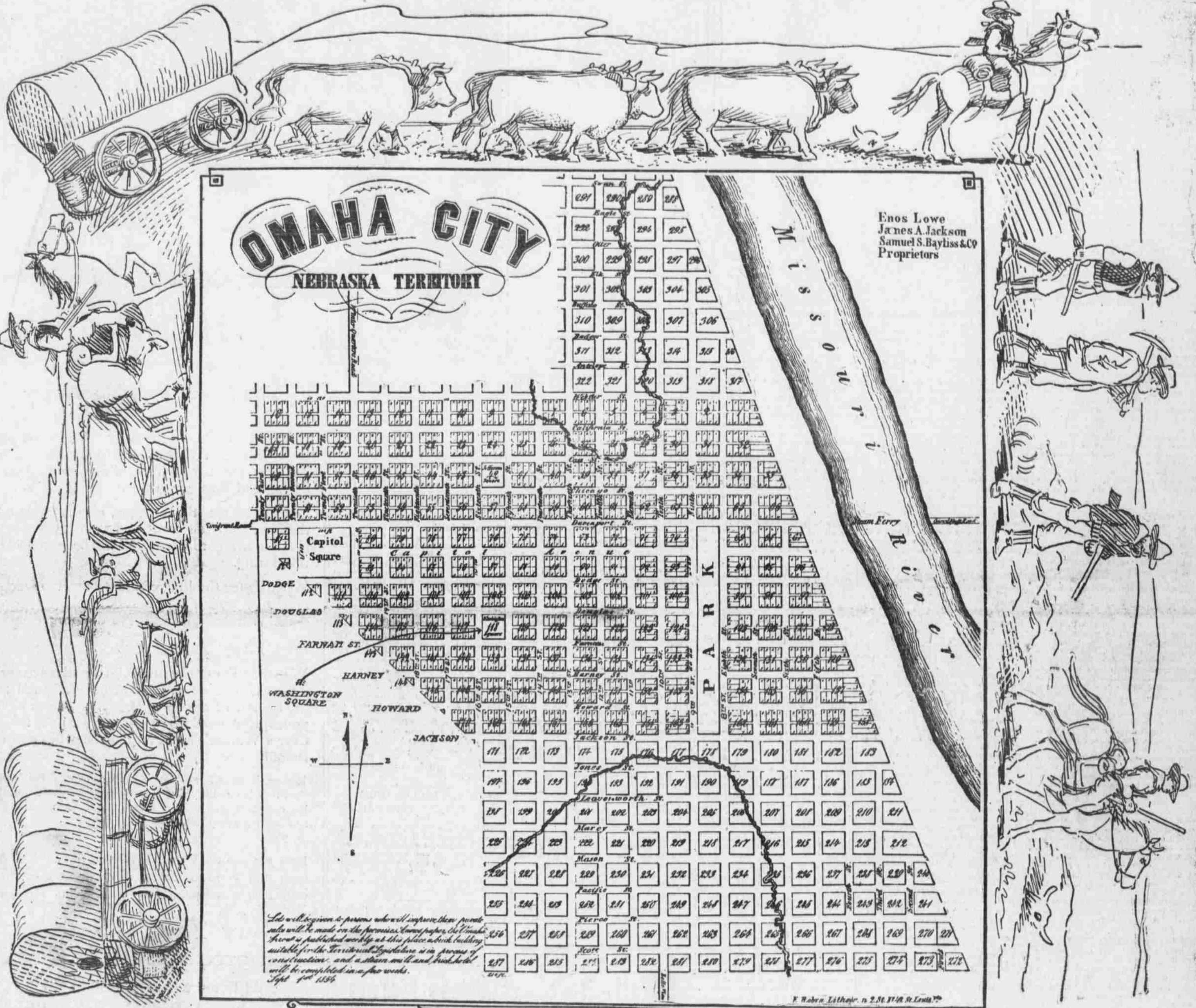


Where Have the Vanished Streets and Parks Gone?

Early Map of Omaha Shows Thoroughfares and Breathing Spots No Longer Known to the Public



Here is a copy of the first map ever made of the City of Omaha. It was drawn for the proprietors of the town-site, Enos Lowe and James A. Jackson and Thomas Bayliss & Co. and was used by them in their efforts to induce settlers to come to the new camp on the banks of the Missouri. A study of the map is of much interest, for it shows the location of many things that are known not at all to the greater majority of the present residents of the city. The cutting away of the map on the southwest indicates that no effort was made by the surveyor to conquer the mighty bluffs that towered their wooded heights far above the easier hills and bottoms that were included as the site of "Omaha City". The park spaces marked show the liberality of the plotters in their provision for future citizenship, but alas, all but one of these parks has vanished, and now can be found only on the map. The creeks and avenues that here appear have followed the parks, but it is still of interest to note what was once Omaha and compare it with what it is today.

OMAHA has actually lost certain streets and parks in the flight of years and, though identified by mark of historic import, they have never been found. Public sentiment, business interests, civic necessities and many other reasons may be used to answer the question, "Why are these streets and parks not in existence at the present day?"

Should the blame be placed upon the early residents of Omaha for the disappearance of drives and public parks which existed many years ago and are not on the present map of Omaha? Many of those who have studied the different surveys of the city say "No," that it is as much the fault (if it is a fault) of the later residents as it is of the early settlers.

A study of the first map of Omaha will be interesting to many, who enjoy going back to the early days of the frontier town or trading post as it was then. The first map which is on record in the city engineer's office is dated 1854, and the original now hangs in the city hall. Though the paper is yellow and the lines are faded it can be seen that the present city plan is carried out to a greater or less extent from the original survey of the city which was made by Alfred D. Jones in April, 1854.

The only public squares or parks on this original map are Jefferson Square, Washington Square, which was the block between Fifteenth and Sixteenth and Farnam and Douglas streets, and a tract of land known as "the park," which had for its boundaries the streets Davenport on the north, Jackson on the south, Eighth on the east and Ninth on the west.

Jefferson park is the only remaining one of the

three and the other two have been lost as public parks.

Few of the old settlers are here to tell us why and how this valuable property slipped from the possession of the city. Records at the court house show that the first transfer of the property upon which now stands the old Union Pacific headquarters was made by Mayor Jesse Lowe to George L. Miller, July 28, 1857. This property was then a part of the old park. However, a part of this tract was not sold until later years and this was known as the "grove" and many picnics were held here by the young settlers of the country at that time.

In a casual way, should you ask any early resident if he or she recalled the park at this location in 1857 you will be told generally that no such place ever existed. But you may find one person who will recall the happy days spent in the grove as did Mrs. D. D. Johnson, formerly Miss Jean Allen. Mrs. Johnson was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J. T. Allen, who came to Omaha from Bellevue in 1858. In speaking of this park, or "grove" as Mrs. Johnson called it, she said:

"Yes, I can remember when we children went

up there to play and have our picnics. The swings in it seemed as high then as the present Union Pacific headquarters. There were large shade trees in it and for this reason we always called it the grove. Where the foot of Douglas street is now located there was a steep incline and we amused ourselves by rolling down this bank. One had a splendid view of the river here and in fact from every spot in the grove you could see the river."

The most valuable park which was ever in the possession of the city was this strip of land. The present value of the abandoned park is equal to the valuation of the entire park system as it now is.

Washington square, which was then the site of the county court house, was sold by the city at about the time the transfer of the "grove" was made. Records again show that Mayor Jesse Lowe sold this square for the purpose of buying the present site where the new court house has just been built.

The present street system has not suffered any material changes and now there are only a few of the old streets or roads lost to the present generation.

In glancing over the original map you will find one road of importance at that time and according

to G. W. Craig, late city engineer of Omaha, one of the greatest losses to the city as a highway is Market street. This street will be found on the map running from Seventeenth and Jackson streets on the south to Twenty-third and Capitol. This street was at the outskirts of the city at that time, but as the city grew block by block of the old street has been closed and at the present time there is not a foot of it left. In speaking of this street or highway as it was, Mr. Craig says that Omaha has suffered a great loss in the closing of this street. "Were this street in existence at the present day think what time could be saved in travel by the merchants in the city," said Mr. Craig.

Jefferson street was practically a continuation of Market street and at the present time about thirty feet of this street is to be seen near Twenty-third and Davenport. This road as it then was led across the town to the old Military road, one of the main roads leading from the western country into Omaha. Nothing is left of any these streets as laid out in the original city plan with the exception of short paths across a few vacant lots. No reason can be found for the abandonment of these roads unless it be that the later engineers of the city

thought it best to have all the street intersections possible run at right angles. This plan has been carried out to a great extent in the entire plan of the city.

The streets running north and south were named in numerical order. The first street named in this way, First street, was taken possession of by the Missouri river soon after the first survey and since then the city has never been able to regain possession. The parks and streets which have been found in recent years are almost as scarce as those which have been lost.

It is noted that Omaha has no river drive, although one has been planned and the work of opening up this drive for the public has been commenced. The road commences at Fourth and Bancroft streets near the entrance to the Riverview park and winds along the hills overlooking the river for some distance and ends at Second and Spring streets. This will be the only drive of its kind in Omaha. From any point on this road the river can be seen for miles up and down its winding course and to those who are fond of this turbulent stream a drive along Ridge avenue will be a treat which Omaha people have not had in the past.

The park commissioners have been so fortunate in the past in obtaining the ideal spots in the city for parks that it would be hard to say that any location for a city park had been overlooked by this board. It is true that in many of both the eastern and western cities there are public squares in the residential districts and these squares have not been found in Omaha. There is talk of a river drive which will lead from the foot of Davenport street to the north and will connect with the river road in Florence, which in time may be known as one of the beautiful drives in this part of the country.

F. Weber, Litho., n. 2, 56, 17, R. Omaha.