

## REAL ESTATE MEN OF PAST

Individuals and Firms Who Began with the City's Urban Growth.

### SOME EARLY DEALERS IN OMAHA DIRT

Historic Names Connected with the Business and Some of the Pioneers Still Actively Engaged in the Work.

Except in a few years after the boom was busted the handling of real estate in Omaha has been a profitable business and many firms and individuals have engaged in this business since the first lots were laid out by the earliest inhabitants. Some men who were first on the field are still in the city and in active business, while many others have come for a time to cast their lot with the residents of the metropolis and some have followed the well known advice of "go west" and have continued further to the west to open up new fields. The growth of Omaha has been steady and the increase in the values has been steady, except for the setback which the crop failures gave the city after the boom period. During that period a regular panic existed for the purchase of real estate and every one wanted to own a lot, even servant girls buying with a small advance payment and pledging to pay so much per week. The coming of the hard times wiped out most of these equities, and as a consequence most of the suburban property of the city went into the hands of eastern people and others who had bought the paper on the inflated value of real estate.

#### Early List of Dealers.

A perusal of the directory of 1873 shows a list of men as real estate dealers, many of whom are well known to the people of Omaha. The list is small. Bartlett & Smith is the first firm. Wallace R. Bartlett was senior member and is now in Minneapolis. Rolland C. Smith, the other member, died about twenty years ago in Omaha. George P. Bemis is next on the list and is put in the directory thus: "Bemis, George P., private secretary to George Francis Train, N. P. A.; secretary and general manager of the Credit Foncier of America; office and residence, Cassius houses." The N. P. A. after George Francis Train's name meant "next president of America." Train had delivered a lecture at Ann Arbor, in which he had declared he would be the next president, and had said at that time he had 5,000 lots in Omaha which he could sell for \$3,000 apiece and make money enough to carry him to the presidency.

The Central Land company, located at Twelfth and Farnam, was a firm doing business at that time. J. M. Clarke, on Twelfth street, between Farnam and Douglas, was in the real estate business. He always signed his name, John Murchie Clarke.

The next real estate firm was in the directory thus: "Credit Foncier of America, George Francis Train, president; G. P. Bemis, secretary and general manager; large interests in Omaha, Council Bluffs and Columbus." A. Denman was another real estate dealer at 618 Fourteenth street. The next entry in the directory was: "Train, George Francis, N. P. A. (owner 5,000 lots, a hotel and ten other buildings in Omaha, 1,000 lots in Council Bluffs and 7,000 lots and a hotel in Columbus, represented by his private secretary and agent, George P. Bemis, eqs., Cassius houses."

#### Father of Shinn's Addition.

In the next two years several other real estate dealers were added to the Omaha colony, among these being Rev. Moses Shinn. He was a retired Methodist preacher when he came to Omaha and received a patent from the government to eighty acres of land in the northern part of the city. He sold this to the syndicate, which laid off the Shinn additions and sold to the public. In signing a deed Mr. Shinn would warranty the deed against all individuals, but would insist on a clause being inserted that he would warrant against anybody except the United States.

Alfred D. Jones, the first postmaster of the city, who used his hat as a postoffice, was not put down as a real estate dealer until 1874. He had assisted in laying off the city, using his knowledge as an engineer. M. G. McKoon and H. H. McKoon were added to the list of dealers in the real estate business until the early '90s. He was joined by his brother, Charles L. Thomas, in 1886 and they have been engaged in the real estate business since that time.

#### Days of the Real "Boom."

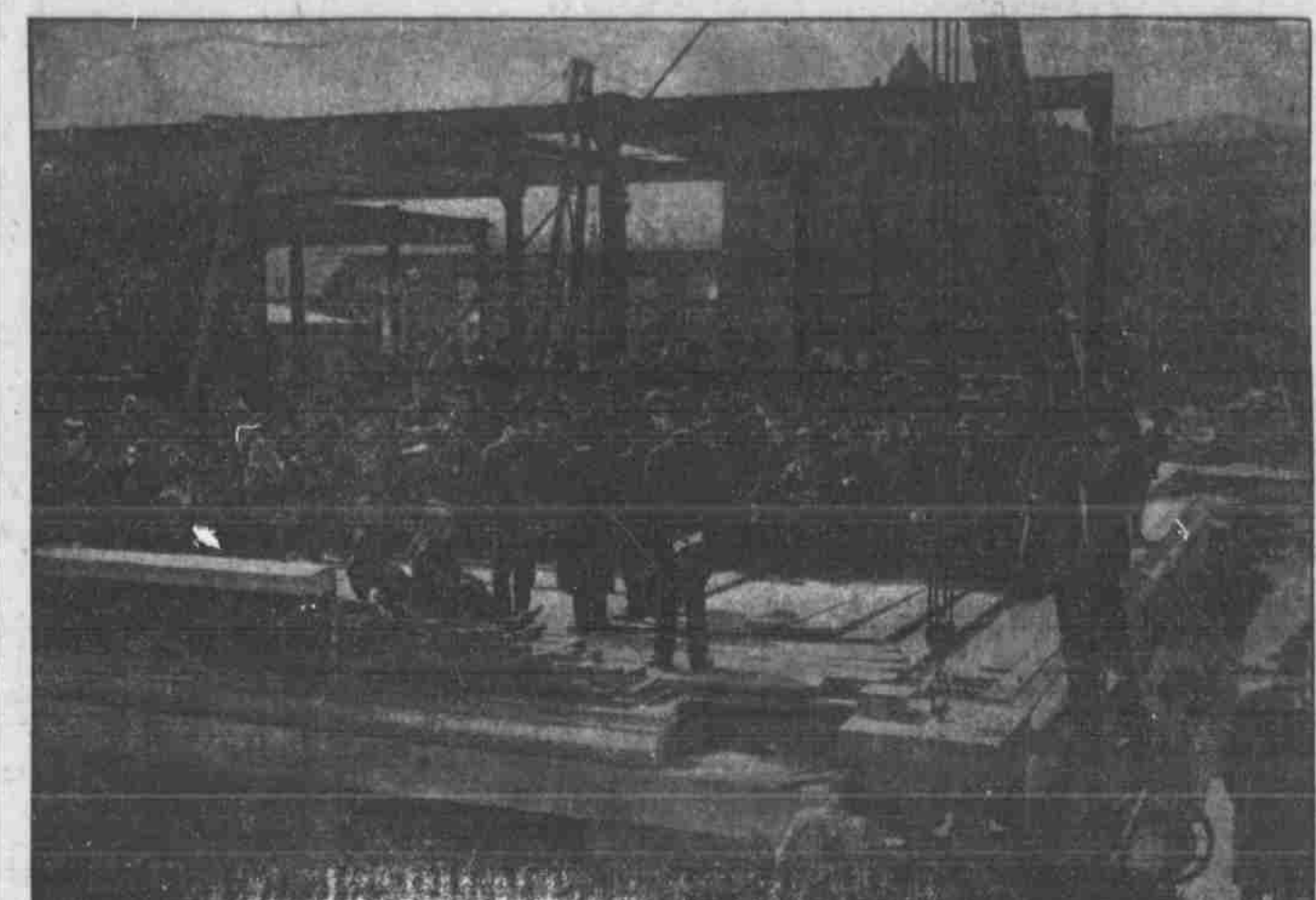
The real estate dealers who were in Omaha in 1886 were the ones who made money fast, and a man did not think he was doing at all well if he did not sell several lots a day. The time may well be called the "boom" period, for all went crazy over real estate and nearly everyone with an income was convinced that the only proper thing to do was to buy a lot on time payments. The fields surrounding the city were laid off into lots and no corner field was too far out to be platted and sold as lots. One strong boomer even went so far as to peddle off some of the lots of Valley as additions to Omaha. It is the aim of the real estate dealers of the present time to head off any such craze, but to simply let matters take their course and to let the price of lots respond to the legitimate demand. The plan of many of the wise ones is to help the town all possible by securing manufacturers and to build up the inside property first and as the demand comes then to boost the outlying stuff.

#### Active Dealers of 1886.

A list of the real estate men who were active in 1886, at the time when real estate started to hum in this city, may be of interest to many. The first alphabetically, is Ames & Co. G. W. Ames was the head of this firm and remained during the boom and up till 1894. R. R. Ball is still in active business in the city. Ballou Bros. were E. G. and O. E. E. G. Ballou is still in the city and Otis Ballou has moved farther west. Bedford & Souer was composed of J. W. Bedford, who is still here. In the coal business, and Mr. Souer, who is in San Diego. Bell & A. M. Clendish were next on the list. J. T. Bell was an old newspaper man and owned the corner where the Burnard gate are now located. George P. Bemis is still here and has served as mayor. He is in active real estate business. The firm of Brown & Hill was well known. Mr. Brown is dead, his widow marrying J. C. Wharton, and Law Hill is still in the city, an extensive owner of real estate.

J. M. Clarke died about fifteen years ago. T. S. Clarkson quit the real estate business to become postmaster of Omaha and then turned his attention to exposition work.

## Turning Point in the Construction of New Home for the Y. M. C. A.



SCENE AT THE LAYING OF THE CORNERSTONE OF THE NEW OMAHA Y. M. C. A. BUILDING.



SECRETARY WADE DEPOSITING BOX IN RECESS OF CORNERSTONE.

## Beautifying the Surroundings of the Home

### Back Yard Follies.

HEY were talking about back yards. The subject had developed after a round of comments on the return of warm weather.

Isn't it too bad so many people neglect their back yards? said one. "Most back yards are used as a convenient place for storing refuse. The owners simply ignore them. It's a funny thing to me that so many can't or won't realize that the back yards can be made a very pleasant spot. Summer will soon be here. The majority of families haven't any front yard to speak of, yet in nearly every back yard there are quite a number of square feet of space. Now, with just a little adornment the back yards could be made a mighty comfortable place for the family to spend its evenings after twilight."

#### Well known Names on the List.

A. J. Hancock is given as a real estate dealer, although he moved his residence from Omaha about the boom times and has been living in New York and Florida most of the time since. Christ Hartman was in the insurance business as well as the real estate business and died several years ago. Of the firm of Howell & Montgomery Ed. Howell is still in business in the city. H. B. Irey was county treasurer for a time after engaging in the real estate business and has since moved to Pennsylvania. John Johnson is dead and Charles Kaufmann is now engaged in the insurance business. Of the firm of Lovgren & Wilde, John A. Lovgren is still in business in the Paxton block. John L. McCague is still at the old stand and has organized several banks and investment companies since the early days. Marshall & Lobeck was composed of J. W. Marshall, former postmaster at Plattsmouth and the father of the present controller.

#### Mayne the Plunger.

Clifton E. Mayne was one of the most unique figures in the real estate history of the city. He was a telegraph operator when he came to Omaha and then went into the office of Joseph Barker on Thirtieth street. He worked into the real estate business and when the boom came Mayne was the main boomer. He bought whole farms and laid them into lots. He had hordes of men working for him with fast horses, who would take a prospective buyer to the suburbs so fast he did not realize the distance they had gone. He platted Orchard Hill, which was the old Baker farm and which is now almost completely covered with fine residences. He made money too fast and soon had too many trons in the fire. He had a large stock farm at Valley and often made quick drives with his fast horses between the farm and the city. He moved to California.

The firm of Morse & Brunner was composed of L. V. Morse, raw of Boston, and T. C. Brunner, who is wholesaling flour in Omaha. Of the firm of Morton & Helms, James F. Morton is dead. The firm of Patterson Bros., D. C. and R. C., is still in the city. Soren T. Peterson lived on North Twenty-seventh street and did a small loan and commission business. Of the firm of Potter & Cobb, both have gone and the firm's name has been changed to George & Co.

The firm of Byron Reed & Co. was incorporated in 1886 as the Byron Reed company, which is still in existence with A. L. Reed at the head. Jorellian L. Rice has gone and J. E. Riley, a real estate dealer and contractor, who built the Riley hotel at Plattsmouth, has moved to the west.

### Shady Places Well Drained and Have Plenty of Light, Rich Soil.

"Say, but flowers must be a fad with you," said the subdued man. "Come around and see my backyard in June," answered the other as he left the car.

The amateur will find it advisable instead of propagating rose plants to buy good 1 or 2-year-old plants, if he wishes to add rose bushes to his garden. They may be had for low prices. The younger ones will produce fewer flowers the first year, but they will be very satisfactory and in the second year will be at their best.

They should be obtained when the gardener is ready to set them out in beds, preferably in April, although they may be planted later. The beds may be of any size and form. It should be in the open, where plenty of sunlight may reach the plants. It is an advantage to have it protected from high winds, as there then will be less trouble from mildew. The soil should be rich loam, well drained.

When the plants are set out thoroughly water them, so as to settle the soil well around the roots. Rapid growth should follow. The only regular treatment necessary is to keep the soil well stirred around the plants. If the summer is dry and warm, a layer of pine needles or fine manure may be put on the soil around the plants. This would make less cultivation necessary; the ground would not dry out so rapidly. For many varieties of the rose which are not entirely hardy, an additional covering should be put around the plants for protection in extreme winter weather.

In the spring this covering—composed of manure preferably—may be spread into the soil and will act as a fertilizer. In covering the plants for the winter care should be taken not to allow the tops of the plants to be bent down under the weight of the protective material and the snow which may come later. Pruning should begin the middle of March, all dead wood and weakly shoots being removed. The weaker growing plants should be cut down so as to leave but four or five buds on each shoot; the stronger ones may be left much higher.

"While you are taking account of what a vegetable garden helps you to save," says the Kansas City Star, "don't forget that it also has a moral worth that should not be left out of the reckoning. You may not have thought of it before, but a garden is a great aid in getting hold of the fundamental things of life. It is human nature in its real essence that makes you dig up garden needs to see if they have begun to sprout. And this clean and wholesome interest follows the development of the garden in all of its stages. It is a miracle and a wonder as old as Nature when the little shoots of green begin to push up through the brown soil, but it is ever new and inspiring. There is nothing more lovelier or more fascinating to the eye than just lettuce and beans and peas and potatoes and corn in the first stages of their growth. Can't you remember, even if you haven't walked through a vegetable garden for years, how

### Curious and wonderful the new bean stalks look when they come up out of the ground bending over as by way of obedience to the seed from which they sprang? And what perfect groundings the potato plants are until they begin to freshen up in the sunlight, and finally to themselves out in their delicate blossoms. And where is there anything richer and finer than the red rhubarb, or pie plant, when it begins to peep up through the ground and "rubber" at the sunlight?

"You may have heard people talking about how they like to cut asparagus or gather cucumbers, or dig potatoes or pick beans or peas; and if you have always lived in a city and have never done anything of that kind yourself you may wonder how such employment could possibly furnish a source of pleasure. Well, that is where the moral value of a vegetable garden comes in. It fosters the home-making instinct. It fixes your attachments on simple, wholesome things. It introduces into life an interest that does not grow stale and that is ever fresh and satisfying."

"The economy of a garden and the value of what it produces may be the prime argument in favor of its maintenance. But do you ever pass a place where there is a neat little patch of vegetables without stopping to look at it and without feeling that the people who keep it have the right idea of a home?"

#### Spring Flower Planting.

Interest in the wealth of spring bloom is apt to prove a stumbling block to the amateur flower grower just now. "Window gardens and conservatories demand special attention to keep up the brilliant display of blossoms. Florists' windows prove alluring and the hardy bulbs springing up outside make us forget the necessity of preparing for summer bloom. The hardy perennials must not be overlooked, however, and early April is the time to plant and reset them. Many of the clumps in the home garden will be better for dividing at this season, not only because of the increased number of thrifty new plants thus secured, but because the old plant will make stronger growth when allowed the extra room and fresh soil which accompanies the dividing. The new plants to be purchased this year will also give better satisfaction if they receive attention now; being hardy, the cold nights, which may still be expected, will not injure them and the early April planting will give them a good start that will enable them to withstand the summer heat."

The old-fashioned aquilegia or columbine is too well known to require description, as no well-regulated garden is without a cluster of these famous old perennials of "grandmother's day." But the novelty in aquilegia, "coerulea," deserves special mention. Though still classed as "new and novel," it only needs to become known to make it the most popular of all. It has been described as the "true blue form of Rocky mountain columbine," which may give but little impression of its beauty, however, to those who have never seen this mountain dweller in its native home; but it does not resent transplanting and grows readily from seed planted at this season, if roots cannot be secured, as the last years clumps begin to push through the soil.

## COUNCIL BLUFFS DOING WELL

Building Activity Over There Results in Big Demand for Unimproved Property.

Council Bluffs is essentially a city of homes and the real estate transactions for last year and the first three months of the present year demonstrate this. The real estate market has been particularly active for the last year or more, with a steadily increasing demand for building lots. Real estate agents say but few purchases have been made this year for speculation and that most of the sales of city property have been to persons intending to erect residences either for homes for themselves or for rental purposes.

Values have increased slowly, but steadily in the city and unimproved property which a little over a year ago was to a great extent, drug on the market today is in active demand, especially if desirable for building purposes. Last year witnessed the greatest activity in building in the history of the city, so far as residences of all descriptions are concerned. In every section of the city new residences in the course of construction are to be seen and the prospects for another big building record in 1906 are of the highest.

Mechanics, railroad employees, motor employees and other workmen are starting out to own their homes and this has resulted in the sale of hundreds of unimproved lots, particularly in the western part of the city, where for years the owners were unable to secure a market, and real estate in the western part of the city, while not demanding high prices, is meeting with a ready sale.

The number of new warehouses, elevators and factories has resulted in an active market for trackside property and a steady increase in the value of such lots. Pottawattamie farm land a few years ago soared until good land could not be bought for less than from \$75 to \$100 an acre. These prices still prevail and transactions in farm land in this county reached a record mark during 1905. If the records for the first three months of 1906 indicate anything, the mark reached last year will be passed this year. For March of this year the real estate transfers as recorded passed the million-dollar mark and this resulted almost wholly from sales of farm land. Despite the present high value of farm lands in this county, real estate dealers assert that a great deal of the buying of such property was for speculation and also as a good investment for idle money.

The following tables show the cash consideration for the real estate transfers for last year and the first three months of this year:

January	182,406.84
February	313,507.17
March	291,599.91
April	218,562.73
May	234,657.38
June	235,608.25
July	101,615.35
August	220,821.70
September	262,171.09
October	266,278.66
November	133,278.62
December	351,367.15
Total	\$3,722,854.00
1904	3,697,350.63
January	313,971.85
February	313,971.17
March	1,000,473.78
Total for three months	\$1,627,350.81

## Building Operations Are on the Up-Grade in All Parts of Omaha



TYPICAL RESIDENCE STREET IN OMAHA, SHOWING THE HOMES OF THE PEOPLE.



SITE FOR THE NEW ROME HOTEL IN OMAHA AS IT APPEARS AT PRESENT.

## TRUE BASIS FOR TAXATION

How City Real Estate Is Valued for Assessment Purposes.

### FACTORS THAT ENTER INTO CONSIDERATION

Selling Price and Revenue-Production Mainly Govern, but Other Elements Have Weight with the Assessor.

Eternal vigilance is the price of an approach to equity in assessment of realty, and perfection is hard to obtain at any cost, so many things enter for consideration and have their influence upon judgment.

Much improvement, however, has resulted in the assessment of city property since the establishment of a special city assessing official (tax commissioner) in 1898, who by charter was given power to revise and equalize the work of his deputies as a substitute for the system of district assessors under the old revenue law. The weak point in the old system was the lack of consistency in the work of the assessors in the various districts. The office being elective, a tendency to undervalue property and please constituents prevailed more or less, until at length in place of full value being assessed as the law required a fifth to an eighth was the rule and not the exception.

The Omaha charter, since 1897 and until 1906, provided that the tax commissioner appoint his own deputies, and this enabled him to obtain the assistance of men familiar with values both in lands and in buildings, and, having to devote his whole time to duties of his office, he was enabled to systematize and bring about improvements in results.

To Fred J. Sackett, the first city tax commissioner, much credit is due for this, and the benefits of having a chief or supervising assessing officer has been recognized by the state legislators and the feature has been incorporated in the new revenue law of 1904 for the entire state. So much value and dependence is placed upon the fact of having now an expert supervising assessing officer for Douglas county, coupled with the consideration of possible economy and the avoidance of the annoyance of separate assessments, that the city has abolished the city assessing office altogether.

#### Finding the Value of Land.

In arriving at values of realty for assessment purposes many things enter into consideration, and no one thing, even the selling price, can always equitably make the proper figure, strange as it may seem at first glance. A seller may be under such circumstances as to virtually be compelled to sell at a low price, or he may be fortunate enough to get advantage of an unusually good offer because of some particular need of the purchaser. A real estate dealer seldom for himself intentionally purchases at what he thinks is the actual value, and the proof of it is that in a comparatively short time he sells it at a material advance. In many cases, therefore, to assess at the actual figure bought at would not be equitable; the average price obtained during the year, however, would be a good criterion for the purpose of assessment.

The net revenue-producing powers of improved property, or what vacant property would produce if, suitable to the location and use, a building was put on it, would be a guide to value, always provided, too, that too much land is not absorbed or wasted. Nearly permanent buildings have been erected in Omaha, and in considering the nature of the building and use, and have been sold a few years after at a third to a fourth of first cost. In such cases cost has little to do with a value or assessment, but the revenue powers would be the big factor and govern.

#### Work in Assessor's Office.

The advantage of an assessor being employed the year round in place of six days is the opportunity it gives him to get and gather information that the limited period does not admit of. Assessments under the old plan were largely copies of the preceding year. He has time to follow the current market, learn from buyer or seller the true price under which it was sold, compare with the assessments on the property, provide for correction of the same, equalize property adjoining if necessary, and thus keep the assessment roll up to date.

The city assessing office since its inception has had a department for the inspection of values, who obtains from the inspector's office a list of the permits taken out and who has examined every building erected since 1897 and made special report on each and incorporated it into the assessment. The department has had the benefit also of one or more experienced real estate experts, which has been quite a help in placing values. There are over 1,700 plots showing the location and nature of the improvements, and the improvements are assessed separately from the land and the land value is assessed with the vacant land value near it.

Contrary to the belief of some no distinction is made between resident and non-resident owners in the matter of assessing. While there is yet room for great improvement it is allowed that great improvement has been effected in the last few years and that the total assessment of realty is not far from the total real value. With possibly \$8,000,000 to \$9,000,000 worth of new buildings incorporated into the totals the last eight years the realty total assessment for 1905 was a little over \$71,000,000, as against nearly \$60,000,000 in 1897-'98, and in the face of growth in value of land and lots steadily since the exposition in 1898.

#### Effect of Present Growth.

With the present upward tendency of realty in the city the present provision of a four-year assessment of real estate will leave assessments below the real value, with some exceptions, of course, in certain districts not having transportation facilities.

Taxation rates in the city of Omaha on realty compares very favorably with other cities of its class, the average rate for city purposes for the last five years has been under \$12 on \$1,000, with property at full value. This should not be regarded as with few exceptions prices are not considered inflated, and they have a long time to grow before they approach cities of similar class.

WILLIAM FLEMING.

#### Smith Would Succeed Alger.

WASHINGTON, April 7.—William Alden Smith, representing the Ninth Michigan congressional district, announced his candidacy for the senate as the successor of Senator Alger, who is voluntarily retiring. Mr. Smith will issue a formal statement Monday.

#### Ohio Operators Stand Pat.

CLEVELAND, April 7.—The Ohio coal operators, in session here today, decided to stand pat on the miners' strike and to offer no concession whatever.