PART III.

# THE OMAHA SUNDAY BEE.

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# Omaha Building Interests Feel the Impetus of a New Life

## NEW ERA OF CONSTRUCTION

### Activity in Building Beyond that of Recent Years.

### OMAHA ON A NEW TURN UPWARDS

**All Sorts of Structures Are Under Way or Just Completed and Many Plans Are Adopted for Immediate Start.**

It may be and probably is true that Omaha's "boom" days are a thing of the past. This city, like many another western metropolis, has undergone the exhilaration, intoxication and excitment of the period in its existence known as the "boom" time, when the possibilities of the city have been banked upon as actualities; when block after block of sky scraping building have gone up—on paper—in a single night; when gigantic schemes have made their advent fast upon one another's heels, and when the actual growth of a single season has been greater than many towns with very much of self-esteem ever have or ever will see. And then has come the reaction that follows such a season, as surely as does the night the day, when prices have gone to the very bottom and when promoters, projectors and millionaires have been left stranded high and dry on the shores of adversity.

From the invariable experiences of boom towns, the time has come when there is nothing farther from the desires of the substantial business interests of the city of Omaha than that the town undergo a boom, in the accepted sense of the term; but that the present marks the beginning of an era of downright, steady prosperity, such as the city has never before experienced, there can be but little doubt. No truer barometer of any city's prosperity could be devised than the buildings, either projected, in process of construction or recently completed, and in this connection a partial resume of what has been done here in this line during the past few months, as well as what is being and will be done before next fall, is a revelation, and presents a matter for rejoicing and congratulation on the part of every business interest and every citizen who has the welfare of the town at heart.

**Points to Prosperity.**

Last year's labor troubles were a serious, though a temporary, setback to the growth of the town, but having been settled in a manner that probably precludes their repetition for a long time to come, it seems a particularly auspicious time for the upbuilding of the city. Another important factor is the present price of lumber of all kinds, which a careful canvass of the main lumber concerns shows to be lower, in Omaha, at least, than for several years. Many things combine to bring about this condition of the market, the chiefest of which is an overproduction, induced by the prevailing high prices of the last two seasons. Another thing is a mild sort of price war between local concerns, which, without regard to the relative merits of the case, cannot fail to redound to the profit of intending and present builders.

One of the natural results of the increased activity in the building trade is a brightening up of the real estate market, and this, as shown by the official records of the county, is at present at least 25 per cent more active than at this time last year or for several years. While the number of business houses and quasi-public institutions building is wonderfully large for a town the size of Omaha, they no more emphasize the increasing prosperity of the town than do the surprisingly large number of homes, not necessarily large or expensive, but substantial, comfortable and sightly, that are being built and bought and paid for. Apartment houses, too, are in great demand, and while under the existing supply of this sort of accommodations rents are comparatively high, by another season the owners of such property can afford to and naturally must lower their figures on account of the increased supply and demand.

**Some Notable New Buildings.**

Certainly the largest building nearing completion in Omaha at this time, and the one to which the construction and completion of which the most general interest attaches, is the Auditorium. So much publicity is given to every move that is made with regard to it that little need be said of it in a general way. That when completed it will be a lasting monument to the enterprise and public spirit of the present generation, in Omaha, goes without saying, and that it will be completed at no very distant day is equally sure.

Another of the notable buildings is the Nebraska Telephone company's new home on Eighteenth street, between Farnam and Douglas. Built of brick, three stories high and devoid of all fanciful ornamentation, it looks from the outside to be just what it is, a solid and enduring quarters for a solid and enduring enterprise. It is fitted up to accommodate al ibranches of the company's business, from the exchange room and the new $100,000 switchboard, to storage for all the line paraphernalia. It is as near fire proof as modern construction can make it, and supplied with every convenience and accessory that the peculiarity of the business to be carried on demands.

The new street car power house at the foot of Jones street covers as much ground as almost any structure in the city, though its purpose does not require that it be of imposing height. The foundation is of cement, laid deep in the ground, with a view to upholding a building that will be subjected to a constant and tremendous jar. The walls and roof are built by the method known as bridge construction, for the same reason, and the whole will be as substantial and as near everlasting as stone and cement, scientifically disposed, can make it.

**New Business Blocks.**

Hayden Bros. have already begun the grading preparatory to putting in the foundation to what will unquestionably be one of the finest business blocks in this state. It will be ten full stories high, made of gray pressed brick and Bedford stone on the exterior, and a steel skeleton for the upbuilding of the floors. Every detail of the construction will be strictly up to date, from the back-slanting, deck-calked floors, that, in the case of fire, run the water off instead of allowing it to leak through to the next floor, to the locally installed apparatus for the quick extinguishment of fire in any part and on any floor of the building. Recent detailed descriptions of this building make more than a mention of it at this time unnecessary. Hayden Bros. are authority for the statement that, barring unforeseen events, it will be ready for their fall business, and, of course, it will be a noteworthy addition to the architectural sights of the city.

Brandeis & Sons' projected building on the other side of the street will vie with any in the city for substantial elegance, and with the other structures in this immediate vicinity will make a square of business houses that any city will find it hard to outshine.

The only uncertain thing about a new Young Men's Christian association building at this time seems to be the matter of a location. It is practically certain that one will be selected within a comparatively short time befitting the imposing character of the structure that it is proposed to put up. The only existing difference of opinion seems to be as to whether it is better to have the building in the heart of the city, or more properly, in the business district, or to have it farther removed. One very distinct advantage of this latter proposition is the much less price that a site could be secured for, thus allowing just so much more money to be put into the building itself. The adherents of this plan argue that the utility and patronage of the association would in no wise be lessened by having it located a reasonable distance from the business district, while another element says that the building would bring so much less business patronage that a cheaper location would be unwise. In any case the association will put up a building at some point, in the very near future, that will be one of the finest in any western city. Two floors will be devoted to dormitories, and the baths, gymnasium and all other departments will be on a scale befitting the demands of the city for all time to come.

**Manufacturing and Jobbing.**

The A. I. Root Printing company will soon be installed in a new home on Howard street, near Fourteenth, in the shape of a modern, four-story, brick building, equipped with all the machinery and conveniences that the increasing volume of their business makes imperitive.

Allen Bros. are to build an addition to their Farnam and Tenth street property that is to be 132 feet wide and the same distance in length. In this will be installed their coffee roasting plant, built on a fire proof plan, and other departments for the enlargement of an already tremendous business. The addition, if a building of that of the size proposed may be so called, will match the rest of their plant and give them room of which they have been so much in need since the disastrous fire last fall.

The managers of the Ames estate property on Jones street, between Ninth and Tenth, will put up a five-story building of red pressed brick and of mill construction for manufacturing and wholesale or retail mercantile purposes, to replace the buildings burned last year. The interior plans are not altogether completed as yet, but that it will be modern in every particular and adapted to the purposes to which it will be devoted is of course certain.

The Harding Cream company is to erect a building of slow-burning construction at the corner of Eighth and Harney streets that will have a capacity of taking care of twelve carloads of their goods at one time. It will be a gray brick, with the conventional trimmings of Bedford stone, and be three stories in height. The offices and administrative rooms of the concern will be on the second floor and the whole is to be ready for occupancy June 1. Thus equipped the Harding company will be one of the biggest concerns of the kind in the country.

Probably the largest outlay in the line of additional building for increased capacity during the past year has been made on the Willow Springs brewery, at Third and Hickory streets. It amounted to $75,000 and the capacity of the plant was thereby increased one and a half times. The enlargements made include a new engine house, boiler room, machine shop and an increase in the brewing house and cellar room.

Far from the least of the creditable additions to the city's architecture are the three engine houses, that have been fully described heretofore, and are rightly enough the special pride of the fire department. The new street car barn will cover a large area, probably in the vicinity of Vinton and Sixteenth streets, near the ball park. This location is favored by the company owing to the fact that it will be convenient for the storing of the cars of the South Omaha lines, as well as those of Omaha proper.

**Churches and Charity.**

The additional building for the Convent of the Good Shepherd is one of the more notable of the structures that will be added to the institutions of the city in the near future. The new building is to be at the corner of Jones and Fortieth streets, west of the present building, to which it will be joined by cloisters in an architecturally artistic way that will take off any "addition" look that might otherwise mar the beauty of the whole. A cloister will also be added to the south end of the present structure and one to the center, making a symetrical, practically new building. The addition will be for the exclusive use of the nuns. The material is of gray brick, with a red tiled roof and ecclesiastical designs over the entrances, courts, etc. The building will be three stories in height and cost altogether in the vicinity of $50,000.

Immanuel hospital is to have another new building, four stories in height, that will give it an additional thirty-two rooms for the treatment of patients. In the old building will be the infirmary, Superintendent R. M. Foglestrom's quarters and other departments of the hospital.

The Clarkson Memorial hospital is also to be enlarged to the extent of a $60,000 building. This is to be four stories in height, with wings at either end and a court between it and the old building. It will be built on thoroughly modern sanitary and fireproof plans and will make this institution one of the largest and best arranged of its kind in the state.

**Will Cost Half Million Dollars.**

The Methodist hospital, already under process of construction at Bemis park, will cost before it is completed in the vicinity of half a million dollars and be equipped in a manner in keeping with such buildings. The plan of the main building is an elaborate and intricate one, including a long main structure with a large quadrangular building at either end, from three sides of each of which extend wings, making six altogether, that will be devoted to the uses of various wards. Aside from this main structure will be the numerous necessary other smaller buildings for the use of the hospital attendants, superintendent and others, and also the stables and outhouses. All will be of handsome pressed brick and it is proposed to make the grounds and surrounding territory of the most attractive nature possible. It is perhaps needless to add that when completed this hospital will compare favorably with any in this part of the country, regardless of their nature.

St. Joseph's hospital is also considering the putting up of an additional building or two, to give it a much needed increase of facilities, though just the nature of the improvement has not as yet been fully decided upon.

The construction of the First Baptist church, Twenty-ninth avenue and Harney streets, is progressing so rapidly and favorably that already plans for the dedication in September are being made. It is to be of gray brick and Bedford stone and will be highly ornamental to that section and a splendid addition to the sacred edifices of the city. Plans are also drawn for the building of the First Christian church. The general outline of the main structure will be in the shape of a cross and the institutional features are being planned with elaborate detail.

The Roman Catholic cathedral going up at Fortieth and Burt streets will be of the old monastery or Spanish rennaissance style and architecturally beautiful, both inside and out.

**Down Town Blocks.**

Just what the nature of the new Hoagland building at the corner of Sixteenth and Howard streets will be is at this time largely a matter of conjecture, owing to some changes of plans. Certain it is that it will be a credit to the vicinity where it will be located and to the business houses of the city as a whole. The material will be of gray pressed brick and the interior will be modern in every respect. Thompson, Belden & Co. will occupy a large share of the building.

The Schmoller & Mueller company are among those who have business buildings projected for the coming summer. They will in all probability put up a four-story brick building that will cover their two lots and serve for their own business and that of several other concerns. They will not begin its construction until the middle of the summer or thereabouts.

**Some New Apartment Houses.**

One of the most elaborate and expensive of the apartment houses built in Omaha this season is the Chatham, on Thirteenth street, opposite the Millard hotel. It is of gray pressed brick, severely colonial in style and modern in every detail as to its interior arrangement. The rooms are single and ensuite and have recently been opened to the public. Another building to be devoted to select apartments will soon be built at the corner of Twenty-fourth and Farnam streets, on the site of the Thurston place.

Dr. C. S. Shepard is putting the finishing touches to a modern three-flat double building at the corner of Twenty-fourth street and St. Mary's avenue and to another like building at the corner of Eighteenth and Cass streets. These are both of pressed brick and built at a cost of about $12,000, and near the last mentioned is a similar structure recently completed by Dr. Upjohn.

J. C. McKell has invested $6,000 in a double flat house at Seventeenth and Cass and D. C. Thompson has completed a double brick apartment house on Harney street, near Twenty-fifth.

Among the more pretentious of the dwellings that are now building and will be built during the summer is one for T. J. Mahoney, esq., at Thirty-seventh and Farnam. It will be of brick and stone, of a colonial style of architecture and with the interior decoration and the hot water system of heating that will be installed will cost in the vicinity of $25,000.

The rectory of All Saints church is a handsome structure of gray pressed brick and was recently completed at a cost of $11,000.

Edward Brown is building a block of four modern houses on Patrick avenue that will be ready for occupancy in the course of a few months. J. E. Wright is having plans made for a colonial cottage on Thirty-sixth street, near Howard, that will be ready to move into by the middle of the summer, and Mrs. M. Kennedy is having one of a like nature put up at the corner of Twenty-ninth and Jackson streets. Howard B. Smith is the builder of another house, Park avenue and Farnam street, and Oscar Williams will have an $8,000 modern home on Dodge street. C. E. Johannis and George W. Loomis are each building houses to be occupied by themselves; and so the list might be carried on to great length, were it necessary, to prove that whatever the city's commercial future the present generation is bound to have a comfortable and sightly place in which to do its work as well as in which to rest.

## HEALTHY TRADE GOOD SIGN

**Builders' Hardware, Furnaces, Tiles and Mantels Are Much Sought After.**

C. F. Schram, manager of the builders' hardware department of the Milton Rogers & Sons company, says:

"Builders' hardware is moving in very satisfactory volume and the tendency is toward a better class of goods. The recent small advance in price on the better grades has had a tendency to stimulate rather than retard sales, and purchasers are giving more attention to adaptability of design and finish than ever.

"It is also gratifying to note that buyers are placing their orders for builders' hardware at an earlier stage of their building, thereby enabling us to give better and more careful attention to their contracts. We consider the prospects for future business in builders' hardware and tools very encouraging."

J. P. Williams, manager of the furnace and mantel and tile department for the same firm, says:

"On account of the present activity in the building line, our furnace business has been exceptionally good for the past six months, and the prospects are very favorable for a continuation during the year. Improved construction of furnaces and up-to-date methods of installing them, together with the moderate cost of the apparatus, make them the popular method of heating. Interest is being taken in the combination hot air and hot water method of heating for the larger dwellings, and some orders are being placed for these systems. Sales of the better class of furnaces are increasing, showing that buyers are inspecting the quality of the materials closer than the price.

"In the mantel and tile department the same conditions hold good, and our customers are buying better goods in this line than for years. Architects' plans and specifications call for a great deal of tile work in bath rooms and vestibules. Some very fine bath rooms are being tiled all over, floors, walls and ceilings. In both the above lines our inquiries from out of town are increasing.

"Furnaces and mantels are being sold to be placed in farm residences, showing that the farming population is in a prosperous condition. Taken altogether, the condition of business at present and the prospects for the future are very satisfactory."

## NOVELTIES FOR BUILDERS

### How Modern Ingenuity Subserves Modern Taste in the Home.

### ART IS WEDDED TO UTILITY NOWADAYS

**Combination Produces All Sorts of Pleasing Things in Glass, Paint, Hardware, Paper and Other Decorative Stuffs.**

Building novelties and improvements always interest the public. Every man and woman in the city is either the owner of a house or expects and hopes to be some time, so that anything which will make the home handsomer, safer, stronger, more sanitary and less costly is a thing to attract the attention of the average reader. The art of making modern and artistic finishing material has progressed with other arts, and while we have today nothing finer probably than the carved oak of old English interiors, we have many things which make a comparatively better appearance for the cost. In addition we have all sorts of things of which the old people never dreamed.

"No industry in this country has made greater advancement during the last ten years than the manufacture of plate glass," said F. W. Judson of the Midland Glass and Paint company. "Only a few years ago it was looked upon as a great luxury, used only in the better grade of store buildings in large cities, and occasionally in the homes of the wealthy. Most of this glass was imported. Today there are fourteen or fifteen immense factories in the United States turning out large quantities of the very best grades. Practically no glass is imported now, and the plate is 50 per cent cheaper than it was ten years ago. This comes through the building of more factories and the introduction of up-to-date machinery. The polishing, which formerly had to be done by hand, is now accomplished by machinery. American glass is every bit as good as any European glass. What is known to the trade as French plate mirror is no more French than I am; it is the best grade of American glass, silvered. The foreigners only get an order when our factories are so loaded down that they cannot take them. Pittsburg is the glass making center of the world.

**Uses for Plate Glass.**

"It is a question of only a few years when plate glass will entirely supplant ordinary window glass in all but the smaller houses. I know of a nine-room house in this city in which the old windows were changed for plate glass, and the difference in cost was only $26, while the house could not have been improved as much by the expenditure of a considerably larger sum in any other way. No store building of any sort is now put up without plate glass windows.

"The plating of desk tops is one of the newest uses of glass. Two or three years ago articles of this sort were introduced in the east, and have proved popular. The Grand Rapids houses have taken it up. They use mahogany or birch or some handsome wood and cover it with highly polished plate glass. They not only protect the wood from mar and stains, but price lists and such things can be put under the glass and save a busy man much time. All sorts of furniture are so made. Glass shelves are also an idea of only two or three years. They greatly increase the beauty of china closets and sideboards, and are becoming very popular. Plate glass door panels add very much to the modern residence or office. About five years ago they began to decorate these with mitred work and wheel cutting. Plain, mitred, bevelled or leaded, they are a noticeable feature of any room. Plate glass signs are among the handsomest. Plate glass show windows make the goods displayed more attractive and give more light to the interior, are easier to clean and more durable. Floor plates of rough, heavy glass are used now to give light to basements. The plate glass comes in sheets of from five square feet to 150 square feet. We have, I think, 75,000 feet of all sizes.

**New Things in Glass.**

"In the manufacture of ordinary window glass a great change has lately been made. Machinery has been put in to take the place of hand work, and I question if in a year any men are blowing window glass. The largest factories are in the control of the American Window Glass company and this corporation is introducing the machinery. The glass made by the machines is not as heavy as that made formerly, but it is more uniform and fully as durable. When the machines get to working better I think that the glass will be turned out cheaper.

"Prism glass is one of the newest things and one of the most useful inventions for lighting. About ten years ago prism glass was patented in Canada, and its advantages were immediately seen, so that now it is very largely used in the east, and the new buildings to be put up here will be equipped with it. It now costs about twice as much as plate glass, but it saves a great deal in lighting bills, for the prisms refract the light and send it into the buildings. There are the cheaper sheet prisms, which can be placed on any building, and then there are prisms specially made with regard to the angle from which the light will come. The prism glass is 25 per cent cheaper now than it was a few years ago, and I believe will decrease in price.

"For skylights the proper thing is the wired glass. During five years the use of this has become general because the underwriters have approved it as fireproof. Wired glass windows do away with the need of iron shutters for windows. While the glass cracks from heat the wire which it contains holds it in place, and in skylights does not allow the fatal draft which comes as soon as the glass falls out. They now make polished wire plate glass for doors and windows.

**Art in Glass Work.**

"In ornamental glass the colored has now been superceded by the white glass. It is more artistic. Colored glass is now confined to churches and in residences to transoms and hall windows. Ten or fifteen years ago all colored glass was imported into this country, but we now are more progressive than the old countries. They do not change so quickly, while American manufacturers are always searching for new patterns in order to keep a market for their products.

"When we started our art glass factory here a year ago there were only three or four men in Omaha making leaded glass, and almost none had been made here for five years. Now we have thirty-five or forty men. Omaha's business in art glass is growing, you can see by the fact that we have just filled an order for a church set from the Indian Territory and another from Oregon. Leaded windows are now made with figures or without, the former being the most expensive and requiring painted glass. An innovation in this work is the use of copper in place of lead. This was introduced five or six years ago. It is much more effective and does not need iron braces as does the lead work and will stand the wear and tear in office and shop. The cost is about 25 per cent more.

"The art glass market is subject to fads and fashions. At one time the fleur-de-lis was seen everywhere, now it is not used. The poster glass is the really up-to-date idea. New York is the glass fashion center. Two-thirds of the cost of art glass is due to the labor. It is never made by machinery. The class of labor is better every year."

**Oil and Lead Preferred.**

Omaha house owners may be interested to know that Omaha is an oil and lead city and not a mixed paint city. Lincoln, on the other hand, scorns the crude materials and will have nothing for its houses but the tempting cans of prepared color. Towns seem to be peculiar in these little matters of taste. Omaha is fast coming to be a mixed paint city, however, if we may believe the dealers in this variety of decorating material. A few years ago all the paint came from St. Louis and from eastern jobbers; now a large part of the paint used in Omaha and by the trade in Omaha territory comes from this city. This is a proud thing for Omaha citizens to know. Paint is an exhibition of prosperity. If a traveler comes from a far land and finds the air of a city heavy with the boquet of turpentine and of new paint, and the prospect filled with fresh new color, he takes a hunch to himself that prosperity has been buying corner lots in the business district. A few streets of dingy frame houses, on the other hand, give the wayfarer the idea that the inhabitants are living in a financial Valley Forge. Two years ago Minneapolis and Omaha were these things. The Minnesota metropolis was all prosperity and paint, while in Omaha a man would have had to be extremely diligent to get a spot on his coat tails. But that was two years ago. Now the glad-faced dealer informs us that never in its history has Omaha consumed so much paint as during the last twelve months.

Paint is affected by the fads of mankind. Also there are colors which are as sure to be seen in the proper places as the turquoise of the sky and the blueness or brownness of the denim pant. White is one of these and long may it reflect the sun, say the dealers, for white grows soiled and sere with becoming quickness. Venetian red is another. With it the barn and the wooden warehouse spread abroad a glory of vermilion reflection on sunny days, and all is peace, and durability, and cheapness.

**Tints Now in Vogue.**

The prevailing fashionable tint now is the light cream and the light gray. The dark—rich, it is probable the salesmen of that day said—paints of two years ago have gone into the ice box. No longer will the man with the little cottage make it look little and contemptible with dark paint in an effort to observe the mode. Now he may avail himself of his knowledge that light paints make a house larger, and while adding no chambers to its comfort, he may by taking thought add several cubits to its stature.

The price of mixed paint has not changed much in two or three years. It depends on the condition of the lead and oil markets. This of course applies to good paint. Other kinds are made of benzine, baryties or even of buttermilk and whiting. Zinc was introduced into the paint business about ten or twelve years ago, and is a lasting and worthy ingredient. As the world moves 'round, the paint gets better and the colors brighter and more lasting. Paint is made mostly in the east, for there are few large factories west of Milwaukee and Chicago. Minneapolis is the great town for linseed oil. The flaxseed grows all over the flax belt of Minnesota, hence the market at Minneapolis. The Argentine Republic used to furnish much of this oil for paint, but it is now a small factor. Patriotic Americans believe it is better to use cotton seed than to go to a foreign land.

**Energy of Paint Men.**

No manufacturers are more energetic advertisers than the paint men. There is now an advertising war on among them and the advertising possibilities of the country are being strained in an attempt to adequately set forth the value of this and that decorative liquid. Something like 150 salesmen are bringing paint into this territory.

Reof stains are taking the place of paint for roofs in a way that pleases their manufacterers. They preserve the shingles in a way that paint or atmospheric conditions never will and give the house on which they are spread that air of refinement and culture which is so desirable.

Varnish is getting more expensive every day. No longer can the innocent young man afford to sit on the newly varnished rocking chair when he drops in of an evening. Varnish is getting into real money. The reason is that the gums used in making varnish are getting more scarce every year. These come from New Zealand and from Africa. Asphaltum is the only ingredient of varnish which is native to America. The gums used are in appearance cheap imitations of amber and are rapidly being used up. Twelve is the number of standard varnishes for house finishes, and there are dozens of special varnishes for special purposes. Varnish is being used much more freely in these days than a few years ago. The natural woods are being used for interior finishing in place of painted boards, and the varnish is the best finishing.

**Improvements in Hardware.**

A big revolution in builders' hardware has happened in the last ten years. Door and window fixtures are so very much handsomer now and the locks have improved so much; but the price has also been busy and in two years there has been an increase of 20 per cent.

The old copper finish is the proper thing for door wear these days, and at least 80 per cent of the sales of all qualities of knob and lock are now in that finish. Modern houses demand a neat doorknob and lock and the limit has been raised continually until the market now offers splendid bronze door locks costing as much as $12. The oval knob has been used for four or five years and is a favorite.

The greatest advance has been made in front door locks. The cylinder lock with the small Yale pattern key was formerly used in only the finer houses, but is now quite common. This is an advance over the front door lock with two keys. The mortice lock trimmings are bronze now.

In window fixtures the latest epoch-making invention is the sash balance. This does away with the clamorous weights and the frail and uncertain rope. A flat metal tape winds itself up in a drum, and is otherwise accommodating when one wishes the window up or down. Sash locks have been improved to the discontent of the burglarious.

Practically there is nothing new in the nail market. The wire nail has superseded the cut nail. Shingle nails now to please the trade must be galvanized. The dealers say that with each year more and more expensive builders' hardware is required. Among the up-to-date metal things used are galvanized wall ties, metal laths, steel studs, joist hangers, corner beads and metal ceilings.

**Steel for Ceilings.**

Pressed steel ceilings are rapidly growing in popularity, say the dealers. The use of metal for ceiling work is not new, but its general popularity is one of the later developments in building. Formerly the idea was for a cheap ceiling and plain sheet metal or corrugated iron were used. Now a high class of art is employed in making the designs and the ceilings are used in the best buildings. T. J. Mahoney's new residence will have these pressed ceilings in the porches. More commonly they are used in office and store buildings. Canton, O., is the place where this sort of work originated and is now the center of production. The designs are first made in clay by an artist and from this a cast iron model or die is made. The plain sheet of soft annealed steel is then pressed into the die by a drop press. The same sort of work is used for wainscoting. The pressed steel comes in standard sizes like wall paper and is made to fit any room by the use of a filling border. When enameled with the high points brought out in gilt the effect is like plastic work and very handsome, and has the additional advantage of being unburnable. The modern pressed work does not cost much more than the old rough metal.

The metal lath is another modern building material which is rapidly coming to the front, and in the opinion of the handlers will in the end supplant the wooden lath in all but the cheapest cottages. About ten years ago this lathing was introduced. It costs a little more than the wood, but is somewhat easier to place, the work in the end costing about 30 per cent more than wooden lathing. The wooden material is growing in cost and is poor in quality, so that the iron is regarded as a sure winner. A sheet of thin metal is cut in parallel lines over its surface by a machine and then stretched out, the gain in surface being about 60 per cent. The sheets come 8x14 feet. In addition to being fireproof material the plastering does not crack as it does on the wooden lath. The latter shrinks and swells with changes of weather.

When pressed steel studding is used in connection with the metal lathing and hard plaster, rooms are constructed of an almost fireproof character, which will withstand anything but a really big blaze. They are said to make a more rigid wall, to be more easily placed and to cost but little more than wood.

**Wall Paper is Cheap.**

According to the dealers now is the time to buy wall paper. It will never be as cheap as now. Four or five years ago, before the break in the wall paper trust, paper was almost 50 per cent more expensive than it is now. The trust would, doubtless, have done well, but the outsiders became very busy in starting small factories for the trust to buy, in order to keep down competition. The trust bought and in keeping these factories going arrived at a production of at least one-third more than the market called for. Then followed the break and a man who had a $10,000 stock in the evening when he went home, found it worth only $5,000 when he returned. Since then the weaker factories have been going under one by one, so that the price has stiffened up a little and is likely to do so more rapidly in the future. Most of the paper is made in New York City or in Philadelphia. Practically none is turned out in the west, although there is a small factory in Des Moines.

"There are many strikingly handsome and original effects in paper hangings this season," said R. M. Beard. "The manufacturers are constantly on the lookout for new designs and new colors which will prove attractive to the refined householder. Many of our novelties come from the French and German papers. As soon as these come out, those which strike the manufacturers on this side as worthy are copied and in about a year become popular. The carpet manufacturers and the paper men mutually admire each other's products and copy any design which looks good to them.

**Trend of Modern Taste.**

"The more striking papers are used in dining rooms and dens now days, and the quieter designs for parlors and reception rooms. No gilt is used in the new papers beyond an occasional thread. This is a marked change from the style a few years ago. For dining rooms, libraries and dens and reception rooms, tapestry is being used very largely. The Oriental tapestries are most popular. The makers are copying the old Gobelin and other tapestries of Europe with the greatest cleverness. These papers have been popular for about two years. The divided wall treatment is getting to be very popular for these rooms. The division has gradually become broader from one-third until now the line is midway between the ceiling and the floor. The women all like to have the plate mouldings, even if they have not enough plates to fill it. Pictorial paper is becoming very popular and makes a pleasing room with burlap on the lower half of the walls and a plain tint ceiling. Ceilings are practically all single tint papers now.

Two-tone papers are taking the place of the ingrains, which were so popular for parlors. These papers are made in two tones of the same color and are very neat. They are hung without borders with a moulding against the ceiling. With the two-tone the ceiling should be perfectly plain. The borders, by the way, are in cold storage and are seldom used. The style changed about five years ago in the east, but about two years are necessary for the popular idea to change this far from the centers of fashion. The paper is put on clear to the ceiling or in panels. Crown effects are used in place of the border. We have cut out crowns which are laid on over the paper, and the regular crown in which the paper is printed to the design. The pictorial stuff shows frieses of ships, children at play and similar subjects. Floral papers are holding their own for sleeping rooms and green is the popular color for parlor decoration. The lighter papers are the popular thing now and the gloomy old effects are out of favor. Fabrics are growing in favor and I look to see a great deal of crash goods, similar to burlaps and other fabrics, used next year."

## FEW FIREPROOF BUILDINGS

### Architects Say Not Many May Be Properly Classed as Such.

### OMAHA HAS SEVERAL EXCELLENT TYPES

**Flames Laugh at Human Efforts to Balk Them, but Danger Can Be and is Greatly Lessened.**

Fewer than fifteen absolutely fireproof buildings exist in Omaha. Among these may be included The Bee building, city hall, New York Life building, Boston Store building, postoffice building, Nebraska Telephone buildings, Commercial National and Merchant's National bank buildings, the new part of the Omaha High school building and the Burlington and Union Pacific passenger stations. The Douglas county court house might be fairly considered as an absolutely fireproof structure, and was constructed with that view at the time of its erection, but this was along the old lines of fireproof construction, that in this modern day would hardly be accepted as a fireproof building. The ironwork of the court house is exposed, while with the new methods of fireproofing the iron and steel framework of the structure must be encased in terra cotta or cement. Owing to its isolated location the Douglas county court house is entitled to be considered as a fireproof building.

The Omaha public library is practically fireproof, excepting as to the roof, though it might be more properly classed with the slow burning structures of the city.

The best types of slow burning construction in the city are the McCague, Bennett and Paxton buildings, the latter at the corner of Sixteenth and Farnam. These are practically about the only technically slow burning specimens of building in Omaha. A number of the larger bank buildings of the city are in a large measure fireproof, but only to the roof. Other buildings are fireproof for only one or two stories.

**Omaha's Apparent Advantages.**

It must not be inferred, however, that Omaha is any less better equipped with absolutely fireproof structures than other cities of its size. There are no excessively tall buildings in the city and for this reason alone Omaha may consider itself as immune from any really disastrous conflagrations such as are likely to and have occurred in cities that lean to the skyscraper style of business architecture. And then again, Omaha is a brick built city, which material is regarded by builders as the one material that can withstand fire successfully if given half a chance.

The question was asked of a leading architect, "What constitutes an absolutely fireproof building?" The reply was, "No bluiding is absolutely fireproof, especially if there be any woodwork about it, including window frames, windows, door casings, doors, wooden wainscoting and wooden floors, even though the latter be laid on cement covered iron girders. The popular conception of a fireproof building is that it must be built of incombustible material, brick, with all the iron frames and casings, beams and pillars covered in terra cotta or cement, with tile floors. Wood must of a natural consequence enter into some part of the construction of a building, and that wood will burn if given the opportunity. So you see that an absolutely fireproof building is almost an architectural impossibility."

**Fire No Respecter of Theories.**

The Baltimore fire demonstrated the utter impotency of the modern fireproof structure. This, however, was not the fault of the builder or the designer, but of the fire, which had no regard for modern devices against it. Anent this matter an elaborate article in the last issue of the Architects' and Builders' Journal says: "That while the fervent heat melted away much of the material with which the tall buildings were constructed, the steel frames withstood the test in many instances, and some of these structures can be rebuilt at a cost of about 40 per cent of the original cost. Houses built substantially of the best brick withstood the fire in many instances and against them the fire met its master, for notwithstanding they were in the midst of a sea of flame which left complete ruin on either side they passed through the ordeal practically unscathed."

A leading builder of Omaha said: "The bane of all fireproof construction is in the elevator shafts. The elevator shaft has come to stay and so long as they are constructed as at present, no building in which they are located is absolutely fireproof. A system has been adopted in Stockholm, Sweden, where the elevator shaft is built of brick, tile or iron and the doors are of iron and are closed automatically. I seriously question whether this system will be ever introduced in this country to any great extent."

**Fireproof Flooring.**

There is on exhibition at the Builders' exchange, in this city, a new material for flooring which is claimed to be absolutely fireproof. It is called "pulp flooring," being a patent combination of sawdust with some incombustible material, its technical name being "petro pulp and monolith combination." Its component parts are a secret of the patentee, and it is claimed to be perfectly incombustible. It is designed to do away with tiling in large buildings where wooden flooring over a concrete and iron base is ordinarily laid. It is made in the form of ordinary lumber flooring and may be cut into any shape desired. Another architect is of the opinion that the time is fast arriving when a new element will enter into building construction in all buildings less than seven stories high and this will be the sprinkler system of fire protection. This system operates automatically in each room of the building. The floors will be so constructed that it will be impossible for the water to leak through from one floor to the other. Said this architect: "Wherever the sprinkling system has been introduced the rates of insurance have been decreased, and this sprinkler system is destined in time to solve the interesting problem of fireproof construction."

Another architect said: "The elevator made the tall building possible and enormously increased the value of property in the congested business districts, and at the same time it has contributed to increased fire risks in this class of buildings."

**New Elements in Construction.**

Many new elements enter into fireproof construction, aside from the "sprinkler" system, and these will include the new material known as "ferroconcrete," a combination of steel and concrete building material. The expansive and contracting qualities of steel and concrete are very

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