

# NEWS OF THE BUSY HOME BUILDERS

## MATTER OF THE WALL PAPER

Old Time Borders Drop Out of Use and Dealers Report Fast.

## LOCAL BUILDING SHOWS MUCH ACTIVITY

Bids for Cohn Hotel Prove that Prices for Material Are Not So High as Some Folks Think.

Wall paper dealers tell me that the old-time border is almost a thing of the past, writes Robert Morris in Building Management.

Naturally this is not to the liking of the manufacturers or the dealers. The prevailing custom of dropping the ceiling down to the picture moulding means a good many dollars to the wall paper men. For if you were to use a border at all, you would probably use a 60-cent border with a 15-cent ceiling. So the manufacturer and dealer are losing the difference on two or three rolls for each room.

The manufacturers are giving special attention to designing attractive borders, with a view to reviving their use, but with little success, especially so, as the price of wall paper is sure to go up next year. This year's stock is selling at about the same rates for the various grades as have prevailed for several years past; but it was mostly made up before the rise of prices in paper, colors, and several of the things which enter into the production of wall paper.

The lines, as a rule, show a great advance in artistic merit and excellence of color over those shown in previous seasons, the manufacturers seeming to find that it pays to cater to a more refined and educated taste. There are on the market many papers that appeal to the public simply because they are odd, even though oddity often means ugliness. In color there seems to be no prevailing tendency. The browns and tans, so much used last year, are less in evidence except in duplex and ingrain papers, where these shades are still prevalent.

In the more expensive papers the fabric effects are largely in evidence. These include tapestry effects, tokkos, Japanese weavers and grass cloths, velvets and English threes in both printed and plain. The less costly papers run largely to double tones. Some of these also have an additional printing, which relieves them of a too severe ingrain appearance. Papers for bedrooms are unusually attractive by reason of there being so many dainty floral patterns. The rose is again in evidence, but it is not so large, nor quite so highly colored, as last year. The lilac, the wistaria, and other softly tinted flowers are in vogue.

Upper third decorations are, of course, always in style for the dining room, and their use is extending to other apartments also.

Many beautiful effects in gray are shown. One or two factories are showing a great many papers with a happy combination of gray and green. Very few strong red papers are noticed in any of the lines, and only occasional patterns in the once popular delft colorings. Greens are still prevalent, and the reason is probably because they color usually looks well with most furnishings, especially with the popular mission styles. The chints and fabric colors are in evidence in bedroom papers, as well as natural colorings of flowers and foliage on white or colored grounds. Dresden colorings are also seen to some extent, but, as a rule, quite differently from the fashioned gold parlor papers, and show evidence of much greater refinement of taste.

The week has seen the closing of a contract which will result in placing a four-story fireproof hotel a block long by half a block deep on Sixteenth street between Davenport street and Capitol avenue. The experience of Herman Cohn, who is erecting the building, is that building material is not as high as most people think. Mr. Cohn asked bids at first for a building only two-thirds fireproof. The bids were so low that he asked for figures on a fireproof structure and the figures submitted were low enough to cause him to decide on that type of building. The lower story will be used for stores.

A \$20,000 church is to be added to the structures of North Omaha. It will be built by the Second Presbyterian congregation. The decision to build was made during the last week and the purpose is to have the structure completed within the next three years and paid for.

Omaha's Auditorium is to be completed. Many people were not aware that the building is not at all in a completed condition. The bare looking roof indicates this to anyone who looks that high. The roof is the main thing and the present temporary covering of tar paper and gravel will be replaced by a heavy tile roof. This with minor improvements will cost about \$40,000. Bonds will be issued to pay for the work.

John A. Doe, president of the Omaha Ice and Cold Storage company, is in very poor health. He will go to Hot Springs to recuperate.

The handsome new residence of Dr. William Arnold will be enclosed with an iron fence built by the Anchor Fence Manufacturing company. The same company will build a fence around the properties of J. C. Wright, Peter Goss, Mrs. Earle and L. A. Goldsmith. A revival of the popularity of ornamental iron fences is noted by builders in the architecture of the city.

George F. Gilmore of the Conservative Building and Loan association is building a fine home on Thirty-second street near Pacific. The John Hussie Hardware company is equipping the house with a combination hot air and hot water heating plant. This is a system which admirably combines the advantages of the two systems and leaves out most of their objectionable features.

Plans have been completed for a \$100 residence to be built by C. N. Forbes on Wirt street between Eighteenth and Nineteenth streets. The house will be frame with brick foundation and modern throughout. H. D. Frankfurt is the architect.

G. F. Epeneter has secured the contract for putting a pressed metal ceiling in the new Catholic church in Petersburg, Neb. The work will cost about \$1,000.

A handsome residence in the colonial style of architecture will be built by E. A. Johnson on Mason street between Twenty-third and Twenty-fourth streets. It will cost \$1,500, will be modern throughout and finished inside in oak. The design is by Architect H. D. Frankfurt.

G. F. Epeneter expects soon to add to his cornice plant equipment a cornice press costing \$1,000.

An elaborate metal ceiling of late design is being placed in the large dining room in the home of Thomas Brown at 132

## Advice to New Builders

One of the cardinal rules of the life of Thomas Jefferson was this: "Buy nothing because it is cheap. You will find it dear to you."

There is probably no line of industry today in which the need for the recognition of these truths is as great as in the world of building.

The man who buys a suit of clothes for \$15 and thinks he is getting a \$30 suit, is not one bit more deceived than is the man who pays an architect's fee of 2 per cent and thinks he is getting 5 per cent service, or who cuts a contractor's price 25 per cent and thinks he is getting 100 per cent service, or who finally pays for a completed building \$5,000 and thinks he is getting a building that is worth \$10,000.

One of the most astonishing things to the observer of building operations is the method whereby the contracts for buildings are made and set on the basis of competition under certain specifications, with practically no regard to the business character and normal reputation of the contractor who secures the work.

Nowhere does the maxim that "appearances are deceiving" apply more fully than in the business of building. This is particularly true because the very nature of the finished building is to cover up, to enclose, to conceal.

More particularly so, because we are accustomed to the judging of buildings by the eye and from appearances.

It is an easy thing for the owner of a building in prospect to say of two methods of construction, one at a price over the other, that the lower-priced one is "just as good." It is surprising to find how many building owners, who know absolutely nothing of building, have never studied it, do not realize that it is a profession and a business in itself, still arrange to themselves the judgment as to what is just as good as something else.

The average new builder seems to forget that the prime requisite of a building of any kind is durability. He seems to forget that in saving \$1,000 on the construction of a \$50,000 building, he may be losing \$2,000 in the life of that building. More, he seems to forget that, even in the same length of time, he will be put to an expense for repairs and replacing of half-dressed work and half-made material in the cheaper building, that will more than equal the additional sum he would have invested to secure first-class work and first-class material.

The average man who has his mind made up to the construction of a building for any purpose usually goes to an architect, and about all he has in mind is that he wants a certain type of building at a certain cost. He knows only that he happens to know that his friend Smith put up a similar building for that sum, and he also happens to know that his friend Jones put up an apparently similar building at a cost of \$12,000 and he thinks that Jones was beat and is not a good lawyer.

The plans are drawn, sent out to the contractors for bids, and the bids run all the way from \$9,000 to \$11,000. It is ten chances to one that Mr. Owner immediately figures that he has gotten into the building market at a time when he is a little better off than either Smith or Jones was, and he promptly instructs his architect to accept the lowest bid, because in each case Mr. Contractor has put up a bond that seems to cover all the necessary guarantees that the owner could exact.

When the bid is given no thought to the character or standing of the contractor securing the business, no thought to his experience, makes no investigation of the character of his previous work, does not know what he has done and does not know how to do it. He knows only that the contractor has agreed to put in certain kinds and quantities of material in a certain way at a specified price and has given an acceptable bond for the fulfillment of the contract.

The architect perhaps has mentioned to the owner that he would prefer to favor a particular contractor at a higher price because he feels that his work will be better, but the owner says, "Well, this man bids under the same specifications and offers a good bond for the work. I don't

see why I should pay \$1,000 more to another man."

He seems utterly to overlook the fact that these contractors who have figured all under practically the same conditions as regards the purchase of material and labor, that none of them has any monopoly of the proper methods of getting a building constructed or securing materials to build with, and he seems to overlook further the very great point, which this article is intended to bring out, that some men and some firms have built and continue to build their business success on good work, on the philosophy of the square deal, and that others achieve success financially by following the opposite policy.

Another thing that sometimes happens is this: The owner does not take the lowest bid. He follows the advice of his architect and takes a higher bid, but insists that this bidder can bring down his figure, and that he shall do so to get the business. He seems to forget that he is throwing temptation in the way of this man to "skin" him on the job. The contractor who has put in a fair figure for the kind of work he contracted for, with the intention of living up to the requirements of good work, feels that if he does not take the contract and "skin" him, it will be given to some other contractor, that he will give the owner as good if not better value than the other fellow, and under these conditions he cuts down his figure and he cuts down his figure and accepts the contract.

Now, the owner and the architect may both feel that the character of the work and material is protected by the architect's knowledge of what should be done and by his watchful supervision of the work.

But here is the second point to consider, that in all business operations of whatsoever kind a certain amount of dependence must be placed upon the character and personality of the man doing the work. It is absolutely impossible to conduct any line of business without this element of dependence.

The clearest illustration of that is afforded in cases of embezzlements and thievery from banks. Absolutely every safeguard that human ingenuity can devise is thrown about these banks by law, by the systems of the banks and by the most combined watchfulness and the mutual safeguards which one bank affords another. Yet in the last analysis the prevention of crooked work depends upon the honesty of the men handling the money. The finest systems that have been devised are simply the result of human skill and human effort, and they are devised against men who work to operate against them and can overcome them. New conditions simply produce new devices of evasion.

There is no man so smart, no man so skilled, no man so diligent, that he cannot be overcome by some other man when given the opportunity.

The builder cannot expect to get from the contractor the perfection of work he desires without paying a fair price that will yield the contractor a just profit.

It is the firm belief of the writer that our methods of building contracting are surely but slowly being revolutionized to where eventually all contracts will be let on the basis of the actual cost with the addition of a fixed percentage or a specified sum for the contractor's profit.

Then when the contractor arrives, the building owner and the architect will be very much more careful in selecting their contractor for his character and honesty, and the results will be much more advantageous to the owner than the present method of setting a premium upon the ability of a man to make figures lie.

The contractor who intends to do good work, who knows that under his contract he is assured of a fair profit, is ready to yield to any businesslike methods of checking up and safeguarding the interests of the owner that he may be desired to do. Like the honest bank clerk, the more he is watched and the more he is checked up the better he likes it, because he knows that by this method his square dealing will be best seen and appreciated.

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