

The Cost Problem

Arthur G. Clausen, Architect.

The three most important considerations in the building of a home are its plan, design and cost. It is not a difficult matter to decide on the most desirable arrangement of rooms suited to the family needs, nor is it difficult, with the assistance of an architect, to design an attractive exterior, provided that the cost is not limited, but here is where the rub comes. The fact that some homes cost a great deal less than others of the same size tempts people to gamble on the proposition and try to get a great deal more than they ought to for the amount which they desire to invest. They are even sometimes encouraged into believing that they can build a larger home than is possible for a certain amount by unscrupulous builders who think that after their mind is thoroughly settled that their enthusiasm will lead them to invest more than they at first intended.

Sometimes architects who think more of getting an order than they do about their reputation will follow the same policy, so that the home builder is not always alone to blame for planning a home entirely beyond his means. No architect could guarantee the exact cost of a home. His experience permits him to estimate its approximate cost, but his estimate only becomes accurate through coincidence. He has not the gift of prophecy and is unable to tell the exact amount which a contractor would want for a certain piece of work. His estimate is sometimes high and sometimes low. In other words, he is in exactly the same position as one of the several contractors who might be invited to figure on the work and these bids would vary sometimes to a considerable extent.

When one's means limit them to exactly a certain amount, it is best to frankly state to the architect all of the circumstances, being sure to obtain the advice from a man of experience and absolute integrity and then instead of adding many little things, such as a higher grade of wood work, a high grade of plumbing fixtures and many little luxuries, entirely desirable but which could be omitted, try to see how many of these things can be done without and apply practical economy wherever possible. Then when the bids are received, if they come below available funds, these little luxuries can be added before the contract is closed with the contractor.

Contractors' estimates often vary as much as 20 or 30 per cent. For this reason it is advisable to take figures from at least five contractors and if time will permit it often pays to take figures from twice that amount. Only responsible men should be invited to bid, men whom the owner would feel safe in letting the contract to. It is not right to take up a contract



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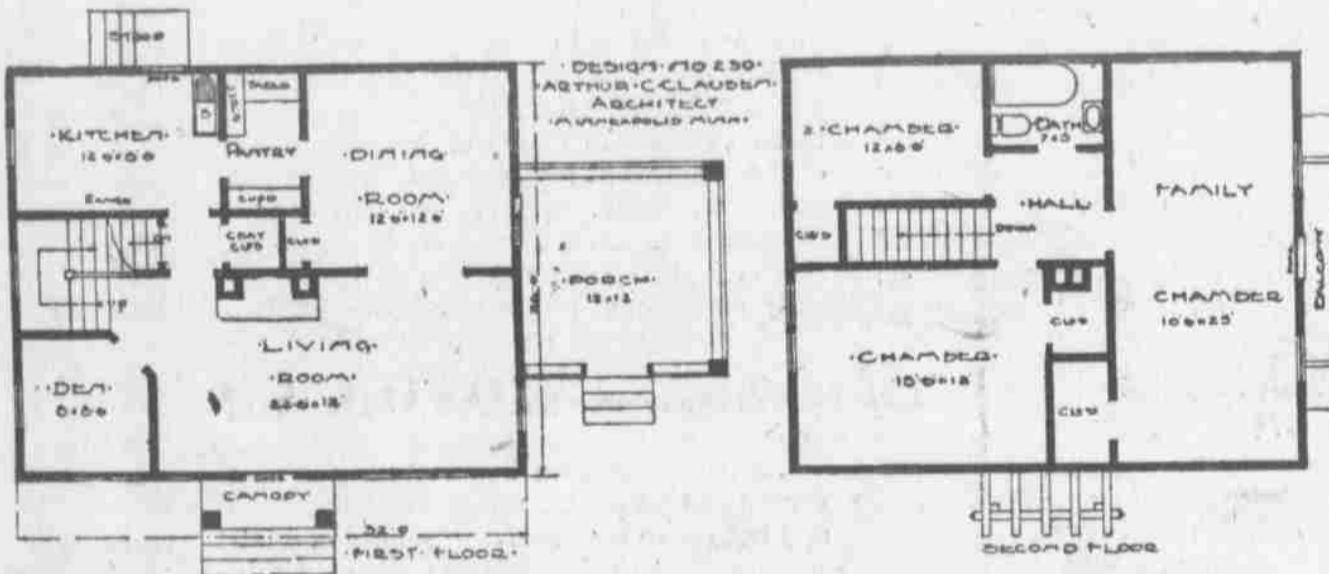
Address, Arthur G. Clausen, Architect, 1139-37-38 Lumber Exchange, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

tractor's time if you do not intend to give him the contract, provided he is the lowest man. Here is an example which shows the advisability of taking estimates from a number of contractors. A home builder desired to build for exactly \$4,000. The first four estimates which he took ran from \$4,800 to \$5,000. He was naturally somewhat discouraged, but decided to let another contractor figure, a man considered somewhat higher up in his trade than the previous four, who did not happen to be very busy at that time. His estimate was \$4,300 and the house was built for this amount. On another building, estimates were taken from five contractors and the lowest estimate was \$1,000 higher than the amount to be spent. Estimates were taken from five more contractors and \$1,500 was saved thereby.

The plumbing and heating should always

be let separately from the general contract. The contractor will never do this work himself, but will subcontract and charge a profit for acting as middleman. This profit can just as well be saved by the home-builder, who then has the opportunity of selecting the firm who will do this work. Some people desire to save the contractor's profit by buying the material and hiring their own labor. In most cases, owing to their lack of building knowledge, this way of building a home proves very expensive. If a man has had experience in building so that he can practically consider himself a contractor, then there is no doubt but what he can save money in this manner, but to the average man, with a business of his own, which should absorb most of his attention, and who has had little previous experience in the building line, it is more economical and certainly a great saving on the nerves to let the contractor for everything, except the heating and plumbing, to one man and hold him responsible for everything in his contract.

A man would not think of having a complicated piece of machinery built without first having prepared exact patterns drawn for all its parts, which he would take to a competent machinist, and have it constructed, leaving the mechanical part of its construction entirely to the man of experience. Still he will sometimes think he can plan and build his own home with all its complications, entirely without the system which would be applied to the work by men of experience, and save money. The results are, in most cases, a decided loss. When building a very large home it is



TIMELY REAL ESTATE GOSSIP

New Residence Districts of Omaha Being Rapidly Developed.

WEST SIDE BUILDING UP FAST

More Activity is Being Evidenced This Fall Than During the Summer Months—Permits for Further Work on Cathedral.

All improvements in a city do not consist of new factories or office buildings and extensive residential building is fully as important as the others. More so with respect to beautification for even the handsomest office building is not so slightly a thing as a handsome home set in a lovely garden.

In the western part of Omaha, George & Co., the Dundee Realty company and others on a smaller scale, have been investing thousands of dollars in permanent improvements which have already made Fairacres and Dundee the most beautiful residential part of Omaha and which within one or two years will make the former one of the handsomest residence sections in the whole west.

Coincident with this is the erection of a number of homes in the district by men of means who are to spend or are spending anything from \$20,000 to \$50,000 for homes and country places.

John L. Kennedy, R. C. Peters, Edward Hayden, G. N. Peck, Byron Hastings, Frank B. Kennard and Lee Kennard are some of the men who are now actively concerned with building and landscape gardening plans in and about Fairacres where their new homes will have as neighbors those of Mrs. W. A. Paxton, E. M. Gibson, T. C. Shelley, C. S. Hayward, L. L. Perley, T. J. Nolan, C. E. Bates, G. H. Payne and J. A. Langen.

To appreciate Fairacres one must drive over its four miles of boulevards and see at close hand the parkways, the trees and shrubbery set out by home owners there, present and future, and the houses which include many of the best places in Omaha.

Moreover the view from the high hills on which Fairacres sits is, of course, not available until one is standing there, and has left the driveways for the eminences. This because the boulevards, all winding, are in the valleys and the tops of the hills are utilized for building sites. Just at this time of year a visit is particularly worth while because the foliage has taken on the golden, brown and red hues of fall and the sunsets are in all its glory. As a further hint, go on south a little to Elmwood park which many Omahans have never visited. It is the loveliest park in Omaha because the most heavily wooded and a grove of silver birches there is worth the trip alone.

Besides the boulevards and gardens in Fairacres where all improvements have been made, the same people responsible for this work have been active in Dundee. Just east of the Happy Hollow club a tract has been thrown open which borders Cass street on one side. More winding boulevards here serve to avoid the tiresome formation of geometrical squares and rectangles. Gas, water and electric light, curbing and guttering have been put in and everything is ready for building. Many

lots have been sold and a dozen new homes will go up this fall. As all over, Dundee a uniform guttering has been adopted, the park gutter and curb combined, which is not only cheaper than the old style, but permits the grass to be dressed up to it better. The district will some day border the second of outer boulevard which the Board of Park commissioners is planning to have run all the way from Hansecom to Miller and Fontanelle parks.

This boulevard will follow the natural ravine and it is no visionary dream because the board has already got started a strip from Military avenue to Fort Omaha, and further south, between Leavenworth and Happy Hollow property owners have agreed to donate the land on which the boulevard will run. This boulevard run-

ning through these parks up hills and through a deep ravine will be the greatest natural show place in Omaha.

Meantime paving is rapidly progressing in Dundee and before snow flies most of the town will have nicely asphalted streets, while the Dodge street road will have a brick paving clear to the club. Beyond this the Dundee Realty company has tried a new thing in oiled gutters on the macadam road. It is believed that the oiling will prevent washing out, but this is yet to be tested by a rain.

Sales of small farms have been a feature of the land business, recently and many land agents are disposing of forty and sixty acre tracts which farmers are finding they can cultivate to great advantage, sometimes more so than larger holdings.

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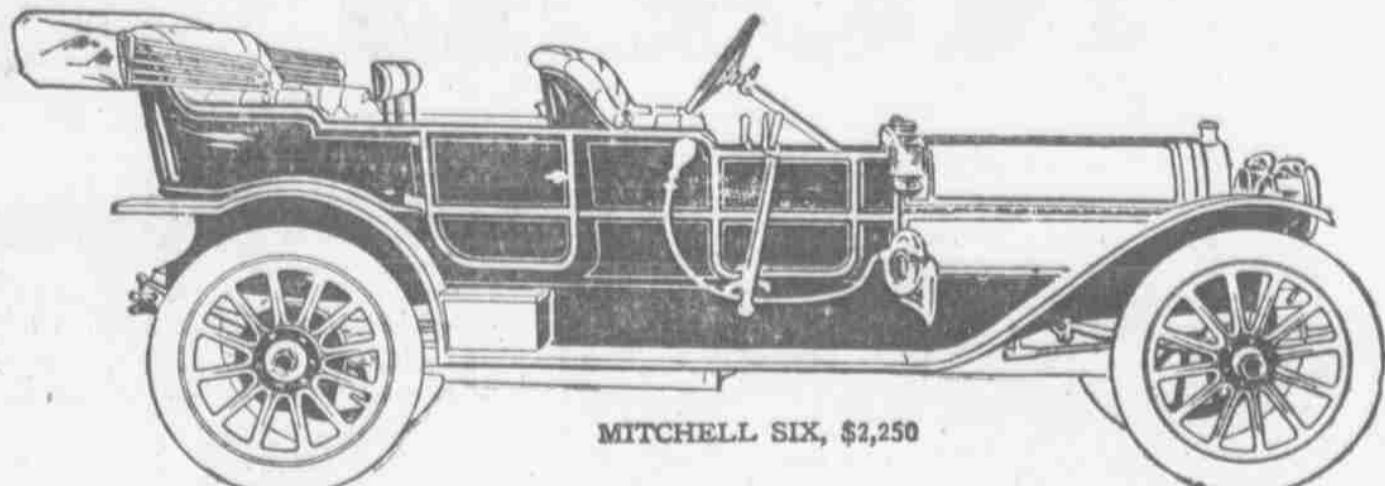
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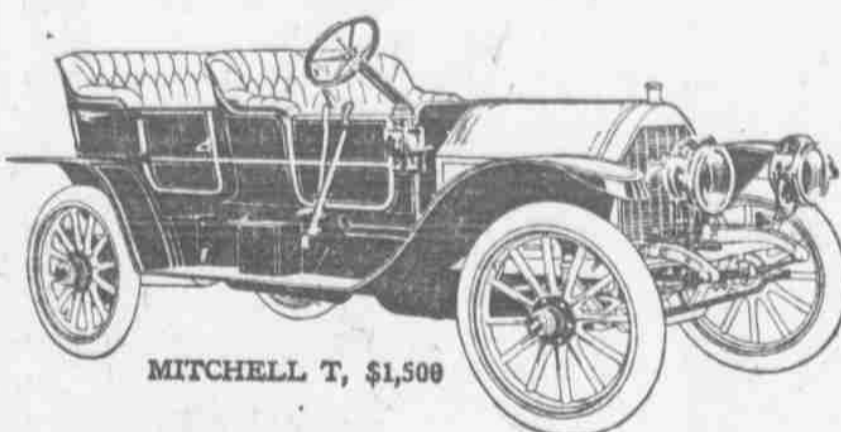
sometimes advisable to purchase the material independent of the contractor, but letting the contractor for all of the labor to one man. In this way one can be sure of the kind and quality of the material,

and still take no chances of the item, which is usually the greatest loss in the amateur builder, that of labor. On a small home, however, it hardly pays to do this and better results are usually obtained by letting the entire contract to one man. This fact should always be borne in mind and strictly adhered to, that no matter how carefully the plans and specifications are prepared, how secure the contract and bond, and how observing the owner, a home will be built better in every respect by a competent builder of known reputation than by a man who has the reputation of "skinning the job, if you do not watch him."

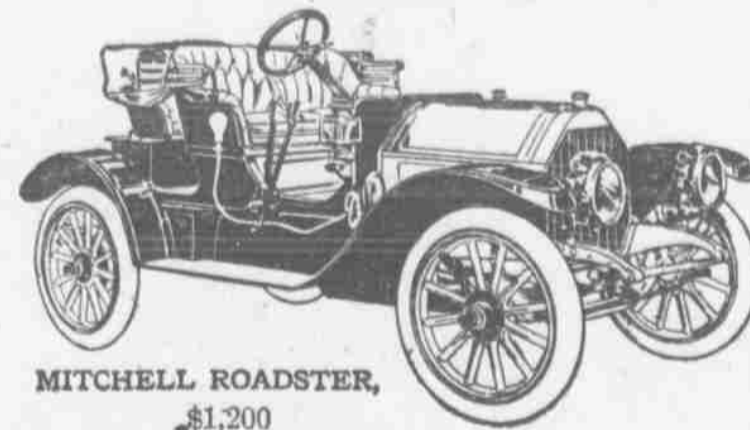
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