

St. Helens Mist

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County Official Paper

Twenty years ago there was agitation for better roads in Columbia county. At that time the people were traveling over mud roads nearly entirely and they were clamoring for macadam or plank. We reprint in this issue an article taken from the Mist of December 22, 1893, which sizes up the situation of the time in a very able manner. The article also shows the wonderful advance in the times and conditions since that date. In this part of the county there is now macadam on nearly every piece of road, and while it is a great improvement over the old mud roads of twenty years ago, it in no wise meets the present day demands. Before the advent of the automobile, macadam roads were all right if properly built and carefully maintained, but in order to keep up with modern times the roads must not only be macadam but hard surface, to be of permanent nature. The article of twenty years ago is interesting so it is here given:

As the wet season advances and our public highways become less practicable of arteries of commerce or social intercourse, the painful fact is each day more forcibly impressed upon us that less talk and theory and more horse sense and "elbow-grease" should be expended upon our county roads. Conflicting opinions prevail as to the best, cheapest and most substantial plan of improving roads, but a fair and unbiased verdict cannot be other than favorable to a plan which, though a little more expensive, will insure the most substantial plan of improving roads.

This county has abundant resources in the way of wood and stone wherewith to improve roads, and both have been used to some extent for that purpose with good results in both cases, but after careful observation of the results obtained, we are convinced that macadam is by far the most serviceable of the two, though it is undoubtedly the most expensive.

Accepting the macadam or crushed rock proposition as the best, the next problem is the least expensive means of getting the rock, and in this connection the attention of the county court is called to the proposition of Messrs. Burke & Charman, who offered to sell to the county their crusher, which they are operating just north of town, for \$500, and deliver it to any part of the county. The machinery is comparatively new and in perfect working order. It consists of a portable engine and boiler, and a crusher that will crush sufficient rock in ten hours to macadamize several hundred feet of road. This is certainly a splendid offer and one that should receive the favorable consideration of the county court. This county is at an annual expense of about \$1500 for road work without any visible improvement in the roads, except possibly in the dry season, when nature does more to put the roads in a passable condition than all the fruitless labor which is expended upon them. The threadbare, obsolete system of patching up a few chuckholes in the roads every spring, with the material supplied by nature, only to have the mud get deeper and the roads more impassable each succeeding winter, has become very monotonous and tiresome. The time has arrived when a change

must be made regardless of expense. The county yearly pays out enough money for practically useless labor to buy two or three stone crushers and operate them several months, and when once their work is done it will be substantial and lasting and therefore the most economical. There is no longer any use trying to disguise the fact that the present system of working roads is a dismal failure. Many years of failure has demonstrated it, and the sooner we adopt some other system the sooner we will have taken a long stride in the direction of convenience and prosperity.

Information reaches us that complaints have been made to Governor West that the laws were being violated in Columbia county and that the aid of his special representatives were needed to clear it up. Accordingly his special agent, Tom Kay, made a quiet visit to the county this week, starting at Scappoose where he found a boy about 18 years old playing pool in a pool room, and the proprietor, Mr. Milroy was promptly arrested and taken before the Justice of the Peace and entered a plea of guilty and was fined \$25, which he paid. Then St. Helens was visited by the detective and here he found the law was being openly and flagrantly violated by a cigar store and two saloons where gum machines were being operated, with the result that Mr. Thatcher of the Club Cigar store, Estabrook & Blew and J. H. Linville were taken before the Justice of the Peace and pleaded guilty and were each fined \$10, which sums were promptly paid. After completing all of this work, the special agent of the Governor went back to Salem to report his success in punishing law violators of this community.

When a community such as St. Helens, a lumbering town and a sea port where hundreds of men are working, is so free from gambling and other like crimes, that a special detective comes in unawares and makes a clean-up, with the results obtained here, it most certainly speaks well for the community. It is proven thereby that St. Helens is a good place to live. That it is a well regulated town and that the officers are doing their duty. The devices used here by the men who were caught in the mesh of the special agent's raid were of such a character that they were supposed to be within the law. There was nothing about them that would cause the ordinary individual who dropped his nickel into them and secured a package of gum or several packages of gum to think that he was gambling in the usually accepted term of gambling. That there were chances to take was of course known and that the machines are money makers for the proprietors is also known, but as for gambling in its ordinary sense, there was none found, nor was there any other law violations serious enough to cause the detectives to make any arrests.

In justice to these men of St. Helens who were fined let it be said that before the machines were placed with them they investigated the gambling feature and found that there were hundreds of the same kind of machines used in Portland and other places in the state and that the agent who placed the machine had letters from various attorneys in Portland stating that they were clearly not a gambling device and could be operated with safety. These men were acting in good faith and had they not been men who were anxious and willing to abide by the laws of the state they could have stood trial and no jury in the county would have convicted them under the circumstances. The machines have been boxed up and the agent who placed them has been notified to come and get them.

What's the use of having sheriffs and each county paying out thousands of dollars for officers to enforce the laws when Governor West's special agent, Tom Kay, can do the work, at a cost that positively will not exceed the combined salaries of all the sheriffs in the state? Useless expense. As evidence of this note the great moral crusade carried on in St. Helens this week.

Just a word to the bachelors: A young lady stenographer of Chicago has been willed \$500,000 upon condition that she marry inside of one year.

Scientists have figured out that the world will come to an end in 15,000,000 years. This startling announcement has not caused much worry among St. Helens people as yet.

Every day happenings are happening in St. Helens which indicates growth. A couple of years ago there were enough chairs in the City Hall to accommodate the largest crowd that ever assembled there, but during the past two months several entertainments have been given where every chair was occupied and large numbers of people had to stand up.

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