



THE FORUM Where Every One Has His Say

"LEST WE FORGET."

La Grande, Ore., Jan. 27, 1915. Editor Observer:—It is now over two years since the high-handed proceeding was had in the City Council of La Grande resulting in a contract with the Warren Construction company at twice what it was worth for the paving of upper Fourth street.

hands of the company, without competition, and at twice what the work is reasonably worth, and with your permission I will outline through your paper the queer procedure by which this is done.

Several years ago our city was ripe for paved streets, at least in the business part of town, and our citizens were public spirited enough to demand that the principal streets be paved. This fact having been published, several paving companies sought opportunity to get contracts for the work, but the city officials determined that they would not put down anything but "Bitulithic" pavement, and called for bids on this particular brand.

tem. A local contractor can not bid on the excavation because unable to bid on the paving.

Recently the City Council, after one week's advertisement, let a contract to the Warren Construction Company to grade and pave O. avenue from First to Fourth. This required a couple of thousand yards of earth to be excavated from the top of the hill and filled in at the bottom of the hill.

Last spring a local company prepared a bid for paving at a very time J. F. Hill & Company of Chicago and Spokane, one of the largest and most responsible paving companies of America, had an agent here looking over the field with a view to bidding on our work, but the local company withdrew its bid and the J. F. Hill Company refused to file one unless the City Council would so change the specifications as to leave out the word "Bitulithic."

The city of Moscow, Idaho, recently let a contract to the Bird-Mendenhall Construction Company of Salt Lake City, to pave the principal street of that town. This contract calls for a concrete base five inches thick, made of crushed rock and cement mixed dry, in proportion of one barrel of cement for each cubic yard of concrete.

vation, without any additional charge for a haul of 1600 feet, a quarter of a mile is 1320 feet. Compare this with what we are paying. Besides, in Moscow the contractors have to haul their rock 16 miles. These same contractors would be glad to duplicate these prices in La Grande, if that patented word "Bitulithic" in the specifications, which perpetrates upon us an inferior pavement at a fancy price, accompanied by the other abuses always attending public contracts where there is no competition.

The Dolarway Paving Company is now doing work in the principal cities of the United States. Ann Arbor, Michigan, was the first city to adopt this pavement. It consists of a bituminous surface on a concrete base, but the bituminous surface is not so thick as the sheet asphalt. The principal thoroughfares of Central Park in New York City are now being paved with Dolarway. This pavement is not patented and under favorable conditions costs about \$1.00 a yard. It would probably cost in La Grande about \$1.20 per yard.

Respectfully, TURNER OLIVER.

Five days after this article was published the City council met for the purpose of opening the bid and letting a contract to the Warren Construction company for paving that part of Fourth street from the south line of O avenue to the north line of C avenue. The council had advertised a call for bids for five days for "gravel bitulithic" pavement; but it was fully understood that there would be only one bid and that this would be at \$1.47 1/2 per square yard, or more than twice what it was worth.

The representative of the Warren Construction company handed a paper to the Recorder who read the same, it being an ordinance accepting the bid of the Warren Construction company, and directing the mayor and recorder to enter into contract. This ordinance was read first, second and third times and declared passed. Thereupon the representative of the Warren Construction company handed a prepared contract to the mayor for his signature. Thus the whole "cut-and-dried" program carried out. I was not given a hearing, and as I left the council chamber the mayor and members of the council joined with the Warren Construction company's representative in giving me a hearty "horse laugh".

I have endeavored to keep my word and shall until this whole rotten business is declared void. The editor of the Observer was present when this proceeding was had and can vouch for the truth of what I have said. This high-handed proceeding was in direct violation of the express provisions of the City Charter, and the contract was of no force and was void, both as against the City and as against the property owners long upper Fourth street, and I predict that the only money which the Warren Construction company will ever get for this work will be such as they

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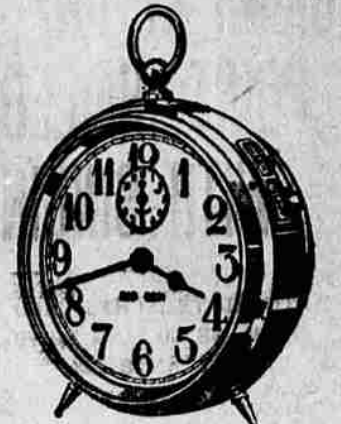
may recover from the city officials as individuals who pretended to enter into this contract, but I do not anticipate that the Warren Construction company will ever make such demands upon their friends.

Respectfully, TURNER OLIVER.

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