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HOLLOW CEMENT BLOCKS

A Product With An Increasing Demand Turned Out by a St. Johns Manufacturing Plant

Recently we made a visit to the Hollow Block Cement Works of Parrish & Thompson. It is an interesting process and one that is calculated to cut somewhat larger figure in the building business of St. Johns than it has heretofore.

This company has an admirable site of fine level land upon which to manufacture their blocks. It is located near the sand pit of the St. Johns Brick Co., and from this company they secure the fine sharp sand so necessary to the construction of their blocks of building stone.

This sand is elevated from the pit, carefully screened and delivered at the works. There it is thoroughly mixed by a cylindrical, or cone mixer, with just the proper proportion of sand and water, the amount of water used being just enough to wet the mixture to a degree equal to that of soil when in the best possible condition for cultivation. This sand, cement and water, when mixed to the consistency desired by the employes, is filled into moulds where workmen ram the mixture down firmly so as to force it into every corner and thus make the angles sharp and the surfaces perfectly true. This gives it a solidity which enables the workmen to handle the blocks with facility. The blocks are carried away from the machine and permitted to cure for some three weeks before being put into the building.

This curing process is a matter of curiosity to the uninitiated. One would naturally think that the less water put upon the blocks after they come from the press the better, but such is not the case. The attendant who has the care of curing the blocks uses a spray nozzle several times each day and wets the surfaces of the blocks thoroughly, and he informed us that if they could be put into the water entirely they would harden the quicker.

This firm is shipping carloads of these fine blocks almost every day and wherever they have been used they have given the very best of satisfaction. The reason that some cement blocks have not given good satisfaction is because they have been manufactured with too large openings making the walls of the blocks too thin, and thus reducing the resistance to the immense pressure from above; another fault with the manufacture of certain cement blocks, we have been told, is that the ends of the blocks have such small portions of their surface in contact with the mortar by reason of extra hollows at the end that there was not enough hold to make the walls firm. While this cutting out one half, or nearly so, of the material for the blocks makes them lighter to work with, it so weakens the blocks that that they become undesirable for use. This the St. Johns firm have avoided, and have made blocks with walls so thick and firm that they will withstand the pressure of thousands of tons.

In conversation with Mr. Thompson in Portland last Tuesday he incidentally remarked that the business was growing too large for their present capacity, and that they were soon to install a machine with a capacity to turn out a block a minute in addition to the machine now in use.

This is one of St. Johns newest industries, and as soon as it becomes known will require many of such machines to supply the demand for their product. These blocks may be made in many different shapes so as to assist the masons in making the different openings in the walls, ornamental masonry, etc., and like the cement pressed brick, the older they grow, the harder they become, and a wall built of these blocks would be practically indestructible under any climatic conditions.

THE MARINE IRON WORKS BUSY

Local Industrial Plant That is Splendidly Equipped and One of St. Johns' Leading and Prosperous Institutions

The noisiest bunch we have met up with in all our travels about the city was found at the Marine Iron Works Wednesday morning, where we went in to get out of the wet for a few minutes. This institution is situated at the foot of Charleston street on the water front, and is the company between which and the city of St. Johns there has been as much diplomacy used as obtained in the settlement of the Russo-Japanese squabble, in an effort to get the lower end of Charleston street closed.

The Marine Iron Works have a splendidly equipped plant and can make almost anything out of iron and steel from a dinner bucket to a full grown steel ocean liner. At the time we visited the works the force were at work on an immense truss for a steel dredge for the Pacific Bridge company, 86 feet 8 inches in length and about 18 or 20 feet in height. In the work on this truss there is in operation an air compressor for which power is furnished by a 50 horse-power motor, the air being used to operate the riveting machines of which there are 24 in the shop. There are also three air drills, one of which was at work reaming out some punch holes in the truss.

They have a gang power punch on the west side of the plant, which will punch 51 holes at one operation, one-fourth of an inch in diameter, used in making smoke stacks, etc.; next to this stood a radial drill covering a radius of some 20 or more feet which would drill almost any sized hole through iron from one-fourth to three inches or more in thickness. Directly across the floor from the radial drill stands a powerful horizontal punch capable of perforating two inches of steel with the ease of a seamstress stitching cambric. A perpendicular punch south of this on the east side of the room has a capacity of making perforations four inches in diameter through 2-inch steel, and has an intake of 42 inches. This last punch is operated by a 10 horse-power motor. Across the room from this machine is a double rotary shear which will cut ribbons off of half-inch iron or steel as a lady would cut strips of papers for her hair curlers with the scissors of her work box.

On the east side of the floor are situated three sets of rolls, two different sizes of plate rolls and one for angle bars. In front of the rolls nearer the door stands a saw for cutting off the angle bars and the way it goes through the half-inch 4x4 angles reminds one of a healthy boy operating on the sharp end of a piece of apple pie. There is a powerful riveting machine operated by air and oil which will set 1 1/2 inch rivets as easily as a harness maker rivets a halter strap.

The entire plant is operated by electricity and the machinery works smoothly and without the slightest jarring, doing the heavy work with the greatest facility. It is most interesting to any lover of mechanical devices to watch the different processes, and to us the pneumatic riveters were the greatest attraction. In operating these machines, which use compressed air furnished by the electric air compressor, one man shoves a red-hot rivet about seven-eighths of an inch in diameter through the perforations of two or three sheets of the metal from which the truss is being constructed, and the man on the other side puts a business-like machine, looking at first glance much like an overgrown nail puller used by our merchants to pull the nails out of their boxes to remove the covers, over the small end of the rivet, touches a button and the machine does the rest.

This riveting machine talks the same language used by the common red-headed wood pecker when boring for oil, or as it may be, a fat worm in a dead elm tree, and the sound carried us back well into the last century when we used to sit and watch these birds, and wonder where they kept their grinding stones to sharpen their drills with. It is also a strange coincidence that the language is not the only resemblance there is to the work of the red headed birds, the stroke of the pneumatic hammer is 860 per minute and identically the same as the feathered driller. If our students of ornithology are inclined to doubt this assertion he can verify it by taking his stop watch and counting the reverberating strokes of a healthy wood pecker some day when he is working by the job on a hard old tree.

This plant is nicely housed in a substantially built corrugated iron structure 125x125 feet, and they build all kinds of iron structures, gas engines, steam and air pumps, etc. The whole institution is ably superintended by Manager Thomas Shea. The employes are a hearty, pleasant looking, robust crowd and appear to have no troubles of their own, nor to be looking for any that belong to less fortunate mortals. We spent a very interesting half hour looking over the works, and feel very grateful to the foreman, who so kindly explained what we did not know about the operation of the big machine. Really, it was the first time we ever ventured inside such a factory, and what we know about the business would make a very small sized primer.

THE CITY DADS IN SESSION

Council Meets Tuesday Evening and Transacts Its Usual Budget of Municipal Business

The common council met in regular session Tuesday evening with Mayor Couch in the chair. There were present besides: Aldermen King, Walker, Leggett, Linquist, Jobs and Dobie; Recorder Esson and City Attorney Greene.

The resignation of W. W. Raser as councilman for the second ward taking effect August 1, was read and the office having been declared vacant by Mayor Couch, on motion of Councilman Leggett, W. C. Francis was placed in nomination to fill the unexpired term. There being no further nominations, upon a ballot being taken, Mr. Francis was elected unanimously, duly sworn in and took his seat among the "elder statesmen."

Judge Cameron was then permitted to address the council in behalf of Mr. Davidson, requesting two or three days further time in which to prepare his revised gas franchise, because of the absence of Mr. Emmons the framer of the franchise. Request was granted.

Mr. R. Citron then appeared in behalf of O. C. Potts, requesting the transfer of the license of Mr. Brink for the operation of the saloon opposite the postoffice on Jersey street, furnishing approved bonds. The transfer was granted to take effect when certain corrections were made in the wording of the bond on motion of Alderman Jobs.

Petition of Peterson & Noce for permission to erect a frame building covered with corrugated iron on the rear of lot 15, block 3. Court addition to be used as a wood house, with walls 9 feet high, house to be 10x20 feet, and on motion of King was granted.

Petition of O. G. Baldwin, et al, for the improvement of Hartman street between Oswego and Lively streets was referred to the street committee.

St. Johns band made petition to have permission to practice in city hall Monday and Friday nights. After considerable discussion the petition was denied on motion of Councilman Dobie; King, Francis, Jobs and Walker voting, No; Leggett, Linquist and Dobie, Yes.

Petition of Wagner & Co. to remove frame building in one part of fire limit to another was held over one week to enable the councilmen to investigate the case.

Bids of Marshall Bros. and Tollman to do the concrete work on the basement of the city hall were read, and after discussion, during which Citizen Nessley offered to furnish bid by another week with good and sufficient bond for the fulfillment of contract, bids were, on motion of Dobie referred to the building committee with power.

Voluntary bid of Tull & Gibbs to furnish and place on the windows of the city hall suitable shades, was laid over until next meeting for consideration.

(Continued on page 2)

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STUNT IN PLANING MILL

Printer Man Takes a Turn on His Own Hook.

Talk about business being dull in St. Johns. We have had occasion to work done at a half dozen different places since coming to this city, and in nearly every instance we have had to wait from one to three days before we could get the work because of the different enterprises being crowded with work. But the limit was reached when we wanted some tent poles made for our summer residence last Monday. We went to Douglas & Sons planing mill and asked the boys if they could build us a few tent poles. They asked if we were in a hurry and we said, "Yep, we would like to have them 'made while we wait.'" "Well," replied the wood worker, "we are all balled up here with work, and cannot possibly get them out today, but there are some 2-bys and here are tools, if you wish to use them you may make them yourself." Suppose he thought that would knock us out, but he didn't know he was up against a fool printer who never takes a bluff or meets a difficulty he can't climb over. We peeled our coat and in about 90 minutes had a full set of tent poles, paid for the lumber, shouldered the job, and carried it to a delivery wagon to be taken home. We wish to thank Messrs. Douglas & Sons for the use of their shop and tools.

GATLING GUN NEEDED

Auto Scorching Getting to be Something Terrific

The man with a grievance came into the office the other day and said: "What's the matter with the city officials? They ought to cinch a lot of these automaniacs who come over from Portland on their smoke buggies and scorch along Willamette boulevard. There is a honk, a hum, and a red streak goes by followed by a cloud of dust like the fog end of a cyclone and you have to turn around and bat your eyes a couple of times to tell whether it is a devil wagon or a shell from a Japanese warship scooting down the boulevard. Somebody's baby toddling out into the street is going to be made into a wienie-worm some of these days by one of these chugwagons," and the man with the grievance went out with an expression on his face that would curdle milk. It is said they go so fast one cannot distinguish their auto number. It would be cheaper to arrest and fine one or two of these fellows than to pay for somebody's baby, and a pleasanter job. Couldn't our chief of police send a man down there armed with a gatling gun, and if he could not get them to answer his signal to stop, puncture a tire or two and bring them in?

SKATING RINK CONTEST

Interesting Doings at the Rink Saturday Evening.

The skating contest at the rink is reported to have been a brilliant success. There were about 200 in attendance and 91 on the floor at one time. The prize in each class was a ticket to the skating rink and a ticket to the Oaks, which were won by the following:

Most graceful lady skater, Miss Sena Madison; most graceful gentleman, Mr. Goodmondson; most graceful couple, Harry Clamp of Arleta, and Miss Gusta Madison; fastest skater, Earl Crouchley; most popular young lady, Miss Inez Hollenstein; the homeliest young man in St. Johns, Lester Brink; booby prize, a pretty doll baby, John Morrison.

The judges were: Capt. B. L. Snow, J. F. Gilmore, Capt. Chas. Bredeson, and the decisions seem to have been very agreeable to all concerned.

ODE TO ST. JOHNS.

By J. H. FLETCHER
On Willamette's placid stream,
Where its matchless beauties beam,
There it stands in stolid form
Laughing at the rain and storm.

Foreign ships their cargoes bring
To her banks where others cling.
Mills and factories arise,
Sleepless, pointing toward the skies.
Before thy tread, baby town,
Laggards quietly lie down!
Little giant of the North
Young in years, but vast thy worth,
Big with promise—full of life—
Strong, our faith in thee is rife.

Mecca of the lab'ring world,
Flag of enterprise unfurled,
Gladly to thine arms we flee
Little city near the sea.

Why not improve Philadelphia street?

Odd Fellows Picnic.

The Rebekahs of Laurelwood Lodge No. 160 will join with Odd Fellows of Laurel Lodge No. 186, and give a basket picnic at Cedar Park, Thursday afternoon, August 22. There will be the usual foot races, games, etc., followed by lunch, and an entertainment in the evening. A good social time is expected. Free for everyone to come and bring a basket. Secretary Laurelwood R. L., St. Johns.

Campaign for New Church.

The Christian church has started an active campaign for the erection of a fine modern church building on their lot in St. Johns. A committee of five prominent members of the church was appointed last Sunday evening, who will at once provide ways and means for this work and report at the close of the meeting next Sunday. We are glad to see this step taken as it means much both to this church organization and the city.

Improve Philadelphia street.

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Are you going Camping?
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