HOUSES TO RENT BECOMING FEWER

Big Improvement in Year, Declares Chairman of Realty Board Committee.

MODERN PLACES SOUGHT

Owners, for Their Own Good, Urged by G. G. Rohrer in Report to Fix Up Run-Down Houses as Soon as Possible.

Marked improvement in the rental situation in Portland has taken place within the past year. Some interesting figures showing the extent to which properties vacant a year ago have been occupied since then were given by G. G. Rohrer, chairman of the rental committee of the Portland Realty Board, in a report read at the meeting of the board Friday.

Mr. Rohrer estimated that not more than 700 houses, flats and apartments are now vacant and that all vacancies combined, including those of stores and offices, do not exceed 1000. He compared this to approximately 10,000 vacancies on January 1, 1916, and 5500 vacancies one year ago.

A general increase in the rents of modern houses approximating about $5 per month was predicted by Mr. Rohrer next Spring. He also emphasized the importance to owners of putting their vacant properties in good shape, as it is the really modern houses, he said, for which the big demand exists. The report follows:

Committee on Alert.

"In making my annual report as chairman of your rental committee, I will only review the work accomplished by the committee during the year and the general situation of the rental market as has been shown at various times during the year. Your committee has been on the alert at all times and has endeavored to protect the interests of the rental man as far as possible. There has been but one case wherein the committee was called upon and did pass resolution of objection; that instance being the inauguration of a rental department by an evening paper, which it has seen fit long ago to discontinue, realizing that it was an encroachment upon the business of the rental agent.

"The rental departments in two of the furniture houses and one department store still exist, and while it is the desire of the rental men that these stores discontinue these departments, no effort is being made toward that end, inasmuch as we fail to find that they are any detriment, and sooner or later will be more of an expense to the firms than a detriment to the agent.

"It is my recent understanding that rental departments operated by stores in Los Angeles and San Francisco have been discontinued on account of the expense and dissatisfaction created, and Portland is the only city on the Coast to my knowledge where they are now in operation.

Rental Situation Improves.

"The rental situation in this city today is quite a contrast to the same periods of 1916 and 1917. On January 1, 1916, our estimated vacant residences, stores, offices, flats and apartments were approximately 10,000; on January 1, 1917, this was reduced to approximately 5500, while today I feel safe in saying that all vacancies combined will not exceed 1000, of which number I estimate 700 houses, flats and apartments.

"While I do not claim this figure to be absolutely accurate, judging from the influx of new people to Portland within the last 90 days and knowing of the inability of prospects to procure suitable places, I feel safe in making this statement.

"In regard to apartments, both furnished and unfurnished, there is nothing to say other than that all apartment-houses appear to be well filled. Even hotels are reported as being in a crowded condition.

"In the business districts store space shows a very satisfactory condition. The downtown section is very well filled, and we find a scarcity of suitable storerooms to meet the demands.

"The office-building situation appears to be gaining headway. There have been quite a number of vacant offices rented during the past year, and today finds office buildings better filled than for the past three years.

$5 Increase Predicted.

"The improvement of rentals on residence properties, as has been shown by my report of September 21, still continues. Advances are being made monthly and from all indications there will be a further substantial advance in the Spring on A-1 modern houses of approximately $5 per month. While there has been, and is, a considerable improvement in repairing of old properties, there are still many properties that the owners must overhaul if they desire to derive any revenue from them.

"A very marked improvement in the sale of residence property has been noted for several months past. While most of the properties sold are of the cheaper class, yet it shows that the renter is availing himself of the opportunity to buy his home in order to save the increased cost of building. A very good example has just come to my notice, wherein during the month of December approximately 15 residence properties have changed hands in the Mount Scott district, one-half of which were on Seventieth avenue Southeast.

"The prices obtained from these houses, I am informed, is about the original cost to the owners. Other sections of the city have also had similar improvement along this line, and I feel that, with the advent of Spring, we should enjoy quite an improvement in the sale of residence property, for I personally know of a number of people now renting who will be in the market to buy homes in the Spring.

Mortgagees Paying Up.

"Another true sign of prosperity which came to my attention within the last few days through one of the financial agents of the city is the number of working men who have been paying off mortgages on their homes. He reported to me that during the month of December he had about 16 mortgages, ranging from $250 to $2500, paid off by mortgagors.

"In this connection it is a pleasure to note that among the improvements being made in our business section is the tearing down of dilapidated properties and the replacing them with modern business buildings on streets leading to and from our depots. But in this instance there is still room for improvement, as there are many properties which the city officials should condemn on account of their dilapidated condition. The approaches leading from the depots to our business sections certainly do not give our city a very inviting impression to the stranger; in fact, a very unfavorable impression is received by the stranger who is seeking business investments in Portland.

"A great assistance can be rendered the city and property owners by the rental agents if every rental man would encourage their clients who own vacant houses needing repairs to put them in good condition so that they can be occupied.

"It is expected that there will be quite an influx of new residents to Portland within the next three to six months, and we must find houses for these people."

ATTRACTIVE NEW HOME OF R. M. TOWNSEND, OF PORTLAND RAILWAY, LIGHT & POWER COMPANY.

THIS RESIDENCE IS IN LAURELHURST, ON SOUTHEAST CORNER OF EAST THIRTY-NINTH AND GLISAN STREETS.

CHEHALIS HAS GOOD YEAR

All Lines of Business Active; New Structures Erected.

CHEHALIS, Wash., Jan. 5.—(Special.)—The year 1917 has been an unusually active one for the business men of Chehalis in all lines and the outlook for 1918 is far better than the city has ever had before. During the last year one new industry has been added, the Chehalis Mill Company.

The industrial plants have been busy all year with plenty of orders at fair prices.

Several important changes and improvements have been made in the business district of Chehalis proper. The Twin City Auto Company erected a new two-story brick addition to its present plant, giving a location through two blocks. It has probably the most complete garage in Southwest Washington.

W. F. West, erected a four-story brick annex which is the second of three units for a complete modern new hotel.

Chehalis is the center of a large dairy industry and dairymen have never before received such high prices for milk as they have the last year. The local condensery here is erecting additions to its already large plant.

The bank deposits reflect the prosperity of a city and the surrounding country, and there has been a gain in the deposits of the three Chehalis banks in the last year of about $8,000,000.

BOARD 12 YEARS OLD

SECRETARY REVIEWS HISTORY OF PORTLAND REALTY BOARD.

Organization Formed in 1906 at Meeting Presided Over by the Late Tom Richardson.

The following interesting review of the history of the Portland Realty Board since its founding 12 years ago, largely through the efforts of the late Tom Richardson, was given by Paul A. Cowgill, secretary of the board, in his annual report presented to the board Friday:

"This annual meeting marks the close of 12 years' successful existence of the Portland Realty Board. On February 28, 1906, in the parlors of the Portland Commercial Club, at 2 o'clock Saturday afternoon, Tom Richardson presided over a meeting that had been called to organize what is now the Portland Realty Board. On March 17, in the same year, a constitution was adopted and the by-laws signed by 55 firms.

"The names appearing upon that list, which are also found in our roster today, are: F. V. Andrews & Co., Wakefield, Fries & Co., Florian Fuchs, A. H. Birrell, Hartman & Thompson, L. E. Carter, Goldschmidt's Agency, Joseph M. Healy, George D. Schalk, Mall & Von Borstel, I. G. Davidson, E. S. Jackson, A. W. Lambert, F. Breske, Charles H. Korell, Pacific Title & Trust Co., E. J. Daly, M. E. Lee, Western Oregon Trust Co., John Daly.

"W. H. Moore was the first president and served during 1906 and 1907. He was succeeded by Henry W. Fries for 1908-1909. W. M. Killingsworth occupied the chair in 1910 and W. H. Chapin in 1911. C. K. Henry was elected in 1912, but, leaving the city before his term of office expired, was succeeded by J. Fred Larson. In 1913-1914 Dean Vincent held that important position, followed by Fred Taylor in 1915 and 1916 and Frank McGuire in 1917.

"The healthy condition of our organization, its progress and activities are manifested in the reports of the various committees and in the customary statement made at this time by the retiring President, Frank L. McGuire, who, by the way, is entitled to the highest praise and commendation for the ability, enthusiasm and loyalty which he has displayed throughout the year. No one knows better than I the amount of time and energy that is required to perform so successfully the multitudinous duties incident to this office, and I am sure I voice the universal sentiment when I say that our present executive has earned the admiration and respect of each and every member of our organization."

EUGENE MAN BUYS BIG FARM

70-Acre Ranch Near Goshen Sold to Gustave Devos on Trade.

T. H. Tregea, of Portland, has sold his 70-acre farm, known as the Hawley place and located near Goshen, in Lane County, to Gustav Devos, of Eugene.

In the deal Mr. Tregea took title to a house and three lots located in Vancouver, Wash., the balance being represented by cash and mortgage. In the transaction both parties were represented by Samuel Doak.

Mr. Doak also reports the transfer of 145 acres in Umatilla County by Mr. and Mrs. E. Underwood to J. G. Arnold.

The mustard family contains more than 2000 species and includes cabbage, cauliflower, turnip, radish, horseradish and in ornamentals the stocks, sweet alysseum and the wallflower.

MORE SALES MADE

Good Farm Properties Continue to Be in Demand.

420 ACRES BRING $35,700

Country Press Records Realty Transactions of Importance in Various Parts of State—City Property Still Slow.

For the past few months, and particularly since September, there has been remarkable activity in farm land sales throughout the state. This is in marked contrast with the realty situation in the cities, where sales have been few and far between, though with good prospect for a decided betterment within a short time.

Good prices are reported for farms sold, particularly for improved properties. Following are details of a few large sales made recently, as told in the country papers:

The J. E. Jinks farm near Tangent was sold last week to a Mr. Ogden, who comes from the western part of Washington, where he recently sold his farm, says the Lebanon Criterion. The farm contains 420 acres of good land and we understand the deal was made on a basis of $85 per acre, or $35,700. Possession will be given about the first of the year.

Alfred Morris, cattle owner of the West Side, has purchased from F. L. Williams 160 acres of land on Dry Creek under the Goose Lake Valley irrigation Company's ditch, says the Lakeview Examiner. The sale was arranged through Ahlstrom & Maguire, Inc.

J. B. Kennedy, of Portland, reports the sale of the West Woodburn 180-acre tract of the Grand Lodge of the United Finnish Brotherhood of the World to A. J. Gump, of Gendive, Wash., the consideration being $18,000, says the Woodburn Independent. Mr. Kennedy also reports the trade of the N. S. Nehl apartment-house in Portland to Frank Saalfeld for the latter's 96-acre farm at Winlock, Wash.

Hecker & Beam closed a deal for the sale of a farm owned by the Coast Livestock Company to Arthur C. Miller, of Albany, says the Albany Democrat. The land consists of 120 acres and is located three miles southwest of the city.

George W. Cox, a pioneer resident of the North Deer Creek vicinity, has sold his place there to Daniel C. Candle, a recent arrival here, says the Roseburg Review. The ranch consisted of 240 acres and the consideration was $4200. Mr. Cox has removed to Roseburg to make his home in town.

OLD BUILDINGS ARE RAZED

Early Hood River Structures to Be Replaced by Garage.

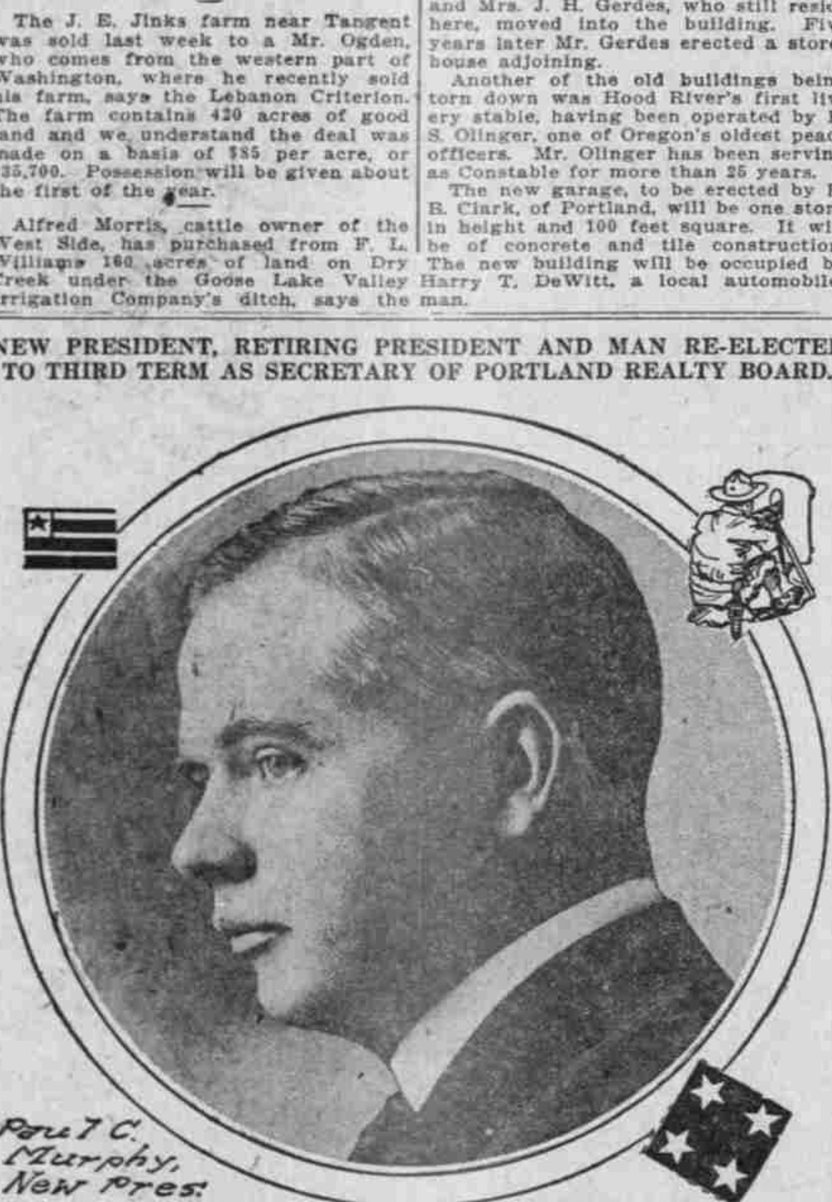
HOOD RIVER, Or., Jan. 5.—(Special.)—Work of razing five pioneer frame structures, preparatory to the construction of a fireproof garage at the corner of Third street and Cascade avenue was begun yesterday.

The oldest of the frame houses being wrecked was built in 1881. Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Gerdes, who still reside here, moved into the building. Five years later Mr. Gerdes erected a storehouse adjoining.

Another of the old buildings being torn down was Hood River's first livery stable, having been operated by E. S. Olinger, one of Oregon's oldest peace officers. Mr. Olinger has been serving as Constable for more than 25 years.

The new garage, to be erected by E. B. Clark, of Portland, will be one story in height and 100 feet square. It will be of concrete and tile construction. The new building will be occupied by Harry T. DeWitt, a local automobile man.

NEW PRESIDENT, RETIRING PRESIDENT AND MAN RE-ELECTED TO THIRD TERM AS SECRETARY OF PORTLAND REALTY BOARD.



Paul C. Murphy, New Pres. Portland Realty Board

Paul A. Cowgill, Secty. Portland Realty Board

Frank L. M'Guire, Retiring President

Paul C. Murphy, of the Laurelhurst Company, was elected president of the Portland Realty Board at its annual election meeting, held in the Benson Hotel Friday. He succeeds Frank L. McGuire, the retiring president, who was not a candidate for re-election. Paul A. Cowgill, by unanimous vote, was re-elected secretary of the Realty Board for the third successive time. Other officers chosen were: Herman von Borstel, first vice-president; Herbert Gordon, second vice-president; G. G. Rohrer, third vice-president, and B. Lee Paget, treasurer.

In his report as retiring president, Mr. McGuire reviewed the achievements of the Realty Board for the past year, emphasizing the work for the good roads and grain elevators bond issues, defeat of the Firemen's Two Platoon measure, and amendment to the Statute of Fraud regarding commissions.

In his report as secretary Mr. Cowgill called attention to the fact that the Portland Realty Board is now 12 years old, and in a particularly vigorous condition.

BRITISH OPERATION OF RAILWAYS PAYS

More Efficient Work Done by Smaller Force of Less Skilled Employes.

TREASURY NOTES FAVORED

President of National Reserve Bank of Kansas City Predicts Reduction in Price of Food and Labor With Talk of Peace.

Britain's solution of the railroad problem in war time is of much interest now in this country, for it offers, roughly, somewhat the same lines expected to be followed here. England declared war on Germany August 4, 1914. At one minute after midnight on August 5 the railroads of England, Scotland and Wales passed under control of the Government.

The seizure contemplated full compensation for loss or injury sustained because of government control and an agreement was made whereby the carriers placed their entire organizations at the disposal of the military authorities and agreed to handle traffic in accordance with directions from them. It was also stipulated that such sums of money would be paid to the roads periodically by the government as were needed to make up net revenues equal to those of 1913, the year before the war. Modifications of the contract have been made as the need arose during the war.

The English Government has attained some surprising results in the operation of the railroads. Despite the loss of some 150,000 employes who enlisted for service at the front, the carriers have handled the traffic efficiently and have furnished the largest amount of transportation in the history of the country with a smaller and less skilled labor quota.

Wages for workers on the railroads have been augmented by war bonuses. There has been no substantial increase in freight rates, but frequent readjustments have been made in passenger fares and on January 1 of last year they were increased by 50 per cent.

There have been deficits for the government to pay, as it is not charged for specific movements of troops or supplies. However, Bonar Law, Chancellor of the Exchequer, said in the House of Commons last Spring that the railway agreement was an extraordinarily good bargain for the government.

Of course the British railways are not so extensive as are those of the United States. However, the mileage is a little larger than that of the combined Pennsylvania, New York Central and Baltimore & Ohio systems.

* * *

Treasury certificates of indebtedness will, it is believed, be popularized among industrial companies by the Federal Reserve Bank, which has undertaken a campaign along this line. Banks have purchased freely of the certificates, but industrial concerns, for whom the last two issues have been especially designed, in order that they might anticipate the payment of income and excess profits taxes and prevent a serious monetary strain when the taxes fall due, have been rather slow in availing themselves of the opportunity. As the amount of taxes due on June 15 is estimated to be in excess of $2,000,000,000, such a strain might easily be serious.

The United States Steel Corporation has already made purchases of $25,000,000 worth of war savings certificates. Chairman E. H. Gary said yesterday the corporation thoroughly believes in these Government certificates.

"Big taxpayers will be doing their country and the business community a great service in responding generously to the Secretary's offering," he said. "It is highly necessary that the payment of the huge war taxes be distributed over a sufficient period of time if we are to avoid strain and confusion at a time when it is most necesary that our economic and financial machinery should be working smoothly.

"As for the securities themselves, I need hardly do more than point to the example of the Steel Corporation's investment in them as proof of my recommendation. They have the security of the United States behind them, they bear 4 per cent interest and they allow the investor certain tax exemption privileges. He may, therefore, through his investment in them, do both himself and his country a favor."

* * *

The embarrassment to which a government is put when precious metals fluctuate in price is shown by recent efforts of Japan to keep silver coins in circulation adequate to the demand. To meet the need, paper fractional currency has been issued to the amount of 30,000,000 yen, or $14,940,000. The government also announces a prize for the best design for a new 50-sen silver piece, of a value in United States money of 24.9 cents. The new coin will be smaller in size than that now in circulation.

For a considerable period late last year, the excess of the bullion value over the mint value made it profitable to melt subsidiary Japanese silver coin or ship it to China. As a consequence, the country became denuded of small change. Since that time it has been difficult to get money changed, except through the offices of money changers at high prices.

* * *

Government control of transportation, food and the things it now concerns itself with will end when the war is over, believes William Huttig, president of the National Reserve Bank of Kansas City. He says there is no ground for fears of Socialism in this country.

Mr. Guttig says lower wages must prevail after the war and he also expects a reduction in the prices of foodstuffs and other commodities. The dollar will be worth more after the war, says Mr. Huttig, but labor will bring less.

He expects that the reaction in the prices of necessities will follow immediately upon a declaration of peace or even announcement of an armistice. The readjustment, he thinks, will be on a scale much lower than that now prevailing. Securities, he said, will recover spontaneously and the rebound will carry them to new high points.

The machinery of the Federal Reserve Bank system is being oiled up and perfected to make future liberty loans the occasion for greater intensive work and wider educational campaigns. Liberty loan committees of the 12 Federal Reserve Districts recently met in Washington and mulled over ways and means.

It is proposed to make the next campaign hum throughout the rural districts and in the smaller cities and towns, as well as in the population centers. Secretary McAdoo has declared that the recent rumor to the effect that the third liberty loan would be launched on March 15, that it will be for the amount of $8,000,000,000,000 and will bear 4½ per cent, is wholly unfounded.

WELFARE OF RAILROAD LINES AFFECTS THE SMALL INVESTORS

Laws Inimical to Earning Power of Transportation Companies Has Bearing on Hundreds of Thousands of Holders of Life Insurance Policies.

IMAGINE, for the purpose of illustration, a savings bank which daily receives the small deposits of hundreds of thrifty people. These deposits constitute a large sum in the aggregate. But the officers of the bank do not put the money away in vaults to stay there indefinitely. The savings bank pays you interest on your deposits, and in order to do this it must invest the funds placed in its care so that they will draw interest.

The same simple principle is applicable to life insurance companies. Both in savings banks and in life insurance societies the funds of the depositors on the one hand, and the funds of the policy-holders on the other hand, must be carefully invested in various securities. In fact, the investments must be distributed in many varieties of securities, so that should one security fail to yield the interest expected, the results in the long run would be satisfactory.

The savings banks of the United States hold $825,000,000 of their assets in railway securities. When we add to this the railway securities held by commercial banks and trust companies the total reaches $1,705,000,000, which is about 16 per cent of the total bonded indebtedness of the railroads. It is estimated that there is 22.7 per cent of the population of the United States depositors in savings banks and savings departments. When we augment these figures by the railway security holdings of the life insurance companies, we have a grand total of $2,500,000,000. Here it should be noted that the people of the United States have in their possession 42,000,000 life insurance policies.

It is easy to see then that the thrifty people of this country should be vitally interested in the questions which hinge upon the earning power of the railroads. Legislation inimical to the successful and profitable operation of railroads reduces their earning power, and consequently reduces their dividend and interest paying ability. When the dividend and interest paying ability of railroads decreases it means that your account in the savings bank will draw less interest and that your life insurance policy will cost more.

TWO LEASES CLOSED

THE DUNHAM PRINTING COMPANY TAKES LABBE CORNER.

Levitt Department-Store to Remove to Macleay Building—Both Deals for 5-Year Period.

Two important leases of downtown quarters were made last week, both of them for five-year periods.

The Dunham Printing Company leased the first floor of the Labbe building, northeast corner of Second and Washington streets, their occupancy to begin on February 1. In the meantime the quarters, which have been vacant since the Hibernia Bank removed from there to its present location at Fourth and Washington streets, are to be extensively remodeled.

Fred C. Dunham, president of the Dunham Printing Company, will occupy the entire 50x100-foot space with a modern printing establishment. He has ordered a $60,000 plant, which will be installed between now and February 1.

Herman Von Borstel, of Mall & Von Borstel, closed the lease, which is the most important one made in that district in a long time.

The other lease closed in the course of the week was for the first-floor corner in the Macleay building at the southwest corner of Fourth and Washington streets, formerly occupied by the Huntley Drug Company.

This space has been leased by Samuel J. Levitt, president of Levitt's department store, now at Third and Morrison streets. The rental involves approximately $50,000 for the five years.

Mr. Levitt will move in between February 1 and 15, and in the meantime the Macleay Estate will remodel the entire place. A new front will be put in and a mezzanine and second floor worked into the scheme.

This lease was made through J. D. O'Donnell.

CADIGAN GIVES REPORT

NEW WORLD LIFE, OF SPOKANE, DOING WELL.

Big Business Increase Noted Since It Bought Out Columbia Life, of Portland.

John J. Cadigan, president of the New World Life Insurance Company, of Spokane, reports that the company will close the year 1917 with approximately $17,500,000 of insurance in force, which is almost 300 per cent increase over insurance in force December 31, 1916. This is made up of an increase of 40 per cent in the business written by the company this year, and approximately $9,000,000 of business purchased from the Columbia Life & Trust Company, of Portland.

It will show assets of approximately $2,750,000, or almost 50 per cent increase in assets over December 31, 1916. The company is having an unusually favorable mortality in its business purchased from the Columbia Life & Trust Company and its own business this year, declares Mr. Cadigan.

The normal expenses of the company have increased only slightly in proportion to the increase in the other items. The only material increase has been in extra clerk hire in transferring the records of the Columbia Life & Trust Company to the home office and other expenses incident to transfer of the business.

The company has maintained a high interest earning on its investments, which have been largely in farm mortgages earning an average of better than 7 per cent interest, and expects to continue to get it as money rates are stiffening on farm mortgage loans, due to the fact that many of the large Eastern companies have withdrawn from the field.

REALTORS URGE SHORT HAUL

Resolution Asks Government to Use Columbia River Rail Route.

The Portland Realty Board, at its meeting Friday, passed a resolution introduced by Herman von Borstel, urging Oregon members in Congress to empshasize on the Government the great saving that can be made in time, expense and power by routing railroad freight down the Columbia River water-grade short haul. The resolution follows:

"Whereas, The Government of the United States wishes in this crisis to conserve rolling stock, motive power, trains, etc.; and

"Whereas, Great saving can be made in the fuel, rolling stock, wear and tear of engines, train crews, wastage in car time, wastage of locomotive power by using the down-hill haul along the Columbia River; therefore

"Be It, Resolved, That the Portland Realty Board request their Senators and Representatives in Congress to use every effort to the end that the artificial barriers that at present exist against Portland be done away with, and that the Port of Portland be supplied with all the tonnage that can be handled there."

HOTEL WILL BE ENLARGED

Addition to Cost $12,000 Planned for Centralia Hostelry.

CENTRALIA, Wash., Jan. 5.—(Special.)—A new addition, 30 by 102 feet in size and two stories in height, will be erected to the Hotel Wilson. Ground for the structure was broken this morning. The lower floor will contain two storerooms and six sample rooms, while the upper floor will contain 14 guest rooms.

Robinson Brothers, owners of the hotel, have awarded the contract to Charles Butz. The new addition will cost about $12,000, and the contract calls for completion within three months.

Adventists Build Church.

CENTRALIA, Wash., Jan. 5.—(Special.)—Work has been started on a new Seventh-Day Adventist church in Winlock. Much of the material and labor are being donated. The new church will be of the bungalow type, 24 by 40 feet in size, and will seat about 100 persons. Rev. Hugh Murrin, who was a constructing engineer before he entered the ministry, prepared the plans for the structure.

Phone your want ads to The Oregonian. Main 7070, A 6095.