

CHESTER TIMES – January 23, 1915 – LITTLE TALK OF NEW BUILDINGS –
Business Depression Has Made Things Look Gloomy for the Early Spring

The cold weather and inactivity of business conditions both are factors in the little discussion going on in reference to the building business for the year 1916. The same reports are coming into the big building centers from all parts of the country, and unless there is a marked change for the better in the industrial world within a short time, the prospects are none too good for the present year.

In this city, aside from the few buildings that were started early last year and are still unfinished, there is little new work. There seems to be the usual run of repairs, but the enterprises from which the contractors and lumber men expect to make their money are few. In fact, the week just closing has been exceedingly dull, but some of the builders attribute this to the cold weather and the uncertainty of the business outlook in general.

Chester last year had more homes erected than any year for a long time, but there is not the activity at the beginning of the present year as last, which causes some concern as to what amount of work will be done this year. It is understood that there are a number of good-sized enterprises projected and will be put through the coming spring and summer, if the money market is favorable, but there is little change expected in this direction until business gets better. When there is a lack of work for mechanics and others, funds for building are much harder to secure. Money is more plentiful for building purposes when the people are generally employed and there is a demand for more and better housing conditions.

TALK OF PLAYHOUSE – A new opera house on Market Street is among the probable buildings to go up this spring or summer. A large number of houses are booked to be erected in the First Ward, but with many of the tenants of present houses vacating to go elsewhere in the search of work it is not likely that the demand for more houses will be every pressing for the present, at least.

The contractor is hurrying along the finishing touches on the new Odd Fellows Temple, at Eighth and New Market Streets for Upland Lodge and the same condition exists with the Young Women's Christian Association building at Seventh and New Market Streets.

With the exception of the work on the plant of the Philadelphia Suburban Gas and Electric Company at the foot of Tilghman Street, there is not very much doing in the building line. Considerable activity is still manifested in the borough of Marcus Hook in the way of improvements for the American Viscose Company and several of the other large industries in that borough.

HELPED PAINTERS – Many of the owners of buildings over the city have taken advantage of the dull period to brighten up their properties inside and out, and this has kept the master painters and paperhangers pretty busy during the winter season.

Samuel Enion, who owns a fine property at Twenty-Third Street and Providence Avenue has made extensive improvements to his home. It will be a marvel of perfection for his family when the work is completed. This will be very soon, when Mr. Enion and his family will return from Atlantic City and take up their residence in this city again. The improvements on Mr. Enion's home were started last summer.

DEPRECIATION ONLY NINE PER CENT - Building operations throughout the United States for the year 1914, as indicated by the reports from 68 of the principal cities show a decrease of only 9 percent, as compared with those of the previous year. Up to

August 1, when the European War began, the construction work was almost identical in volume with that of the first seven months of 1913. The loss occurred entirely in the last five months of the year. The cause was apparent to everyone concerned in the building trades, namely, the disarrangement of the financial market.

Building operations, on account of the large units involved in this work, compared with most other industrial activities, are peculiarly sensitive to money conditions. The unfavorable comparison is, therefore, not an index of anything intrinsically reactionary in the building industry itself, but simply represents the insuperable obstacles in the way of activity. Thousands and tens of thousands of plans have been held back by the unresponsiveness of the banks, and this accumulated work will be renewed with the general casement of loans.

The official reports of building permits issued by 68 cities for the year 1914, received by "The American Contractor," New York, total \$634,177,323, as compared with \$697,594,916 for 1913. While the generality of reports are in harmony with the prevailing tendency, there are some exceptions. St. Paul shows a gain of 56 per cent for the year; Salt Lake City, 38 per cent; South Bend, 39; Seattle, 36; Denver, 34; Oklahoma City's totals make an enormous gain, on account of the new capitol building begun there.

December naturally made the poorest showing of the year, since by common consent new undertakings have been carried over into 1915. The December figures are \$34,310,848, as compared with \$53,661,519 for December, 1913, a decrease of 41 per cent – Builders' Guide.

Harry W. Koch, real estate broker, Drexel Hill and 1519 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, reports the sale of an improved property on Foss Avenue, Drexel Hill, Pa., and also one of Turner Avenue, at the same place to T. M. Meloy. He also reports the sale of a lot on Drexel Heights for J. P. Boyd.

The houses which are being erected by former Council Andrew J. Johnson at Ninth and Booth streets, are rapidly nearing completion. The dwellings are ornate structures and have all the modern conveniences. In the spring, Mr. Johnson will commence the erection of several additional houses. City Council recently opened Booth Street from Ninth to Eleventh Streets, and this, with the opening of Hewes Avenue, places streets through the Broomall property, which has been for years a stretch of undeveloped land.

LAW FOR GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS – The Master Builders' Exchange in Philadelphia, has received a letter from Congressman J. Washington Logue, stating that a sub-committee of which he is chairman, has taken up the question of adopting a new law relative to the bringing of suits for penalties under bonds filed by general contractors on Government contracts, and requesting the Exchange to furnish him with data concerning the laws on contractors' penalties in the matter of city contracts. Under the present laws on Government contracts, it is said, a sub-contractor cannot bring suit against the general contractor on the Government job, unless every other contractor on it joins in the suit.

The brick garage being built for T. Brooks McBride, in the rear of his property, at Third and Lloyd Streets, is progressing rapidly. The brick walls are about half way constructed. The garage will be as nearly fireproof as possible and will contain all modern automobile accessories.

Frazier Brothers have almost completed the three-story brick dwelling at Third and Lloyd Streets, being built for Dr. Joseph Dunn. Only the finishing remains to be applied and in a short time, the dwelling will be turned over to its owner for occupancy.

Work is being rushed on the improvements in the store on Third Street, near Edgmont recently leased by L. Federman. The back part of the store is being remodeled and the basement is being extensively improved.

SOME CITY WORK – Little or no work was done on the Hughes garage at Ninth and New Market Streets, the past week, owing to the weather conditions. The stone masons have the building up over one story high and with pleasant weather next week, it will be but a short time before the building will be ready for the roof.

Contractor Joel Phipps is making rapid progress on the Linski garage building at Ninth Street and Morton Avenue and the carpenters yesterday sheathed in the roof. Work will begin on Monday to finish the interior of the building and cement the floor.

Work on the seven houses at Morton Avenue and Hyatt Street, is practically completed. Contractor Loeper has one man at work placing hardware on the windows and the electricians are installing the bells and other electric wires. The houses are very attractive and improve the neighborhood.

Very few men are working on the Young Women's Christian association Home, Seventh and New Market Streets owing to the cold weather. It will be but a short time, however, before the heaviest interior work is completed.

The Lincoln Building, Eighth Street and Edgmont Avenue, is rapidly rounding into shape and it will be but a few days before the interior work is all completed. An extra force of workmen are employed and the heating system, which will be one of the finest in this city, is being installed.

The operations in the First and Second Wards were at a standstill last week, owing to the wet and cold weather. The workmen found it difficult to work on the rainy days and too cold when the clear weather made its appearance.

THE PENN THEATRE – Special pains have been taken by the management of the Penn Theatre to select a bill for this afternoon and evening, and in addition to the orchestra that will furnish music at both the afternoon and the evening performances, a fine line of pictures will be shown.

"The Speed King," a Thanhouser picture in two reels, will be a feature of today's show. The story is by Philip Lonergan and Arthur Ashley and Muriel Ostriche and the leading characters.

A Keystone comedy, entitled "Rum and Wall Paper," is a very funny production, which, with the addition of another excellent picture will complete today's bill at the Penn.