

California Stone Monument & Building Industry circa November 1909

“The West Coast”

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“San Francisco, Cal., Nov. 27. – Notwithstanding the comparative quietness of the last few months in general building work, there is about as much business being done in the line of structural stone as there ever has been in San Francisco, owing principally to the erection of a number of bank, lodge and club buildings, on which expense is not stinted. Marble for interior finishing purposes is again in fair demand, several contracts of considerable magnitude being just let, or in immediate prospect. The outlook in both departments is unusually good for a winter season, as quite a number of new jobs have come up within the last week.

“A marked revival is reported in the wholesale monument trade. Traveling men from the marble monument interests have been on the road for the last few weeks, and are sending in liberal orders, accompanied by highly encouraging reports. Retail dealers in the interior of California and the northern Coast state as a rule say that the past year has been a little below normal from their point of view. Nevertheless they have sold about all the large stocks they took on a few months ago, and in view of a better outlook are inclined to buy quite liberally. Business has been fairly good with most dealers in the immediate vicinity of San Francisco, and they consider the outlook for winter business very good. Most of the coast retailers are carrying fairly large stocks of granite, as well as marble, and the two lines seem to be running equally well.

“Monument dealers from San Francisco south to San Jose have been worked systematically during the past month by a swindler, who was safely landed behind the bars in the latter city of few days ago. His method was to select a monument, order it delivered to a neighboring cemetery, and insist on paying for it on the spot. He would then write a check for about \$25 above the amount asked, and pocket the change, after which he would quietly fade away. Being a plausible talker and well dressed, he succeeded in getting money from a number of dealers, and was only caught after a general warning had been sent out.

“Thomas Holmes & Son, of Pasadena, Cal., are now carrying a large stock of finished monuments in both marble and granite. They have installed a pneumatic plant, and do a great deal of their own finishing, especially in granite. They have an automobile for use in soliciting business, and are covering the adjacent territory energetically, with the result that they now have a number of large mausoleum and monument jobs on hand.

“The contract for marble for the interior of the San Francisco Hall of Justice has been awarded to the Vermont Marble Co. Numerous varieties of marble are to be used in this work, which is the largest job taken in this city for some time.

“J. Fred Williams, who has been covering the southwestern territory from the St. Louis branch of the Vermont Marble Co., has been transferred to the San Francisco office, and will look out for the trade in the northern district. The company now has a large plant in Tacoma, Washington, where it is getting considerable work, especially in its new Alaska marble.

“The Joseph Musto Sons-Keenan Co. reports business comparatively quiet, but with numerous small jobs and a few large contracts still unfinished, it is able to keep its large plant on North Point street in full operation. The most important contracts taken in the last month are for the main office of the Home Telephone Co., amounting to \$15,000, and the interior of a new building for the Claus Spreckels estate. The family of I. W. Hellman, the prominent San Francisco banker who died recently, have ordered a fine vault built by this company.

“The most notable job of marble work in prospect here is for the Pacific Union Club’s building, which will be the handsomest club house on the Coast. The building will be erected on the ruins of the brownstone Flood mansion at California and Mason streets, facing the Fairmont hotel, which will be remodeled and enlarged. The designing was done by Willis Polk, of D. H. Burnham & Co., and the interior will be finished in the styles of the best architectural periods. The baths in the basement will be copied from a famous Pompeian (sic) design, with a colonnade of Doric columns and paneled walls. The large halls on the first floor will also be finished marble with pilasters supporting a florid cornice and vaulted ceilings. The central court will be in light gray unpolished marble, with marble columns at the openings, in Italian renaissance style. The lounging room will be treated in the same style, with Corinthian pilasters. The entire job will involve a large amount of fine sculptural work. It is reported that some of the contracts have been let, but so far no definite information has been given out regarding the interior. Exterior stonework, repairs to the brownstone walls now standing, and erection of two additional wings will be carried out by the McGilvray Stone Co., of this city.

“The McGilvray Stone Co. has completed some of its local work, but with several large contracts still under way and the new club house to be started as soon as possible, there is still quite a rush of work. The yards have been cleared with some of the surplus material, and the force of workmen will be doubled as soon as possible. One of the most notable jobs, the granite column work for the Union Trust Co., is about completed, and stone is being set on the Hall of Justice and the Scottish Rite Temple.

“The Raymond Granite Co. is rushing the cutting of granite for the San Francisco Savings Union building, and as soon as the foundations are completed will begin setting the stone.

“Work is being carried forward actively at all the California marble quarries, and considerable material is being shipped to this city. While there is not at present much work on hand in which this material is being used, the dealers are anxious to accumulate large stocks before the heavy rains set in. Most of the quarries are at some distance from rail transportation, and it is sometimes impossible to get the material out during the rainy season.

“The Hercules Sandstone Co., of Tenino, Washington, is preparing to equip a large branch yard at Portland, Oregon, as its facilities in that city are becoming inadequate to handle the growing trade.

“The R. S. King Co., of Seattle, Washington, has purchased the townsite of Othello, Washington, from the Chicago, Milwaukee & Puget Sound railway, and will install a \$250,000 plant for the manufacture of slate products.

“G. B. Luce, a monument dealer of Sacramento, Cal., visited the trade in San Francisco early this month.

“Alaska marble is now being used to some extent as a monumental stone. It was at first regarded as a building material entirely, but the shipments recently brought here have included many blocks which were perfectly sound all through, and from which some very attractive monuments have been produced, as the material seems to be favorably received by the retail trade, it is expected the introduction of this material will cause considerable reduction in the amount of Italian marble used for monumental purposes on the Coast.”