

ST. JOHNS REVIEW
ST. JOHNS, OREGON

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Friday Evening, December 2, 1904

FIRE PROTECTION.

Jersey street and Broadway, for two blocks, on either side, will soon be built up solidly, and the question of fire protection is one to be promptly and seriously considered by the owners of property. As it now stands, let a fire break out at any point in the business center, and with a wind blowing, a conflagration would follow, resulting in its total annihilation. Nothing short of a miracle would save any buildings encompassed within the business district. While, perhaps, complete protection cannot at this time be secured, yet something should be done, and without any unnecessary delay. Say that two hydrants, one on Broadway and the other on Jersey street, with a few hundred feet of hose, would be of invaluable aid in case of fire, and would be the means of saving many thousands of dollars. A volunteer department could readily be organized, and in case of fire would be ready to put in execution means to save property. The cost of this equipment would not be great, and if the city is not in position to meet the expense, the funds should be raised by voluntary assessment, let each property holder pay an amount to be fixed by the value of the buildings he owns which would be benefited.

Another view of the question, and one of no mean importance, and that is the lessening of insurance rates. We are not advised just what reduction the underwriters would concede, but the amount saved in insurance premiums would go a long way toward paying for the equipment.

This is purely a personal business proposition with property-owners, and they should not hesitate to make some move in this direction without delay. We are assured by the superintendent of the water company that an ample force of water could be supplied, even with the present capacity of the plant, for serving hydrants. The Review urges the business men to take up this matter at once, as the danger is increasing daily.

A GOOD SUGGESTION.

In a communication in last week's Review from a correspondent, signing himself, "T. J. M.," a suggestion was made in reference to the neglect of the last resting place of St. Johns' greatest benefactor, the lamented James Johns. This idea is a good one, and The Review will do its part toward securing a suitable monument to mark the spot of the father of our city. It seems too bad that the matter should not sooner have received attention, but it is not too late yet. It is gratifying that the school children should be responsible for bringing the matter to the attention of our correspondent and the public, and as Mr. Johns bequeathed his entire wealth for school purposes, it is meet and proper that the school children should assume the task, aided, of course, by the adult members of the district. To this end The Review is formulating a plan by which the desired end may be accomplished, and every child of school age participate. In the next issue we will outline the plan, and will ask co-operation of all public-spirited citizens.

THE PUBLIC PARK QUESTION.

The Views of M. L. Holbrook on Present Needs.

The Review accosted M. L. Holbrook this week, in regard to the park question, and in an interview he made the following statement, which is full of timely hints and suggestions:

"If it can be shown that there is a definite and responsible public sentiment back of the suggestion of the purchase of the block in question for park purposes, and if it can be further shown that there is a reasonable prospect of a sufficient fund being raised with which to pay for same—I shall be glad to at any time meet with the authorized representative of the promoters and try to get together with them on common ground. I do not desire to stand in the way of any public betterment which the citizen

of St. Johns really want and can afford.

"Aside, however, from my ownership of the property in question, and speaking solely as a property owner and a taxpayer of St. Johns, I beg to express myself as being in great doubt as to the wisdom of agitating this question at the present time.

"St. Johns needs a great many things at this stage of its development. In my opinion it would be better to first secure the necessary public improvements, and then, when these are assured or well under way, go after those less imperative. Concentrate effort and available funds on one thing at a time, beginning with what is absolutely necessary. Afterwards, if public funds or private subscriptions are not exhausted, by all means secure all such public utilities as will add to the general beauty and attractiveness of the community. I shall, at the proper time, be glad to co-operate with others along these lines.

"At this particular time I believe there are other needs far more important. First, I would suggest the necessity of additional school facilities. This problem is now under careful consideration by the citizens of the town. Probably some satisfactory solution will be found, and provision for the school children be made. Until it is done and the matter settled right, I believe it is unwise to distract money and energy on side issues.

"There is another matter of the most vital importance: St. Johns, while making pretensions as a live, progressive, thriving young city, is absolutely without public highways, and practically without sidewalks. Jersey street, the main business thoroughfare, is a series of mud holes—and such sidewalks as it affords are those thrown together at varying elevations by the different business houses. It is universally admitted that the condition of the streets and sidewalks all over town are a disgrace to the town and a reproach to those who are charged with the duty of maintaining them.

"Until some solution of this matter is well under way and a system of thoroughfares established, that are usable, I am decidedly of the opinion that all talk of diverting public and private money and energy on such luxuries as city halls and city parks is at this time premature.

"Schools and streets are necessities. Parks are highly desirable, but the town can exist for a short time without them. It must, though, have the former or go out of business. The progress and growth of the town has been seriously retarded, and is now being retarded, by the failure of those in authority to meet the situation. Would it not be better for all concerned if every possible effort was made to the one end of street betterment.

"Would it not be wise to all pull for essentials and for the time being cut out non-essentials? It looks so to me, and I have talked with a good many conservative men who are interested in the growth of the town, who take the same view.

"However, as I first stated, if it can be shown that a substantial public sentiment, backed by some responsible assurance that the project can be carried out, exists in favor of the purchase of the land in question, I will waive my personal preferences, and consider any reasonable proposition that may be submitted."

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