

bridge would cost you, and it seemed that one company regardless of the number of bids or attempts to secure new bids, would have each time the lowest bid and eventually secure the contract."

The conditions that prevail in Minnesota are not peculiar to this state. Under date of March 31, 1915, the state engineer of an adjoining state wrote this committee in part as follows: "According to information that I have received from various sources, this is about how the bridge trust has been managing affairs in this state up to the present time. The leading contractors enter into an agreement or have an understanding. They apportion the counties among themselves, and when bids are called for, the contractor who 'owns' that county, submits the lowest bid, which is very much higher than it should be. The other contractors, just to make the thing look good, submit higher bids. Then the successful bidder pays the others enough to cover their expenses in submitting a bid. If the local so-called 'butter in' submits a lower bid than the contractor who 'owns' the county, a friendly board of county commissioners or of supervisors will reject all bids and call for new ones. Then the favored contractor submits a low bid and gets the contract. After he gets it the plans are changed to provide for additions, upon which a handsome profit may be made."

Only a few years ago the combine of bridge contractors became so notorious in the state of Ohio that quite a number of individuals and bridge companies, were indicted by the grand jury of Lima, Ohio, on the charge of "conspiracy against trade," convictions followed. The cases were carried to the supreme court and were affirmed by that court.

The Engineering News, commenting upon this case said: "A bridge pooling prosecution in the state of Ohio ended June 12th with pleas of guilty by eight bridge construction companies to the charge of conspiracy in restraint of trade. The prosecution was directed against a highway bridge 'pool' of a kind that has long prevailed in the business of building county and town bridges. The 'pool' contemplated the attendance of agents of some or all of the several companies at each letting at which the job would be awarded to one of the members in accordance with systematic allotment of work and adjustment of the several bids to suit. The bids being thus based on a secret understanding, they were made high enough to yield a normal profit to the company to whom the work was allotted and in addition yield a fixed amount to each of the other companies in attendance."

There was also a prosecution of the bridge combine in Illinois, convictions secured and fines aggregating \$7,000 paid. Louis H. Burrell, who conducted the prosecution, under date of October 21, 1914, wrote in part as follows: "The American Bridge company incorporated under the laws of the state of New Jersey, and covering practically all of the bridge companies in the west, had a regular pool agreement fixing the amounts to be paid to each concern which appeared at bridge lettings, and providing that the successful bidder should pay to the others stipulated amounts, and providing a schedule or scale of amounts to be so paid. As a result of these prosecutions the bridge companies subdivided themselves and in 1905 the bridge concerns in Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota and possibly some other states, had a contractors' pooling agreement whereby the territory in Illinois was parcelled out and it was known before hand who was to be the successful bidder in that territory upon each letting. A scale of pools was agreed upon to be paid to bidders who appeared at lettings for the purpose of making it appear that the letting was competitive. In this county I made a careful investigation of the records for a period of ten years, and it showed that the lettings all went to one concern; that the other bridge concerns had had representatives present, but in each instance bid higher than the concern to whom this territory was parcelled."

In the fifteenth biennial report of the state engineer of Colorado for 1909-1910, there appears the following: "For years there has existed a recognized pool among highway bridge contractors who divide the state into districts and allot one district to each contractor. Although there is a semblance of competitive bidding whenever a bridge is advertised, the low bidder in each such competition (?) is known in advance to the members of the pool and the others place their bids above his figures."

#### The Minnesota State Highway Commission and the Bridge Contractors.

There appears to be considerable friction between the engineers of the state highway commission and representatives of bridge contractors. A few years ago, nearly all plans and specifications for bridges were furnished

by the bridge companies, and at a letting of a single bridge contract, it was not unusual for half-a-dozen different plans to be submitted by as many different companies. There is no question but what bridge companies prefer this plan, or that it works to the disadvantage of the purchasers of bridges. It leads to confusion, as plans and specifications presented by the bridge companies are often indefinite, loosely drawn and uncertain. We believe, too, that the highway commission has been insisting upon the construction of a better class of bridge than were formerly built. This has somewhat increased the price paid for bridges, and has subjected the commission to criticism, and the bridge contractors have not been slow to take advantage of it. In fact, there is some evidence that much of the agitation against the state highway commission has been fostered, encouraged and prompted by interested bridge contractors. Formerly, there was no adequate inspection of bridge work while under construction. We believe the inspection made by the state is in the interest of the taxpayers of the state, and should be continued. Where the interest of the taxpayers and contractors conflict, it is easy to understand why the public official, who stands for the taxpayers, gains the enmity of the contractor.

These bridge contractors or their representatives are constantly coming in contact with village, township and county boards, and with the public generally, and it is an easy matter for them to suggest that the plans of the highway commission are too elaborate, that they call for the expenditure of too much money, that too much power has been taken from the local boards and is vested in the state commission, and that it would be a fine thing to return to the old system, and do away with all state control or supervision. There has been an opportunity to work up sentiment along this line, and it has not been neglected.

Bridges constructed under the supervision of the state highway commission during the last three or four years have cost more money than formerly, and are worth it. They are designed and planned to last and stand for many years to come. Bridge contractors have nothing particular to lose by the construction of bridges that will require to be replaced within a few years. One reason why bridges constructed under plans, specifications and inspection of the state highway commission have cost more, is because in some cases longer bridges have been required, than were the old bridges that were replaced, or than local boards considered necessary. Whether a bridge is 40-foot or 60-foot does not make a very great difference in the cost of the bridge but it does make a large difference in the amount of water that can pass away underneath. During the heavy freshets of 1914, there were a large number of bridges in Rock, Stevens and other counties that were washed away and largely because the spans were too short and insufficient vent given the water. It is interesting to note in passing, that of the bridges damaged by the floods of that year, there were but three bridges that had been constructed under the plans and specifications of the state highway commission.

#### The Remedy—Recommendations.

To assist in remedying the evil which we believe exists this committee has had and has introduced H. F. No. 1130 and H. F. No. 1131, to which we invite your attention.

House File No. 1130 permits town, village, city and county boards by resolution duly adopted, to make the state highway commission their agent for the purchase of bridge material. There are several reasons for this. It is fair to suppose that steel and cement for several hundred bridges can be purchased at a lower price if purchased under one contract by the state, than it can be purchased in small quantities by the different counties and municipalities. If there are to be 100 bridges constructed requiring 50-foot spans, the steel can be fabricated at one time by one rolling mill or foundry, and the work done more economically and at less price than under the present system. Is there any good reason why the cement that enters into bridge construction should not be purchased by the state direct from the manufacturer instead of the counties and municipalities being compelled to pay a profit on the same to the manufacturer, the wholesaler, the local dealer and to the contractor who constructs the bridge?

There is an even more important reason that may be advanced for the favorable consideration of this bill. From information gathered during this investigation, we are convinced that the most effective competition contractors in the bridge combine have is the local contractor. These local contractors are not always able to secure bridge material. Several instances have been called to our at-

tention where local contractors claimed they were unable to secure steel or that they were unable to compete with bridge companies in the combine because they could not purchase the material at as low a figure as those on the inside. We are satisfied that the purchase of the material by the authorities constructing bridges under the provisions of this bill or otherwise, and then advertising for bids for the erection of the bridge will give local contractors a much better opportunity and result in greatly increased competition and lower prices. In the counties where the combination has been broken up, it has been largely due to the local bidders. We earnestly recommend, that if this bill should not pass, county and town boards advertise for bids for material and construction separately, and if this is done, we are thoroughly convinced that it will go a long way towards breaking up the combine.

If steel for a large number of bridges is fabricated by one rolling mill or foundry, to be shipped upon requisition later, it can all be inspected and stamped at one time, lessening the cost of inspection.

If this bill should pass and a considerable number of municipalities and counties elect to take advantage of its provisions and place their orders for material in the late fall or early winter, it would also have a tendency to reduce prices, as this is a time of year when fabricating work is usually slack and when orders are eagerly sought.

The committee realizes that this bill advances a new proposition and owing to lack of time for consideration, it may not appeal to the good judgment of the house. But should it become a law and be generally used, we believe it will effectively dispose of the bridge combine and save many thousand dollars to the taxpayers of the state.

House File No. 1131 provides, that where the cost of any bridge to be constructed is \$500 or more, a copy of the published advertisement of the setting shall be mailed to the state highway commission at least twenty days before the date of such letting, and that the highway commission shall print lists of such bridge lettings, and furnish the same to interested parties upon application. We believe this will result in largely increased publicity, at a minimum cost to the taxpayers, and it will make a place where interested contractors can supply and secure a list of every bridge letting in the state.

We recommend, that as far as possible in transmitting the published advertisements of the bridge letting to the state highway commission, that plans and specifications of the proposed bridge accompany the same.

We recommend that as far as possible in the inspection work of 1915 and 1916, the state highway commission give the preference to bridge construction.

We recommend, that all bridges be constructed under plans and specifications prepared by some competent engineer and not by the bridge companies; that bids submitted and contracts entered into be in the standard form prepared by the attorney general or the state highway commission.

We recommend, that sufficient copies of this report be printed to supply one copy to each county auditor, county attorney, county commissioner and township clerk, and that the same be forwarded to the respective county auditors for distribution.

This committee has made an unbiased, impartial investigation of the subject entrusted to it by the house, and from the information secured, we are convinced that if local boards will make an honest effort to conform to the recommendations contained in this report, it will result in saving many thousand dollars to the taxpayers of the state.

O. H. Warner.  
J. E. Madigan.  
L. A. Lydiard.

#### School Report.

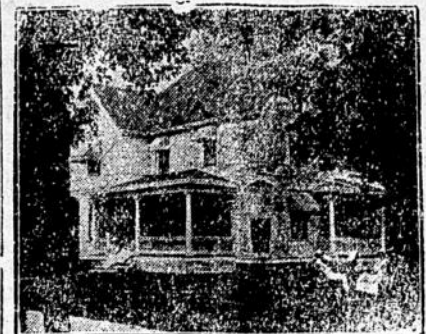
School report of district 31, Baldwin, for month ending April 2, 1915. Perfect attendance: Amelia and Harry Rossing, Julia and Matilda Peterson, Bertha and Vera Sanborn, Theodore Almborg, Mabel Hamilton, John Lane, Ruth Judkins and Mamie Anderson. Mabel Hamilton had a mark of 100 in spelling. Vera and Bertha Sanborn and Amelia Rossing had 99 in spelling.

Alma Johnson, Teacher.

Report of primary department of Oak Grove school for school month ending April 1. The perfect attendance pupils were Lillian Anderson, Lola Hamilton, Austin Henschel, Clarence and Edna Kennedy, Ruby Lane, Clarence Sanborn, Bennie and Charlotte Smithers and Hazel Heath. Valdemar Almborg, Edward and Earl Hamilton and Eldon Hetrick attended 19 days. Edna and Clarence Hamilton and Eldon Hetrick had an average of 100 in reading for the entire month. Edna Kennedy had 100 in spelling.

Ida May Schmidt, Teacher.

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(ESTABLISHED 1900)

A private institution which combines all the advantages of a perfectly equipped hospital with the quiet and comfort of a refined and elegant home. Modern in every respect. No insane, contagious or other objectionable cases received. Rates are as low as the most efficient treatment and the best trained nursing will permit.

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FRANCES S. COONEY, Supt.  
SELMA ANDERSON, Head Nurse.

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## ILIFF & FOLEY

WHEAT LAND—EASTERN MONTANA. 2,560 acres—93% Plow Land, 1,250 acres cultivated. 500 acres in winter wheat. Near Milw. Ry. 10 year terms. Immediate possession. Price on application. W. E. HOLT, MILES CITY, MONTANA.

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IT'S different from others because more care is taken in the making and the materials used are of higher grade.

**Black Silk Stove Polish**

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All we ask is a trial. Use it on your cook stove, your parlor stove or your gas range. If you don't find it the best stove polish you ever used, your dealer is authorized to refund your money. Insist on Black Silk Stove Polish. Made in liquid or paste—one quality.

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Sterling, Illinois

Use Black Silk Air-Drying Enamel on grates, registers, stove-pipes—Prevents rusting. Use Black Silk Metal Polish for silver, nickel or brass. It has no equal for use on automobiles.

**"A Shine in Every Drop"**

## HOFFMAN

### Oils Harness for \$1.00 a Set

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Time in the navy is marked not by hours, but by bells, just as in the merchant marine. The system of marking time by bells is very easy to understand once it is explained. Every four hours, 4, 8 and 12 o'clock, the ship's bell is struck eight times. At the end of the first half hour after each four hour period the bell is struck once, an hour afterward twice, and so on till the four hours are up, after which the preceding routine is begun over again. For instance, one bell in the forenoon is 8:30 o'clock, two bells 9 o'clock, three bells 9:30 o'clock, etc. In the afternoon one bell is 12:30 o'clock, four bells 2 o'clock, etc.

#### COURAGE.

Courage begets courage. Every brave deed one does makes it easier to do another. Every courageous act one witnesses prompts courage in ourselves.

## First National Bank

of Princeton, Minnesota.

Paid up Capital, \$30,000

A General Banking Business Transacted.  
Loans Made on Approved Security.

Interest Paid on Time Deposits.  
Foreign and Domestic Exchange.

S. S. PETERSON, President.  
T. H. CALEY, Vice Pres.  
J. F. PETERSON, Cashier.

M. M. Stroeter will conduct farm auctions either on commission or by the day.

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Cashier.

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We Handle the Great Northern Railway Co. Lands

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Highest market prices paid for Cattle and Hogs.

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