

Chicago Region Survey Shows Slump in July Building

Building in the Chicago suburban region slumped in July and no manner of comparison will soften the fact. It went down in a month when it should have gone up, if the Julys of 1935 and 1936 may be taken as indicators. It dropped in comparison with June of this year and with July of last year, though in every other month of this year suburban building has been greatly in excess of the corresponding month of last year.

The figures to be compared are \$2,586,729 for July, 1937; \$3,580,962 for July, 1936; and \$3,356,452 for June, 1937. Thus a falling off of nearly \$900,000 in the amount of permits issued is indicated, whether in comparison with last year or last month.

The only mitigating fact may be found in a couple of unusual jobs for which permits were issued in July, 1936, giving that month an exceptional total. These were the Wieboldt store in River Forest, for which the permit was \$610,000, and the church of St. Athanasius in Evanston, which cost \$150,000. But even if these are deducted from the total of July a year ago, the indication is still that there was less building this year in July than there was last year.

The classes of building in which the losses occurred are apparent. Last year in the month of July 175 new homes were started for which permits were issued to the amount of \$1,572,743. This year more homes were started but much cheaper ones on an average, that is 231 homes to cost \$1,524,054. The average cost of homes has been receding for some time, as this survey previously has pointed out. Repairs, alterations and additions to homes in July amounted to \$385,598, which compares with July 1936 permits for these purposes amounting to \$399,505. In July a year ago a considerable number of industrial permits were taken out and these amounted to \$739,775, while this July the industrial construction reported was only \$250,583.

The bright side of the picture is that home building is still proceeding on a grand scale. Though the amount contracted for in dollars and

cents fell off a little in July as compared with last year, one may find satisfaction in the fact that 1531 families have built suburban homes this year while in the corresponding months of last year only 847 families built. The cost of the homes for the seven months of this year was \$11,905,667 and last year \$6,123,538.

As to a reason for the slump in July, one prominent builder operating in Elmhurst, Glen Ellyn, Hinsdale, River Forest and other fine residential communities said that people contemplating building seemed suddenly to grow conscious of the overload the home builder is now expected to bear. Standing out most conspicuously is the 3 per cent sales tax added to the cost of all materials. This increases the cost of a \$10,000 home about \$200. Then there are the costs of old age and unemployment insurance, a total of 3 per cent, which the contractor must pass along this year to the person building a home. The building permit also will run as high as \$450 on a house of the value mentioned. State taxes are high, wages have reached new peaks and, although the lumber industries have stabilized their prices, the cost of materials still remains a serious obstacle. In spite of all these specifiers which make the prospective home builder lie awake at night and figure whether or not to take the plunge, builders in the suburban region feel that the need for homes is so great, the urge to own a home so strong and the earnings of so many families on the up and up that home building will continue on a satisfactory scale for several years.

The communities in which an exceptional amount of home building was started in July may be noted:

| | |
|------------------------|-----------|
| Wilmette, 10 homes | \$145,000 |
| Hammond, 24 homes | 94,000 |
| Gary, 43 homes | 30,000 |
| Beverly, 8 homes | 77,000 |
| Evanston, 13 homes | 74,000 |
| River Forest, 4 homes | 73,000 |
| Highland Park, 8 homes | 72,000 |
| Kenilworth, 5 homes | 70,000 |
| Glencoe, 4 homes | 69,000 |
| Riverside, 7 homes | 62,000 |
| Elmhurst, 8 homes | 58,000 |
| Aurora, 10 homes | 54,000 |
| Waukegan, 9 homes | 47,000 |
| Hinsdale, 2 homes | 45,000 |
| Palos Heights, 8 homes | 43,000 |

The home situation so dominates building that little else is found in the reports. However, Edward F. Ream of Aurora mentions a church for \$10,000; E. J. Friedrich of Des Plaines a \$9,500 remodeling job for a church and school; H. C. Bainbridge of East Chicago a \$7,000 building for Shell Petroleum; A. J. Nichol of Elgin a \$60,000 bathhouse and R. F. Munn of St. Charles a \$25,000 addition to the plant of the Roto-Color, Inc. E. F. High of Naperville notes an addition to the office of the Kroehler Manufacturing company, but does not give the amount, and S. D. Morris of Highland Park reports two steel and concrete residences of unusual design and construction.

Steel production rose 35 per cent; automobile production 12 per cent; residential construction 54 per cent; lumber production 8 per cent; electric power output 13 per cent; factory payrolls 29 per cent and factory employment 13 per cent.

Farm prices rose 18 per cent; construction costs zoomed 13 per cent; and department store prices upped 7 per cent. Stocks averaged 18 per cent higher and bonds 2 per cent higher.

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Death Toll Great in Spite of Grade Crossing Protection

Although more than \$70,000,000 has been spent in the federal program of grade crossing elimination and protection, fatalities at rail-highway crossings continue to mount, Charles M. Hayes, president of the Chicago Motor club, declared today.

"During 1936," he said, "a total of 1,768 lives were lost in grade crossing crashes, while nearly 5,000 persons were injured. The great volume of highway traffic and the greater speeds of both trains and automobiles during the past year undoubtedly were primarily responsible for the increase. However, last year's total was still far below the record of 2,568 grade crossing fatalities registered in 1928.

"At the present time, a total of nearly \$100,000,000 has been apportioned to grade crossing projects which are now under construction. These include 797 new separations, 138 reconstruction jobs and 345 protection projects.

"With appropriations for grade crossing elimination and protection now included in the regular federal-aid bills, the outlook for eventually bringing the number of grade crossing fatalities down to the very minimum is extremely good.

"Completion of the state highway planning surveys, now under way in forty states, will make possible the selection of grade crossing projects on a much firmer foundation of knowledge as to where the need is greatest from the standpoint of both train and motor vehicle traffic of the present and of the future.

"This, of course, is a long-range program. In the meantime, it behooves every motorist to exercise the utmost care and caution at all grade crossings. The records continue to show a surprising number of motorists who crash into the sides of trains sometimes even when the crossing is protected by lights, bells and gates. The time-tested slogan of 'Stop! Look! and Listen!' is still as important as ever."

D. A. R. BETTER FILMS REVIEW

"Michael O'Halloran." Cast: Wynn Gibson, Sidney Blackmer, Jackie Moran, Thursday, Aug. 19. A Gene Stratton Porter novel furnishes the plot for a heavily sentimentalized story of a selfish, shallow wife. While there is nothing wrong with the basic idea or the acting the emotional interpretation is of an outmoded type. The cast is good. Family.

"Horse Feathers." Cast: The Marx Brothers and Thelma Todd, Thursday, Aug. 19. A light comedy for the family.

"Pick a Star." Cast: Laurel and Hardy, Paty Kelly, Jack Haley, Friday, Saturday, Aug. 20-21. The plot employs the often used theme

of the country girl crashing Hollywood, assisted by her faithful swain. The theme song, creditably sung by Miss Rosina Lawrence, has a catchy melody. Adults and young adults.

"Hell's Angels." Cast: Jean Harlow, James Hall, Ben Lyon, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Aug. 22-23-24. The stage revives its finest offerings from time to time. But the outstanding motion pictures rarely return to the screen. This is a repeat, by request. Adults.

"The Great Gambini." Cast: Akin Tamiroff, Mariaro Morish, John Trent, Genevieve Tobin, Wednesday, Thursday, Aug. 30-31. A murder mystery for adults and young adults.

Feature No. 2—"Big Business." Cast: Jed Prouty, Spring Byington, Shirley Deane, Wednesday, Thurs-

day, Aug. 30-31. A delightful and typically American Jones family becomes involved in a get-rich-quick scheme, which has to do with oil wells. This series should prove very popular, it is homey entertainment, humor, romance and situations familiar to all. Family.

The average distance traveled daily by all steam passenger locomotives, except those undergoing repairs, owned by Class I railroads, was higher in 1936 than any year on record, the average being 174 1/2 miles.

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A chat with The MILWAUKEE..

RESIDENT: Yes sir, the Milwaukee was one of our early settlers. Guess it's done a lot of business out of this territory.

R. R. MAN: And it has brought a lot to this section. Don't forget that the Milwaukee is a home town industry.

RESIDENT: I know it is the way to market and it brings back goods on dollars buy, but how is it a "home town" concern?

R. R. MAN: For one thing it has a large investment here in tracks and buildings, and it renders essential service to this community.

RESIDENT: That's right, and I know it employs residents of every town along its lines.

R. R. MAN: Yes, it employs tens of thousands in the hundreds of towns it serves, and it paid them over 48 million dollars in wages last year, which they spent locally for food, clothing, fuel and other necessities, and for taxes.

RESIDENT: I guess you are right. The Milwaukee Road surely is a "home town" industry and we in this town can help ourselves by giving it our support.

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