

"Politics", "Mining" and "Mexico" all Settled in this Number

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What Is the Truth About Utah Asphalt?

That is the question. What is the truth about Utah Asphalt? If there be a natural product in this state capable of being employed as paving; if it is good material and can be prepared and laid at even a little more than out-of-the-state material would cost; if it will not only "look good," but will present wearing qualities under city traffic—then Utah asphalt ought to be used wherever in Utah asphalt paving is employed.

If, on the other hand, Utah asphalt is not capable of being successfully employed in city pavement, then the people ought to know that, and they will—regrettably, maybe, but certainly—drop the subject. Mr. Cook, author of one of the articles presented below, mistakes the position of the Weekly. The paper never has urged the Commercial Club or the Manufacturers' Association, nor any one else, to boost an inferior or a worthless product. We have asked only for a discussion that would settle the question once and forever.

There is the whole question: Is Utah asphalt practically usable? If so, then let's use it. If not, let us know the truth and drop an old, a vexing and a useless contention.

THIS IS ONE SIDE.

Salt Lake City, Utah, Oct. 20, 1913.

Mr. Leroy Armstrong,
Editor, Goodwin's Weekly,
Salt Lake City, Utah.

Dear Sir:—Your editorial of the 18th inst., relative to Utah Asphalt is before me. Its purport impels me to think you want for yourself, and the people of Salt Lake, more light and the truth on that subject, and perhaps in a measure my remarks herein will enlighten you,—at least they may serve for the basis from which you may start either to substantiate or disprove my statements.

Utah Asphalt is, to start with, a misnomer, for aside from the asphalt that oozes from the great Salt Lake bed near Promotory and some small and negligible seepages in the vicinity of the asphaltic sand beds in the coal producing countries, no such thing as asphalt or asphaltum in its comparatively pure state so far has been discovered—the product you are writing about is the one that contains about 90 per cent sand and about 10 per cent of asphaltum, and of the 10 per cent of asphaltum that binds the sand-particles together. Only a part has any genuine cementing quality, and the remainder is merely a light volatile oil without any binding effect. I have made frequent examinations of the Utah Rock Asphalt—this nine-tenths sand product, that is being imported to Salt Lake—as it is being laid on Seventh East Street and towards which there has been much adverse criticism directed, and it is but fair to the contractor to point out that he has not only used the product that the chief boosters of Rock Asphalt have for sale, but he took over and has used the identical machinery or plant both for crushing and heating preparatory to laying the material on the street that had been selected and brought to Salt Lake by them for that identical purpose, and I have witnessed, as have scores of other people, the many trials of differing temperature that have been made by the contractor at the suggestion of the interested producers of Rock Asphalt or their friends. When a contractor furnishes a large bond guaranteeing the maintenance of his work for five years, it is not only absurd, but it is unfair to accuse him of plotting to put a large crimp in his own bank account by ruining the material specified in his contract.

What has been overlooked in the treatment of the Sunnyside and Thistle product is the fact that of this 10 per cent of bitumen or asphalt, a part is only non-cementing oil, very volatile even at low temperatures, and after the crushed Rock Asphalt is heated what it really requires is more refined or pure asphalt added to it to assist in binding the sand particles together.

Your statement that "there are in Utah mighty deposits of pure asphalt" is entirely out of accord with the facts. If any such condition prevailed there would

be no difficulty about its covering the home field and also a large territory in the adjacent states.

The Utah public, in common with yourself, have been widely and persistently misled in this matter and chiefly by men who have never been directly associated in laying a square yard of bituminous pavement.

Your editorial insists that the Manufacturers Association and the Salt Lake Commercial Club should lend their weight and countenance to the Rock Asphalt propaganda, if it is all that its sponsors claim for it. Would it not be well to stop and consider that already several hundred thousand dollars worth of Rock Asphalt pavement is under contract? And so far as it has been laid, it looks as though it may prove a highly expensive experiment, both to the contractor and eventually to the property owners. But aside from that why should either the Manufacturers Association or the Commercial Club pledge their members and use their publicity organizations as a club to kill off other genuine construction and manufacturing interests of Salt Lake City or to foist a less meritorious pavement upon the tax payers?

Recently a contract has been entered into with the Utah Oil Refining Company of North Salt Lake to furnish the refined asphaltum used in the wearing surface of the pavement to be laid on Eleventh East and Yale Avenue. The Utah Oil Refining Company have an investment of \$400,000.00 in their plant and they have a large steady payroll which helps to build up our city, and further they manufacture a first-class refined asphalt or paving cement that meets every scientific test. The Burton Manufacturing Company, another local manufacturer, will also furnish bitumen for pouring the crushed stone base. Why should the Manufacturers' Association seek to discriminate against them and in favor of a so-called "Utah Rock Asphalt association" that has not collectively spent \$10,000.00 in developing their properties in Utah in the past ten years? What merit is there in importing a 90 per cent sand product into Salt Lake at a cost of nearly \$5.00 per ton, when we already have plenty of better graded sand for asphalt paving at home? Why should other types of pavement that use Salt Lake manufactured products, Salt Lake sand, and the product of the Salt Lake stone quarries, and employ Salt Lake labor, be discriminated against by either the Commercial Club or the Manufacturers' Association? Do you think that the members of either of these organizations know that Rock Asphalt can be readily secured in a score of different places in the United States, but notwithstanding its use has for the past fifteen years constantly diminished? The best Rock Asphalt street that we have, namely a portion of West Temple, came from Carpinteria, California, but today in California, the natural rock asphalt yardage being laid is almost negligible.

There must be some good reason for this, Mr. Editor, and the true explanation of its diminishing yardages surely cannot be attributed to any local plot.

Whatever the merits, or de-merits, of Rock Asphalt, the truth is that to the reduction of paving prices in Salt Lake are attributable a ruinous war of extermination among contractors, not only with relation to paving, but also to other types of public work and under which contracts have been taken at cost, and in many cases below cost, and as a result of which bidders are being eliminated from the competitive field. For any set of men or producers of Rock Asphalt to assert otherwise is mere buncombe.

I am, Respectfully yours,

C. A. COOK.

THIS IS THE OTHER SIDE.

Editor Goodwin's Weekly.

I have greatly enjoyed reading the comments of Goodwin's Weekly on the subject of Utah rock asphalt. I agree with the expressed view that now is an opportune time to determine whether or not the streets of Salt Lake City and of other Utah cities shall be paved with a product native to the state. If the question concerning this proposition is to be answered affirmatively, it will depend upon three favorable phases—namely: quantity, quality and availability.

Let us consider the question of quantity first. The statement is frequently made that one county of Utah—Carbon county—has sufficient natural rock asphalt to make a road 1,000 feet wide around the earth. While I believe the truth of this statement, I don't care whether it is true or not. It is not necessary to have a road 1,000 feet wide anywhere, and the ocean certainly does not need paving, however desirable such a condition might be to the sea-sick man. No informed person will deny that Utah has enough rock asphalt to pave all the streets of Utah and have plenty left to pave the streets of neighboring states, as far as freight rates will possibly permit. Either of three counties will do this—Carbon, Uintah, or Wasatch—and the three of them will do three times as much.

While there are few who will doubt the immensity of Utah's deposits, some have questioned the quality of the product, and of this phase it is well to present a few facts.

Most of the large cities of Europe, including London, Berlin and others, pave their streets exclusively with rock asphalt, and it will not be questioned that such streets are put to a severe test in the way of traffic. Now, if Utah has a natural asphalt equal to the kinds used in Europe, surely it should answer every purpose for local paving.

Mr. Boorman, an authority on asphaltum lays particular stress on the immense deposits of Utah, and mentions the fact that it is composed of an exceedingly fine sand of uniform size, a chief requisite for successful paving.

Not many streets of Salt Lake are laid with natural