

BENEFITS OF NEW BUILDING CODE SET OUT

Building Supervisor James H. Yeaman Gives Summary of Important Features.

The result of months of hard work, and comprising 236 pages, the new building code of the city of Nashville will be passed on final reading at the regular session of the board of commissioners next Tuesday morning. In the preparation of this measure a large number of citizens, experts in their respective lines, co-operated with Commissioner George J. Tompkins and Building Supervisor Jas. H. Yeaman, and it is regarded as one of the best building codes ever enacted in the United States. In fact, in an article prepared by Building Supervisor Yeaman, and comprising an account of building laws enacted in Nashville in the past, and a summary of the features of the pending ordinance, he states that he is sure that the new building code "will be recognized as the best in the United States, and a standard of reference by cities of much more pretension than ours."

Mr. Yeaman's article, which was prepared for The Tennessean and American, is as follows:

"Quite a bit of history of interest to the building interests and the citizens of Nashville is to be found in the tracing out of this important subject as it wends its way through the different city digests, beginning with the famous article of the general assembly of North Carolina, passed April 19, 1784, establishing the 'town of Nashville,' on the bluff adjacent to the 'French Lick.' Among other queer items, it proceeds to provide for the erection of buildings and inspection and measuring of lumber and other building materials. Thus in 1848 we find ourselves with a building law of three or four lines of reading matter, and proceed to erect a great city, with a mayor and six aldermen, and corporate limits beginning at the mouth of Lick branch, thence west with said branch to Summer street, thence north to Line street, thence east to the Cumberland river, to the beginning point at the mouth of Lick branch.

"From time to time boundaries are increased and building laws are enacted, until we have a metropolis with a (proposed) building code of over 300 pages, not only up to date, but ahead of date.

"Resuming the thread of history, I find that the second digest of laws prepared by Hon. W. A. Glenn in 1854 has two pages of building laws, controlling the erection of wooden buildings and erection of chimneys; also the digest of 1865 by the same compiler, which provides that the city engineer shall lay out the lot for anyone proposing to build a home and he is to charge a fee of \$2 therefor. His honor 'the mayor' is building inspector, under this digest.

"Then we have Lellyett's digest of 1872 and three pages of building laws called 'Fire Regulations' and describing a fire district from the river at the mouth of Broadway to Spruce, to Cedar, to Vine, to Line, to College, to Locust, to Front, to the river and to the beginning.

"Next we have the McAllister digests of 1875 and 1881, in which a board of building commissioners is created, consisting of the mayor, the fire marshal and the president of the board of aldermen, with a building law covering about five pages.

"In 1885 we have the Bradford digest, with its seven pages of building laws, the same board of building commissioners to administer; in 1888 the Taylor digest, with eighteen pages of building laws, and the same administration; also the Waller digest of 1893, with its twenty-two pages of building laws. Next we have Price & McConico's digest of 1901, with its twenty-seven pages of building laws, with a board of building commissioners consisting of the mayor, chief of police and chief of fire department, and one of those 'orful animals,' a 'building inspector'; and now the fun begins, for 'we' are 'some city' set upon a 'bluff.'

"Then comes the first real building code of 1906, perpetrated by Charles A. Ferguson and Robert Sharp of the architects, S. H. Bowers and J. W. Patrick of the carpenters, W. N. McDonald and Fred Fuller of the concrete manufacturers, 'Bob' Elliott and Joe Fuleher of the brick contractors, J. F. Fox and William Grewar of the plumbers and Col. A. Tillman Jones of 'hot air fame.' After many tribulations, these worthies handed down to posterity a real good building code, with the earmarks and footprints of each of them thoroughly imprinted therein. This code became a law on October 12, 1906, and did much good in the handling and control of building and building construction within our city, and the benefits leaked out as far as Brentwood, Paradise Ridge and Sllpup.

"During the succeeding three years many

changes were made and new ordinances enacted, and in 1909 another code or the assembling and compilation of the then existing building ordinances was made by B. J. Hodge; and our last digest, the McAllister and Smith digest of 1908, contains the above ordinances. Then comes the 1914 building code by Edward Laurent and James H. Yeaman.

"All of these steps have been taken with decided improvement, noticeable not only in the laws themselves, but in the mode and manner of building and construction.

"We are now up to the new building code, which is on its third and final reading before the board of commissioners, and will doubtless become the building code of the city of Nashville by the time the ink is dry on the paper you put this on. This code, I am sure, will be recognized as the best in the United States and a standard of reference by cities of much more pretensions than ours. I say this because I have in my files copies of the building codes of every city of over 60,000 population in the United States.

"We have had the best talent in the south in conference and committee meeting, night after night, for the last four or five months, delving deep into the minutest details, in order that a perfect code should be had. Members of the Engineering Association of the South, experts from Vanderbilt university and the national board of underwriters, government experts, Nashville architects and contractors, material men and furnishers, real estate agents and property owners, representatives of other cities and interests have come, advised, criticized, and without exception have complimented this code. Commissioner Tompkins and the co-workers selected by him have left no stone unturned and spared neither time, thought nor energy to get the very best, and he is to be congratulated on the work accomplished.

"Now then to the milk in the coconut—for your request is not only for the bit of history just given, but general outline of the details of this ordinance—so here goes.

"This is a remedial ordinance, and is to be construed liberally, in order to obtain the beneficial interests and purposes thereof. It defines the fire zones, which are five in number, and specifies the class of buildings which may be built in each zone; provides for the inspection of buildings and structures, the boilers, elevators and electrical works; the filling of plans and specifications for approval before issuance of permits to construct or erect; defines the duties of the supervisor and inspectors and a board of appeals, consisting of an architect, a structural engineer and a practical builder, this board to sit as a court on appeals from orders and decrees of the supervisor and inspectors.

"Provisions are also made for control of the piling of materials and use of streets and thoroughfares in the construction of buildings. Bonds are demanded in all cases where constructors use the streets and public thoroughfares, or erect signs, awnings or marquise. Very comprehensive definitions of the terms and words used are also contained in the measure.

"A special fire retarding zone is created where only buildings constructed of fire-retarding construction may be erected. Buildings throughout the city are classified, from the chicken house to the pretentious skyscraper, with the class of materials and construction permitted therein. The works of excavation and foundation are all properly provided for, and the adjoining property is to be protected during the execution of such works. The class, kind and manner of constructing walls is carefully arranged and safeguarded; heights of buildings and areas for light and ventilation, with allowable loads for all classes of floors and buildings; means of egress from all structures, including fire escapes, smoke-proof towers and stairways; the tests, quality and weights of materials and working stresses; the tables and descriptions being very carefully prepared and approved.

"Then we have cast-iron construction, steel construction, concrete construction, wooden construction, and all the fire-retarding formulae and constructions known to the market, suggested or approved by the experts on the committee; roofs and roof construction in all phases and branches; fire doors, fire windows and fire shutters, protection of vertical openings, shafts, etc.; vaults, arcways and projecting structures, mill construction, fire-proof construction and fire-proofing; pressed steel construction, fire tests of construction, chimneys, flues and heating apparatus; the raising, altering, repairing or removing of old buildings; standpipe requirements, sprinkler requirements, construction and equipment of theaters, construction and equipment of moving picture theaters, with all modern requirements for the safety and convenience of the public in all classes of buildings where people congregate, room or sleep; hotels, apartment houses, flats, schools, auditoriums, assembly halls, etc.; the construction of public garages, storage and handling of gasoline or other volatile, inflammable liquids.

"Buildings for dry cleaning and structures of similar class are all to be fire-proof and removed to a safe distance from any other house or structure. Signs, sign bulletins, billboards, awnings, marquise, fences and tents are all provided for and safeguards placed around all. Special protection for workmen and the public in manner of scaffolding is also remembered. A very comprehensive tenement house law is also provided. Laws for the inspection and installation of electrical wiring apparatus and equipment are embraced in the ordinance. The inspection of boilers, elevators and heating plants and installation of same is very carefully provided for, and in fact all matters relative to buildings, structures and equipment of same, with the exception of plumbing and smoke inspection, is included in this code of 236 pages of closely typewritten matter.

"This ordinance is to take effect on Jan. 1, 1917, with the exception of the provisions prescribing zone limits and relating to signs and billboards and heating plants, which take effect from and after its passage."