

Regenhardt Firm Delivered Wet Concrete to Site 44 Years Ago

The Regenhardt Construction Co. of Cape Girardeau delivered wet concrete to construction sites 44 years ago, Ted R. Regenhardt, now postmaster here, recalled today.

It is believed to be the first company in the United States to follow the wet concrete plan, with the product moved directly from a central mixing center to the point to be poured. The central mix method is now almost universally used.

Edward F. Regenhardt headed the company, and conceived the idea of mixing the concrete at a plant and hurrying it out in trucks to the place the forms were to receive it.

It was almost a comical scene, Ted Regenhardt recalls, when the method was first used. It was in Poplar Bluff, where the Regenhardts were building paved streets, in 1922.

The firm bought eight small Ford trucks and these were quickly fixed up to handle small loads of the heavy concrete. The little trucks would often tip over, and once the senior Mr. Regenhardt was riding beside the driver when the truck went over. He was a giant of a man, and part of the truck and the driver fell on him.

The trucks had manually operated dump units, and the driver had to yank a lever to trip the load. When it went, it rushed off with a big splash. But the trucks worked. Their load was only a half cubic yard. The machines had to move quickly to the scene, so the cement did not set up and pose a problem. The early day trucks, stripped down, cost only about \$350 each.

The plant first used by the Regenhardt firm was a mere three-bag unit. The batches stirred and put into the small trucks were small, but the crews worked hard and soon could make a block of paving. A wooden hopper was used in the plant.

The company made its big start at street paving in Poplar Bluff, then branched out and handled large street jobs in Chaffee, Kennett, DeSoto and other district towns, with some jobs also in Cape Girardeau.

The company went into the highway building program a little later, and paved main highways near Cape Girardeau and elsewhere.

Edward F. Regenhardt, who headed the construction company, died in Cape Girardeau in 1926. He was a son of Wm. Regenhardt.

Edward Regenhardt started his career in St. Louis—learning to be a brickmason and learning

Academic Hall of the State College in 1904. It remains as a bit of near perfect building accomplishment, located as it is on the high ground of the campus. Stone for the big building was quarried here.

He also built the Chamber of Commerce building here, constructed as the first main building for The Missourian. He constructed the Park Theater, now the Salvation Army headquarters, part of the Rueseler Motor building on North Fountain, and many dwellings of the Cape Girardeau community.

Ted Regenhardt recalled a comical incident of the early days, in Cape Girardeau. The company was putting down concrete for a street and retaining wall on North street. Ted was helping his father boss the job. Ted was young and slender, and hardly made the impression with the workers that his father could.

It was raining, and men would hold a large tarpaulin over the work scene, to keep the water from ruining the cement as it was finished. Ted asked a big worker to do a certain thing, but the man became belligerent, and refused to perform.

At the moment Mr. Regenhardt came up. He went beneath the tarpaulin with the man and fists started to fly. The tarpaulin heaved and concrete flew into the air. Some acid type comments were thrown in. All work ceased, but the rain kept coming down.

Finally Boss Regenhardt landed a telling hook with his big arm, and everything got quiet.

Then Mr. Regenhardt instructed the worker that the word of the foreman was always final on the construction jobs. The man rubbed the water and cement from his face and said he wanted to go ahead working with the crew.

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Edward Regenhardt started his career in St. Louis—learning to be a brickmason and learning the work there. He was an apprentice as a mason with the former mayor of St. Louis, Henry Kiel, and other men. These two worked at the trade, then branched to other things.

Mr. Regenhardt's sons were the late Wm. K. Regenhardt, Ted R. Regenhardt and Edward Regenhardt, who lives at El Cajon, Calif. He is with the U. S. Navy. All the sons had worked for the construction company.

The senior Mr. Regenhardt was named U.S. marshal for eastern Missouri in 1910, being appointed by President Wm. H. Taft. It was said he made an impression as an officer, being a hefty man and towering 6 feet 7 inches.

As a contractor he had built