

# The Shoe and Leather Fair Building

Description of the Handsome Building Erected on the Banks of the Charles River, in the City of Cambridge, for an Exposition of Shoes, Leather and Kindred Trades

**L**AST Thursday evening, amid a blaze of electricity that lighted up the surrounding country for miles, the first world's shoe and leather fair was opened in the presence of a large number of people who had been invited by the management to attend the dedicatory exercises. Those who had not visited the building before it was dedicated, and who knew of the project simply from the trade journals and the advertising literature sent out by the Fair Company, were surprised at the mammoth size of the structure.

## Short History of the Project.

Because of the general interest in the Fair it is well, before presenting a description of the building, to give a short history of the enterprise. While the project was not announced until October 1, 1906, the idea had been conceived more than five years previous to that date. Some time after October, 1906, a site for the building was secured on the Charles River Embankment, in the city of Cam-

bridge. The building is one-third larger in floor area than the big Madison Square Garden in New York City and is only excelled in area by the large Temple at Salt Lake City.

The building has five domes, one each to represent America, Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia, and is two stories high, except under the monitor roof and main dome. The main dome is 125 feet high from the ground floor of the building. Under this dome is a circle theatre—an entirely new feature in exposition buildings—with a seating capacity of approximately 3,000. A stand on the ground floor directly under the main dome is arranged for a large band of musicians, which will be in attendance every hour during the time the fair is open.

## The Ground Floor.

As one enters the main entrance of the building there is noticed the floor exhibits and display cases at the right and left, and also the display cases arranged under the center dome. The display cases on the ground floor meas-



EXPOSITION BUILDING OF THE FIRST WORLD'S SHOE AND LEATHER FAIR CO.

bridge, contracts were let for the construction of the building and the work of excavating for the foundations started. When this work had progressed to a certain stage it was learned that the contractors were not doing their work according to specifications and the City of Cambridge ordered the work stopped until the specifications had been complied with. This tied up the work for a time, resulting in the contractors abandoning the job.

At this time the country was in the midst of the business panic, and for this and other reasons it was determined to postpone opening the fair in July, 1908, as it was originally intended, until July 1 of this year. A new contractor was secured to complete the building and from that time until the opening of the fair on Thursday last, work was rushed to have the building completed on schedule time.

## A Beautiful Exposition Building.

It was no small task to plan a structure suitable for the best display of boots, shoes and leather and kindred products, and this part of the work was only accomplished by a thorough study of the conditions and demands of each and every branch of the business. The building is of steel and concrete, 500 by 200 feet in ground area, or covering approximately four acres of land, including the grounds that surround it on four sides. In point of size the expo-

sition building is one-third larger in floor area than the big Madison Square Garden in New York City and is only excelled in area by the large Temple at Salt Lake City.

The sample rooms on the ground floor, which measure 6 x 14 feet and 7 feet high, are finished in mahogany, with appropriate fixtures on the inside for displaying and selling shoes. The rooms are lighted and ventilated from the top. In these display cases and sample rooms exhibitors will display the finest product of the shoe and leather manufacturers' art. The installation of the display cases alone is estimated to have cost at least \$75,000.

## Shoe Factory Exhibit.

On the ground floor, occupying a space of 10,000 square feet, is a working exhibit of The United Shoe Machinery Co., which is one of the most interesting and educational features of the fair. This exhibit is a complete shoe factory in actual operation, showing every step in the manufacture of a medium-grade welt shoe, from the assembling of the materials to the finished shoe. The work of making shoes is explained by experienced representatives of the company, who are always present to perform this service for visiting shoemen. In connection with this exhibit the company issues an invaluable booklet explaining all the processes of construction, and it is

so comprehensive that it will serve as an illustrated text book for every visitor to keep for future reference.

On this floor are also found some of the largest exhibits of leather and leather working machinery, where the processes of making leather may be observed.

#### The Second Floor.

On the second floor, on the balconies overlooking the exhibits on the ground floor, are arranged the retailers' exhibits, representing sample pairs of shoes loaned by retailers in different parts of the country for the purpose of showing visiting dealers just what styles are in demand in these sections. These exhibits were arranged for in this manner: A dealer from each 50 or more different cities and towns contributed from their stocks samples of different grades and styles. These shoes are displayed in special cases, made of plate glass and mahogany, 2 x 6 x 4 feet high, representing the dealer's respective city or town, with the dealer's name and selling price attached to every shoe. Half a hundred American cities are represented, showing footwear of the hour, quality of leather and trimmings, shapes of lasts, styles, and heights of heels, weight and trim of soles, etc.

On the roof of the building is a promenade that encircles the entire structure and from which an unexcelled view can be had of many interesting places in and about

Boston. Here, too, is a beautiful roof garden, under the management of an experienced firm of caterers.

#### Retailers' Assembly Hall.

Mention should also be made of the retailers' assembly hall, on the second floor of the building, and of the salesmen's social hall. In the retailers' assembly hall business men connected with the shoe and leather business are expected to hold daily sessions for the consideration of important matters pertaining to the business. It is also planned on certain days during the fair to have representative retailers address visiting shoemen on matters relating to the retail shoe business.

The quarters for the traveling and other salesmen are most commodious and comfortable and are to be used exclusively by them.

The Shoe and Leather Fair will be held during the month of July. For the rest of the year it will be the scene of such exhibitions as automobile shows, motor boat exhibits, horse shows and also national conventions of the various orders.

There could scarcely be a more ideal location for an exposition. The building fronts upon the magnificent new Charles River basin, which is being created at a cost of several millions of dollars, and its wide and beautiful sweep of water helps to make the site of the fair building one of the coolest in this part of the state.

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