

ed at a low cost, to meet the increasing needs of commerce and shipping. A dock or system of docks sufficient to accommodate the shipping at the time it was built, might be found to be inadequate and obsolete within a comparatively short term of years, a complete re-arrangement being then necessary.

With timber structures, this transformation or reconstruction is a simple, rapid, and economical undertaking; it is difficult and costly with structures of stone, concrete, steel, etc. The use of concrete piles, reinforced concrete sub-structures or similar forms of construction, therefore, would not only have resulted in high first cost of construction, but the difficulty and expense incidental to the periodical removal, reconstruction, or expansion of dock structures of this type, as necessitated from time to time by the growth of shipping, would have rendered harbor construction work, as a revenue-producing municipal investment, practically impossible, and, consequently, would have greatly retarded the development of the harbor.

Types of Pier Construction.—The United States Government, by virtue of its power to control all navigable waterways in the country, established along the entire water-front or shore line of New York Harbor two lines: one the bulkhead line, which limits the extent outshore of the solid filling or reclaimed land under water; the other, the pierhead line, which determines the limit to which piers may extend beyond the bulkhead line. These piers must be of such construction that the free flow of the tidal water shall remain uninterrupted.

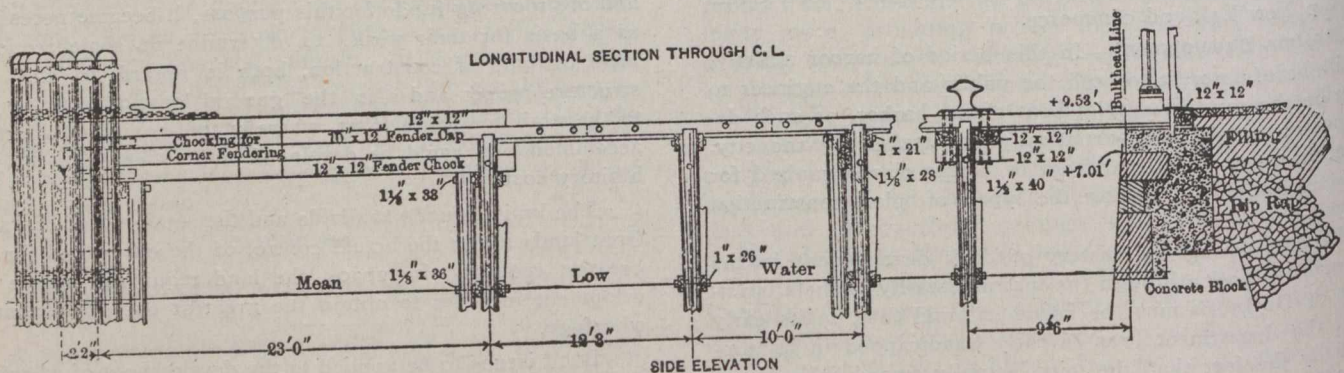


Fig. 1.—Detail of Single Story Reinforced Concrete Deck.

ed by the supporting columns. This construction, being a condition wisely insisted on by the Government to preserve tidal conditions and currents, governs, to a great extent, the handling of vessels, particularly of large ones, and affects the sanitation of the city, in that it prevents the accumulation of sewage and refuse which would occur in closed slips. With open slips, such matter is carried away by, and disseminated in, the tidal flow. All pier construction is limited to the area included between the bulkhead and pierhead lines.

The pier which meets these requirements, and was adopted by the city in its early history as the type of structure for berthing vessels (and also adopted by all private and corporate interests), is a wooden structure throughout, consisting of a deck resting on piles driven into the mud or hard bottom. The physical features of the harbor, the geological formation of the bottom, and the condition of the water, fortunately permit the adoption of this type of construction, which, in many other parts of the world, is not adaptable because the life of the timber itself in the water would not be permanent or fairly long-lived. Wood-boring animals, the teredo, limnoria, etc., are very little in evidence, and, therefore, wooden piles are practically permanent below the water-line in almost all parts of New York Harbor.

The prominent objectionable feature to wooden pier construction is the expense necessitated by the constant repairs of the deck sheathing and the continuous wear and tear of the fender system extending along the sides and outer ends of the piers. As to the remainder of the structure, piles, floor system, etc., its maintenance and repair is very economical and consists generally in the replacement, from time to time, here and there, of decayed portions of the timber above mean low water only, at inconsiderable expense.

Until seven or eight years ago, the piers were generally built with decks of yellow pine, 4 in. thick, laid on a system of yellow pine floor structure of ranges and stringers. This deck plank in turn was covered with a second layer of either 3- or 4-in. plank sheathing, laid diagonally or at right angles to the deck proper, to form a wearing surface for the traffic.

Constant repairs and renewal of this deck sheathing, caused by the wear and tear of team traffic, is augmented in great measure by the moisture, horse urine, etc., which saturates the wood and eventually finds its way to the underlying deck and rangers. This forms the greatest item incidental to the expense of pier maintenance, the average life of the sheathing for most busy piers being about 6 years, or requiring a 17% renewal annually. As the cost of the deck sheathing is generally about 12% of the total cost of a pier, it will be seen that these sheathing repairs would aggregate 2% per annum of the cost of the entire structure.

New Pier Construction Practice.—Notwithstanding the necessity for constant repairs to the deck sheathing of the

wooden pier, the parts of the remainder of the structure—rangers, caps, stringers, piles, and bracing—give excellent service. Maintenance is economical, the average life of the structure above mean low water line being from 20 to 25 years, the repairs aggregating an entire renewal above low water in that period of time. As the life of the piles supporting the structure is practically permanent when submerged below the water, the entire structure can be rebuilt after this period and made practically new by "bench capping" such piles as may be decayed above the water line and renewing the stringers, caps, deck, and sheathing; in other words, the pier structure proper, after a life of 25 years, is readily susceptible of renewal above the water line, the supporting piles below that line being to all intents and purposes permanent.

It will be readily seen that the life of the wooden pier structure would be prolonged still further, and the cost of maintenance and repairs reduced, by the elimination of the objectionable wooden deck sheathing and its replacement by some form of deck impervious to moisture and resisting the wear and tear of traffic.

It was with the object of eliminating this large repair expense incidental to the maintenance of the sheathing, and