Factors Affecting Paint Costs

THE major item in the cost of a painting job is, almost without exception, the labor cost of applying the paint. On some types of work where there is considerable moving of staging involved, or where there is much careful cutting in to do, the labor cost may amount to 90% of the total cost. On plain, flat, easily-reached surfaces the labor percentage may be around 60%.

Converting percentages to dollars, a typical $1000 job might represent $750 worth of labor and $250 worth of materials.

On the face of it, this simple division of costs—75% labor, 25% materials—might appear to indicate that, if a saving of 40% could be made in material costs, the saving on the job as a whole would be 10%. This assumption would be true if there were no complicating factors. However, such things as hiding power, covering capacity and spreading ability must be considered.

An excellent example of how these "complicating factors" affect an anticipated saving in material costs was recently afforded by a good-sized job in an eastern city.

The local school board asked for bids on painting the interior of a large school building. The specifications called for white-lead paint and an alternate bid based on an ordinary flat wall paint.

The painter who was awarded the job submitted two figures, as directed. One was based on white-lead paint. The other, and lower, bid was based on "ordinary flat wall paint." This latter figure won the award. In arriving at the price, the painter had figured he would get from the "ordinary paint" the same coverage and spreading capacity as he would with white-lead. Expressed in figures, he estimated he would get a coverage of 700 square feet per gallon and a spreading rate per man per day of 1600 square feet. On this basis he figured his total paint requirements at 3000 gallons.

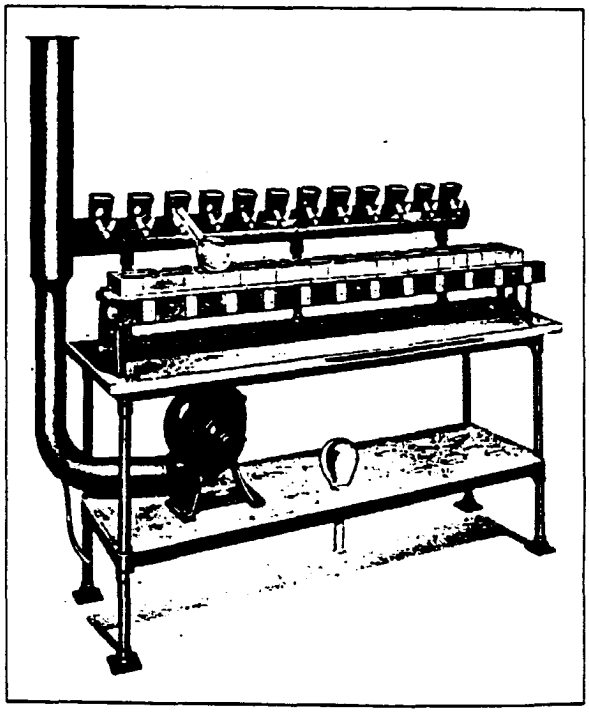
It is generally agreed that the above figures are normal for flat paint made of white-lead and Lead Mixing Oil and used on smooth plaster.

The job was done, as previously stated, with the "ordinary flat wall paint." Here is actually what happened:

Anticipated (white-lead) covering rate	700 sq. ft. per gal.
Actual covering rate ("ordinary paint")	400 sq. ft. per gal.
Anticipated (white-lead) spreading rate	1600 sq. ft. per day
Actual spreading rate ("ordinary paint")	900 sq. ft. per day
Anticipated quantity of paint needed (white-lead)	3000 gals.
Actual quantity of paint used	

It will be seen that the covering rate actually obtained was but 57% of the rate expected; that the spreading rate obtained was but 56% of the rate expected; that, as a result of these two contributing factors, 66⅔% more material was needed for the job than was anticipated.

If white-lead paint had been used, the contractor figured his cost for paint would have been about $6000. The "ordinary flat wall paint" actually used cost about $6500. The $500 extra cost of material is a sizable figure but it is practically small change alongside the increased labor cost on this job. The estimated output per man was 1600 square feet per day. Actual production was 900 square feet per day. The estimate figured on 1300 days labor at the former rate but the job, as carried out, required 2300 days labor. This means that 1000 additional days were needed to complete the job. At current wage rates it is easy to see how a low cost-per-gallon paint can cost considerably more, *on the job*, than a paint with a high spreading rate and good covering capacity that may cost more *in the pot*.



TELLURIUM LEAD IN THE LABORATORY

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The accompanying photograph shows two views of a multiple digestion apparatus manufactured by the Precision Scientific Co. Chicago, Illinois. The horizontal fume pipe with the individual hoods for each digestion flask as well as the vertical stack connected with the motor blower below are made of Tellurium Lead. Both