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READ AND CATCH ON!

REEDSFORT, March 25th, '84.

EDITORS ARGUS:—I have, for a long while intended to write you a brief history of the early settlement of Big Spring creek district, with its present condition and future prospects. But owing to various causes, the chief of which was, procrastination, the intention, up to the present time, never matured into action.

A conversation a few days ago with Mr. Sam Fishel, (who, for many years, has been in the employ of the government as a scout, in this part of the country) reminded me of the subject and I am indebted to Mr. Fishel for considerable information in regard to it.

Previous to the Spring of 1873, this portion of the Judith basin, was inhabited solely by the red man, and if an occasional white man roamed this far, it was only for the purpose of hunting the Buffalo, Elk, Deer or Antelope, which, in countless herds, grazed on the foot hills and bench lands. But no settler came to locate a home, for the gory scalping knife of the merciless savage, was a constant menace to, and effectual barrier against, any who might be lured by the rich land in this valley, or the beautiful stream which gives it its name. The first trading post was established here in the spring of 1873, by Mr. Nelson Stoney, of Bozeman; Theo. I. Dawes being left in charge. The store was located a few rods back of where now stands the Reedsfort postoffice. This store, which did a rushing trade with the Indians, was sold the following spring to Major Reed and John Bowles; whose names, since then, have become household words in Eastern Montana. Of their trading and fighting with the Indians, numerous stories are told, both probable and improbable; how, Indians, who came to trade, mysteriously disappeared, if they possessed good horses, plenty of robes, etc. Whether any of these stories are true, or not, would be hard to find out. But it is certain that those traders had a very unsavory reputation. In the spring of '74, Capt. Williams, of the 7th Infantry, was ordered here with his company, from Fort Shaw. They erected temporary quarters on the bank of the creek about forty rods below Reed & Bowles' trading post, where they remained until fall, returning to Fort Shaw for the winter. During the winter of '74-'75 Reed & Bowles moved their stock of goods and buildings about two and a half miles down the creek, to what is now known as Carrol crossing. There they drove a thriving trade with the Crows, Piegans, Groscons and Northern Creeches, who were all supposed to be on friendly terms with the whites, while an occasional band of hostile Sioux, reminded them of the necessity of keeping their powder dry and their hair trimmed.

In the Spring of '75, Capt. Browning, of the 7th Infantry, with Co's G and K arrived here from Ft. Shaw and located Camp Lewis, on the site of the present town of Lewiston. The same year a mail route was established between Helena and Carrol. A postoffice was established at Carrol crossing of Big Spring creek, which was named Reedsfort, and Major Reed

was appointed P. M. In July '75, while a party of seven, consisting of Dr. Hart, (army surgeon) W. Collins and five soldiers, were fishing in the creek, near the mouth of Big Cassino, they were surprised by a band of Sioux, who fired on them, killing two of the soldiers instantly, the rest of the party escaped through the brush to camp about a mile distant. Mr. Collins, (one of the party) of whom we get this account, is now a resident of Reedsfort. During this season a partial survey of the lands along the creek was made by DeLacy and McFarland, but (if we are informed correctly) the survey was not accepted by the government.

In the fall, Camp Lewis was broken up, and the companies returned to Ft. Shaw; the postoffice was discontinued at Carrol crossing, and this section was once more left to the Indians, Indian traders and hunters. During '76-'78, but little occurred outside of the regular business of swindling poor "Lo" out of his hides, robes and furs, for a few cupsful of villainous brown sugar, or perhaps more villainous whisky. During the summer of '79, quite an immigration set in here, and the choice lands along Big Spring creek and its small tributaries, were soon located. Among those arriving and locating here that year, are the following names: F. A. Jeuneaux, Oliver Fichette, Dan and John Crowley, Paul Morris and Frank Clouture, all of whom still reside here. Besides these there came twenty five families of halfbreeds, who settled on the various little creeks around. During the fall of '79, Mr. Jeuneaux built a trading store and stockade, on the site of old Camp Lewis. About the same time Major Reed moved back from Carrol crossing and located the ranch, which is now the property of Holzner & Day. In the Spring of '80, Messrs. Boissonneault & Pichette erected the store building which is now the property of the Pichette Bros. The location of Fort Maginnis in the fall of '80 and the removal of troops there from Fort Logan, made it necessary to have a mail route established from White Sulphur Springs to the new post. This route, passing through here, the postoffice at Reedsfort was re-established, with Major Reed once more in charge. Since the building of Ft. Maginnis, the immigration into this and adjoining districts, has been large and steady, and now every available quarter-section of bottom land has been entered. Some two years ago Messrs. Holzner & Day bought Major Reed's ranch and buildings, and upon the resignation of Reed as postmaster, Frank Day was appointed to the office, which he still holds.

The distance between Reedsfort and Lewiston is so short, (only half a mile) that we shall speak of them as one place. Their interests are identical, and there is hardly a doubt, but that in the near future they will merge into one city, and the next generation will have to hunt through the archives of the Historical Society, to find out the fact, that Spring Creek City, in the (not very remote) past, flourished under two names, or rather, that its name, like the duke's hair, was parted in the middle.

Were we to compare our town with some of the young cities along the line of the Northern Pacific railroad, the comparison, would, at first glance, seem to be in favor of the railroad towns. But there is a great difference between the mushroom growth of the average railroad town and the substantial increase of a place like this. The former usually springs into existence and notoriety within a week, and in two or three months it has gained such a size as to be considered a young giant. Everybody seems to have the corner lot fever; they dream of a second Chicago, until they are rudely awakened to the fact, that the daily toot of a locomotive whistle, is not sufficient to support a city. Immediately after the fever, the "young giant" takes a chill, from which, if it recovers at all, it is on a disappointing hope of its early youth, and degenerates into a miserable dwarf. Very different from this, however, is the steady, healthy, development of Reedsfort and Lewiston. They have not been boomed in the least, but are the natural outgrowth of their surroundings. There are at present, some thirty five buildings in the place, three fourths of which have been put up within the past year. There are two general stores, two hotels, four saloons, carpenter, wheelwright, blacksmith, and butcher shops, a substantial school building; the best in the county. The

stores are owned by T. C. Power & Co., and the Pichette Bros, respectively. Mr. Power bought F. A. Jeuneaux's store last summer, and since then has doubled its capacity by the addition of a large warehouse, and this spring, work will be commenced on another new building to be occupied as a store, while the present store will be converted into a warehouse. This firm carry a stock here of over forty thousand dollars, and as soon as room can be made, this stock will be considerably increased. Mr. N. M. Erickson has full charge of Messrs. Power & Co's interests here, and under his able management the business is in a flourishing condition. The Pichette Bros carry a full line of general merchandise, also, and are doing a thriving trade. Both hotels have been found inadequate for their increasing business and new buildings are in course of construction, which, when completed will furnish ample accommodations for the traveling public and home trade. It is rather early in the season, to predict, with any degree of accuracy, the amount of building that will be done here this summer, but it is generally believed that it will be very considerable. Big Cassino and Rock creek saw mills, are furnishing us with an excellent quality of lumber, and judging by the quantity of logs that have been put into both mill yards this winter, it is evident that our lumber men are fully aware of the importance of this place as a lumber market, and are wisely preparing for the "boom."

Of the healthfulness of this locality, too much cannot be said. It is a poor place for a doctor to try to get rich in, there are so few cases of sickness among us, that our genial M. D. (Dr. Lapaline) finds but a very limited scope for the exercise of his talents, not a single case of natural death has occurred on the creek since its earliest settlement, that we have heard of. The organization of a lodge of the A. O. U. W. has marked a new era in the social history of our town, and has proved itself a grand harmonizer, already. Another organization, we trust, will soon be effected here, in which the fair sex will have an equal show with the "lords of creation." We refer to the Good Templar order, a branch of which will be established here before long.

Of the stock interests of this valley, your correspondent, "Scribbler," has written so fully that we need not refer to them. Regarding the agricultural advantages of this district we might write at length, but must condense. There are forty thousand acres of bench land between Big Spring and Cottonwood creeks, that can be irrigated from the head of Big Spring creek. This land is considered, by practical farmers, to be as good wheat land as lays out of doors. It is safe to estimate that within a radius of fifteen miles of this point there are forty thousand acres more that can be easily watered from the various little streams that empty into Big Spring creek. The splendid crops of the past two seasons are ample proof that the land around here is well adapted to the raising of all kinds of farm produce, and it is only the lack of a market, that deters our ranchmen from competing with the wheat raisers of Minnesota and Dakota. The erection of a good flour mill on Big Spring creek would open a market to our ranchmen, supply us with flour such as is now brought to us over a thousand miles of railroad, and unquestionably prove a bonanza to the mill owners. There never existed anywhere, a better opening for a mill man than is offered right here. The water power is one of the best (we might say THE BEST) in the country. It rises some six miles from here, in two large springs; the fall in that distance is over three hundred feet; the estimated volume of water, eighteen thousand (18,000) inches, or about two hundred and twenty thousand (220,000) gals. per minute. There is hardly any appreciable difference in the volume of water summer and winter. It was never known to freeze in the very coldest weather, until it had gone over twelve miles from its source. Any mill man can easily figure the power that can be had, with a pressure of fifteen or twenty feet of water, in such a stream as this; and that head of water can be attained at a very small cost, owing to the winding, doubling course of the creek. An irrigating ditch with a capacity of five thousand (5,000) inches, is in course of construction, from the head of the creek to the bench land, (already mentioned) between here and Cottonwood. The parties building this ditch, are L. Rot-witt, J. V. Stafford, John Toombs and Geo. Stafford. These, with several others, have taken desert claims on the bench, but the ditch will be large enough to supply many more claims, and we understand that the owners intend to sell the water.

It is a fact, conceded by all, that this county, is much too large to be run economically, and that at the next session of the territorial legislature,

Meagher ought to be, and undoubtedly will be divided into two. Such being the case, it would not be out of place to enumerate the many advantages that we possess here on Big Spring creek, over any other point in Eastern Meagher county, that should induce the voters of the new county to select this as the county seat; but the length of our article forbids it. Let it suffice to say: that of all with whom we have spoken to on the subject, (and they have been from nearly all parts of the county) there was not one that did not concede that this was, by far, the most eligible and desirable site that could be selected. This may seem like "counting our chickens before they are hatched," but so sure do we feel that this will eventually be the county seat, that we look upon it almost in the light of an accomplished fact. And now that we have put on the mantle of a prophet let us look a little further into the future and see what great things are to occur in our lovely valley. If you will glance at the map of Montana you will notice that Reedsfort and Lewiston are almost in the centre of the territory, and it would be safe to predict that in ten years this will also be very near the centre of population, wealth and industry. When Montana shall have put on the dignity of statehood and the immense Indian reservations to the east of us have been thrown open for settlement, is it probable that the capital will remain almost on the western border of the state, five hundred miles from the eastern line? Will such a thing be tolerated? We think not; some more central point must be selected. Is there any place in our grand territory more suitable than this? centrally located, the healthiest climate in the world, surrounded by inexhaustible agricultural and mineral wealth, beautiful scenery, wood and coal in abundance, plenty of fine trout in the streams and no lack of game, both large and small, in the mountains. In the year 1884, the traveler, as he alights from a car in the Grand Central Depot, at the corner of Jeuneaux ave. and Day street in Spring Creek City, will hear the street car conductor calling: "All aboard for the capitol!" "Take the green car for the Grand Opera House and Central Market." "All aboard!"

Yours respectfully,
VULCAN.

One hundred Extra copies of this issue have been printed and will be on sale at T. C. Power & Bros. store, at Lewiston, Saturday, March 29th.

Stock Growers Attention!

A meeting of the stock-growers is hereby called to convene at H. P. Brook's ranch, on Warm Spring Creek, Monday, March 31st.

Stock men who have herds ranging between Big Spring Creek and Black Butte, are desired to be present.

H. P. BROOKS,
JAMES FERGUS & SON,
JAMES DEMPSEY,
OTTEN & RANGES.

FORT MAGINNIS NEWS.

Major Clayton and family left Friday for the east.

Lieut. Guy Carleton and wife left for Ft. Custer last Sunday, week.

Capt. B. B. Keeler, of the 18th Infantry, is expected to arrive at the Post. He will assume command vice Capt. McAdams.

Lieut. Kingsbury, of 2d Cavalry, who has been on a leave of absence for two months, and visiting relatives in Milwaukee, will return April 1st.

Capt. Miller, of G company, and Dr. S. B. Stone, enjoyed a duck hunt on lower Spring Creek this week. The compliments of these gentlemen in the shape of a brace of aquatic birds was left at this office. Thanks.

During our short stay at Maginnis last week, we were informed that several of the command's horses were suffering from a peculiar and contagious disease known as the "lifts." Dr. S. has offered to undertake the cure of all animals afflicted.

Harry Davis, Deputy P. M., is on a visit to his home near Spirit Lake, Ia. He will return about April 15th, and it is rumored he will bring a fair life-partner with him. We trust the rumor is correct, as Harry needs the tender, caressing influence of the fair sex.

C. J. McNamara, who is east on a business trip, in company with McCulloch, of the Assinaboine house, (a connection of this firm), is expected to return May 1st. While east Mr. McNamara will order a complete and extensive assortment of general merchandise from Chicago and New York houses, and will have them on sale in a few weeks. Mr. Athey, in charge of the store, reports a rapidly growing business, and says the house proposes to keep up to the times, in every line.