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No. 7.

FORT BENTON AND THE CARROLL ROUTE.

An attempt was made, in the year 1868, to establish a town near the mouth of the Musselshell river, which was to be the terminus of a new wagon road from the mining regions of Montana to the Missouri. According to Montana custom—and a most ridiculous custom it is—the single log cabin erected was called Kercheval city. There was to saving power in the misnomer, however, and after a sickly existence of a few months Kercheval city died, and the Missouri river undermining its site, soon gave it free burial in its surging flood. In 1868 the attempt was repeated, under other auspices, and this time the town enjoyed a temporary prosperity, which its modest and appropriate title of Musselshell entitled it to, but the project again fell through. Carroll is therefore the third rival of Benton that has sprung up in that region, with the design of intercepting the ascending boats, and diverting transportation from the route by which it naturally flowed from the time that Montana came into existence.

These three efforts to open a route through the Judith basin, with a view to attracting the freighting business of the Missouri, were evidently made for the reason that between Benton and Carroll numerous shoals and rapids forbid all navigation except during the season of high water, while boats may ascend freely to Carroll from April to October. Carroll therefore enjoys a boating season twice as long as that possessed by Fort Benton, and it is to profit by this fact that Carroll and its predecessors have been created.

From this showing there appears to be some reason for the existence of Carroll, and perhaps a fair prospect for its permanence and prosperity. There is one fact, however, which is generally overlooked or misunderstood. It will cost much less to remove the obstructions to the free navigation of the river to Benton than to build the bridges, make the cuts, and perform other labors necessary to make the Carroll route a good wagon road; and if this proposition is true, there is no adequate reason for the existence of the Carroll route, for all things being equal, it will certainly be cheaper to transport goods by water to Benton and thence by land to Helena, than by water to Carroll and thence by land to Helena. Upon this point no argument is necessary.

The Missouri is as capable of navigation to Fort Benton as to Carroll. The obstructions are confined to certain points, and if these were removed, boats could freely arrive at and depart from Benton from the first of May to the last of October, bringing river navigation one hundred miles nearer to the heart of settled Montana than if Carroll were the highest port on the river. We have considered these obstructions in detail, showing their location and character and the estimated cost of their removal or remedy.

1. The Shonkin bar, an oblique gravel bar stretching across the river just above the mouth of Shonkin Creek. Only twenty inches of water at low stage. Could be improved by a wing-dam thrown partially across the channel, deepening the water for the remainder of the distance. Sufficient rock close at hand. Expense \$400.

2. Marion bar, where the steamboat Marion was wrecked, in 1836, about five miles above the coal banks, below Benton. The wreck was the result of accident, and the bar is no barrier to free navigation.

3. Lone Rock rapids, about eight miles below the mouth of the Judith. A series of diagonal bars throws the channel against the south bank, where it is obstructed by a considerable rock some twelve feet in diameter. The rock can not be passed in low water, but could be removed by blasting, at a cost of \$200.

4. Gallatin rapids, about twelve miles below the mouth of the Judith, where the steamer Gallatin sank, in 1867. The boat was subsequently raised. The rapids are about half a mile in length, rendered dangerous in low water by a number of small rocks scattered over the bottom of the stream. The rocks could easily be lifted and removed to the right and left, thus opening a safe and deep channel. Expense \$500.

5. Island rapids, four miles below Gallatin rapids. Several small rocks obstruct the channel, which could be removed as in the case of the Gallatin rapids. Expense \$400.

6. Dauphin rapids, three miles below Island rapids, the chief obstacle to the navigation of the Upper Missouri. For some two hundred yards the channel is divided into two by a bar, the north channel having the deepest water. The upper end of the main channel is broad and shallow, the water flowing over a bed of soft and broken slate rock for a distance of more than a hundred yards, over which a boat can not pass in low water. This part of the channel could be deepened by removing the slabs of slate rock to the head of the small channel, thus increasing the flow through the main channel. Below the reef the channel narrows and is broken by numerous boulders, over which the water rushes with great impetuosity. These boulders could be readily lifted out, rendering the channel deep and safe. A little blasting might be necessary in removing the slate rock, though probably not. Total expense of improving Dauphin rapids not to exceed \$2000.

7. From Dauphin to Magpie rapids, a distance of about twelve miles, the channel is occasionally obstructed by small rocks, which could be readily removed. Expense \$400.

8. Magpie rapids, similar in character to the Gallatin, and to be treated in the same manner. Expense \$500.

9. Birds rapids, about three miles below Magpie, caused by a rocky reef thrown diagonally across the stream, from the south bank,

compressing the river into a narrow channel about twenty feet wide in low water. The channel is abundantly deep, but needs to be widened by removing the loose rocks from the north bank. Expense \$300.

10. At Cow Island the stream is divided by the Island and two bars at its lowest end into two channels, each about twenty inches deep at low water. A dam should be thrown across one of the channels, thereby deepening the water in the other. There is sufficient rock near by for the purpose. Expense \$400.

11. Busick's bar, two and a half miles below Cow Island, has about twenty inches of water at low stage. A wing dam on either side of the stream would increase the depth sufficiently on the other. Rock near at hand. Expense \$400.

12. At the head of Grand island a bar reduces the water to fifteen inches at low stage. By closing the chute north of the island, or building a wing dam in the main channel, plenty of water would be secured. Rock would have to be brought some distance, but the expense would probably not exceed \$500.

13. Near the lower end of Grand island, the main channel is divided into two by Hammond island, with a depth of fifteen inches at low water. The channel between the south bank and Hammond island should be closed, which would afford abundant water in the other. Expense \$500.

14. Chippewa island, sixteen miles above Carroll. Below the island there is a succession of bars, affording about twenty inches of water at low stage. The remedy is a wing-dam to increase the depth of water. Rock would have to be brought some distance, but the expense ought not to exceed \$800.

By the above showing, which is made upon excellent authority, it appears that the Missouri river can be rendered navigable to Benton for as long a season as it is to Carroll, at an expense of about \$7,400, not inclusive of a boat and appliances, which, if not furnished by the Government, would cost probably an additional sum of \$5000. A wagon road by way of the Judith basin could not be built for the same money; but if it could, it is not worthy of comparison with the river route, which for six months of the year would deliver freight within one hundred and forty miles of the metropolis of Montana. Until the Territory has railroad communication, such a route is the best that Montana can have, and even with a railroad, it would always prove a powerful auxiliary to her prosperity. It should be an object of Territorial concern to have the river improved at once, and we earnestly commend it to our delegate to Congress, as one of the most important and beneficial enterprises that could engage his attention. Will not the public journals of the Territory take hold of the matter and advocate the work? An appropriation of \$10,000 from the general Government would be more than

sufficient for the purpose, and this is a small sum to expend considering the permanent benefit that will result. It is strange that an effort was not made long ago to secure the consummation of so important an enterprise.

No. 2.

SUN RIVER VALLEY.

The entire population of Sun River valley seldom exceeds two hundred persons, and in this number are included about forty resident families. The floating or transient population is therefore much smaller than that of our own town and vicinity. In size, wealth, population, and natural advantages we are superior to our neighbor, but we regret to say that Benton cannot claim to have shown the same energy and enterprise that Sun River has displayed during the past two or three years. Our business men are perhaps unexcelled for energy and enterprise in mercantile pursuits, but their efforts are seldom directed towards building up and otherwise improving the town; while the leading men of Sun River have spared neither time, money, nor expense in promoting the welfare and prosperity of their community.

Some years ago, when the future of Sun River looked by no means as bright as it now appears, Messrs John Largent and J. J. Healy—two gentlemen well known throughout the Territory, and of whom we shall speak more at length in a future number—built a fine, substantial bridge across the river, at a cost of \$5000. The bridge has not proved a profitable enterprise to the builders, but it is one of the greatest improvements yet made at Sun River, and an invaluable convenience to the traveling public as well as to residents on either side of the river. Our Government, true to that characteristic inconsistency mentioned in last number, refuses to allow the military to pay toll on this bridge, because it happens to be built upon public land, which is, perhaps, one of the flimsiest reasons ever offered to excuse fraudulent imposition. The building of a bridge across a stream otherwise impassable for teams or vehicles, is frequently done, even by the smallest and poorest communities, simply because it is necessary. It was different, however, with the Sun River people, they having the advantages of a good ford, at low water, and a ferry capable of conveying horses and wagons across at any time. Mr. Largent and Mr. Healy are therefore entitled to more credit for the enterprise, than if it had been an absolute necessity.

Messrs Largent and Adams have established a water power saw mill on the Missouri, about seventeen miles from the Crossing. The difficulty of procuring suitable saw logs compelled the proprietors to erect the mill so far from the valley, and even at this remote point they are obliged to haul their timber