

FORT BENTON RECORD

FORT BENTON, M. T., SATURDAY, MARCH 11, 1876.

No. 47.

Vol. 1.

THE BENTON RECORD,

Fort Benton, M. T.,

PUBLISHED EVERY SATURDAY.

W. H. BUCK, - - - Editor & Proprietor.

RATES OF SUBSCRIPTION.

(IN ADVANCE.)

One copy, one year,	\$4 00
One copy, six months,	2 50
One copy, three months,	1 50

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COUNTY COMMISSIONERS.

We publish in another column the proceedings of the Board of County Commissioners. To say that the result of their meeting is creditable to themselves, and to the county whose cares are entrusted to their hands, would only feebly express the opinion that every sensible person must entertain concerning the ultimate result of their actions. It is not necessary to refer back to the past to ascertain the reason why this county should have been allowed to drag its local existence wearily along, year after year, to the minor position which it has been permitted apparently to occupy. It is enough to know that this position was by no means justified by the wealth and prosperous indications of the county, and more than gratifying to learn that the present Board of Commissioners are cognizant of the errors of their predecessors, and have practically expressed their recognition of the necessity of rectifying these errors, and have taken the necessary steps towards advancing their county to that position, which its relation to the general advancement of the Territory and its local prosperity bespeak for it.

The repairing &c., of the several roads leading to Benton has all along been urged by teamsters and freighters as a matter of imperative necessity, and has always been considered by the residents of this vicinity and the county at large as a necessary improvement. We trust that the gentleman who has been appointed Supervisor of this district by the Commissioners will

take such steps towards placing these roads in as good condition for travel as will insure permanency. The Commissioners have performed their duty in the matter so far, and all that is now required of them is to enforce the performance of the duties of the Supervisor according to law and in agreement with the details of work handed to him.

Of course, those who have sound faith in the future of the town could not be affected by any action that might have been taken by the Board. The record which the Commissioners have made in regard to the improvement of county property situated at the county seat, however, will add materially towards strengthening the existing faith of our citizens in the future of the town in the interest of real estate. The improvement of the county buildings will enhance the value of property and tend to the establishment of the real estate market upon a solid basis. This work is to be performed in a short time; in the meantime we say to the Board of Commissioners, you have done well.

Another important public work remains to be performed. We have referred to the matter in a previous issue and will continue to urge the presentation of the question before the public for their action, by the gentlemen who compose the Board of Trustees of this school district. The building of a school house is a primary necessity. How the question of raising a tax can be placed before the residents of this district without any expense, comparatively, in proper season, we shall endeavor to explain in due time.

LOCAL PREJUDICE.

The present condition of Indian affairs, the attitude of the lower Indians towards the Government and the white people, has occasioned comments from some of the Territorial journals in regard to the military situation of Montana. The defenceless condition of this Territory is not a matter that has newly come to light. It has been again and again presented to the consideration of army commanders.—Promises have been repeatedly made that the grievances occasioned thereby would be remedied and the occasion removed as far as it came within the jurisdiction of their respective departments. A color of effect was given to these

promises by the visit of the late Secretary of War Belknap on as reported, a personal inspection of the military condition and needs of the Territory. This was somewhat heightened through a post-prandial speech delivered by him at Helena, in which he said "I assure you that I have paid particular attention to the exposed condition of the settlements which I have traversed, and I assure you that the posts shall be re-enforced and more troops sent to the Territory." The settlements traversed were those which might be termed thickly populated, and as their condition was viewed in the light represented, the attention of the "illustrious" inspector was invited to the settlements neighboring the most dangerous and less protected portion of Montana. This invitation was not heeded, the demands of the people of this section were not deemed worthy of consideration. Sectional influence, through sectional prejudice, the bane of local and general advancement, was the means employed to divert attention from this locality, which last season was the first to receive the brunt of the Sioux warfare, and which unfortunately is likely to prove an objective point this year unless the result of the military movement proves to be the complete subjection of the scattered bands of hostile Indians who roam through the country adjacent to the Missouri River.

But withal the promises made by Belknap last summer, and in the face of the acknowledgement that "you need more troops," not a single military post has received outside re-enforcement, not a solitary company has been added to the skeleton regiment which garrisons Montana. And if we are to place any reliance upon reports, or to judge by past experience, the occasion for additional troops is more pressing, and the injury attendant upon a defenceless condition more likely to be fully realized, this season than it was last year. There is a lesson to be learned from this—a lesson that has been on more than one occasion taught to the people of this Territory in connection with other questions, but which it can never be too late to learn.—It is this: In any matter of internal improvement or security, sectional differences should be shut out of sight, and the general welfare of the Territory and protection of the people alone considered.

DISCREPANCIES IN THE RAILROAD BILLS.

Beside the many discrepancies that appear in both railroad bills is the looseness and indefiniteness of the sections relating to the publication of election notices by County Commissioners. The Northern Pacific railroad bill directs the publication of the election notice upon the receipt of the Governor's notification of the passage of the act. The bill to aid the Utah Northern directs the publication of the election notice after the Commissioners have received notice from the Secretary of the Territory of the acceptance of the contract by the railroad company. Thirty days after its passage is announced by the Secretary are allowed to the company to accept the conditions of the bill, and failing to accept within that time, the act is void. If the announcement had been made immediately after the passage of the act the company would still have until the 11th instant to accept the contract. But no notification has been given that such announcement has been made or that the contract has not been accepted by the company; and, consequently, in order to bring the publication of the election notice within the time required by law, Commissioners are forced to act independent of the Secretary.

The question arises, what constitutes the Secretary's notice? Under the provisions of the Public Printing Bill, the receipt of the paper containing the law printed by the authority of the Secretary and transmitted through the Territorial Auditor, is legal notice. And upon such notification the Commissioners are justified in performing whatever may be required of them thereby, unless notified by the Secretary to the contrary, within proper time. And this interpretation appears more reasonable when the supplementary enactment is considered, which apparently makes it compulsory to hold both elections at the same time.

RAILROAD ELECTION.

As will be seen by the notices published in another column, the Commissioners have placed the railroad question before the people of this County as required by law. Both railroad subsidy bills will be voted upon at the same time, the third day of April next. It is not probable that the entire vote of

Choteau County could be polled, for reasons not necessary to enumerate, and the Commissioners have shown a creditable regard for economy, in laying off election precincts. Three precincts are specified; one at Benton, one at Sun River, and one at Upper Sun River. These are sufficient, and the votes polled thereat will represent the large majority of the votes of the County.

What the result of the election will be in this County is a matter of surmise; what it should be, we have already intimated in a previous issue. Sectional interests and sectional differences will prove the means of defeating both subsidy bills. With either road this section cannot well have any binding sympathy, nor would its interests be so much enhanced by the construction of either road as to justify the granting of an enormous percentage of its entire valuation as an inducement towards the completion of the same to this Territory: We will discuss the question further in future issues.

In an article on railroads, headed "Railroad Riddles," published in the Bozeman "Times" of the 2d instant, Mr. J. V. Bogert says, in connection with the Yellowstone river as a substitute for railroad communication:

"But say some of Gallatin County, 'we shall have steamers up the Yellowstone the coming season'. We shall, shall we? How do you know we shall? That remains to be tested yet. We hope we may—we believe we shall; but Indians, and snags, and low water, and Providence may prevent for many a season yet."

"Again is there any reason to hope for greater immigration results from navigation of the Yellowstone than have occurred from the navigation of the Missouri? It is a railroad we want, and we are choking to death without one."

What a change the passage of the subsidy bills have created. It is not quite one year ago since Mr. Bogert, then editor of the "Times," announced the certainty of a fleet of steamers sailing up the Yellowstone this season, and hailed the opening of that river for freight transportation as a blessing to the Territory at large, not alone as a means of reducing the cost of transportation, but as an important step towards populating the Territory adjacent to the Yellowstone River.