

# THE RIVER PRESS.

HOLIDAY "RESERVATION" EDITION.

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## THE PROMISED LAND!

Montana's Prime Garden Spot--of Proportions Immense--

Which Flows With Milk and Honey, in a Figurative Sense,

Where Smiling Valleys and Bunch Grass Covered Bench,

Vie With Each Other in Rich Luxuriance.

Where in Every Mountain Gulch and on the Rocky Slope,

Here "Colors" Can be and There the Hopeful "Float."

In Short, an Interesting Article, as the Reader Will "Discover,"

Written by One Who Knows the Land as the Pilot Knows the River.

IN THE FIELD, December 15, 1883.

We expect the 48th congress, now met, will open to settlement the fertile country lying north and east of us. There are many views as to the extent the country now set apart for the Blackfeet, Gros Ventres and other Indians should be reduced, but there is only one sentiment among our white population, which is that it be largely reduced, and at once. As has been several times written, there is too much land lying waste in this reservation which could be utilized by farmers, and is demanded by our increasing stock interests and which is of no benefit to the Indians who call it their country and hesitate to surrender their title to it. A description of this much coveted and highly prized region at this time will not be inappropriate. Bounded on the north by the 49th degree of latitude, on the west by the main range of the Rocky mountains, south by the Marias and Missouri rivers to the 107th degree of longitude, a point on the Missouri river near old Fort Peck, thence due east to the Dakota line, and on the east by our sister territory, Dakota. It lies in shape a parallelogram, 500 miles long and averaging 85 miles in width. It is subdivided for the different tribes of Indians who now possess it as follows: The Yanktonais and Caneau bands of Assinaboines from the 104° of longitude to the 108°. These Indians number respectively 3,800 and 1,300 souls. Their agencies are at Poplar creek and Wolf Point. The Gros Ventres du prairies and Upper Assinaboines occupy the country between the 108° and the 111°, or Sweet Grass hills country. They number 1,100 and 900, according to a recent census, and their headquarters is at Fort Belknap. From the 111° of longitude west to the Rocky mountains is the country of the Blackfeet, Piegians and Bloods, who number about 3,000. From this it will be seen that 9,000 persons occupy 45,000 square miles of the best portion of our territory, about five square miles for each person.

This district contains three small ranges of mountains or hills, viz: the Sweet Grass, Bear's Paw and Little Rockies. Milk river, the principal stream within its boundaries, rises near the main range of the Rockies, and after running through a portion of British North America, enters the territory near the Sweet Grass hills and takes an easterly course through the center of the reservation to its mouth, near Fort Peck. Milk river discharges a considerable volume of water during the spring and early summer months, but owing to its bed, which is quicksand, it absorbs and loses by evaporation nearly all its water during the heated term and early fall. It is alkali in character, as are all its affluents to some extent soon after leaving their sources. Milk river is well timbered east of the 109° of longitude—Fort Belknap. The streams flowing into it from the north are Porcupine, Buggy, Rock, Frenchman's, Woody Island, Black's, East and West forks. From the south, the Sandy, several streams called Box Elder (which seems to be a

favorite name in Montana), Beaver creek, on which Fort Assinaboine is built, Clear, Snake, People's, Big Beaver, Dry and Willow creeks, all of which head in the Bear's Paw, Little Rockies, and the dividing ridge between the Missouri and Milk rivers. Eagle, Birch, Cow, Warm Springs, Little Rocky, Beauchon, Pouchette and Timber flow into the Missouri, having their sources in the Bear's Paw, and Little Rocky mountains. Further east than the mouth of Milk river are the Little Porcupine, Wolf, Poplar and Muddy, all of which head near Mountain, in British territory. None of these streams are much timbered, excepting Snake, People's Woody Island, Frenchman's and Rock creeks, and these only for a very short distance above their mouths.

With few exceptions, viz: Eagle, Sandy, Box Elder and Beaver creeks, these streams sink or dry up some distance below their sources during the hot summer months, but commence to run again late in the fall. Considerable timber—pine and spruce—is to be found in each of the mountains and in the breaks of the Missouri between Fort Claggett and old Fort Peck. These breaks or bad lands extend from five to fifteen miles back from the Missouri, and are covered with scrub pine and cedar, and although unfit for cultivation, make an excellent range for stock. The military have a steam saw mill in operation at Fort Assinaboine and turn out fair lumber.

The agricultural region proper commences about six miles east of this post (Assinaboine), and the valley of Milk river broadens into immense meadows, so to speak, averaging three, and in many places six miles in width between the foothills, intersected by the streams already mentioned and covered with a luxuriant growth of grass which waves like green fields in favorable seasons—eight years in ten—and in such seasons it will produce good crops without irrigation.

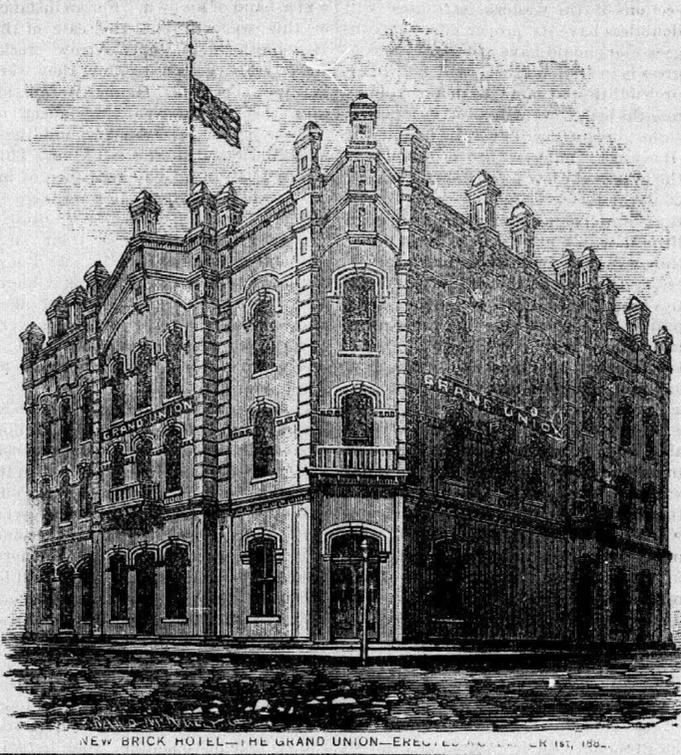
The hills and table lands on each side rise gently and are covered with the famed bunch grass and dotted with many ponds and small lakes—a paradise for stock. The agent at Belknap, Maj. W. L. Lincoln, has been very successful in raising crops without irrigation; in fact, his continuous success made him enthusiastic, but the past season has demonstrated that irrigation is necessary. The military at Fort Assinaboine have nice gardens also. The length of the warm season is attributed to the very low altitude of the Milk river region. It is only 2,400 feet above sea level at Fort Assinaboine, and 2,150 at Fort Belknap, the bench lands extending back to the mountains gradually, with but little increase in altitude.

The valley of the Sandy is well known to most residents of Choteau county as the hay fields, par excellence, from which in past years thousands of tons of hay were cut and thousands left to waste. Under intelligent management the area of these meadows can be increased, giving hay meadows inexhaustible.

Timber can be had for building and fencing purposes, but the main reliance for fuel must be in the vast deposits of coal or lignite which occur all over this region, but in greater abundance north of Milk river, where a superior quality, easily mined, is found, almost every coulee showing veins varying from three to eight feet in thickness. Thus a beneficent Providence has provided for the future development of those vast prairies.

Beds of pipe clay and fire clay have been found, and good brick has been manufactured at Fort Assinaboine, while the whole of the Little Rocky mountain is a limestone formation. From the base of this mountain flow several warm springs, varying considerably in temperature, in some cases leaving large deposits of silica, forming rifles and dams. The approaches to this mountain on the north and eastern side are precipitous; on the west and south easy, the prairie ending in groves of young pines. Springs and rivulets trickle from each ravine, and in two places small streams fall perpendicularly from the mountains and are called cascades. The mountains are very rugged and covered with pine. I doubt if they have ever been explored by a white man; even the Indians know but little of their interior.

In the Bear's Paw the timber is less dense; the formation is granite and trap rock; gold has been found in several of its gulches, but the placers have not been worked as the Indians objected, and the last prospectors were driven out by force. Galena leads have been discovered which have assayed high in



NEW BRICK HOTEL—THE GRAND UNION—ERECTED IN 1881.

silver. No doubt in the near future these will be profitably worked. The interpretation of the Indians' name of these mountains is "Island mountains," from its being surrounded by prairie. It is very dear to them on account of its former plentitude of game and its beautiful springs and parks, where in the past their forefathers gathered the various wild berries indigenous to this country, while wooing their wives whose recollections may be more vivid on account of reminiscences of hard work—cutting lodge poles and scraping them while their noble lords smoked in the shade. Their present protestation of love for those mountains may also have been enhanced by the desire of the white man to possess them. Trout abound in the many branches of Eagle and Birch creek. An effort has been made by the military to introduce them into Beaver creek but without success. The Square Butte, fifteen miles south of Fort Assinaboine, is the Bear's Paw proper, called so by its likeness to the paw of a bear, but it takes more imagination or a different aspect than I have ever had to see the resemblance.

This mountain covers more than twice the area of the Little Rockies, not vice versa, as is seen on the maps.

Luxurious grasses cover these hills to the topmost points while the valleys are almost tropical in the rankness of their vegetation.

The Sweet Grass hills is of a similar formation to the Bear's Paw mountains, and several rich specimens of galena have been shown as coming from there. White marble of an excellent quality has also been discovered. These hills are fairly timbered and the surrounding country well watered by springs. They receive their name from the sweet smelling grasses which are found there in great abundance, and with which the young Indians, of both sexes, adorn their heads, necks and arms in summer time.

"When small birds tune and thrushes sing," this mixture of odors is quite overpowering. Talk of patchouly—whew! It beats the famed seven stinks of Cologne.

All this country is now lying in waste, and to the few Indians who inhabit it is an unmitigated evil, for they roam over it search of game, which is no more, for "the buffalo are all gone," and so are the antelope and deer for that matter, and now remains but the wolves, coyotes and Indians; the former to be the cause of worry to the coming "cowboy" and loss to our cattle kings, while the latter will be the bone of contention for the interior and war departments, a hobby for rival religious denominations and a prey to unsophisticated Indian traders and other evangelists.

Now that the "buffalo are all gone" there is no good reason why the Indians should not be put on lands in several, and taught the pastime of farming, and soon become self-sustaining. They understand that this is inevitable but they have a laudable ambition to raise steers for the eastern markets as well as home consumption, and they have heard of porterhouse and tenderloin in demand, but scarce, at 25 cents a pound in Fort Benton, so they desire to retain a large section of the country for the purpose of stock raising—which is good sense. They are not yet sufficiently well versed

in the mysteries of the branding iron or posted on mavericks to compete with their white brothers.

At the council held at Fort Assinaboine with Senator Vest and our able delegate to congress, the lands they expressed a willingness to sell were those lying west of the present military reserve to the Sweet Grass and the country lying north of Milk river to the international boundary line; but I understand their agent has recommended a more liberal reduction, viz.: that the 109° of longitude be the western boundary. This line would be due south from the vicinity of Picket Corral, on Milk river, to Grand Island, on the Missouri, and would leave the Little Rockies in the new reserve, but the Bear's Paw open to settlement—should the military reservation be reduced also, which I suppose will be done. Without doubt a railroad will soon put in an appearance from the east, and also a branch from the Canadian Pacific, making a junction at Fort Assinaboine, when the cheerful shout of the brakeman will call out, "Change cars, for Cypress, the Rocky mountains and Fort Benton."

"OLD TIMER."

### THE UPPER TETON AND MARIAS.

There is a great similarity in these two streams of northern Montana. They both head in the main range of the Rockies, and flow 150 miles in a southeasterly direction to their point of confluence, which is about four miles of the Missouri, with which their waters finally mingle. Both are small streams compared to their length, as for the last seventy-five miles they do not receive any tributaries, which flow the year around—this making them carry as much water seventy-five miles from the mouth as where they finally empty into the Missouri. The lower half of both streams have short, narrow bottoms, which makes it difficult to irrigate—these are used principally for stock ranches, for which purpose they are admirably adapted. As soon as you get to the tops of the high bluffs, on either side of the streams, you are on a high, rolling prairie, cut by deep coulees, running into the main ravine. This broken country furnishes good shelter for stock during the winter storms, and the plateau with its perennial carpet of bunch grass furnishes free pasturage for thousands of cattle and sheep. The lower Teton has been utilized more for grain ranches than the Marias, on account of larger bottoms, and the northern side of the Marias still held ostensibly for the Indians, though precious little use they have for it. When water has been brought on to these bottoms, either by ditches or irrigating wheels, they will make the finest of grain and hay ranches, as the soil is generally a clayey loam, which will stand cultivation for a long time without wearing out, as would a lighter and more sandy soil. Nearer the mountains the valleys, of the tributaries and forks of these two rivers, widen out and make natural fine hay and grain ranches. The broad valley at the new town of Choteau, which has the two forks of the Teton running on either side of it, is a good sample of what can be seen on all of these smaller streams. Here we find the land all taken up, and the adjoining ranches, for the most part, well improv-

ed. This settlement is wealthy in flocks and herds, and it only lately that any attention has been paid to ranching, as there was more money to be made with less labor in raising cattle and horses.

The town of Choteau has, in our opinion, a promising future before it, as it lies in the center of as fine a stock and ranching country as can be found in Montana. Fort Benton, its supply point, lies ninety miles to the east, and is too far away to compete for the local trade of this section. No particular effort has been made by the business men of the place and owners of the townsite to advertise this promising place as a good location for business houses and trades of different kinds, but a building and business boom such as Sun River has been enjoying for the last year is bound to strike the town of Choteau inside of two years.

The El Dorado ditch company have a ditch dug by which next season they can make valuable ranches out of tens of thousands of acres on the bench land between the Teton and the Muddy. The soil here is said to be a deep loam and of first class quality for cropping. Water can be brought from the Teton to cover this ground at a small expense compared to the advanced value of the land to be irrigated. It is the intention of the directors of the company to procure a colony either in the eastern states or the old country to settle on this immense tract. The financial success of such colonies, both to the originators and the settlers in Colorado and California, where the natural advantages are no better than here, makes us sanguine of the success of this enterprise.

There are two business houses on the upper Marias, but as the larger part of the country on the tributaries of this stream is included in the Blackfoot Indian reservation, it is hard to say yet where the business center of the upper Marias will be located. As is the case with the upper Teton, there is room here for a good town with its surrounding trading posts and smaller business houses.

### THE HOLIDAY RIVER PRESS.

This, the third, Holiday number of the RIVER PRESS goes forth on its useful mission, and we submit it to the reader upon its merits. Its single purpose has been to present in truthful narrative the advantages of Fort Benton and the resources of her magnificent tributary country—and particularly the great Indian reservation that is soon to be opened to settlement. We have not sought in any way to make it a "literary" work, but rather to set forth in simple, rugged English the story of the wondrous resources of northern Montana, and the inducements that are here offered to immigration and the investment of capital. For whatever of success to this end has been attained, we are indebted to a large extent to our contributors and to those who so cheerfully gave us information on the subjects considered. To these gentlemen we extend our sincere thanks. And, at the beginning of the new year—which promises to be an auspicious one for northern Montana—the RIVER PRESS presents the "compliments of the season" to all of its readers.

### Yellowstone Cattle Shipments.

Major Wyman, chief roadmaster of the Yellowstone division of the Northern Pacific railroad, furnishes the following statement of stock shipments to and from the Yellowstone valley, Montana, during the season of 1883. The number of cars of cattle received are as follows:

Stock Yards	No. of Cars
Miles City	327
Billings	288
Glendive	204
O'Fallon	50
Beaver	78
Alard	8
Total	943

Most of these cattle were young stock and averaged about 24 head to the car, making the total number shipped into Montana, 12,632. The shipments to the eastern markets were as follows:

Where Shipped From	No. of Cars
Miles City	359
Billings	401
Beaver	450
O'Fallon	181
Dickinson	52
Springdale	71
Little Missouri	17
Total	1,767

Estimating the number in a car on the eastern trip at 19 head, this would make a total of 33,573 head of bunch grass beef sent out of Montana during 1883.

The only buffalo herd of any considerable size is now wintering in the Bad Land country of the Little Missouri, about 150 miles west of Fort Yates. The buffalo day is nearly done.

The heaviest teams now cross the ice in perfect safety.