

SOUTHEASTERN IDAHO'S RAPID PEOPLING AND DEVELOPMENT

BY GEORGE E. HILL.

A review of the year's work by any of the large daily papers circulating throughout the Intermountain country would be incomplete if southeastern Idaho, or what is termed "the Upper Snake River valley," was left out, and nothing said of this great inland empire. Southeastern Idaho, composed of Fremont, Bingham, Bannock, Twin Falls and Cassia counties, can boast of the largest valley and the greatest river in the Rocky mountain country. The counties named are empires within themselves, and as large as some of the states of the Union, yet they are all in this one valley.

It is impossible to correctly convey to those unacquainted with this country an idea of its bigness. In early days before this land was inhabited by white men, it was universally believed that the eastern part of Idaho was too cold, that the altitude was too great, and the soil too forbidding, to be of any value to homeseekers. As in nearly every other instance, the settlement of this country was made from necessity more than from choice. Thousands of settlers became overpopulated—and not because of the beauty or other attractions of eastern Idaho.

When the Start Was Made.

The fact remains, however, that in the early eighties pioneers began to wend their way from crowded Utah to Idaho, then great ones in its valleys, mighty rivers and lofty mountains. They settled and were surprised at the result of tilling the soil. For it yielded far beyond expectations. Abundant water was found for irrigation, the climate was found equal to that of northern Utah, for the altitude is about the same as the Salt Lake valley. Reports of the phenomenal success in all fields of agriculture, stock raising and irrigation enterprises soon found their way back to the communities from whence came the first pioneers. This created a spirit of unrest and the desire of many who then did not own any real property to possess a farm and home of their own brought many new emigrants and settlers to this now-famed and rich country. The rapid settlement of eastern Idaho has only been surpassed by that of Oklahoma, when it was thrown open for settlement a few years ago.

Great Snake River Valley.

Today no apologies are necessary for this part of Idaho. For the past few years she has given such a wonderful account of herself that people who have not been here for investigation and in some instances impossible. The first great feature that attracted the most attention was the extent of the Snake River valley—or the upper part of it, which from the Twin Falls comes to the head of the valley near Marysville, comprises a distance of about 200 miles, with an average width of about sixty miles. Through the center of this great valley tract, most of which is good agricultural land, meanders the Snake river, the principal tributary of the Columbia. The Snake river has its source in the Yellowstone park and the South Fork. It runs southward nearly a hundred miles through Wyoming before entering the Gem state. The North Fork heads in Henry lake on the west side of the park, and runs southwesterly, uniting with the South Fork near Rigby. In the southern part of Fremont county. Into these two streams empty the Teton, Warm, Fall, Salt and many other rivers and smaller streams. While this network of waterways is unequalled in any section of the intermountain country, still the large volume of water they carry is the chief distinctive feature. This affords the source for the greatest irrigation systems in the world.

The Dawn of Irrigation.

The magnitude of eastern Idaho's irrigation and agricultural possibilities began to dawn upon those early settlers after they had produced their first bounteous crops, because they had come from a region of limited irrigation and agricultural facilities. Of late years the value of irrigation, and the extent to which it can be carried in the arid west, has forced its importance upon congress. Eastern Idaho is a national way in no demonstrated and no longer doubted. The state of Idaho has received more attention, and there has been larger sums appropriated by congress and expended on her great reclamation projects than any other state thus far. The land is here and, likewise the water, which with the ideal climate justified the government in what it has done.

All this by way of preliminary. If a correct and detailed story could be told so as to include all of eastern Idaho's growth and development during 1907, the increased acreage planted, the additional length of canals constructed, the new towns built and the increased size of those already in existence, the new railroads built, likewise factories erected, mines opened up, etc., etc., it would surprise and amaze people who live here, and have been engaged in this work of enlargement in all lines of industry. The scope of this land is so great that the people living in one part of a county are strangers to and know but very little in regard to those living in another part, much less as to what they are doing.

Idaho Products for 1907.

The following statistics will partly tell what the Upper Snake River valley has produced during the year about to close:

The sugar beet industry affords the best chance of illustration, because it uses on other crops are hard to obtain. At the three sugar factories in this part of the state, located at Blackfoot, Idaho Falls and Sugar City, the following results obtained for the year: 2,000,000 pounds of sugar will be produced (the factories are not through grinding yet, and the result is partially estimated); 199,000 tons of beets were delivered at these factories; number of acres planted to beets in Bingham and Fremont counties, 18,000 acres; number of farmers engaged in raising beets, 1,252; number of employees at the three factories, 672; capital invested in these three factories, \$2,500,000; amount paid the farmers for beets in these two counties, \$650,000; paid factory help over \$200,000; the value of the refined sugar produced is over \$2,000,000. The largest yield is that of Jesse M. Baker of Teton, who had twenty-five acres of beets that averaged over twenty tons all the way through, which brought him \$2,299—a snug sum from a small farm.

If statistics were gatherable upon

the great wheat, oats and barley crops; also the potatoes, hay, livestock and other Idaho productions, not omitting fruit, a greater wealth story would be told, for but these crops are raised and disposed of in various ways, not all going to three purchasing companies, like the sugar beets, hence figures are not obtainable.

Large Shipments of Freight.

A compilation of the records of the Oregon Short Line freight offices in the various towns in the valley would give an approximate idea as to the enormous crops produced in Fremont and Bingham counties. The record of the railroad company at Rigby shows over 250 carloads of farm produce shipped from this town alone during September, October and November. When we take into account that there are a dozen similar shipping points on this line north of Pocatello, the aggregate amount become enormous. This record would have been surpassed had not the money crisis that swept over the nation occurred in the beginning of the farm produce shipping season. Thousands of cars of grain, hay, potatoes, stock and other produce still remain to be exported, but the farmers are in a financial condition to enable them to hold their unsold crops for a higher market. Last spring, one week in May, fifteen cars of wheat were sold and shipped from Rigby by about that many farmers. This proves the financial standing of eastern Idaho's progressive farmers is good.

One noticeable feature of the history of this valley is that from its very earliest settlement there has never been a crop failure. The nearest such calamity ever came to overtaking the farmers in the northern part of Fremont county was when the great hordes of crickets infested the level and sandy country to the northwest of St. Anthony during 1906, but these have practically been annihilated and no further fear is held from that source. The damage done by these insects was slight, compared to the whole country. It is this feature of "sureness" and "permanency" that impresses travelers through this country when considering its agricultural possibilities.

Good Progress During the Year.

In an industrial way the towns and country under consideration have made much progress during the year. The Western Mill & Elevator company, backed by Denver capital, has erected large grain elevators at Rigby and Ashton—the latter not yet finished. These are the largest in the state and will do much to encourage the grain growing feature by furnishing a ready market and good prices. This same concern erected a large mill of flour at the latter place, and has also erected a large mill at the town named, and also at Idaho Falls and Shelly. The country is so far developed as to attract capital from the outside for investment, thus new enterprises are springing up on every hand.

The Idaho Power & Transportation company has successfully installed its great electrical plant on the Snake river at that place. The company has much more current than it needs at Idaho Falls, and has already secured franchises at Rigby, Rexburg and St. Anthony. These cities with light and power, and now has the pole and wire line into Rigby, which place it will light by Christmas. The American Falls Power & Lighting company also has a great plant at that place, on the Snake river, and contemplates building its line up the valley from Blackfoot, its present northern terminus, to compete with the new company named. It is also asserted on good authority that one or the other, or perhaps both, of these companies will build an electrical railway line from Pocatello to Ashton, a distance of nearly 100 miles, and through the most fertile and thickly settled part of this great valley, there already being towns every ten to fifteen miles the entire distance.

Ride to the Gates of the Park.

The railway officials have recognized the needs of the Fremont county branch of its line by taking one of the passenger trains that formerly ran from the park to the Snake river and run it up the branch to Ashton. This has been made necessary by the increased traffic on this line. This branch this year has been completed to the Yellowstone park, and hereafter tourists and all others desiring to see that wonderful land can ride in Pullman palace cars to the park's gates. This, together with the rapid development of the rich country through which this line passes, has produced the unparalleled business it now enjoys.

It is persistently stated by those who claim they are in position to know that it is the Short Line's intention to build soon from the present terminus of the park line down the Madison river to some point on the main line near Red Rock, Mont., and then make the park branch the main line to Butte. This would doubtless result in a great saving to the company, because the best train service could then accommodate more people, and the heavy operating expenses over the hills of the old line would be obviated.

The Short Line officials were attracted by the great coal deposits in the mountains east of this valley this summer and made a thorough investigation as to their extent, and quality, with the result that they promise to build a line from either Sugar City or Chester into that region, thus bringing cheap coal to the homes of the many thousands of Fremont and Bingham counties, and keeping the large sums now sent out of the state for fuel at home to build up our own enterprises, which will add another great industry to our resources.

Other Roads Headed for Idaho.

While speaking of the railroad development for eastern Idaho, mention should be made of the prospects, now more favorable than ever, for the extension of the Chicago & Northwestern railway, and also the Burlington system, from western Wyoming into Idaho and across the state to the Pacific coast. If the present money stringency continues to any great length it will doubtless interfere to some extent with the financing of these projects, but aside from this more and more a thorough investigation of these roads into Idaho. The crying need of the country is more railroads. The great and unequalled Snake River valley, with its present development, the great mineral country west of here, where the Wetmore copper and other mining properties have been opened up this year, are located, only need a railroad to make them equal Nevada during the days following the advent of the Clark road

into that state. The great timber resources also in central Idaho but await the coming of the iron horse to place cheaper building materials in abundance in the hands of Idaho's eastern citizens. Such a road would traverse great coal fields in the Jackson Hole country than exist in the Teton basin. The development of the coal and mining industries of this part of the state would mean the erection of smelters, and thus another industry, which is bound to come, would be started.

Great Empire Is Redeemed.

This article would be incomplete if no mention were made of the reclamation projects now under way by private companies under the Carey act and by the government direct. There has, up to date, been segregated under the Carey act by private concerns, 88,500 acres in southern Idaho. There has been of this amount already sold, 615,000 acres, leaving over 300,000 acres yet to be disposed of. Most of this yet unsold is not ready for occupation, as the canal projects have not been fully completed. Idaho today has 2,564,608 acres of land under irrigation systems already completed. There are, according to the best information obtainable, 1,658,593 acres actually irrigated. The length of canals in the state exceed 9,400 miles or nearly twice across the continent. The cost of construction of canals up to date is over \$21,000,000. Nearly a million acres of land in Idaho have been brought under canal by the government under the reclamation act. This, with the great amount stated above that has been redeveloped under the Carey act by private companies, and the vast number of acres under the farmers' canal systems, runs the total up to approximately 2,000,000 acres of irrigable land.

From these figures an idea may be gained as to the present status of Idaho, the land of opportunities. It is safe to conclude that this state and southeastern Idaho form the greater part of this vast irrigable district, and that it will soon surpass every other intermountain state in the west in its greatness. Idaho produces \$1,500,000 in gold annually, besides the untold wealth of her lead, silver and copper mines. She is also very rich in timber, practically the central and entire northern part being covered with dense growth of valuable timber. Her stock ranges are unequalled in the world, which are now taken care of under the forest reserve policy of the government and made to return wealth both to the stockmen and Uncle Sam.

Dry Farming a Great Success.

Another great industry that has sprung up during the past year is that of "dry farming." The mountains of Idaho, more properly speaking, rolling hills skirting the Snake River valley in the eastern part of Bingham and Fremont counties, is composed of the richest kind of loamy soil, which by reason of its upland situation and rolling nature is not susceptible to very successful irrigation. One company about ten miles southeast of Rigby has nearly 2,000 acres broken up and seeded to crop for next year's planting. The company of Rexburg on the Woodmansee-Webster dry farm over 20,000 bushels of grain was raised this year, and much more land is being planted for next year. Great steam traction engines are used on these huge farms, plowing from thirty to thirty acres per day. There are millions of acres of this dry farm land in the hills east of the valley, which in the not very distant future will be mostly cultivated. Some rates are being as thirty-five and forty bushels of wheat to the acre. Twenty and twenty-five bushels are common yields. This valley following the great river, after which it is named, to the Pacific ocean, thus forming a great waterway, makes travel through, brings much rain even to the upper part of the valley. This is becoming more pronounced every year. Also the great amount of water taken out of the river and spread over the land for 200 miles also causes more rain, all of which insures good dry farm crops. This is made possible because the rolling hills in the place of mountains permit it.

The Cow Comes to the Front.

Another important industry has developed in eastern Idaho this year—that of home dairying. Up to a little over a year ago very little attention was given to butter or cheese making, notwithstanding the great number of cows owned and kept by the farmers. But eighteen months ago the Rigby Commercial club conceived the idea of having the farmers separate their cream by hand cream separators, and established cream routes and sent out cream haulers, who visit the homes of those who are now engaged in this industry, taking up their cream, hauling it to the depot and at Rigby and shipping it to the salt lake dairies. This has grown to be an important commercial enterprise, bringing in about \$20,000 annually to the farmers surrounding the town. The most of this comes during the summer time when less cash is in circulation in agricultural communities, and thus proves a great benefit. This is all practically for a product that formerly went to waste.

Viewed from every standpoint, southeastern Idaho today offers the best opportunity to the home seeker, investor and manufacturer that can be found in the United States. The greatest need of the state today is ten times the population it now has to properly handle its many and varied resources. These will come in time, of course, but much sooner if this state's advantages were more fully known.

SON OF HIS FATHER.

(Catholic Standard and Times.)
O' my, O' my, the years go by
Like sheep the dogs are berrin';
But late I had a lispin' lad,
An' now he 'talls o' marrin'.
Lord bless me! but he has the strut
Of one that's grand an' knows it;
No lass so grim that looks at him
But likes his cut an' shows it.
An', fairs, 'twould do your heart good,
To hear him at the blarney;
There's scarce a lass that sees him pass
But wears a smile for Barney—
Our Barney—
A wistful smile for Barney.
The Cupid lays cute snares these days
Where Barney goes philanderin'.
An' all his traps hold cease, perhaps,
None takes this bold young gander in.
Ah! none as yet, but there's a net
That will, one day or other.
An' her I'd name to bail the same
Is one like me, his mother.
Aye! sure as fate, he'll take for mate
Sweet, roguish Nora Kearney.
Who meets his will with scornful smiles
As once I did with Barney.
My Barney—
The father of 'our' Barney.

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