



ONCE A DESERT - NOW A THRIVING COMMUNITY - BALLANTYNE, MONTANA.

By William L. Aldorfer

N EARLY every one at some period of life has given serious thought to the possibility of securing a home in the west. After years of unprofitable labor in the crowded life of the cities, the idea has appealed with striking force—to build a home way out on the prairies where one might breathe the air of freedom and get away from the hurly burly of life as it is today in most of the towns and cities of our land. A home out in the open, miles and miles away from everything, with just enough to maintain life and a few of the luxuries, is the ideal home thousands have looked forward to for many years. But

ing. He could not leave the homestead under any circumstances. Under the new law he may get his title in three years, and during these three years he may go away for five months in each year to a place where he may avail himself of schools and at the same time earn sufficient to pull him through the rest of the year.

Representative Edward T. Taylor of Colorado is the man who was responsible for the passage of the law in the house of representatives. Both of

the great drawback up to the present has been the restrictions of the land laws and the long time necessary to acquire a title to the home.

Now Uncle Sam has stepped in and proposes to aid all his citizens who may want homes in the west. On the seventh of last month President Taft signed the new homestead law, which became operative at once. The new law nearly cuts in half the time required to own a homestead. Under the old law a five years' residence was required, with no provision for a man to go away and earn enough to tide him over hard times. Under the new law, however, only a three years' residence is required, while the pioneer is permitted to be away for five months during each year, so that he may be able to earn sufficient to pull him through the critical period of homemaking in the west. There are other radical changes provided under the new law, which do away with much red tape and technicality, the plan of the government being to make it easy for the homesteeker to acquire title to his land as quickly as possible.

For many years thousands of our best citizens have been emigrating to Canada—last year the figures were something like 150,000. Canada, being alive to the situation, has offered all kinds of inducements to get Americans to emigrate to that country. The campaign was unusually attractive and was put in operation slowly so as not to attract attention too quickly. But after a while the number of families leaving the United States became so great that Uncle Sam became wise to the fact that he must do something and do that something quickly, or Canada would very shortly depopulate a great portion of the United States.

Investigations were started with a view to finding out just what great inducement was offered by Canada. The result of this activity revealed the fact that the enterprising dominion north of us had not only cut in half the time required to secure title to a home, but had raised the ante two or three better by actually building homes for settlers immediately upon their arrival, helping them to secure agricultural implements, furnishing them with seed and the like, all of which was done on the long time payment or installment plan.

It was not long after these facts became apparent that steps were taken to remedy conditions and do away with many of the restrictions and red tape that honeycombed our land laws. Senator William E. Borah of Idaho is the author of the new law, and he is the man who fought for it several years in the United States senate.

"The old homestead law was enacted in 1862," said he in speaking of the new law, "and bore the signature of Abraham Lincoln. At that time the lands of the great middle west were subject to entry and it was easy to get a homestead. The old law required a continuous residence of five years. The great change in the law is that part of it provides for only three years and permits the absence of the homesteader during five months of each year.

"Another thing, under the old law a man could not get his title until he had lived there five years. He was compelled not only to remain upon his property for five years, but to be without title to it for the same length of time. He could make no use whatever of his title as a basis for credit, because the title was with the government and remained there, not only for five years, but in some cases as many as 10 years. Again, the homesteeker was forced to remain on the land the whole time, and because of this he could not give his children proper schooling, or in fact any kind of school-

these men struggled against great odds for years.

As showing the gigantic nature of the work undertaken by Uncle Sam to help the homesteaker, there are now 39 projects under construction in various sections of the country west of the Mississippi, on which has been spent more than \$78,000,000. All this work has been done under the direction of the reclamation service. During the last eight years the government has built more than 6,000 miles of canals, some of which transport whole rivers from one section of the country to another. It has excavated 20 miles of tunnels through high mountains. It has built something like 28,000 canal ditches and more than 2,900 bridges. And last but not least, three of the highest dams in the world have been completed. In addition there has been built a total length of 581 miles of roads, more than 1,500 miles of telephone wires, and 75 miles of levees. As a result of all this work 1,114,000 acres of land have been transformed from a desert into the richest land in the world.

In 1911 the value of the crops produced on this reclaimed land was more than \$20,000,000, and as a direct result the land values have increased more than \$165,000,000. Seventy thousand people are now living on the farms reclaimed from the desert, and 25,000 more have been added to the population of the cities, towns and villages in the immediate neighborhood.

Nearly all government land not yet taken up by settlers is confined almost wholly to the arid sections of the west. While these lands are very rich and fertile when reclaimed—in fact, it is said to be the richest land in the world for agricultural purposes—it is more difficult to reclaim than the old lands of the middle western states. But there is more than 400,000,000 acres left, and, under the new law, which enables a man to get his title within a reasonable time and to make his living as he goes along, the authorities confidently predict that thousands of homesteaders will occupy these lands within the next few

year. The biggest engineering work now nearing completion is that of the great dam in southern Idaho, known as the Arrow rock dam. This will be the tallest dam in the world when completed, reaching a height of 351 feet. It will contain 550,000 cubic yards of material. Just to state this bald fact as so many cubic yards of material hardly gives an idea of the quantity of material that will go in the building of this dam. A better idea might be given by saying that a cubic yard is a block three feet high, three feet wide and three feet deep. If it were possible to place in a straight line all the material to be used in this dam in blocks of this size the line would be 313 miles long.

There is another great dam being constructed on the Rio Grande, in New Mexico. It will be known as the Eagle

IT'S NOW TWICE AS EASY TO GET A HOMESTEAD

Thousands of Settlers Will Be Drawn to the Open West by the New Law Which Gives Title in Three Years and Permits an Absence of Five Months Out of Every Twelve

dam. The work has just started, but when completed it will be one of the biggest structures of the kind in the world. Still another is that of the Truckee-Carson dam. This work will add another 50,000 acres of land, and it is expected to be completed early in the year 1914.

Charles J. Blanchard is the statistician of the reclamation service, and he has been intimately associated with all the work done by Uncle Sam toward homemaking in the west. Mr. Blanchard is an enthusiastic believer in the slogan "America for Americans," and he believes the government should do everything possible to keep Americans from emigrating to foreign soil. He has traveled over every foot of ground now being reclaimed, and is probably the best posted man on the subject in the country.

"The homemaking instinct is a well developed trait in American character," says Mr. Blanchard, in speaking of homemaking by the government. Our forefathers, who landed on the bleak shores of New England; their descendants, the pioneers of the middle west; the argonauts of this generation, who crossed the trackless plains, were impelled by this instinct more than by the love of adventure or the lure of gold to wander forth into strange lands.

"The great question of providing homes for our people is a big one. The rapid narrowing of the boundary of our unoccupied public lands and the tremendous increase in the land values in all the settled sections of the United States render it increasingly difficult for a man of small means to get a foothold on the land. There is congestion in many of our cities, and the menace of a great population of underfed and poorly housed people increases each year.

"A nation's greatness has its foundation in the home of the man whose feet are firmly planted upon his own land. There is no national stability in a citizenship born and reared in tenements. Patriotism, loyalty and civic pride are not bred and fostered in the great centers of population. The destiny of the nation is foreshadowed by the provisions made for the prosperity and contentment of its citizens.

"And so our legislators have finally recognized that it is a national duty to render the acquirement of homes as easy as possible. Areas greater in extent than many of the original states have been donated for the purpose of making habitable unused lands. At one time the property of the United States embraced 1,500,000,000 acres. Today it has been reduced to less than 400,000,000 acres. Out of that public land 20 vigorous commonwealths have arisen,

and an agricultural empire has come into being that is today the marvel of the world.

"But the difficult part is now to come. In many parts of the public lands still left nature has placed in position all the natural elements required for a prosperous country, except rainfall. How to overcome the absence of water and thus bring this great region to its proper state of development is today the problem that Uncle Sam is solving. There is no question but that its successful solution will provide a safety valve against the dangers of congestion in the great cities of the country.

"Then, there is the other side of the question. The economic value of national irrigation can not be measured in dollars and cents. The desert made habitable offers the boon of health to him who builds a house upon it. You can not fix the possibilities of this great land of silence and sunshine. Its influence is tremendous in character molding. Instead of the dead level of mediocrity which prevails in modern city life, the desert offers the uplift of vast distances, perpetual sunshine, and the individual home, with the broader freedom of action that comes with life in the open. There is a constant inspiration to industry. It is a real stimulation which comes from the great life that springs from the bosom of the desert when water is applied.

"Many projects of the government which are ready for irrigation contain large areas of land for sale by private owners who are under agreement to dispose of their holdings. Under the reclamation law no farm will contain more than 160 acres, the only requirement being that every settler must reside upon the land and cultivate it for three years before he secures a title. The homestead rights of soldiers and sailors are the same as they always were.

"As a final word of advice I should say that home seekers should have some money. How much depends, of course, upon the settler and the kind of farming he expects to do. While there are numerous opportunities to secure work the settler with a little money and equipment will be able to get his land in condition earlier and will thus secure an early income from his farm.

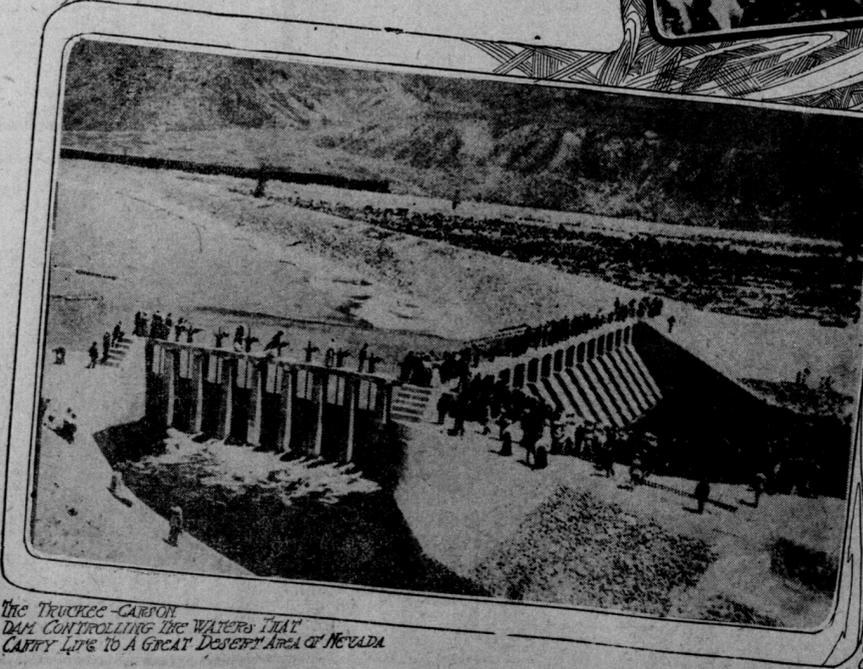
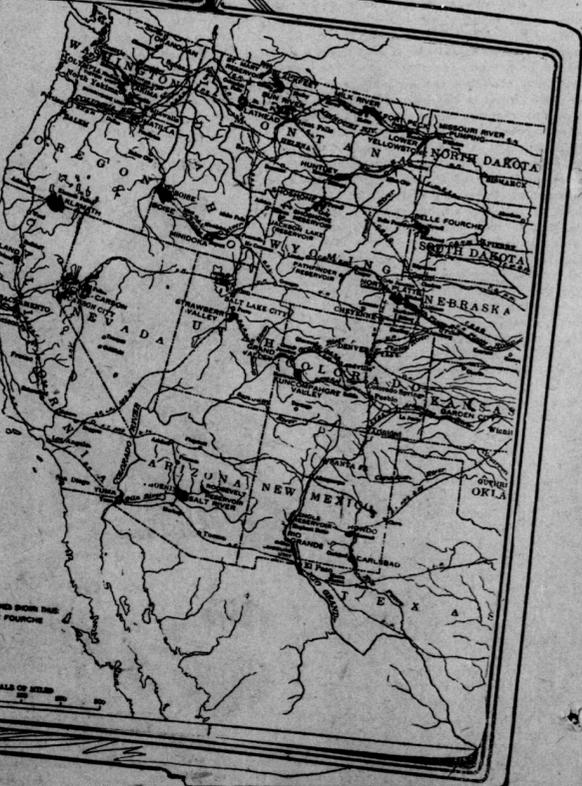
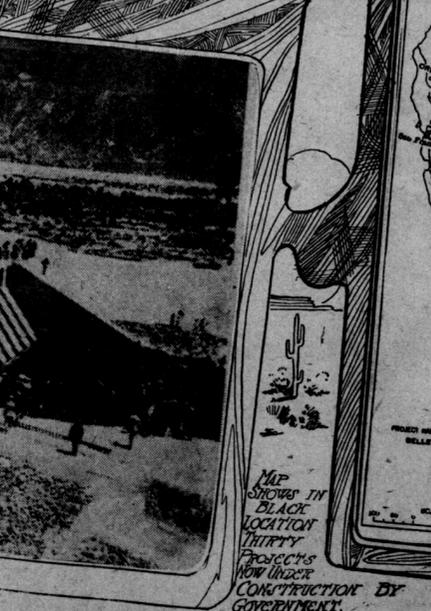
"A knowledge of irrigation is not absolutely essential, as the government keeps a practical farmer on each project to advise newcomers. A recent innovation on several projects are the demonstration farms, where the government grows crops best suited to that section. These are a great help to newcomers. During portions of the year Uncle Sam gives employment to settlers in building canals, laterals and roads, which is another great help, especially during the first two or three years, the most trying period of homemaking in the west.

"The most difficult problem the government had to solve in reclaiming the great southwest was the labor question. The ordinary laborer did not like the job, because he could not spend his money fast enough. It was a government reservation, where no saloons and no gambling were permitted, and no towns nearer than 60 miles, so the laborer did not look with favor on the work. The real worth of the engineer came out when he turned missionary and held a powwow with the Apache Indians, who have lived in the basin for generations. It seems incredible, yet it is nevertheless true, that that engineer succeeded in inducing several hundred Apache Indians to go on the payroll, and largely through their labors the wonderful highway near Yuma, Ariz., was built.

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PRESIDENT TAFT SIGNING NEW HOMESTEAD BILL WHICH MAKES IT POSSIBLE TO GAIN A HOMESTEAD IN THREE YEARS



THE TRUCKEE-CARSON DAM CONTROLLING THE WATERS THAT CARRY LIFE TO A GREAT DESERT AREA OF NEVADA