

## Irrigation In Southern Alberta

### Canadian Pacific To Reclaim 2,000,000 Acres

The Canadian people are small in numbers—only 6,442,581—but they possess as their heritage a country larger than the United States. Their numbers, limited though they be, are imbued with an ambition proportionate to the extent of their territory and the richness of its resources. Their ambition is shown in the largeness of their enterprises. They built the first, and only, complete American trans-continental railway, and are in the midst of building two others, while it is Canadian sagacity that is managing the largest irrigation project on our continent. This irrigation system, which is being constructed by the Canadian Pacific Railway in southern Alberta, will cover a tract as large as all the United States government projects combined. It is one of the striking manifestations of awakened spirit which is transforming our northern neighbor.

The final notice, a modest one, that 1,000,000 acres of the block were open to settlement, was issued last April. Two million acres more will follow as soon as the engineers shall have extended the canals to serve them. If this announcement had been made concerning lands in Montana or any of the Western states, the response would have been a rush and a boom, or an over-subscribed sale by allotment, with the usual crowding into occupation and the growth of canvas towns overnight. The reason why there are no such things in this case is that the case itself would not permit them. The lands are being taken fast enough, but the whole condition precludes haste. On the other hand it assures permanence and prosperity. The far more serious delays and risks attendant upon boom settlements are shut out altogether, and the incomers are able to enter upon a fixed and established mode of farming and living as soon as they take actual possession. They are crowding in fast enough now, and will come in faster as the months go by.

The reservation extends in the form of a stubby bow, southeast from Calgary. It is 150 miles long and forty miles wide, with a general eastward slope of seven feet in the mile. The Canadian Pacific main line traverses it from end to end.

The water is drawn from the Bow river at a point two miles below Calgary and distributed through a system of main and branch canals that already has a total of about 1,000 miles and will have somewhat over 3,000 when completed. From these canals the water is conducted directly to the fields, in ditches dug by the farmers themselves. The Bow river, like all other natural water in the Dominion, is Crown property and inalienable.

The lands until recently belonged to the Dominion of Canada. It passed to the Canadian Pacific Railway Company as part of its land grant subsidy, through an agreement under which the company was to construct an irrigation system, and the government was to furnish water at a nominal rate. Up to the time of that agreement none of it could be had at any price; nor was any of it open to sale until the company had established its plant, inaugurated its system, and made ready for settlement on a very broad scale.

Alberta is not arid. The average annual rainfall of about twenty inches is sufficient for successful farming by the old ordinary method. It is not for lack of water enough to make things grow, but to show what a well-planned and well controlled artificial supply of water will do to make things grow, and all things grow better, and to show, moreover, how the real wealth of an acre of soil may be brought out, that this enterprise has been established.

Irrigation is by no means new, nor confined to arid regions, or places where the rainfall is light. Primitive and prehistorical peoples practiced it with a wisdom our later centuries would seem to have forgotten. The common idea that it is useful only in desert countries may be referred to the publicity of late years given to government "reclamation" of arid lands in the United States.

Artificial watering ought to be practiced even in those areas where the annual rainfall is greatest, since it puts crops beyond the caprice of weather and insures moisture when it is wanted, regardless of the accidents of rain and drought.

The wettest countries have "dry spells." The very wettest have occasional seasons when no rain fall and all crops fail. Without irrigation the farmer is at the mercy of the weather. It makes or breaks him. With irrigation, he controls his crop growths, and there can be no wholesale disaster.

But the effect goes beyond mere insurance against crop failure. It means big crops and sure crops. That is the reason why irrigation has come into vogue in Wisconsin, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey and some of the New England states, as well as in the Western states where rain falls only in a "rainy season." It is the same reason that lies back of the action of the city man who sprinkles his lawn and waters his garden and his shade trees. It gives him just what the farmer gets out of unoccupied lands in America, and these lands must, in the course of the next quarter century, become the home of a large population, whose business it shall be to furnish breadstuffs and meats to half a world. Therefore the government is looking to it that settlement shall be so guided and aided as to get from the land the most that is in it, wisely and with knowledge, and with full accommodation to the largest number of producers, without crowding.

Because there are many millions of idle acres now it does not follow that acreage may be wasted, or the ability of an acre to produce healthily be left untried. The empire of which Canada is part has had a long and wide experience in colonization, and the lessons so learned are being applied on this new ground, so that the future may bring it fitly and fully to its place in the life of a great race. The settler is to be given the chance to profit by the most that an acre is easily capable of yielding, rather than to cultivate many acres with no greater result than he may more readily secure by wisely cultivating one.

Thus the whole scheme of this vast irrigation block is a demonstration on a tremendous scale of the possibilities of intensive farming, offering immediate benefits to those who come in and occupy the land, but going immeasurably far into the making or prosperity for the future. Because this is so I have given a somewhat lengthy description of the tract itself. Here colonization methods are fixed and established, and the soundness of the theories on which the work is carried on is being adequately demonstrated day by day.

A ditch to drain a 5,000-acre tract in Skagit county, about six miles long by two wide, is to be constructed. The amount of assessed benefits is \$140,000 and the estimated cost of the improvement is \$23,000. The ditch system provides lateral or spur ditches for each individual tract of land. A powerful pumping plant to cost \$4,000, will be established at the mouth of Kayton slough which empties into the Skagit river at Conway.

Spring has opened early in the Tieton district this year, and 100 men have been sent to begin operations on the irrigation canal for the season; the force will be increased to 1,000 men. At Bumping lake, where the government is building a huge reservoir, there is still snow, but much work has progressed all winter. The Tieton project is about half completed, according to the engineer's report.

In favor of the Bent-Prowers irrigation project in Colorado. Bonds will be issued for \$2,350,000 to build a canal 100 miles long, with reservoirs of a capacity of 75,000 acre feet; 100,000 acres will be benefited.

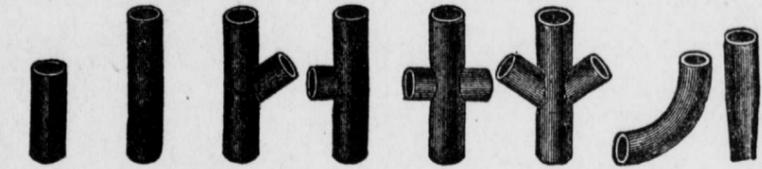
La Grande, Oregon, has an irrigation project that contemplates an expenditure of \$500,000 and will bring 40,000 acres under irrigation.

A high line canal extension of the government canal at Grand Junction, Colorado, will be built by private capital. It will run 100 miles into Utah to a canyon where reservoirs five miles long will be built. It will reclaim 250,000 acres of land.

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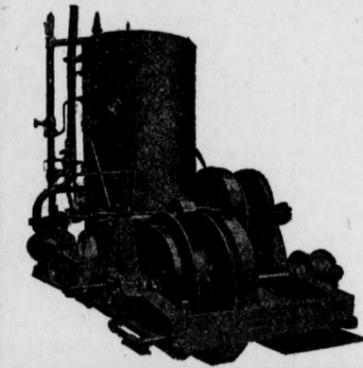


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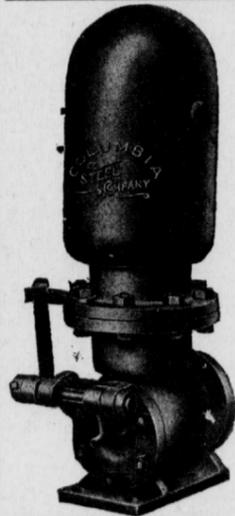
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