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Report of the Governor of Dakota, 1879 [with] Report of the Surveyor-General of Dakota, 1879

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REPORT
OF
THE GOVERNOR OF DAKOTA.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE DAKOTA TERRITORY,
Yankton, September 13, 1879.

SIR: Referring to your letter of the 28th ultimo, requesting I would communicate any information for the use of the department I might have additional to my last report, I beg leave respectfully to report that the year 1879 has been one of unexampled prosperity in this Territory. The crop of cereals in three or four counties in the extreme southeastern part of Dakota was injured by drought and grasshoppers to a considerable extent, but the corn and hay crop is very large. In all other parts of the Territory crops of every kind are excellent. The value of surplus agricultural products must reach several millions of dollars. While I have not reliable and accurate statistics at hand, I am sure the products are very large.

The mineral product of the Black Hills must be at least three millions of dollars for the year, and is rapidly increasing. A large number of stamps, for crushing the ore, and machinery of every kind, have been added, and it is believed the product of gold will be more than doubled the coming year. The mines are proving rich, and the systematic working of them is proving remunerative. The rapid development of the agricultural resources of the Black Hills and the large immigration going in and producing food in the vicinity of the mines, must lessen the cost of living and stimulate production and insure the reward of all classes of labor.

Immigration this year has been large, far greater than in any former year, and this large increase extends to all parts of the settled portion of the territory—perhaps about the same percentage of increase in each of the three divisions. Southeastern Dakota has had a very large increase of population. I am told by persons in whom I have confidence that as many as three hundred teams, immigrant wagons, have passed into the southeastern part of the Territory daily through the summer. Quite as large a percentage has come into Northern Dakota. The same may be said of the increase in the Black Hills. In the absence of census returns it is impossible to state with accuracy our present population. The swelling tide of immigration spread over so vast a territory, much of it in unorganized counties, makes satisfactory estimates difficult if not impossible. Well-informed persons have estimated our population at 160,000, others at 170,000, and some as high as 180,000. At the present time I think it is at least 150,000, probably more than that. The immigration to the Black Hills has been large and of a very satisfactory character. They claim to have, and I think with good reason, from 25,000 to 30,000 inhabitants.

Railroad facilities are being largely increased in Dakota. We have of completed railroad in the Territory about 400 miles; this will be in-

creased before January next to over 500 miles. Several strong corporations are pushing their trunk lines into this Territory at various places, as well to carry the products of our rich soil as ultimately to reach the Black Hills.

It is but a short time since vast herds of buffalo roamed undisturbed over these prairies; now farms stocked with cattle and sheep everywhere abound. It is not long since we were taught in our Eastern homes and in our schools and learned from our geographies the story of the Bad Lands, the "Great American Desert," and were left to believe that Dakota for barrenness was only equaled by the Desert of Sahara, and whose chilling blasts were equal to the cold of Greenland; but since it has been demonstrated that Dakota has a soil exceedingly rich, has more arable and less waste land in proportion to its size than any State or Territory in the whole Union, and since millions of bushels of grain are already waiting transportation to the markets of the world, capital, proverbially timid, is stretching out its arms and with hooks of steel is drawing to itself the carrying trade of an empire.

The interest our people take in education and the moral improvements is steadily increasing. Schools are increased in number and improved in character; churches are multiplied; greater respect for law than formerly is apparent. If we consider the richness and extent of our school lands, it will be found that Congress has provided for us a school fund that, when developed, will be equal to that of any State in the Union. If no sacrilegious hand shall be permitted to squander any portion of this rich inheritance, Dakota will have a population second to no State for intelligence and virtue.

In this connection I beg leave to call your attention to some of the more pressing needs of the Territory. Its vast extent would, even under more favorable circumstances, render efficient government and protection very difficult to a people so scattered. The fact that the whole population is embraced in three distinct and remote localities, whose business centers are on diverging lines and very far apart, and whose railroads have as yet no common center within or near the Territory; that there are no public buildings of any kind, and no certainty as to where the capital shall be, nothing to fix a common rallying point; the pressing necessity for a prison or prisons, as well for the use of the United States as for the Territory, thus saving the expense of transporting prisoners, Territorial and National, 1,000 and 1,500 miles—an average of 1,200; the proper care and education of the deaf and dumb, the blind and insane; the necessity of early providing for such military measures as would result in the raising of at least three companies of militia, one for the protection, if need be, of the people of Southeastern Dakota, one for Northern Dakota, and one for the Black Hills, suggest matters worthy of the attention of Congress. I submit the time has come when the population of this vast Territory, by no means homogeneous, now in three remote sections of difficult access, should be organized into three or at least two Territorial governments. Or, if this should not be thought best, Congress should, in its wisdom, if this vast and fertile country is to be kept together, admit Dakota into the Union as a State, and by relieving our people of their Territorial swaddling-clothes enable them to draw these elements into one compact mass and mold for themselves such institutions as will secure a united people and a great and prosperous State.

Very respectfully,

WM. A. HOWARD,
Governor Dakota Territory.

REPORT
OF THE
SURVEYOR-GENERAL OF DAKOTA.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
GENERAL LAND OFFICE,
Washington, D. C., November 15, 1879.

SIR: Respectfully referring to departmental letter of the 5th September last, requesting this office to instruct the surveyors-general of the Territories to transmit to the department such information as they possess, or may be able to obtain, relative to the resources and development of the Territories, I have the honor to transmit herewith the report of the United States surveyor-general of Dakota upon the resources of that Territory.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully,

J. M. ARMSTRONG,
Acting Commissioner.

Hon. CARL SCHURZ,
Secretary of the Interior.

REPORT ON THE SOIL, CLIMATE, PRODUCTS, AND RE
SOURCES OF DAKOTA.

SIR: In compliance with the instructions contained in your letter of the 8th ultimo, initial E, I have the honor to submit the following:

SOIL.

The soil of that portion of Dakota lying east of the Missouri River is generally a rich clay or sandy loam, very little rating below second class. In the valleys of the Missouri, Big Sioux, Dakota, Vermillion, Cheyenne, Red River, and other streams the soil is exceptionally rich, producing large crops of grain and grass. In this region there are no extensive areas of marsh or sand. The country is fairly watered by the streams named and their tributaries, and by numerous lakes in the northern and eastern portions. I have yet to hear of the point in the Territory where water cannot be had at a reasonable depth by digging. West of the Missouri River the character of the soil is not so fully determined, most of that section being included in Indian reservations, but as far as known it is generally good. The district west of the Missouri River, prominently shown upon early maps as the "bad lands," might be compressed into a few townships. It may be said, in fact, that the proportion of waste land in the Territory, owing to the absence of swamps, mountain ranges, overflowed and sandy tracts, is less than in

any other State or Territory in the Union. In the valleys and foot-hills of the Black Hills the soil is rich and productive, and the rainfall abundant the past season. It is expected that, in an agricultural way, that region will be self-sustaining without irrigation.

CLIMATE.

Owing to the dryness of the atmosphere and general evenness of temperature the climate of Dakota is very salubrious, and well adapted to agricultural pursuits. The average temperature of Southern Dakota may be compared to that of Southern Illinois, Northern Indiana, and Ohio. In the northern portions the winters are somewhat more severe. In the southern part early frosts are very rare and the weather very fine down to the 1st of November. Little snow falls in the winter, and sleighs are almost unknown.

AGRICULTURE.

The agricultural products of the Territory include the whole range of those common to the Northern States. Small grains and vegetables grow in the greatest perfection. Northern Dakota, particularly the Red River Valley, is destined to become one of the greatest wheat-producing regions in the country. No systematic effort has yet been made in pomology, but, from what has been done, there is no doubt that when the varieties best suited to the soil and climate are settled upon, fruit-growing will become a profitable occupation. At present, next to grain, stock-raising is the most growing industry. The excellent grasses and mild climate have given this occupation a great impetus, and within the past two years large sums have been invested in young stock.

COAL.

Deputy surveyors employed this season, west of Bismarck and near the line of the Northern Pacific Railroad, report coal croppings at various points near the Sweet Brier River, and between that and the Big Heart River. One vein in that vicinity is being worked to a limited extent, but the coal taken out so far, from near the surface, is of a somewhat inferior quality. Bituminous coal has also been found in the Black Hills, but the vein has not been sufficiently developed to determine its economic value.

MINERALS.

No metals have been found in any quantity outside of the Black Hills. In that district gold, silver, lead, and mica have been found in quantities of commercial value. A fine bed of the latter is now being worked.

Of the gold and silver product, it can only be said in the limits of this report that it is steadily increasing. Daily more capital and refined methods are employed in the various mines now open, and new discoveries are constantly being made. The ease with which the auriferous ores are worked makes profitable the mining of very low-grade ores. There is said, by persons competent to judge, to be enough gold and silver ore "in sight" in the Black Hills to employ the present mining facilities for the next ten years.