

10-20-1879

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

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REPORT  
OF THE  
GOVERNOR OF MONTANA.

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TERRITORY OF MONTANA,  
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT,  
*Helena, October 20, 1879.*

SIR: My report for the present year is briefly as follows:

Montana has made rapid increase in material prosperity during the year last past. The population of the Territory has increased more rapidly than any year since its organization, and the increase in taxable property over that of last year will reach nearly \$4,000,000.

The farmer, the miner, the merchant, the tradesman, and in short all classes of our people are prosperous and contented. Capital yields satisfactory returns, and labor is liberally rewarded. The Territory has been free from Indian troubles, and our people have been blessed with peace and plenty. The public domain is being rapidly occupied, and settlements have grown up where but a year ago the buffalo and the elk fed unmolested by white men. The people of the Territory have strictly observed the provisions of the Indian treaties, while the Indians have totally disregarded the rights of our citizens by stealing and destroying their property. This trouble results from the fact that Indians are permitted to leave their reservations and roam through the country, but sparsely settled by white men. Our people appear determined to defend their property from Indian depredations; and I anticipate trouble between the treaty Indians who leave their reservations and citizens who reside in the remote settlements. I think I can assure the department that the citizens of Montana will not invade the reservations of the Indians, nor permit it to be done by bad men; but they do insist that the Indians must not be permitted to roam at will through the settlements. I wish to call the attention of the department to the area of the Crow Reservation. It is large enough and fertile enough for a great State, and yet less than 3,000 Indians occupy it. It is no longer of value to the Indians, while they, as a body, refuse to farm or raise stock for a subsistence. I respectfully recommend that such steps be taken by the government as will materially reduce the area of the reservation, or induce the Indians to abandon it and place them north of the Missouri River, near the buffalo. A large portion of the Flathead Indians remain in the Bitter Root Valley, in violation of the law of Congress, and those who do occupy lands granted them by Congress refuse to pay local taxes.

The Utah and Northern Railroad, a branch of the Union Pacific Railroad, has been built into the Territory during the present year, and I

hope it may soon reach our business and financial centers. The completion of this railroad will enable the landless citizens of the Eastern States to reach Montana, where homes can be obtained more advantageously than in almost any other section of the country.

I am, very respectfully,

B. F. POTTS,  
*Governor.*

Hon. C. SCHURZ,  
*Secretary of the Interior, Washington, D. C.*

REPORT  
OF THE  
SURVEYOR-GENERAL OF MONTANA.

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· UNITED STATES SURVEYOR-GENERAL'S OFFICE,  
*Helena, Mont., October 9, 1879.*

SIR: In compliance with instructions received through the Commissioner of the General Land Office, under date of September 8, 1879, I have the honor to submit a brief report relative to the resources and development of Montana.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION.

Montana comprises all that part of the territory of the United States within the following limits, to wit:

Commencing at a point formed by the intersection of the twenty-seventh degree of longitude west from Washington with the forty-fifth degree of north latitude; thence due west on said forty-fifth degree of latitude to a point formed by its intersection with the thirty-fourth degree of longitude west from Washington; thence due south along the said thirty-fourth degree of longitude to its intersection with the forty-fourth degree and thirty minutes of north latitude; thence due west along said forty-fourth degree and thirty minutes of north latitude to a point formed by its intersection with the crest of the Rocky Mountains; thence following the crest of the Rocky Mountains northward till its intersection with the Bitter Root Mountains; thence northward along the crest of said Bitter Root Mountains to its intersection with the thirty-ninth degree of longitude west from Washington; thence along said thirty-ninth degree of longitude northward to the boundary line of the British possessions; thence eastward along said boundary line to the twenty-seventh degree of longitude west from Washington; thence southward along said twenty-seventh degree of longitude to the place of beginning.

This vast tract of country, comprising an area of more than 92,000,000 acres, is interspersed with mountain ranges, spurs, and isolated peaks throughout its entire extent. The headwaters of the Missouri and the Columbia Rivers lie within its borders, and it is well watered by these rivers, the Yellowstone, Milk, Marias, Musselshell, Tongue, Bighorn, and Powder Rivers, and numberless smaller streams and tributaries.

SOIL.

In the western, central, and southern portions of the Territory the land along the valleys, adjacent to the streams, is rich and well adapted to agriculture, large crops of grain, vegetables, &c., being produced with little or no irrigation. The soil of the table-lands is generally

good, only requiring irrigation, for which abundant water can be had, to produce largely, while the foot-hills are covered with an abundant growth of nutritious grasses extending to the timber line. In the northern and eastern portions of the Territory are vast tracts of so-called bad lands; but even these, in many portions, are covered with grasses more or less abundant, and affording grazing to large herds of buffalo, antelope, &c.

#### TIMBER.

The Territory is well timbered throughout, the mountains being covered with a dense growth of pine, fir, and spruce, some of which attain very large proportions, while cottonwoods and willows border the streams. There are some small groves of ash, and I am informed that large bodies of oak have recently been found on the headwaters of Tongue River, near the southern boundary. The forests in the immediate vicinity of settlements have suffered somewhat from the wanton depredations of settlers, who often destroy half a dozen small trees in obtaining one of the requisite size for their purposes; but even in those portions where the hillsides have been stripped entirely bare, I have noticed a sturdy and flourishing second growth. The loss from forest fires is far greater than from any other source, but as the country becomes more settled, and the Indians, who are most careless with fire, are kept upon their reservations, these will become less frequent.

#### CLIMATE.

Montana is blessed with a delightful and healthful climate. The temperature is generally mild and even, and although severe cold weather is sometimes experienced, it is never long-continued. The rain-fall has increased during the past few years, and the snow upon the mountains lies deep, but the proportion of stormy days is small, and the glorious sunshine and pure air throughout the greater portion of the year render mere existence a delight.

#### AGRICULTURE.

The amount of land under cultivation is limited by the demand for the products, as no facilities exist for export, but the yield per acre of grain, vegetables, &c., is very large and the quality is of the best. Montana wheat especially is unexcelled. As the population increases so will the supply, and the area of arable land is so great that the Territory will not only be always self-sustaining in this respect, but will also have a large surplus to export, whenever cheap modes of transportation are afforded.

#### MINERAL WEALTH.

No reliable estimate can be made of the value of the vast mineral resources of Montana. The richest placer mining ground in the comparatively settled portions of the Territory have been worked out, but new "diggings" are constantly being discovered, and there are immense areas of placer ground which will pay a handsome profit whenever labor can be procured at from \$1.50 to \$2 per diem. Quartz mining is still in its infancy, and it is only within the last year that sufficient developments have been made at several of the most prominent mining camps—notably Butte and Philipsburg—to prove the permanence and value of the ore deposits. Considering her isolated position and the great

expense of reduction of ores and transportation, Montana's product of precious metals has been very large. In the near future it will be greatly increased, and it is not an extravagant prediction to say that within ten years it will equal that of Nevada.

#### STOCK.

According to the most reliable estimates the number and value of stock in Montana has doubled within the past three years. The natural increase is very large, and in addition to this there has been a steady and increasing importation of cattle, sheep, and horses.

Stock breeders are paying more attention to the improvement of the quality of all kinds of stock, many thoroughbred stallions, bulls, and rams having been imported within the last year. Cattle and horses roam at will over the foot-hills throughout the entire year, and sheep require shelter and food for a few weeks only in the winter season.

The value of the export of cattle, hides, and wool will, in a few years, rank second only to that of precious metals.

#### TRANSPORTATION.

During the season of navigation, steamboats come up the Missouri River to Fort Benton, the present head of navigation, and up the Yellowstone to a point at, and during the high stage of the water above, the mouth of the Bighorn River. The Missouri is navigable to the Great Falls, about 40 miles above Fort Benton, and at a slight expense can be made so above the falls nearly, if not quite, to the junction of the three forks, the Madison, Jefferson, and Gallatin Rivers. The improvement of this portion of the river will be commenced early next season, under an appropriation by Congress, and a light-draught steamboat, to run above the falls, will be put on the river at the same time by a Montana company. The Yellowstone River is also being surveyed with a view to its improvement.

The Utah and Northern Railroad (narrow gauge), running northerly from Ogden, has now reached our southern border at Pleasant Valley, on the main divide of the Rocky Mountains, and in a few weeks will be at the foot of the divide. This insures us, for the first time, continuous transportation throughout the entire year. The terminus will probably remain at the foot of the divide for some time to come, but eventually the road will be extended into the central portion of the Territory. The Northern Pacific Railroad has nearly reached our eastern boundary, and early next summer will have its terminus at, or near, Miles City, on the Yellowstone River, at the mouth of Tongue River. Upon the completion of this road, passing through the richest portions of the Territory, from the eastern to the western borders, and affording ample means of transportation for imports and exports, Montana will enter upon a career of prosperity perhaps unexampled in the history of the Territories. I venture to express the hope that Congress will see fit to exercise a wise liberality, extend the time for the completion of this railroad, which is of vital importance to Montana, and confirm its land-grant.

#### POPULATION.

In the early days of Montana, her population was composed almost entirely of men, attracted by the rich placer mines, and when these became exhausted, the number of settlers decreased for several years.

The discovery of quartz leads caused a steady influx, and now that her natural resources are becoming more widely known and utilized, immigration is increasing yearly, and is of a permanent character. The citizens are intelligent, industrious, peaceable, and law-abiding.

CONCLUSION.

The large amount of work in this surveying district, and the inadequate appropriation for salaries of assistants, renders it necessary for me to personally perform much clerical labor, and has left me but little time for the preparation of this report, which is, therefore, necessarily brief and imperfect. With this explanation, it is respectfully submitted, in the hope that it may meet with your approval.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

ROSWELL H. MASON,

*United States Surveyor-General for Montana.*

HON. CARL SCHURZ,

*Secretary of the Interior,*

*Washington, D. C.*