

# Coos Bay Times

AN INDEPENDENT PAPER PUBLISHED EVERY DAY EXCEPT MONDAY AND ALSO WEEKLY BY THE COOS BAY TIMES PUBLISHING CO.

The policy of The Coos Bay Times will be Republican in politics, with the independence of which President Roosevelt is the leading exponent.

Entered at the postoffice at Marshfield, Oregon, for transmission through the mails as second class mail matter.

**SUBSCRIPTION RATES:**  
 Single copy, daily, 5 cents  
 Per month, daily, 50 cents  
 Three months, daily, \$1.25  
 Six months, daily, \$2.50  
 One year, daily, \$5.00  
 Weekly, per year, \$1.50

Local readers 10c line first insertion, 5c line each succeeding insertion.

Address all communications to COOS BAY TIMES, Marshfield, Oregon.

## MR. BELL'S FRANCHISE.

It is something over a year since the city of North Bend granted to Henry Hewitt, Jr., Seymour H. Bell and assigns, a franchise for electric lighting, steam heating and electric street railway. The ordinance by which this grant was made was extremely brief and contained few restrictions or limitations of any kind. It was, in short, so broad and liberal that the water front and street in North Bend could be occupied for fifty years by the company to which these broad privileges should be assigned. When Marshfield heard of this boundless liberality and anticipated that a similar franchise would be applied for, for the use of Marshfield streets, her people were inclined to murmur, and the opposition which developed delayed, if it did not prevent, the granting of any franchise.

Nearly a year has passed and the whole electric line proposition has been in suspense. Now, however, Mr. Bell has asked for a franchise which is confined in its scope to what must be regarded as the water front. It is probably not the same franchise which he expected Marshfield to grant him when North Bend made its grant, for the North Bend franchise, while it gave the grantees ALL the streets, mentioned Sherman avenue from Marshfield city limits to North Bend as the location of its first line. He has changed his plans, evidently, so as to control the water front. He now desires all of Broadway, Cedar street and Front street along the water front from Cedar street to the city limits and it is his design to proceed along the water front of North Bend, including Plat B, Porter and the other points, or so close to the water front as to control it. Now Broadway from Coalbank Inlet to C street is a water front street to all intents and purposes. There is no street east of it or between it and the bay. From C street to the intersection of Cedar street and Front near Ferndale is not water front but thence to Sheridan street, North Bend is. There is no disguising the fact that such a route controls the water front completely. It is a water front line.

The people of Marshfield have a right to grant this franchise if they desire. But they should understand it clearly. Why does Mr. Bell want a water front line? Is it to develop the country between Marshfield and North Bend? Where? On the water front? Broadway will develop without it. So will Cedar street. But no street railroad will induce people to live on the mud flats between Front street and Ferndale. If the street railway were designed to handle the passenger traffic between Marshfield and North Bend it might hope to reach a paying basis quickly by going up the county road through Ferndale and thence along Sherman avenue. Such a road would attract house builders and residents. They would line the railroad and accept its accommodations. The traffic would grow. Not so on the water front.

Let us be frank. The water front line can be nothing but a railroad—a common, ordinary, traffic road for carrying passengers and freight. The franchise asked for is for fifty years. It provides that freight cars shall not be handled on the tracks except during the night. It also provides that the cars of other companies shall be handled at reasonable rates. It is made to Mr. Seymour Bell as trustee and his heirs and assigns. Who is the beneficiary? Now, Mr. Bell would never assign to the Southern Pacific or any other company, but he might die and his assigns or heirs could turn it over to one of those companies. Excellent! Who then would own the water front? What would be a reasonable rate for the S. P. or the N. P. or the N. W. or whoever owned that

franchise, to charge its competitor? other persons until the bay is bot- Who would be the umpire to decide that question? Would it not be easy to sell this franchise, for a good price to one of the transcontinental companies? Possibly the people of Marshfield would not object to such act of beneficence toward a trans- continental road, if it would induce such road to come. But after all it might just as easily grant directly to the company it wishes to favor and could do it fully as well in that way as through the proxy of Mr. Bell or anybody else.

Again, the construction is not to commence until four months after Cedar street is graded and it is pre- sumed extended all the way up the water front to North Bend. Whether that city will at once proceed to build is a question, of course. It may well be supposed that she will, however, for North Bend is a very enterprising city and has the distinction of "doing things" and doing them swiftly. But suppose she doesn't? Suppose it is impracticable to build during the rainy season? The winter months pass. The four months of summer pass. The limitation does not begin to run. The Southern Pacific arrives with its bottle, and the franchise has been held from all tied up. This does not say either that Mr. Bell would do such a thing or that his heirs or assigns will get a chance to. But they might.

The plan which Mr. Bell had in the first instance, as it was generally understood, was one which nobody could take any exception to. It contemplated that as the cities grew a number of feeders to the main line down Sherman avenue would extend from its central station at North Bend in every direction. If he had only kept to that plan there would have been a line down Sherman avenue from North Bend to Marshfield, another from North Bend to Empire, another from North Bend up Pony Inlet and thence to Sunset Bay and other points. The location of the power house at the center and the network of lines which was proposed at that time may be within the present plan and the hope is entertained that, should the council adopt the charter, that part of the original plan may be carried out. Probably, on second thought, it will be, for North Bend is entitled to all the advantages suggested inasmuch as it has spared no expense, in the matter of giving away its public franchises, and has been liberal beyond the power of two generations to limit or control.

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