

KITTITAS COUNTY, WASHINGTON.

KITTITAS county and the Kittitas valley, of Washington, is one of the most promising of the newer sections of the state. It came into public notice only within the past decade during the latter half of which almost its entire growth has been achieved; indeed Kittitas county has had an individual existence less than seven years. It first came into prominence as a stock and agricultural country. The advent of the railroad unlocked it to the world and it is now beginning to show rich deposits of valuable minerals. Late developments tending toward the location of the state capital at the thriving commercial center of Central Washington, Ellensburg, the capital of Kittitas, give special interest to the city and its environments.

The traveler from the east crosses the great plain of the Columbia, and, passing up the Yakima river in a northwesterly direction, threads his way through a narrow, crooked defile several miles long before reaching the smiling valley of the Kittitas. The heavily rolling hills that define the limits of the valley press back from the river and the plain stretches away ten or twelve miles on either hand and nearly forty miles long. Approaching Kittitas from the west one crosses the Cascade mountains through some of the grandest scenery imaginable. On the regular passenger trains breakfast is served while ascending the mountains. Such views of varied natural grandeur as one gets from the window during the breakfast hour make it seem like some wild dream. Then comes Stampede tunnel, nearly two miles long, after passing which the train bowls along down the mountains and down the Yakima to the Kittitas valley. The city of Ellensburg is located near the center of the valley.

Of the few available passes of the Cascade mountains four are on the western boundary of Kittitas county—Cady pass in the extreme northwestern corner, and to the southward, Snoqualmie, Stampede and Natches. The Northern Pacific crosses the range by Stampede. The Seattle, Lake Shore & Eastern has located lines by both the Snoqualmie and the Cady and the recently organized enterprise of constructing a road east from Shoalwater bay contemplates crossing the mountains by the Natches pass. Thus the Kittitas country is sure to be well supplied with railroads. To build and operate a railroad in that region, between Eastern and Western Washington involves the expenditure of vast sums of money and only strong corporations will undertake it. But the country possesses such varied riches that their development will warrant the inauguration of enterprises on a scale so vast as to be appalling to more staid communities.

By the building of a railway through the northern

part of Kittitas county the placers to the northward of the Peshastan district would be much augmented in value and the working of quartz properties would be greatly stimulated. The iron and coal lying between those districts and the main mountain range could then also be mined to advantage. That region is rough but its wealth of gold, silver, copper, iron and coal cannot even vaguely be estimated. There are numerous deposits of all degrees of richness, but the prospecting has been very unthorough, and the claims located are no measure whatever of the diffusion of minerals. Of course the character of the deposits can only be determined by sampling the actual products. There is plenty of water and timber convenient to the prospects. The interest now being awakened in that region is certain to result in the investment of much money in the mines and the building up of important mining interests. The extensive coal mines of the Northern Pacific railway company at Roslyn, in Kittitas county, a few miles northwest of Ellensburg, show that that mineral exists in vast quantities and only needs capital to develop it.

The surface of Kittitas county presents various features. Its western boundary being the crest of the mountain range, that part is, of course, mountainous. The northern portion of the county is also rough and not suited to the demands of practical farming. The rough lands are valuable for their minerals, timber, and some areas for stock ranges. There are a number of beautiful and useful lakes in the county, chief of which are Wenatchee, on the northern boundary, an expansion of the river of the same name, Cle-Elum, Kabchess, Kitchelos and Piwallus in the western portion. These lakes are valuable as forming storage reservoirs for the streams that drain them through the dry country below, and by suitable improvement could be made to equalize the flow of water in the rivers still more than they do now. They are at considerable elevations in the mountains. The scenery about them is of the most picturesque and sportsmen are attracted by the game that is so plentiful in those wild sections. The valley of Kittitas itself is one of the finest farming regions of the west. Scarcely one-tenth of the soil is yet cultivated, though most of the area has been claimed, and but few eligible locations remain in the public domain. The population is not dense enough to bring country property to a very high price yet, however, and good farms may be purchased on easy terms. The total number of inhabitants in Kittitas county is less than 15,000, while its area is 2,304,000 acres, fully 1,750,000 of which are arable land. The inducements for manufacturing are growing with the development of the natural resources and the field is a broad and attractive one for the enterprising citizen.