Port of Brookings is Not New Idea

Many people have heard there was once a dock at Brookings. Possibly a resume of that fact will be enlightening, not only to the local residents but to a great many people, and especially those on the other side of the coast range who may, some day, interest themselves in regard to their potential seaport at Brookings.

No one was more familiar with the dock and its operation than the late William J. Ward. He was a graduate civil engineer, Cornell university, and came to Curry county about 1906. Apparently he was scouting timber and locations for a huge lumber and box company, then centered at St. Louis. From the time he came to the county until his death in 1936, he had the resources and possibilities not only at his finger tips but did much to combine them in the operation of the huge mill and did exploratory running of levels from the Port of Brookings toward the upper Rogue Valley.

The Pilot is privileged to make available a treatise Mr. Ward wrote in January 1933 summarizing his experiences. It is especially valuable because it was written by a qualified engineer whose trained mind foresaw and predicted further development of the Port of Brookings, especially in an extension of the factual demonstration of operation over a period of profitable years.

The Pilot herewith brings you, verbatim, the story Bill Ward wrote.

W. J. Ward

GENERAL SCHEME FOR DEVELOPMENT HARBOR AND RIVER

(January 1933)

As has already been stated, a bill is now before Congress to provide for the survey and the plan of improvement of Brookings Port (Chetco Cove, Oregon as it is known on the United States Geodetic Charts). The harbor has already been carefully surveyed and the soundings taken by sweepings. This work was started in 1910, by the orginal surveys, and elabroated in 1913 to 1916. During 1916 and 1917 all rocks in the roadsted on which a depth of 36 feet at low tide was not found, were removed to that depth by blasting. Anchors were expertly placed and suitable mooring buoys attached. During the summer of 1917, a fine wharf, 1200 feet long, was constructed into the bay and in all some 350 million feet of lumber and lumber products and many thousands of tons of general freight have been handled over this wharf all without one cent of damage to ships, cargo or to equipment. The fact that the wharf still stands today (January 1933) without one cent of money having been spent on it for maintenance or any other account since 1925, speaks most eloquently for the fine natural protection of the harbor.

Loaded Coaster Leaving Brookings

Former 1200 Ft. Dock at Brookings Port

From the Chetco Point west of the harbor(its protecting feature) a breakwater will probably be recommended. This breakwater will extend seaward for some 2,000 or 3,000 feet. It will serve to absolutely protect the present bay and further protect the mile of expanse from the Chetco Point to the mouth of the Chetco River. Such protection will permit the construction of many wharves, all that would ever be necessary to care for a city of many thousands, and to dock ships sufficient to supply all of Southern Oregon, regularly and safely. It is also likely that a plan for improvement would comtemplate a jetty from the Chetco River. Such a jetty will confine the flow of the Chetco River and its tidal basin to the west shore, directly into the area protected by the breakwater. The breakwater would protect the mouth of th river, thus confined, and a depth of water from 10 to 12 feet, on the Chetco bar, might well be expected. The river, inside its mouth, ranges from 16 to 20 feet deep, in the chanel along the west bank and a scope of close to one-half mile is available before the Oregon Coast Highway bridge and shoal water is encountered. Thus, a small, but adequate inside harbor could be made.

The consummation of this work would give to Brookings an ideal arrangement. Large, off-shore vessels could load or discharge at the wharves. The smaller "coasters" could take their choice. The commerical fishing fleet could safely anchor in the lea of the breakwater, or could run into fresh water in the Chetco River. Pleasure boats and yachts could be cared for safely and easily and power cruisers, for outside fishing and touring, would find a safe and readily accessible haven.

The cost of this work would be low as there are ample quantities of suitable rock readily adjacent to the construction, And the magnitude of the work to be done is small. Two or two and a half million dollars would do all the work that the government would be called upon to perform. And there would be no additional cost in yearly dredging or in expensive maintenance. The plan is most feasable and very economical.

Railroad

Brookings, as has been stated, is at the mouth of the Chetco River. This stream rises some fifty miles east, in the Coast range of mountains. Some twenty miles from its head, the Chetco River has a large tributary called Tincup Creek flowing into it from the north. Part way up Tincup Creek makes a sharp bend to the east, and at this bend there is a low pass or "saddle" with a thin ridge separating its waters from those of the Illinois River. And it is through this Tincup Pass that a railroad has been projected from the southern and eastern parts of Oregon to the coast. Then the vast railroad systems of Southern Oregon would be connected with the Pacific Ocean at Brookings. The Chetco River routs is direct, short and cheap to construct and low in maintenance costs. A tunnel through the Tincup Pass of some 6200 feet would penetrate into the waters of the Illinois River at an elevation of not much over 1200 feet and some forty miles would be furnished in which to make the climb. The grades would be very small. The tonnage that such a railroad would develope is problematical. But with the vast agricultural resources of the interior valleys and the great timbered areas of the coast country, in conjunction with a wide area of undeveloped mineral lands capable of producing large amounts of copper and varying amounts of many other commerical ores, the railroad should soon pay, once normal conditions prevail. Southern Oregon has long looked for an outlet to the sea. And the coast country wants better access to the interior. The two will surely be joined before not too long.

J. E. Brooking, official of the Brookings Box & Lumber Co., for whom the City of Brookings was named.—(From the Milton Foster collection.)