

AWAKENING AT HAND for LAND LONG DORMANT

Railroads Into Central Oregon Will Reclaim Area Greater Than Ohio and Richer in Resources

By R. G. Calvert.

ON JULY 22 last, 48 wagons, 50 teams of mules and horses and large quantities of railway construction material and commissary supplies were unloaded from the steamer Bailey Gatzert at The Dalles. Once unloaded, 100 men in feverish haste assembled knocked-down wagons, piled on wheelbarrows, picks, shovels and camp equipment, hooked up four-horse teams and began an overland journey eastward toward the canyon of the Deschutes River.

A few weeks previously the Harriman Railway system had begun assembling railway construction equipment at points along the Deschutes and had commenced the construction of wagon roads into the canyon, from the east. For about a month the identity and purpose of the new movement from The Dalles was cloaked in mystery, then came an official announcement that James J. Hill was backing the enterprise and all Oregon suddenly realized that two great railway systems had begun a race for an unawakened empire.

In the bottom of a canyon 100 miles long and from 1000 to 2000 feet below the level of the adjoining table lands, steam shovels, hundreds of teams and 5000 men are toiling in the stupendous contest. High cliffs are being torn down by powder blasts that reverberate from canyon wall to canyon wall, tunnels are being driven through solid rock, dumpcars are moving incessantly, and gradually two railroad grades are being constructed, one on each side of a tumultuous stream that averages about 30 feet across.

In constructing these two railroads through 100 miles of unproductive canyon two railway systems are expending approximately \$10,000,000 and for what?

To him who can conceive of a terri-



CONFLUENCE OF DESCHUTES AND CROOKED RIVERS - BEST TROUT FISHING IN OREGON



MT JEFFERSON AS SEEN FROM NEAR MADRAS

spurs to reach far into Oregon, and gradients on all lines make long extensions impracticable.

Fed by perpetual snows on the eastern slope of the Cascade Mountains, the Deschutes River is the largest stream that flows out of Interior Oregon. The valley it drains contains an area of 9000 square miles, or a district greater in extent than the entire State of Massachusetts.

The flow of the Deschutes River is almost due north. It parallels the Cascade Range, and numerous small streams flow out of the mountains from the west and add to its volume. One hundred and forty miles from its

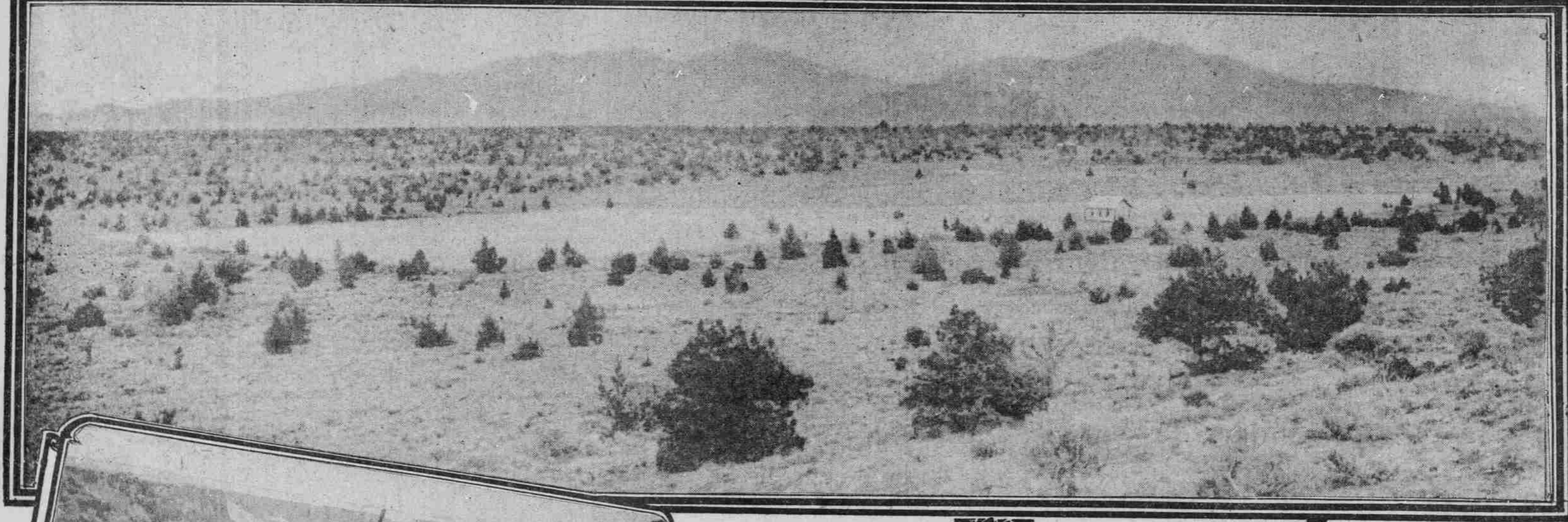
Oregon to feel the impetus of railway development have been Western Crook County and Northern Lake County. Crook County is an undeveloped empire in itself. It has an area greater than the states of Connecticut, Rhode Island and Delaware combined, and there is enough good vacant Government land still in the county to provide homesteads for 8000 families.

The railroads will first touch the northwestern portion of this county, tapping an area of 250,000 acres, capable of producing good grain crops. In 1908 only one-sixth of this area was in wheat, and it produced 1,000,000 bushels. This grain area extends south-

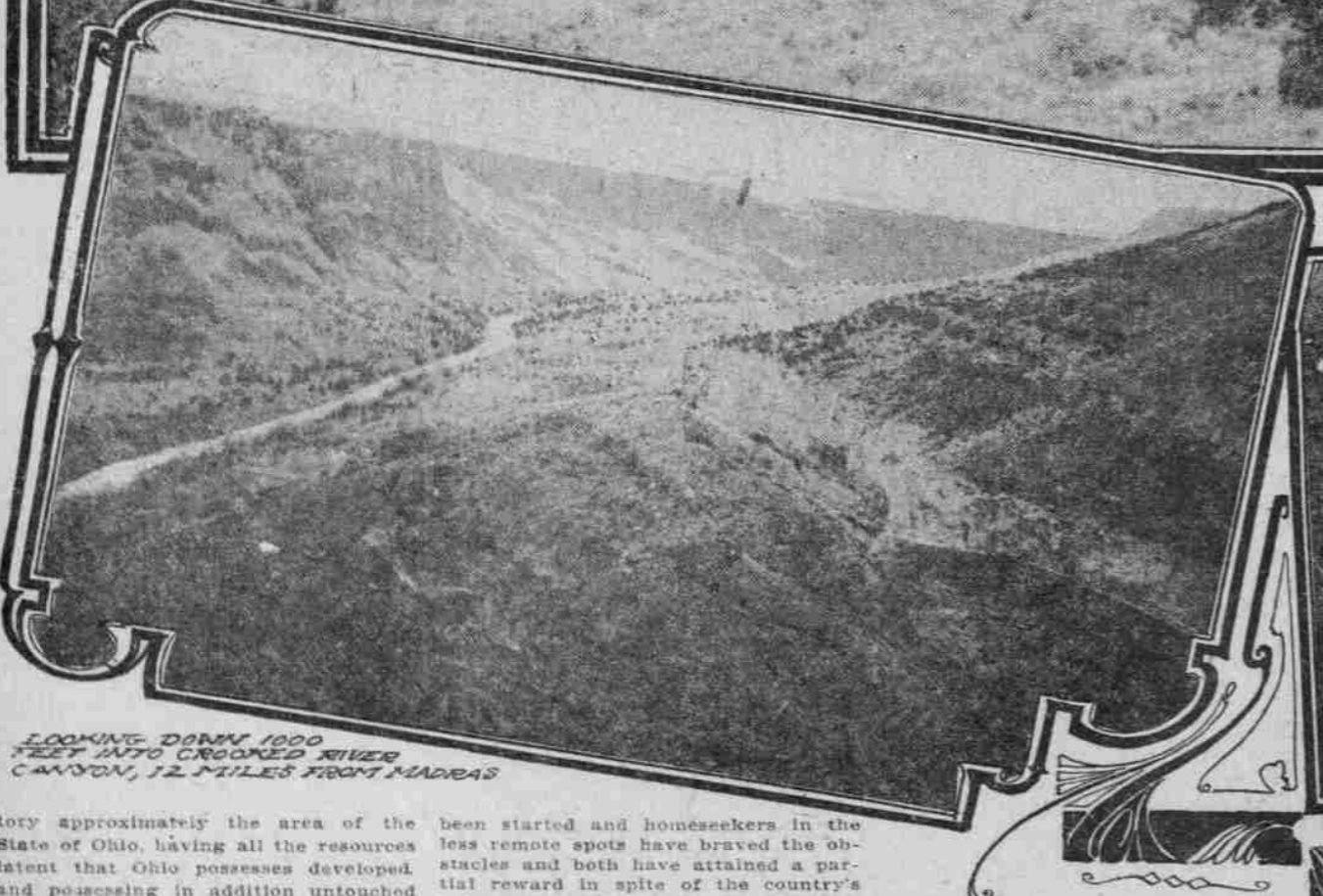
ties. In the Madras and Lamonta counties the wells dug for domestic water supply are sometimes so impregnated with petroleum that the water cannot be used. A well for oil is now being drilled near Lamonta.

What is said of Crook County may be said of several other counties of Eastern Oregon, and Crook County comprises but one-fifth of the area of the isolated empire.

South of Crook are Klamath and Lake Counties. The northern and western portions of Klamath County are occupied by the pine timber belt. In the southern portion a Government ir-



GRASSY FIELD IN ONE OF MANY CLEARING MADE BY RAILROADS IN CENTRAL OREGON



LOOKING DOWN 1000 FEET INTO CROOKED RIVER CANYON, 12 MILES FROM MADRAS



TYPICAL SCENE IN DESCHUTES CANYON, RAILROAD GATEWAY TO CENTRAL OREGON'S WAST AND FERTILE EMPIRE

ory approximately the area of the State of Ohio, having all the resources latent that Ohio possesses developed, and possessing in addition untouched mines of precious metals, a virgin tract of pine timber unexcelled in stand and area in the world and a stream producing unapplied water power four times the aggregate of Niagara may come some conception of the tonnage prize that is at stake.

Not only the prestige of first to arrive, but low grades and curvatures and location advantages will mean much to the railway line that gains first place in the contest now in progress.

This vast territory has never been penetrated by railways. Interior Oregon is what Eastern Washington was 23 years ago. Then the traveler over the almost unmarked trails of the two states could have found no choice between the two districts had he been seeking a home site. Today Eastern Washington has its Spokane, a city of 100,000 population; it has its Walla Walla, its North Yakima, its Wenatchee, its Ritzville and a score of other substantial towns and cities. Its great plains are probably cultivated to wheat and other grains, and its arid tracts have experienced the life-giving touch of irrigation.

Most of Interior Oregon is still undeveloped. Irrigation enterprises have

been started and homeseekers in the less remote spots have braved the obstacles and both have attained a partial reward in spite of the country's isolation. Yet Interior Oregon is chiefly a vast range given over to the grazing of sheep and cattle. Jackrabbits swarm on the sagebrush-dotted plains and in the uncultivated draws and on nearly every barn in the settled districts is spread the drying skin of the coyote.

The railroads have penetrated and criss-crossed Eastern Washington, but so far they have left untouched Interior Oregon. This is the reason why one has advanced and become rich and populous and the other has not.

The cause of the tardiness of the railroads in penetrating Interior Oregon is open to debate. The late E. H. Harriman was accused of "building a fence" around Oregon with the intention of giving it railway service at his leisure. If the intent was there, it at least has been proved that the fence was not impregnable. Successors of Harriman are now building a railroad into Central Oregon in anything but a leisurely manner.

Whether or not Harriman thought he had Interior Oregon bottled, it cannot be questioned but that the difficulties of railway construction into the country had a great deal to do with the slowness of railway development.

Interior Oregon, in general, is a high plateau, ranging in altitude above sea level from 3000 to 4800 feet.

If one will glance at the most recent map of Oregon he will see a great corner in the southeastern portion of the state almost completely designated in black. This corner comprises about one-third of the area of the whole state of Oregon. On the west the Cascade and Siskiyou mountain ranges throw up barriers, on the south the head of the Sierra Nevadas juts into the state from Nevada and sends spurs up to meet the Burnt River mountains along the eastern border.

Out of the western portion and northwest corner of this great area the drainage is toward the Columbia River, the Deschutes valley forming a great pinhandle of 9000 square miles extending to the north. From the southwest corner the drainage is into California, through a gap between the Siskiyou and the Sierra Nevadas. One river, the Klamath, flows out along the southern base of the Siskiyou into the Pacific ocean. Other streams flow into Goose Lake, which is the main source of the Pitt River, which finds a confluence with the Sacramento River near Redding, Cal.

To the east the great table land area is drained by the Malheur River which

begins in the form of a box canyon through the rimrock and drops 2000 feet to its confluence with the Snake River at Ontario, Or. This river canyon forms a gap between the Cedar Mountains, the northernmost spur of the Sierra Nevadas, and the Burnt River Mountains. Thus are three and, say men familiar with the country, only three water-grade routes provided into Central Oregon.

It is declared feasible to penetrate the Cascade Range, but the grades would be those of the typical mountain pass, while the other routes offer water grades.

The Deschutes has long been looked upon as the most adaptable railway gateway to Central Oregon. Along the Columbia River high bluffs roll back from the water's edge. At intervals minor streams have cut steep draws through these bluffs, and up three of these draws short branch lines have been extended toward the interior. The longest, the Shaniko branch of the O. R. & N., is 70 miles in length, but it reaches the high lands after winding over grades that attain a maximum of 4 1/2 per cent. On the other branches the gradients are but slightly less. The Condon and Heppner branches would have to pierce the Blue Mountain

mouth, after flowing in comparative tranquillity for 35 miles, the Deschutes takes a sudden plunge over Benham Falls. It drops 110 feet in the first half mile, and from there to the mouth it is a raging torrent. In the 140 miles the river falls approximately 4000 feet before discharging its accumulated waters into the Columbia River, having twice the fall of the Malheur in the same distance. As the canyon sinks into the plateau the river winds around dome-like hills, bare save for a light covering of grass and so steep that the rocky volcanic soil slips in places and forms black spots of eccentric shape, looking as if someone had upset a gigantic ink bottle on a light green carpet. At times these high rounded domes give place to perpendicular walls of rock and castellated crags. Columnar basalt crops out at intervals. Sometimes the columns stand erect, again horizontally, and give the appearance of immense ricks of cordwood jutting from the hills. In this canyon is offered a maximum working grade to Central Oregon of eight-tenths of 1 per cent.

Such is the route that is to be the main traveled highway to Central Oregon. The first districts of Interior

ward to the canyon of Crooked River, which cuts into the Deschutes from the east. South of Crooked River is the big irrigation district described in another article. Where the irrigation works leave off the timber begins, covering the southwestern portion of the county.

In the southern and southeastern portions of Crook County alone are 1,250,000 acres of rolling sagebrush plains, practically unsettled, but capable of producing crops of the Big Bend country, in Washington. In the northwestern portion are low mountain ranges, divided by small, well-watered and wonderfully fertile valleys. There is located the Ochoco mining district, where promising ledges of gold-bearing quartz are held back from development by lack of transportation. The central portion of the county embraces the Crooked River, Ochoco and McKay Creek valleys, that last year produced 55,000 tons of hay. On the stock ranges of the one county last year were 30,882 head of cattle, 102,430 head of sheep and more than 10,000 horses.

In Central Oregon are large coal deposits from which fuel has been hauled to Madras and Prineville and found to be of excellent heat-producing quali-

ties. Malheur, nearly as large is also a stock country, with large irrigation projects on foot. Excellent oil indications exist near Vale, the county seat, and several drilling outfits are at work. Malheur's area is nearly 10,000 square miles, of which five-sixths is unappropriated.

Projected railway lines cross Lake, Harney and Malheur Counties east and west, and another line is projected southward through Lake County to Lakeview. Klamath County is to be brought in touch with Portland by the completion of the Natron cutoff, now under construction by the Southern Pacific.

This country is to be reached by water grades by the two railway systems and from three-fourths of the country it is a downhill pull to Portland. Canyons and mountain barriers divide the territory into sections, making likely the upbuilding of a dozen or more substantial cities, instead of one main distributing center, so if properly fostered and encouraged Interior Oregon will become Portland territory, making for the further growth and prosperity of this city. As for the country itself, it has been well said that it is one in which the man with common sense cannot make a mistake.