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Ashland, Ore., Monday, July 6, 1914

Judge Watson On The Lake Country

As Ashland now is beginning to awaken to the possibilities in developing the natural resources, scenic beauties and geologic favors of southern Oregon, the following letter written by Judge Watson to Professor Diller, of the United States Department of Geology, about a year ago, will be of interest to people generally:

"Your suggestions about collection of anthropological data in the Klamath Lake region I am sure is on the line of interesting observation and would result in value ethnologically and geologically.

"I have been quite familiar with the region, beginning back forty years ago, as early as 1872. I have, from time to time, written much of its history; was publisher and proprietor of the first newspaper in southern Oregon east of the Cascades at Lakeview in 1878-1880. The natural history aroused my intense interest at that time. While pursuing my studies of it I secured contracts for government surveys and have personally surveyed considerable territory there, up to twenty years ago.

"I was engaged as attorney for the settlers in their contests over the so-called swamp land locations, and became very familiar with the country and people, extending my acquaintance even among the Indians. Their traditions were very interesting to me and getting them first hand gave me peep-holes into their earlier history.

"I was there during the Modoc war and witnessed the execution of Captain Jack and his confederates in October, 1873. At that time the history of this interesting and warlike tribe might have been studied with profit. These Indians, you remember, made their way into the lava beds south of Tule Lake and defied Uncle Sam's forces for weary months. Starvation alone dislodged them, so impregnable was their stronghold of volcanic caverns.

"These lava beds have never been fully explored, though miles of passageways and chambers have been traversed and a great many interesting relics have been recovered. For ethnological data touching the Modocs and their progenitors it is a virgin field and in some respects an unique one. The cliff dwellers of Arizona and New Mexico seem to have been fully exploited, but of the ancient dwellers of these volcanic caverns there is only a dim guess. Besides the ethnological importance, the geological readings are no less important. Hazy tradition peoples these caverns with the most savage and warlike tribes of the northwest. It prevented the amalgamation of the Modocs with the Klamaths, Plutes and other neighboring tribes, and the effort of the government to put them together upon a reservation resulted in the war of 1872-3. The ill-feeling between the Modocs and other tribes still exists, as I have reason to know from experience while I was prosecuting attorney some years ago.

"Lost River has its rise in Clear Lake and after a course of 90 miles empties into Tule Lake, and yet the two lakes are but five miles apart. This river, in its lower course, cuts deeply in the alluvial plain through which it flows and its banks have given up many interesting fossils.

"There is every indication that Tule Lake is a modern innovation, so to speak, on the plain where it lies, and the reclamation service has been trying to devise methods of draining it, but so far without success. So far as it has gone, exploration has disclosed volcanic tunnels apparently continuous, except where obstructed by "cave-ins" from the top. The appearance suggests that Lost river is older than Tule Lake or the lava beds; that the river's course was obstructed by the flow that built up these beds. An effort has been made by the reclamation service to divert Lost into Klamath River and now most of its flow goes into the Klamath. Last

summer and fall I spent considerable time in Shasta Valley, California, and entered two great volcanic caverns that underlie the valley near the northwest base of Mt. Shasta. From what I saw there I am led to believe that such caverns of volcanic origin are of frequent occurrence and of great extent. It would not surprise me if the disappearance of Lost river near the head of Langells Valley and its reappearance in immense springs at Bonanza (if we could trace it) is through volcanic conduits. The great springs about the upper Klamath also suggest relief to the "Big Klamath marsh" and Crater Lake.

"I find the study of Shasta Valley particularly interesting and believe a careful study of it will be of great benefit as well as scientific interest. At the risk of tiring you, I'll venture a few facts and suggestions I deduce from them.

"A big irrigation scheme is being projected for Shasta Valley and the preliminary work is in progress. Water is what they need most. The soil is rich and the climate good for agriculture. Where they have water the results are good, but the region is volcanic ash and sand lying upon a very porous capping of basaltic lava, in and under which are volcanic caverns and tunnels. I was in one for a distance of perhaps three-quarters of a mile. It declined at a moderate angle. Its sides were very regular and showing beyond doubt that molten masses had used it as a highway to the surface. It was quite regular and had an arched roof. Its average width I would estimate at 40 feet and its height at 20 feet. The floor is good and not very uneven except where—during that volcanic energy was expiring—lava masses not having force enough to expel them, were deposited on the floor and broke up in the course of cooling. In such places we had to climb over the masses of great angular blocks. At the extreme point reached by us a greater mass had completely blocked the way, but between this mass and the roof and sides I could plainly see that the tunnel continued but with a much greater decline in its downward course. I was told that extensive side passages had been found and followed for considerable distances, but I did not enter them. The entrance is from an almost level plain. I found the horns and bones of mountain sheep. I entered and traversed another such cavern a few miles nearer to Mt. Shasta, also in the level plain, not quite so large, but equally striking.

"At what is known as the Big Springs, about sixteen miles southeast of Montague, the greatest part of "Big" Shasta River comes to the surface, forming a small lake. This water is now being pumped with electric power and a large area of otherwise desert land is reclaimed and very productive. In this immediate vicinity eleven large flowing wells have been opened, for irrigation. About two miles above these springs, and directly toward Mt. Shasta, Mr. Williams last summer started to drill a well in a "draw." At five feet he struck the lavy cap. Two feet more he got through it and a great volume of water flowed out. He went on down for 80 feet, and while he seemed to be passing a medium that yielded easily, he got no residue from his drillings, his sand bucket bringing up only water. He then cleared off a space 10 feet wide and 30 feet long down to the lava cap and in it bored three more holes and got four monstrous flowing wells in this small space, from which he has, perhaps, 300 inches of water flowing away. There are other interesting phenomena in this immediate neighborhood, but I am inflicting you too much, I fear, and yet I am not done.

"You have noticed the great number of volcanic cones that dot the floor of Shasta Valley. I think I have read somewhere that you give their number at 140. Now between these cones are valleys of varying sizes, generally drained into Shasta River by means of "salt draws," i. e. depressions continuing in the direction of the fall of the valley with more or less of alkaline deposits and attendant "salt grass." I noticed that at the heads of these draws, around the foot of the volcanic cones, where the water table seems to be fractured, the salt grass and alkali indicated water near the surface. I selected several of these places and with an eight-foot crowbar punctured a thin water table at about two feet from the surface and then easily pushed the bar down its whole length, when, withdrawing it, the water flowed out at the surface. Remember, this is around the feet of the volcanic cones where water seems to gush from a strong source of supply.

"Then I heard of a spasmodic stream of 5,000 or 6,000 inches that, during warm weather, flows from the glaciers on the north slope of Shasta, beginning about midnight and running until about noon the following day. I went to see it, and while I did not measure the amount of water, I am prepared to believe the

statement. I found that it carried an immense amount of silt, sand, gravel and small rock, building up an inclined plain of that material at the margin of the valley where the water all disappeared within a very small area. The Southern Pacific Railroad from Weed to Klamath Falls crosses this spring and its heavy burden was used to make a large fill there. There is, near the railroad, what I take to be a heavy terminal moraine, and from the foot of it the same kind of a plain extends down to the edge of the valley. From the material I take it to have been built up in the same way that the present spasmodic stream is continuing the work on a smaller scale.

"I am told that other volcanic caverns than those I saw are known in the valley and some of them have been entered, but none explored. Other evidences of the existence of such caverns have been discovered in drilling for wells and currents of air detected coming from the ground.

"There are no springs on the north slopes of Mt. Shasta and not a great number near the river, and yet the north slope of that mountain carries its heaviest glaciers and greatest snow banks.

"Now here is my query: In the building up of these volcanic cones that dot the valley, has the matter which composes them, when expelled, left voids under the valley corresponding with the mass expelled? If such is the case, are the caverns filled with the lost waters from Shasta? Did Williams tap such a reservoir in his cluster of artesian wells? Does the existence of such subterranean supply of water account for my getting water with a crowbar along the fracture line at the foot of these cones?

"Would it not pay to determine the facts as they exist? Would it not be interesting to determine what relation, if any, exists between the McCloud River and Lost River? Are they one and the same stream, interrupted and cut in two by a volcanic disturbance that gave birth to the lava beds and created Tule Lake? That whimsical stream does flow under ground through Langell Valley and comes to the surface at Bonanza. Does it do the same thing between Tule Lake and the McCloud?

"All through that lake country are interesting things that ought to be looked into. In the Great Basin scarcity of water alone holds settlement back. There is an abundance of precipitation and no surface outlet. Where does the water go? Evaporation alone hardly accounts for its disappearance. The whole country has been broken up by volcanic action. Are there great volcanic caverns underlying it? If so, may they not be accessible sources of water supply? The use of electricity for pumping is now available and I believe the chance is worth an effort for that, if not for other scientific purposes. In many places is found sandstone rich in fossils. At the fossil beds north of Summer Lake Valley is a wonderful deposit, brought to light occasionally by the shifting of the volcanic sands that drift about on the plain. Occasionally masses of granite that might have been islands in that prehistoric sea have been saved from the cataclysms that have wrought so many changes.

"One of the most interesting things to me is the 'old river bed' that crosses the 'Oregon desert' between Summer Lake and Bear Creek Buttes. Some years ago, in a lecture at the University of Oregon, I suggested some possibility of connection between the 'old river bed' and the boulder cliffs that support the sandstone on the Cascade side of Rogue River Valley. If such relation ever existed, then it means that long before the submergence that preceded the rise of the Cascade range the country known as the Great Basin was above water; that this great river crossed it and that the Rogue River boulder beds marked a delta at its mouth; that afterwards the country east, perhaps to the Rocky Mountains, was submerged and subsequently when the Cascades were raised the old river bed was cut in two and came to the surface again, but only a fragment was left to mark its course across what we now call the 'Oregon Desert.' It produced some comment at the time, but I'm not aware that any further thought has been given to it.

"The 'Black Desert' of northwest Nevada is another interesting bit that I examined a little many years ago. In a sage plain there I found fine specimens of silicious sinter that looked like the product of the geysers in the Yellowstone National Park. I found there also what I have often thought might prove to be a valuable nitrate deposit.

C. B. WATSON.

The Commercial Club is desirous of obtaining good specimens of grains and grasses for exhibit purposes. Will those who have such kindly leave at the Commercial Club rooms? tf

OREGON'S GOING DRY.

(Tune: "Bringing in the Sheaves.")

Come, ye loyal workers, join the temperance army,
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Forward be our watchword, in the mighty conflict;
See the hosts advancing, Oregon's going dry.

CHORUS.

Oregon's going dry, Oregon's going dry,
See the hosts advancing, Oregon's going dry.
Oregon's going dry (by faith we bring it nigh),
See the hosts advancing, Oregon's going dry.

Saloons will soon be banished from our state forever;
Hear the children singing, banner lifted high;
Joyous are their voices, happy are their faces,
See the hosts advancing, Oregon's going dry.

CHORUS.

And the youths and maidens, with their zeal and courage,
United for the battle, the enemy defy.
From hillside and from valley, from city and from village,
See the hosts advancing, Oregon's going dry.

CHORUS.

Rally, all ye faithful, rally to the conquest;
Shout the glorious message, victory is nigh.

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