SURVEY COVERS VAST COUNTRY

W. D. CHENEY RETURNS FROM LONG TRIP.

After Traversing More Than 2,000 Miles by Auto, Bend Man Gives Description of Strahorn Survey—Many Wonders Seen.

With J. C. Rhodes, his local manager, for guide and driver, W. D. Cheney, of Seattle and Bend, has recently spent more than a month investigating the territory tributary to the Strahorn lines, part of the time with H. L. Emerson, J. D. Spreckels' engineer, part of the time in company with Robt. E. Strahorn, addressing "railroad meetings" in the towns of the interior; part of the time with chief engineer Bogue, and during the last two weeks accompanied by C. R. Miller, a photographer of Klamath Falls, who has taken a number of panoramas under Mr. Cheney's direction intended to assist Mr. Strahorn in the building of the Oregon, California & Eastern and Surprise Valley railroads.

When visited by a representative of The Bulletin yesterday and asked for his impressions, Mr. Cheney dictated what follows:

"When Robert E. Strahorn first came to the Emblem Club two years ago, we 'entertained an angel unawares'; and Bend, Portland, and Central Oregon found the only man on earth who could solve the problems—one whose wonderful achievements and beautiful character made him loved and admired throughout the whole Northwest and his opinions respected, both here and in the money centers, from Portland, Oregon, to Boston, Massachusetts.

"One month later, in the dead of winter, this man, 62 years young, and C. S. Hudson, of Bend, drove 1,000 miles through railrdadless territory. This was merely the first of many journeys. One month more, and at his own expense, Mr. Strahorn began an exhaustive engineering analysis of this great region which culminated in the surveys of the O. C. & E. and Surprise Valley railroads, the mere investigation and surveying of which were not finaly completed until now, after two years of labor, at a cost to Mr. Strahorn of not less than $75,000.

"When such a man so emphatically expresses his opinion, mine is superfluous. But I shall be glad to share with others the pleasure of the most beautiful and inspiring journey I have ever taken. I shall not attempt to describe it in detail, as we often retraced our route, but will try to give those who have not seen it some idea of the country strictly along the surveys and within view of the rights-of-way of the Strahorn lines.

Farmers are Prosperous.

"One drives southeastward from Bend through twenty miles of land that is mostly irrigated. Then, without apparent change of altitude, so gradual is the ascent, and without once being out of sight of cultivated farms, he comes into the lower end of Millican Valley. This is the High Desert, where people have been telling me that nothing could be grown; and well as I know this country and long as I have been faithful to it, I expected to see nothing but sagebrush to the level and uninteresting horizon. When we topped a rise, swung around Horse Ridge, and I saw before me a checkerboard of rectangular stubble-fields as far as the eye could reach, I stood up in the car, waved my hat, and shouted a wild hurrah for the brave homesteaders and this, their answer to the pessimists.

"From the time of the New Testament until now, the great enemy to progress has been the pessimist, who always calls his lack of faith 'conservatism.' The inventors and creators of all that we call civilization and development have been optimists, the enthusiasts, from those who merely voice their faith to those like Alwyn Lee.

"Alwyn Lee had no horses when he took up his claim; and he packed his supplies on his back from Bend, more than twenty miles distant. He needed water; and you have to go deep for water on his claim. Alone, away out there on the High Desert, Alwyn Lee dug his well by lowering a bucket, climbing down, filling the bucket, climbing up, raising the bucket, emptying it, lowering it once more, climbing down, refilling the bucket, climbing up to lift and empty it again, and so on; patiently, tirelessly, hour after hour and day after day, until, two years later, we ride by and admire his farm buildings, surrounded by haystacks, with a triumphant windmill whirling over them. To me, that well is a monument and an inspiration; and at the request of Robert E. Strahorn himself, I plead with everyone to call that valley High Prairie. Thanks to Alwyn Lee and many like him, it is not a desert any more.

"But I must not be carried away by my enthusiasm for these people, of whom Alwy Lee is herely a sample. I could tell tales of every ranch we pass; and I firmly believe that it was this, and this alone, the joy of working with and for these people, and the pride of achievement, that induced the beloved "Uncle Bob" to take up the great task of building the Strahorn lines. It would require a book to tell it all—a large book. So we will proceed for the rest of our journey like a cold-blooded, respectable railroad.

Fort Rock is Growing.

"Turning south from the western end of Millican Valley, we traverse thirty miles of pine timber, a great resource for a railroad. Then we enter Fort Rock Valley, in its center the remarkable rock from which it takes its name, surrounded by the ever-present checkerboard of farms. Here I met W. M. Stratton, a veteran of the valley who is volunteer gatherer of gladly-given rights-of-way from the homesteaders who are loyally and generously following the leadership of Uncle Bob." I as.. about the customary proving-up of claims and their subsequent desertion by the homesteaders; and Mr. Strahorn tells me that practically all the farms spreading in every direction are now occupied and tilled by permanent residents.

"When Mr. Miller and I climbed half way up the mountain to get our panorama of this valley, I told him that I was becoming skeptic of the pessimistic information that I have been constantly receiving; and having been told that there was 'nothing but sagebrush' beyond this mountain, I thought I'd climb to the top and see. I came down and got Miller; and when his picture is developed and printed, I will show you what I saw. It was not a valley. It was a whole level kingdom, with the same old checkerboard of cultivation fading into blue invisibility thirty or forty miles away. We climbed 29 mountains; and every time, everywhere, that checkerboard lay below us.

Valleys are Fertile.

"We no sooner leave Fort Rock than we enter Silver Lake Valley, with mile after mile of the same eternal checkerboard surrounding the town of Silvevr Lake at the north end of the lake, and narrow arms of the checkerboard extending down both sides of the lake to the entrance of the beautiful valley of Summer Lake, where the wider shoreland checkerboard continues. At the southern end of Summer Lake we round another mountain, and below us lies the pretty little town of Paisley, nestling in a cleft of the hills, and looking for all the world like some peaceful, eastern village. In fact, so like the eastern farmlands are these valleys and so prone are we to think of Eastern Oregon as a barren sagebrush, that, after driving rapidly in an automobile through such scenes as these all one afternoon, I asked 'How long will it be before we get out of Illinois and back into Oregon again?'

"We could see nothing from Paisley but haystacks and cattle; and so it continued all afternoon, clear to Chandler Valley and on through that valley to the short pass that took us out into the wonderful valley of Goose Lake, part in Oregon and part in California, and containing the towns of Lakeview and New Pine Creek. Here it is the same old story—haystacks, cattle and farm buildings; cattle, farm buildings and haystacks, scattered thickly over the checkerboard of farms as far as one can see.

"Then the survey led us over Fandango Pass, so called because they were dancing the fandago when interrupted by Indians and a massacre in the old, old days. I wish I could enlarge upon the old ox-team wagon-trail, almost perpendicular, and the men I met who had traveled it in bygone days; the camps of Fremont and Kit Carson; beautiful Fort Bidwell and its delightful inn, presided over by Mrs. Peter McDonough; the old fort, now an Indian school, where General Crook was stationed at the time of the Civil War. Truly we traveled in the print of olden wars, for we crossed and re-crossed the battle-fields of the Modocs.

Scenery is Wonderful.

"I wish that I could write at length of the wonderful scenery all along our route; and I must touch upon it, for it is a resource. Beginning at Bend, the most beautiful site in America for an inland town, with its eleven mountain peaks, snow-capped throughout the year, never once in thirty days of travel were we out of the midst of scenery through which we could drive again and never tire of it. The many lakes we passed and the hundreds of other lakes, waterfalls, caves, hot springs, and natural places of interest that are accessible to the automobile, with 320 days of sunshine annually, made it easy to imagine the pleasure of the tourist. We traveled 2,000 miles, with no more than 75 miles of bad roads; and for my part, I prefer the turnings of these natural roads to the level straight-away of brick and concrete. There is a fascination about them that is lost on the Broad Highway, even though it drives its course straight through the same beautiful scenery. The eye is greeted by a constant succession of pleasant surprises; for the most part the roads are as smooth as a boulevard; and one rides in comfort through beauty and romance for which the pioneers were willing to endure hardships and danger. For these are not the dreary plains they crossed; this is the El Dorado to which they traveled. Even in the far interior, off the surveys I describe, the high plateaus, abrupt headlands, and their brilliant colorings, only exceeded in brilliancy by the blue distances and the clear, golden sunsets, make one feel that he is riding through one of those paintings by Frederick Remington that critics deem too lurid. They are not. Always you are in vast valleys, surrounded by inspiring upheavals; and when the clouds are fleecy, the sunset extends clear across the heavens. You stand in the bottom of a still, blue bowl; and the whole dome above you, down to all horizons, is filled with the glory of the sunset.

"Fandango is the highest of the passes; and from the top we learned why the country on the other side is called 'Surprise Valley.' It is certainly a beautiful surprise. Like all the valleys that have gone before, Surprise Valley is just an oval basin of fertile farms, ten miles wide and sixty miles long, surrounded by rugged mountains, some of them snow-capped, and containing the towns of Fort Bidwell, Lake City, Cedarville and Eagleville. The only time this valley ever exhibited at the fair in Sacramento, California, it was given first prize for grains, and first prize for quality of apples, in competition with the whole state of California.

"We are now in California, but Surprise Valley is joined southward by Duck Lake Valley, that by Rye Patch Valley, and that again by the valley of Buffalo Meadows; and all these are in Nevada. Then a few miles of pass and Nevada desert takes us to Flanigan, our southern terminus and connection with the Western Pacific.

"We are 315 miles from Bend, 577 miles from Portland. We are far nearer to San Francisco than to Bend. We have come through 300 miles of land, not only productive, but already producing; and every foot of it will be tributary to Bend and Portland. They will be its natural markets when the Strahorn lines are done.

Klamath Prospects Big.

"But this is not all. We return 235 miles to the town of Silver Lake, and go southwest through solid walls of pine timber to Sprague River Valley and on through that valley, 75 miles, to the city of Klamath Falls. Radiating from this beautiful city are Poe Valley, Langell Valley, and many others like those we have been describing. Unlike the others, these are compact; large enough, it is true, for many an eastern state, but all centralized at Klamath Falls like the spokes of a wheel to its hub. With the additional resource of large bodies of timber and several large mills, Klamath Falls is certain to become a fine city. Some of this traffic will come to Bend and Portland; but Klamath Falls is the capital city of a little kingdom all her own, with four avenues of egress for her products when the Strahorn lines are finished—more, of course, to Portland than to Bend. But Klamath Falls and Bend will never be competitive. In fact, in the important matter of tourist travel, they will be in constant partnership, and should make the partnership real, cordial and practical.

"Surely we have seen enough resources for one railroad; but we still have to return 150 miles north to the well of Alwyn Lee. Thence we travel eastward 168 miles, passing through Millican Valley, Imperial Valley, Hampton Valley, Brookings Valley, and Silver Creek Valley; and nearly all the way our road runs, like a grey line across a checkerboard, through sage and stubble-fields.

Burns Country is Vast.

"Then we come to Harney Valley and the town of Burns, the home of Bill Hanley and the Sagebrush Orchestra. If we have been impressed by what we have seen before on the long surveys of the Strahorn lines, we are now struck dumb to find that Harney Valley, Jordan Valley, Donner and Blitzen Valley, and their many tributaries are as large as all the valleys we have visited combined. This Burns country is so vast that it is almost impossible to photograph. ..though the eye can see hundreds of haystacks, group beyond group of farm buildings, herds beyond herds of cattle, and the white town of Burns in the far-away foothills, the details are so small in a photograph that they are lost in their own multitude; and what actually is a town and 1,600 square miles of farms surrounded by high mountains, appears in the photograph to be empty, level country with a shadowy background of low hills. Remember that we see only 40 miles of it at a time, sometimes only 10 or 12 miles, while the Jordan Valley extends 100 miles to the southeast and the Donner and Blitzen Valley 100 miles to the south.

"But I agreed to confine my description exactly to the Strahorn lines and what is visible from the surveys. The surveys are like a hand, with widespread fingers, laid down on a map of this great region. The wrist is in Portland's sleeve; the base of the hand is at Bend; the end of the thumb is at Crane, 180 miles east of Bend; the end of the third finger is in Nevada, 315 miles south of Bend and only about 40 miles from Reno; and the end of the little finger is at Klamath Falls, 150 miles southwest from Bend. It is 250 miles from the tip of the thumb to the tip of the third finger, across territory equally productive and roughly including the Jordan Valley, Donner and Blitzen Valley, the rich valleys east of Stein's Mountains, Catlo Valley, and Warner Valley. Still there is left the whole palm of the hand, the very heart of southeastern Oregon, 100 miles square, and most of which will soon be producing grain, as it is already producing minerals, handicapped by the lack of transportation. There is plenty of opportunity, you see, for the middle and index finger of future railway construction.

"This is the Hand of Portland. She holds the commerce of all this vast and rich territory firmly in her grasp. Excepting a few crumbs on her little finger, none of it can ever get away from her. Territory? Cultivation? Productivity? Development? Freight for a railroad? Commerce for Bend and Portland? Here it is, equal to all that Portland can ever get from the combined resources of Alaska, Eastern Washington, and the Willamette and Columbia Valleys. It is so great an empire, bursting with potentiality, all ready to spring into productivity, and waiting to pour a flood of commercial prosperity through Bend into Portland, that I gasp and strangle in the effort to give you a glimpse of it. Now that I am done, have I given any idea of the immensity of it all? I wonder."

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