

## MAJOR BONTA'S ELECTRIC LINE

**Biggest Money Making Enterprise in Eastern Oregon---Will Cover a Great, Rich, Isolated Empire.**

Since THE MINER published in its issue of November 19 that Cleaver Brothers had sold to Major J. W. Bonta and associates of Philadelphia the great Oregon Wonder and Will Cleaver groups of mines, and in a subsequent issue the fact that the Philadelphia capitalists would build an electric railway from Baker City to the Strawberry mountains, where these mining properties are situated, the newspapers of this state have printed hundreds of columns on the subject. They have, almost unanimously, dwelt upon the fact that this enterprise will be of inestimable benefit to the country tributary to the mines and through which the electric line will be built.

There can be no difference of opinion on this side of the proposition; nor should there be on the other among those informed on the merits of the mining properties involved and the resources of the country to be served by this railway. THE MINER ventures the prediction that it will be the biggest dividend payer in the West.

In the first place, for ten or a dozen years past all practical mining men have agreed that there would be millions of profit in working these two leading mines of the Strawberry mountains, if reasonable transportation rates and satisfactory facilities could be secured. During the past few years the Will Cleaver has been extensively developed; practically proven to be a valuable mining property. The Oregon Wonder is nothing more nor less than what its name implies. There are many thousands of tons of free milling ore in sight that can be quarried like building stone. Timber and water, every conceivable convenience for cheap mining and milling, except transportation, is available, and a combination of good mining and business methods is all that is necessary to make this the world's record-breaking mining bonanza. This electric line will supply the one needed element to insure a gigantic success.

As to the good business judgment of investing money in the construction of this railroad, that is a matter that can be demonstrated with the precision of a mathematical problem. First and foremost, the territory tributary to this line is the largest in the United States today without a railroad. Were THE MINER to state that it is also the richest in natural resources, that would be a statement that some one would be sure to deny—but could not refute. It is also a comparatively old, settled country, many of its resources far advanced in development, especially in the line of agriculture. The road will run through farming, grazing, fruit, mineral and timber lands, a juxtaposition of Nature's gifts found nowhere else—at least in such a wealth of profusion—on the continent.

THE MINER has tried in vain to secure some authentic statistics regarding the tonnage handled by the various transportation companies in this isolated

empire. The Sumpter Valley railway will give out no information on the subject. An official of that company admitted, however, not ten days since that the road has paid for itself, all its equipment and improvements and had declared two dividends of five per cent each, in a half dozen years. It has done better than that. Some idea of the volume of the transportation business that is being carried on in the section of country between the O. R. & N. railroad and the John Day valley, to be covered by this electric line, can be formed when it is known that about 1000 head of stock are employed the year round in pulling freight wagons and stages.

This new company will do practically all of this business. It will shut out the Sumpter Valley road at every competing point for two reasons; first, it will be standard gauge, rendering unnecessary the expense in time and money of reloading cars at Baker City; second, the Sumpter Valley charges a trifle more than one cent a mile per hundred pounds for hauling freight, the highest rate in the United States, and when people get an opportunity to escape from that imposition, they are going to do it.

Late in the summer of 1900, the writer made the trip from Sumpter to Prairie City and thoroughly inspected the upper John Day valley. Of that country he then wrote:

"If you are so fortunate as to get a seat on the box with the stage driver, the run from Flynn Station down to Prairie City, in John Day valley, a distance of seven or eight miles, which is made in the hour between seven and eight o'clock in the morning, is so delightful a ride that one's good humor is almost restored. The bad temper of the traveler is occasioned by the inexcusably inconvenient schedule on which stages run between Sumpter and Canyon City.

"It is a spiritual pleasure difficult to describe which one experiences who lives in the high altitude of the Blue mountains, where grow no flowers, or fruits, or vegetables, to swiftly descend at such early hour into this fertile valley, where all flourish luxuriantly; where every farm house is surrounded by prolific grainfields and rich meadows; is embowered in fruit trees heavily laden with red apples, purple plums and yellow pears, intermingled with a riotous profusion of flowers and vegetables. Then, too, on every hill side thousands of cattle are grazing—all of which means plentiful prosperity.

"The John Day valley is the finest country out of doors. It possesses a combination of advantages which render in the nearest approach to perfection as a farming country that can be found on the continent. It has plenty of wood and water, convenient to agricultural and grazing lands. The usual condition is the absence of timber, or else the long, laborious task of clearing land for farm purposes. Here, however, the foot hills are heavily timbered, the val-

ley, from one to eight miles in width, is practically prairie land, and from every gulch in the mountains come streams of water with which to irrigate the pregnant soil.

"This is preeminently a stock country, the cattle being fed in winter. Hay is, therefore, the principal crop, though, as the altitude averages only about 2000 feet above sea level, anything can be grown there. Considerable grain is grown, but not enough wheat to supply the local demand for flour. There is a flour mill near Prairie City run by natural warm water power that could be operated the year around, but it cannot secure wheat enough to keep it running half the time. Flour and pork products are brought in from the outside by every train of freight wagons. Peaches and grapes are the only fruits which are not raised there, and there is no reason, so far as climate and soil is concerned, why they are not on the list of products."

"The visitor stands on one of the high bluffs, and casts his covetous eye down the beautiful valley and surveys in vision a land of every promise fulfilled."

THE MINER hopes that Major Bonta and his associates will ultimately decide to build other branches than the one to Prairie City, which, it is reported, will surely be constructed. If he will push one up from Burnt river to Sumpter, he can get five-year contracts for enough tonnage to pay dividends on the whole line.

These Philadelphia people have come in here and corralled the biggest money making proposition in eastern Oregon.

### A Rich Prospect.

The Botha, one of the newly discovered properties in the Granite creek district and owned by Barney Mulligan and Gus Burke, is one that is rapidly coming to the front as a valuable property. It is located about five miles from Granite near the old Sheridan mine, and comprises two claims. A vein three feet in width in which there is sixteen inches of ore values; assays often running into hundreds of dollars, has been uncovered. Since the discovery was made about six months ago this vein has been drifted on for a distance of 70 feet and a depth of about 100 feet gained, with the ledge improving at the firing of every shot.—Granite Gem.

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