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NEW RULES FOR LAND SEEKERS

Hitchcock's Policy Toward Settlers on Public Domain

Strict Construction of Rules Governing the Making of Final Proof of Homesteads

A new interpretation to the term "speculation" has been given by Secretary Hitchcock in connection with the timber and stone land act of 1878. It is held that any one who takes up a piece of timber land, expecting at any future time to dispose of the same at a consideration in advance of what the land actually cost, is a speculator, within the meaning of the law. Upon this disclosure in connection with the examination of an applicant for the purchase of such land, the applicant is rejected and dismissed.

Under this ruling of the department, the only persons who are permitted to purchase these lands are those who will swear that they own land in the vicinity of the timber land for the purchase of which they have made application, and that they desire the timber for personal use. The only person who can conscientiously swear that he needs the timber for his own use is a rancher so far removed from a mill or place where lumber is sold that he cannot buy sawed lumber. On the other hand, if the applicant admits that he expects to manufacture the timber into lumber and sell it at a profit, it is held that his purpose is speculation, which disqualifies him as a lawful purchaser, and excludes him from the benefits of the timber and stone land act. A strict construction of the department's ruling makes it practically impossible for the applicant to make final proof on timber land for the purchase of which he has made application in regular form, unless he wants it for an actual home. If the applicant now gains title to timber land, in making final proof, he must perjure himself and disclose his roguish designs or he must reveal a pitiable mental condition.

Put on the Rack.

Under the present program the applicant is taken in charge by a special inspector as soon as the regular form of examination and proof-making has been complied with. He is taken into a private office, unaccompanied by his friends or attorney, and is then put through a cross-questioning that would reflect credit on the criminal department of a police station. The proceedings are conducted strictly on the star chamber order. Absurd and irrelevant in the extreme are many of the questions fired at the witness, who, if he admits in any way that he might at some time accept more for the property than it actually cost him, his claim is vitiated. The decision is final, so far as the local office is concerned, and the only right remaining to the individual is to appeal to the land commissioner at Washington, and, since the order calling for this form of procedure emanated from the secretary of the interior, the applicant stands a poor chance of getting a reversal of the decree of the lower office.

The new policy for the examination of applicants is shown in the following list of questions, which is asked, almost without exception by the special inspector of every person making final proof:

Some of the Questions.

Why do you purchase this tract of land?

Have you any personal use for the timber or stone on this land?

How long do you expect to keep the land?

What do you expect to do with the land and the timber thereon after you acquire title?

Do you expect to sell the land or the timber thereon at a profit?

Do you intend to cut the timber on the land yourself, or do you expect to have some one else cut it, or do you intend to sell the timber?

Do you own any real estate in the vicinity of your claim, or in this state, and if you do state where?

Is the land so situated that, considering your occupation, circumstances and condition in life, you can make use of the timber and stone on the land yourself, so as to make it possible or practicable for you to use it for your exclusive use and benefit?

At the time you made your application for this timber land was it your intention to make use of the timber or stone on the claim yourself, or did you merely intend to purchase the

land for the purpose of selling again at a higher price?

Interest of Scrippers.

On the recent stringent rulings of the United States land department as to the timber land locations the Bureau Evening Herald charges that the ruling was made in the interest of the scrip syndicate in the following language:

"Is it not a fact that this ruling was made for the exclusive use and benefit of the combination who own and control the scrip issued by the government?"

"Is not all the scrip owned and controlled by a few wealthy concerns, and are not the banks the depositories of scrip in question? Can you not find scrip in banks adjacent to every local land office, sent by banks in Chicago, St. Louis, San Francisco and other legitimate cities? All this is perfectly legitimate unless used for collusive and corrupt purposes."

"Did it not become imperative on the part of scrip holders to buy and own parties who could assist them in securing lands, and is not the contemplated act of congress the reason why the scrip holders are fighting to get all the land possible? Has not some 75,000 acres of land been gobbled up in the Eureka land office district in the past month? Will not 125,000 acres more be gobbled up this month, and is not the effort made to throw out or tie up each and every claim that can be possibly upset by hook or crook? It has been truly stated that no patents are issuing. Why? That is the question, and the one who can answer this has the key to the situation."

"Why are parties stationed in every district land office in the United States every day to take a list of all the filings and proving on each and every tract involved? Why are they paying locators and others to get contests up to test claims, and furnishing the necessary funds to do it? How is it that in many of the large firms where timber lands are pledged and hypothecated as security that reports are furnished from the land offices every day as to what has been done? Under whose instructions is this done, and why is it that no complaint is made? Or why is it that inspectors and others do not inspect? Why is it that inspectors and special agents spend more time in matters not conducive to good health or good morals than in investigating the actual facts as they arise? And they still are the trusted representatives of the government. What is the reason for it?"

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Arrives Yaquina 5:35 p.m.

No. 1 returning—
Leaves Yaquina 7:30 a.m.
Leaves Corvallis 11:30 a.m.
Arrives Albany 12:15 p.m.

No. 3 for Detroit—
Leaves Albany 7:00 a.m.
Arrives Detroit 12:30 p.m.

No. 4 from Detroit—
Leaves Detroit 1:00 p.m.
Arrives Albany 5:55 p.m.

Train No. 1 arrives in Albany in time to connect with the S. P. south bound train, as well as giving two or three hours in Albany before departure of S. P. north bound train.

Train No. 2 connects with the S. P. trains at Corvallis and Albany giving direct service to Newport and adjacent beaches.

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