

on that new section of territory was started immediately. The weather continued to be remarkably fine.

Here the main route followed is a pack-trail leading to Shiningbank lake. From Shiningbank lake to Edson, we could work from the wagon road. Along with the daily short trips, more especially directed to the boundary determination, many lengthy ones were made into the centre of the district; one, for example, led up the Athabaska river, to the Canadian Northern Railway crossing, along the right of way, advancing up the Windfall river; another, on the 15th Base Line, west of Shiningbank lake. From Edson, a last trip was made which covered the territory west of the Grand Prairie road. The party proceeded from Edson to Medicine Lodge. From this point, following the trail to Athabaska Crossing, it came back to Edson again on the Grand Prairie road. The work was completed and the party broke up December 23.

The main object of this above resumé of the distribution of the work is to show the route followed in making the examination of the territory under consideration. I deem this important. Besides, the party had to spend some time in putting out ground-fires spreading from camp-fires left by travellers or hunters along the routes, and, in order to complete the description of the every-day travels, examination-work and mapping, a detail diary has been written, giving particulars on the progress of the work, the topography, the nature of the soil and conditions of the timber.

During the season the party had fifty-eight main camps and thirty-nine sub-camps. The members of the party worked with the greatest harmony and ability, and I am grateful to them for the success of the work.

GENERAL CONDITIONS.

TOPOGRAPHY, SOIL AND TIMBER.

The Athabaska River and its Tributaries.—Amongst the many streams draining the territory examined, the Athabaska river, with its deep, wide and broken valley, is already known to be the most important. Its banks are from 100 feet to 300 feet high; its flat is narrow and cut by the riverbed.

There is no agricultural soil in any portion of this section of the Athabaska River valley. The surface of the land is mostly rough and broken, cut by deep ravines and gullies. This is particularly remarkable on the south side of the river. The soil is sandy and stony, and the few small pockets of deposited sandy loam or clay that could be found at the entrance of the creeks are not worthy of special consideration.

The country, however, improves gradually. Following the course of the river, the slope becomes more and more even, so that below the Sakwatamau river, especially in the vicinity of the valley of Christmas creek, the Athabaska river enters fair agricultural land.

Here the Athabaska valley was, at one time, very well timbered with the best of lodgepole pine, spruce, birch and poplar. Repeated fires have swept over it in such a way that there are, at the present time, only a few remaining patches of the old stand. These are found scattered along its flats, and mostly at the entrance of streams.

The young growth, however, is generally abundant over the old brûlé, to which large and healthy patches of forest, 35 to 50 years old, give a certain value. But no one will ever know how many millions of dollars worth of the national wealth, represented by the virgin forest, were turned into ashes by recurring fires and washed away with the best of the soil by the rapid current of the Athabaska river.