

CLIMATE AND RESOURCES OF MONTANA.

LETTER FROM GOVERNOR POTTS.

The route of the Northern Pacific Railroad traverses the entire length of Montana. Ten Million acres of its land grant lie within that Territory, and mainly in the valley of the Yellowstone. In reply to inquiries made by his former neighbors and friends in Ohio, Governor Potts of Montana wrote the following private letter addressed to Dr. J. Armstrong of Alliance. Such incidental and unsolicited testimony from so high a source is of the most conclusive sort:

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT, MONTANA TERRITORY,

Virginia City, February 17, 1871.

SIR:—I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 6th inst., inquiring about the character and climate of Montana, through which the Northern Pacific Railroad will run. * * * *

The Yellowstone valley [along nearly the entire length of which the Northern Pacific Railroad will pass] is about 400 miles long by 150 miles wide. It contains eight principal valleys, entering the great parent valley of the Yellowstone, situated midway between the mountains and prairies. Its climate is soft and genial. Its soil is exceedingly fertile, and contains extensive coal fields and numbers of oil springs. The Yellowstone is navigable for light draft boats for 300 miles from its mouth. I am satisfied that this valley is one of the most healthy and productive on this continent, and will furnish homes for at least a million of people.

The valleys of the Gallatin, Deer Lodge, Jefferson, Bitter Root, and Jocko are equally as productive as the Yellowstone. The average yield of wheat in these valleys is from fifty to sixty bushels per acre, and all other cereals in proportion.

I have never seen any place that equals this Territory for the production of vegetables. The common yield of potatoes per acre is 400 bushels. The most valuable land in Montana for agriculture is yet unoccupied. That now under cultivation is generally close to some mining camp, and was taken up and occupied solely because it was near a settlement.

Gold and silver mining is very profitable in this Territory. More than Twelve Millions of dollars gold dust was mined here during the past season, and the coming year promises to be the most profitable mining season ever known in the history of Montana. Labor here is very scarce, and consequently very high. Common day laborers readily command from \$5 to \$6 a day, and mechanics from \$6 to \$10 per day.

From the best information that I can obtain the Northern Pacific Railroad will open up the richest country in agricultural and mineral resources on the American continent, and if the people East and in Europe could see the rich land grant that the road has its bonds would not remain in the market ninety days. The coming year is certainly a propitious time to settle in Montana, and I shall take great pleasure in welcoming a soldier colony from old Molly Stark.

I almost forgot to speak of the climate. This winter is said to be colder than usual, but I can assure you that it is not so cold or disagreeable as Ohio winters. The atmosphere is dry and pure, making this mountain country the healthiest on the continent. On the high mountains snow falls to a greater depth, but the valleys are scarcely ever covered with snow. The cattle run at large during the entire year, and no grain or hay is fed them, yet they come out in the spring as fat as the best stalled cattle in Ohio. Our meat market here is supplied with beef driven in from the herd, and I can assure you the meat is better than I ever saw in Ohio.

In my haste I may have omitted to state many things you and your friends may want to know. If so, I shall be glad to answer any questions you propound.

Very truly yours,

B. F. POTTS.