

## BUTTE WISDOM & PACIFIC RAILROAD

Interesting Article From the Eloquent Pen of A. J. Noyes, a Pioneer of the Big Hole--Mohawk Cannot Stand Comparison With Beautiful Big Hole

To the Editor of THE BREEZES:  
You won't object to my taking a little of your valuable time once in a while, will you? As we get older we live much in the past and little things of the present bring to our minds thoughts of those other days and their very pleasing experiences. I recently picked up THE BREEZES, also the Dillon Examiner, and noticed that you had another railroad running into the basin. As all places must have a history, and claiming to be somewhat of an historian myself, I thought I would write you some of the remarkable occurrences that have taken place in the upbuilding of the lovely valley to which a wise providence guided your footsteps.

You may have heard that I went to the Big Hole in 1882 and settled on the banks of the "babbling streamlet" and waited with an assurance that I would live to see a steam horse come prancing along to put fear into the hearts of our undisturbed denizens. (Now the nearest I ever came to that in reality was Strowbridge's steam plow.) I had probably lived there five or six years when one morning very early I heard the whistle of a locomotive and rushed out to see a train of cars pull up just back of where Joe Loss's stable is now, and found my old friend Si Bragdon the chief push and whole crew. It bothered me to find out had he financed a railroad into the Big Hole and could get it there right on to my ranch without my having heard a word concerning it until he was actually at my door, because prior to that time if Si wanted to get any place he either went on foot or "borrowed" a horse. It did not worry me for long because my wife kicked me and said "lay over," and I found it only a dream. That was R. R. No. 1.

Quite a number of years after I happened to make my home in Dillon. Mr. Bancroft, then a superintendent on the Great Northern railroad, called into J. E. Morse's office and among other things said that his people were contemplating the change--a much talked of but never yet done--of making an easier grade by going toward the Point of Rocks, thence up the Big Hole, and so cut out Apex hill. He remarked at that time that they would show more wisdom by using the light rails they had on hand and the cost that would be required to make the change and the cash that would be required to make the change, if they would actually build up the river to Wisdom. He asked me, on the advice of Mr. Morse, to secure all the data possible on the subject, send it to him at Pocatello, and he would take the matter up with those in authority. I attended to the matter, sent everything obtainable and there was "nothing doing." That was R. R. No. 2.

Then there came a time when I found a man who was surely capable of being the chief engineer of a big scheme. This was Geo. Metlen. I proposed that we secure right of way, etc., and put a railroad into the Big Hole. George demurred a little at first and said, "Say, Shiny, I am afraid that them d-- Danes wouldn't know what a railroad was for, and they might get scared and leave the country and if they did, I would be mighty hard to get anyone else to locate in there, because you know that ain't like Horse Prairie."

I explained to him that we might work it so gradually that the Danes would become in time used to it and not hide every time the cars came in, and that we might get a rope on some of the more intelligent ones like Nels and Soren Nelson, Anton Jackson and Martin Sorenson, lead them up and show them that it would not hurt them if they would stay off the track. He agreed to go in under those circumstances and we met in his office in Dillon. I proposed that we put the line through the canyon on a water grade and save as much of our capital as possible so that we could go to the California Brewery and get a glass of beer to refresh us after our strenuous labor in producing such a needed improvement. He "bocked" right there. He said, "We can't leave out the CL ranch. That would never do in the world. Besides, if we were to go up the canyon, old man Bryant, Bobby Shultz, and Bill Madison would kick because we would have to go across the river from Dewey and then, another thing you never thought of, it would ruin Ralston's dinner station and bust Geo. Gronn completely. Never do, Skinny, never do." "Well, what do you propose?" I asked. "We will go from Redrock to CL, then to Bannack, Polaris and Elkhorn, thence along the line or divide between Wise river and Big Hole, via the Martin mine, and down Steele creek to Wisdom. That's the way to go," he said. "That will catch everything." "What about Mt. Torrey?" I asked. "Are you going to leave that out?" "No," he said, "we will build a scenic road up that peak and make our road one of the grandest on the continent." "What's your idea in wanting to go over the most impossible and impracticable section of Beaverhead county when you could go up the Big Hole river for a very small percent of what the road would cost the way you have laid it out?" I asked. "Well, that's easy," he replied. "I am an engineer and an engineer wants to go over the most impossible places in order that people may know he is an engineer, and besides, there is more money in it for me than running a line over an easy grade, see!" Yes, I saw, and as I was the one that had to furnish the money or hot air to get it, I made up my mind right then to quit and let the CL, Bald mountain and Wise river go to h-- or some warmer place. You see, I had figured out exactly where I expected to get my money. I was going to draw a check on B. F. for ten or fifteen millions, get Dr. Poindexter and L. J. Price to endorse it, have "Horse" Smith take it over to Harry Gilbert and tell him that if he could get the governor to cash it he could be treasurer. But, as before intimated, George wanted to make too much out of the preliminary, and the thing went to smash. That was R. R. No. 3.

Now, Griff, we did not have any more railroads built into the Big Hole until Bob Jones, Jim Murray and some Spokane men got the people into the notion of bonding and mortgaging their land for about \$5 per acre in order to raise money to build their own line. Now that was a wise thought, because it originated with me years before and I even Jim Montgomery to agree with me (probably the

only time in his life that he really did) that it would be the thing to do. But Jim was dead and I was out, so it fell to Murray and Jones to bring about the desired result. They went to work one winter (close to stove in Murray's hotel in Wisdom) and built a line leading to the outer world, but the dampfools didn't use very good judgment in their right of way. The track must have been laid on the ice, as not a sign of it could be found after the break-up next spring. That was R. R. No. 4.

Now No. 5, and not the least by any means, begins to work. How many years ago I do not know there was born on the banks of the turbid French a little boy who was destined to grow, like the jack pines of his native clime, tall and slender. I do not say that he resembled the jack pine in every par-



Old Method of Trailing Will be Done Away With

ticular, for he differed from it in that he did not grow to a peak nor was he rooted in the soil. It was natural for him to love his native hills and gulches, so he never got but a few miles from French Gulch, from choice. He believed that there a "mother" lode could be found, from which the placer gold had been taken in his infancy and boyhood. So strong was his faith that he would find it that he made desperate struggles to see that his dreams would come true. So he did find leads and lodes and worked to make his dream a financial success. But it is not an easy thing for a man with small capital to develop a prospect into a paying mine. On the banks of the Brandy

he had a small, but nice ranch that was soon to be overshadowed and overcome by the great Washoe smelter. He did not, like Nick Bielenburg and Walter Staton, "kick against the pricks." The little ranch was only a secondary affair in the schemes crowding his mind. He dreamed of mines, railroads and political positions that would place him above want and worry. To antagonize the great copper interests would mean political suicide, and so he made use of them instead. Tall fir trees grew on the mountain sides near his beloved French and they were needed for the mines of Butte. If he could not get enough to go ahead and develop his mines, he could, by furnishing these stulls to the mines, make both ends meet, always with a future for his own honest advancement. If he could get a railroad to his mines and

called "Shorty," he would have been looking from a different angle and would no doubt have solemnly sworn (he did swear sometimes) that that was a "right smart" hill to climb. Now, I do not wish to make any comparison between these two friends of mine, but it was a sure thing that Owen Ellis' bar, even with a glass of beer on the hither edge, was an insurmountable obstacle to "Shorty," while Bill, without any effort, could reach over and help himself from the back bar. I don't say that he did. So you see it was a simple difference in the angle of vision that cost us this new railroad, because the engineers soon found that Bill had overlooked some of the inequalities in actual conditions. Now this did not discourage him. He made up his mind to mix a little more in polit-



Value of Ranch Lands Will be Greatly Increased

Bosh! Compare the Big Hole and the Mohawk! Better compare the North Star, the great guide of the universe, with some dead sun, whose last lingering ray left the earth years before our Savior was cradled in the manger at Bethlehem! The Big Hole and the Mohawk! Oh! ye gods! When one looks at the lazy, sleepy stream that "gently glides down the wooded vale of the Mohawk, and then looks at the snow-capped mountains that, forming a crescent, pierce the vaulted dome itself, and sees, clasped in their embrace, the pent-up snows which move at the command of the springtime sun into flowing rills, that go singing joyfully singing on their way to join with others from every hill and mountain side, until they together form a stream that goes rambling, tumbling, never grumbling, toward the goal set for it by the Creator as long ago as when the "morning stars sang together," is it any wonder that the Big Hole is beautiful enough to be a resting place for the gods? Is it any wonder that many beautiful flowers dot the green carpet of May and June, and dying, leave their perfume to enrich the wild grasses that frugal man uses to tempt the appetites of the white faces of sunny Texas? This is not a digression. It is simply a small, crude comparison of the Mohawk and Big Hole.

So once again we begin our railroad. It is to come up my river grade that Metlen would not listen to. Bill is now getting nearer the truth than ever he was before. The Standard states it is going up Wise river to Elkhorn. Good thing! It will make Mike Steel, the discoverer of Steel and Elkhorn, turn over in his grave and say, "I told you so." They say it will build to Jackson and then maybe to the Pacific. My advice is, "Don't let it go by Jackson." Of course the Dark Horse people might let it use their tunnel to the Salmon river side, or maybe Paul Jahne would enlarge their tunnel so the cars could go through. Then again, Morse might block out some more ore in the Ajax toward the Idaho side and let them go through. Anyway, there will be lots of places where they can hit the Salmon, and it is a cinch that if they ever do get to the main range and don't take extra precaution, they will hit the Salmon, only to be useless, as far as Big Hole transportation is concerned.

I am glad that you are going to have a railroad. It looks more like it now than ever before. Bill Allen is a bigger man than ever he was before and the mines of French Gulch, Elkhorn, Wise river and the Big Hole are not vain images, woven in the wool of an illusive dream, but realities that will one day make the world take notice of old Beaverhead.

So accept my prayer that this may be the "last act," that when the curtain is rung down it will be an accomplished fact that glittering bands of steel connect your now infant valley with the busy marts of all other lands.

AJAX.

### Fishing is Fine

Fishing the wise river is reported excellent. Dr. Herdert D. Kistler and party visited that section Sunday and had fine sport. The roads are fairly good, and the country traversed never looked more beautiful than now. A number of Bette people are camping on the Big Hole river at the present time. — Butte Post.