

AREA AND RESOURCES.

Montana occupies nearly the geographical center of the North American Continent, being situated between 45° and 49° of north latitude and, 104° and 116° of longitude, comprising within its limits an area of about 144,000 square miles, and was organized as a Territory in 1864. It is bounded on the north by the British Possessions, east by Dakota, south by Wyoming and Idaho, and west by Idaho. The Territory is divided into the following named counties, viz: Beaver Head, Big Horn, Choteau, Dawson, Deer Lodge, Gallatin, Jefferson, Lewis and Clarke, Madison, Meagher and Missoula. Capital, Helena. Principal towns: Bannack, Blackfoot, Bozeman, Deer Lodge, Diamond, Fort Benton, Missoula, Trapper and Virginia City. Population, estimated at 20,500. Assessed valuation of property in 1874 was \$10,009,817, and the amount paid into the Territorial Treasurer in the same year was \$58,000; the valuation showing an increase of \$1,734,670 over that of 1869. The treasure product in 1874 was \$4,163,204; of which, \$3,696,438 was in gold, \$493,766 in silver, and \$5,000 in copper. Smelting furnaces have recently been constructed in various districts for the reduction of the argentiferous-galena ores and rich lead will in future be added to the metallic product. While Montana is a great gold and silver producing region its currency is the paper money of the east, in which all estimates are made and business transacted, and thus differing from the States of California, Oregon, and Nevada, which maintain a metallic currency. Among other products of Montana, are large quantities of furs and peltries, including 65,500 buffalo robes. These animals are in countless numbers on the plains of the Missouri and Yellowstone, and are slaughtered for their hides and tongues, as well as for sport, and in many instances by herdsmen in defense of the grazing grounds where range domestic cattle. The Indians, though now partly subdued, have been among the most savage and unrelentingly hostile of any of that singularly bloodthirsty race. The number is estimated at 18,000, the principal tribes being the Crows, Blackfeet, Snakes, Teton Sioux, Gros Ventres, Piegans, Bloods, Flatheads, Bruloes, Ogalallas, and Assiniboines.

As its name implies, the general aspect of the country is mountainous, the Territory extending over both slopes of the Rocky Mountains, and embracing within its limits the sources of the Missouri, flowing eastward, and of the Columbia, flowing to the Pacific, thus occupying, as it were, the backbone of the continent. The Rocky Mountains, however, do not rise in such high and precipitous ridges and peaks as is the character of the range both south and north, but presents many irregularities, offering numerous passes and throwing out lateral ranges that fall away into the plateau of the great plains of the Missouri and the basin of the Columbia. Branching westward are the Bitter Root and Cœur d'Alene ranges; on the east the Tobacco, Belt, Judith, Bear's Paw, Big Horn, and Little Rocky ranges, and others, dispersed in various sections throughout the interior. In almost every range, minerals of a valuable character are found, the principal being gold, though silver, copper, lead, and coal are extensively mined. But the mountains possess resources aside from their minerals, some sections being covered with grand forests, others furnishing excellent pasturage, and enclosed within the ranges are many fine valleys of excellent agricultural land. According to the opinion of the Surveyor-General, given in his report for 1867, about one-third of the total area, amounting to about 30,000 acres, is susceptible of cultivation. The valleys lying between the mountain ranges possess an exceedingly fertile soil of great cereal producing capacity. Extensive tracts of the Bitter Root, the earliest settled portion of the Territory, the Prickly Pear, Madison, and Gallatin Valleys, are now in a high state of cultivation, and producing annually large crops of wheat, barley, oats, rye, potatoes, and other vegetables. About 30,000 acres are cultivated in the Gallatin Valley alone for the production of cereals, more than one-half of that area being under wheat, and yielding an average of thirty bushels to the acre. Several grist mills are employed in converting the grain produced in this valley into flour, and a number of others are in course of erection. Among the unsettled sections most prominent for the extent and fertility of the agricultural land contained within them are the Judith, Musselshell, and Yellowstone Valleys, which are now the resort of numerous herds of elk, deer, antelope and buffalo, and the favorite hunting grounds of savage hordes of Indians, whose determined hostility to the whites effectually prevents them from settling and bringing these lands under cultivation at once. The few men who have succeeded in travelling safely through the Judith Valley, pronounce it to be one of the most beautiful and fertile regions in the Territory, possessing a rich, deep soil, and well timbered and watered throughout. The Missouri Valley, which river rises in the Rocky Mountains in the southwestern portion of the Territory and flows through the interior, winding in a semi-circle around the Belt Mountains, contains a vast extent of unsurpassed agricultural land, with every facility for irrigation where such is required.

As a rule, the soil of Montana Territory is a dark, vegetable mould of great richness, having the invaluable quality of being porous without being spongy, being thereby easily worked and very productive. The sub-soil is composed of a light clay, or clay mixed with sand. In addition to that portion of the Territory unsuited for agricultural purposes on account of its mountainous character, are a number of high plateaux, or barren clay table lands, called by the early French settlers "*Les Mauvais Terres*," or Bad Lands, which name they still retain. It is an extensive barren region, unbroken, excepting those parts intersected by the Little Rocky and Bear Paw ranges. This section is drained by the Milk and Marias Rivers, whose banks are thinly skirted with cottonwood, producing a striking contrast to the surrounding region, which is composed of a sedimentary deposit, abounding in fossils and petrifications, with occasional outcroppings of sandstone, but utterly destitute of vegetation.

Montana, however, agriculturally, is pre-eminently a grazing country. Everywhere on the mountain slopes and in the fertile valleys, where not otherwise covered with forests of timber, an unlimited and luxuriant growth of bunch grass, the most nutritious of grasses known, is obtained. The statement made by the Territorial Treasurer in his report for 1873, shows that the total area of land then under cultivation within the territorial limits, amounted to 318,039 acres, and the aggregate number of stock, such as horses, mules, horned cattle, etc., exceeded over 100,000 head.

Although destined eventually to become a great farming and stock-raising State, its principal resources at present consist of its mineral deposits. Gold was first discovered in paying quantities on Willard or Grasshopper Creek, in 1862. The rich and extensive mining district, of which Helena, the largest city in the Territory, is the center, was discovered in 1864, and has continued to yield largely ever since. The alluvial deposits are spread over a great area of the country, and from an estimate made of the creeks and gulches known to contain gold in supposed paying quantities, it contains mining land of an aggregate length of about five hundred lineal miles. From the annual returns of the products of gold since the time of the discovery of the mines, the yield has been satisfactory, and as they give no signs of exhaustion, their promise of continuing to do so in future is equally as favorable. Up to 1867, the attention of the mining population was devoted entirely to placer mining. Since that time, however, it has been much divided with the development of its more permanent quartz ledges, a great number, rich and well defined, having been discovered, many of which are now successfully worked. Over thirty silver-bearing ledges and twenty copper veins are also in a high state of development. Rich mines of gold, silver and copper are known to exist on the head waters of the Judith, but on account of the hostility of the tribes making it their headquarters, it remains almost unexplored. Coal beds have been found on the Missouri, Yellowstone and Gallatin Rivers. The deposits on the former are situated at a point a short distance