

RECOLLECTIONS OF A PIONEER RAILROAD BUILDER.*

The construction of the Spokane International may complete my work in this connection and it may not. I am on the sunset side of life, but still vigorous, and willing to be of use to the community in which I live, and work agrees with me. I have always felt great interest in development of the country and have unlimited faith in it. Washington has great possibilities and will be one of the great, rich states of the Union.

In the spring of 1886, having some leisure time on my hands, I came from New York to the Coeur d'Alenes and the State of Washington, with no other purpose than to see something of the extreme northwest. I was familiar with nearly all the states and territories west of the Missouri river, having come out to the west when a young man and spent most of my life on the frontier, west of the Mississippi river.

I crossed the plains to Denver and Salt Lake on mule back and by overland stage several times before the Union Pacific railroad was built. I had enjoyed the exciting sport of chasing buffalo and being chased by Indians, and had contracted a love for the west which will last as long as I live.

By invitation of Henry Villard and T. F. Oakes, I had been present at the driving of the last spike, near Gold Creek, Mont., that completed the construction of the Northern Pacific railroad, and had not then, nor until my visit in 1886, been further west on the northern route than that point. I knew something of Washington, especially of the Puget Sound country, a little about Spokane and the Inland Empire, and had a desire to see it.

I stopped short of Spokane on my way west, leaving the Northern Pacific railroad at Rathdrum, and, taking the stage from there to Coeur d'Alene City—city by courtesy, for it was then a very small place, its principal feature being the military post.

After spending a day there I took the steamer Coeur d'Alene, owned by James Monaghan, Clem King and Captain Sanburn, for Old Mission, at the head of navigation on the Coeur d'Alene river, and upon arriving at that point changed conveyance to a mud wagon stage that ran between Old Mission and Wardner. It was in April and the roads were at their worst, and that, as

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anybody will testify who traveled at that time, either on foot, horseback or by stage, meant about the worst that anybody ever saw.

It was not like old time roads on the Illinois prairies, that had no bottom, when stage passengers were required to walk and carry rails on their shoulders to pry the coaches out of the mud; there was bottom to the road between Mission and Wardner, but it was from two to three feet below the surface.

At the town of Wardner, I found James Wardner, Phil O'Rourke, Con Sullivan, Harry Baer and Kellogg, who owned the donkey that discovered the Bunker Hill mine. The men named except "Jim" Wardner, were the owners of the Bunker Hill and Sullivan mines, at that time nothing more than exceedingly good prospects, and they courteously invited me to inspect what little there was to be seen, and afterward have dinner with them at the miners' boarding house, both of which invitations I accepted and enjoyed.

In our examination of the prospects, "Jim" Wardner had secured a gunnysack, in which he deposited various samples of the ore, and upon our return to his cabin dumped them in a pile on the floor.

Among the samples was one that would not have assayed much in silver and lead, but which would have given exceedingly high values in dynamite; in other words, "Jim" had picked up an empty sack—apparently empty—in which to deposit his samples and had been dropping occasional chunks of lead ore on a stick of dynamite during the day. We were both speechless for a moment, and some remarks were made which are not necessary to repeat here.

From Wardner I proceeded to the town of Wallace, which then consisted of three log houses, occupied by Colonel Wallace and his wife, another man and wife and a single man. S. S. Glidden, who then owned the Tiger mine, at what is now the town of Burke, had accompanied me from Wardner for the purpose of showing me the mines, but we were obliged to lay over at Wallace two days while men were clearing fallen trees from the trail—there was no wagon road between Wallace and Burke at that time.

We then proceeded to the Tiger camp. There was not much development on the Tiger and Poorman mines at that time, but what there was looked good, and after a day there I returned to Wardner for a further examination of that camp and to gain what information I could respecting other discoveries.

It all impressed me so forcibly that I concluded that a transportation line connecting the district with the Northern Pacific, the only railroad then in sight, would pay, and within a short

time had arranged to build a branch from that road to Coeur d'Alene City, had purchased the transportation line on the lake and river, and begun the construction of a road from the Old Mission to Wardner, and during the following winter was transporting ore, merchandise and passengers over it.

The business grew rapidly and grew profitable, becoming so attractive that two years later the O. R. & N. Company, then under the management of Elija Smith, began to look that way with longing eyes. This did not suit T. F. Oakes, then president of the Northern Pacific, who claimed that the territory belonged to his company, and he proposed to buy me out. Our negotiations were short, but satisfactory to both parties, and I sold the line to the Northern Pacific Company in the fall of 1888.

The following winter I spent in New York, but early in the spring of 1889, at the invitation of James Monaghan, James Glover, Frank Moore and others who had at some time previously organized the Spokane Falls & Northern Railway Company, I came to Spokane, and after a short time arranged to take the company over, finance it and build the road, and in October of the same season was running trains to Colville, 90 miles north of Spokane.

During the following three years I extended the road to Northport and the international boundary line, and early in the spring of 1893, having obtained a charter from the Canadian government, started the construction of the Nelson & Fort Sheppard Railway, from the international boundary line to Nelson, on Kootenai Lake.

Later during that season, with the road half completed, the great panic of 1893 broke upon the country like a thunderclap out of a clear sky, and within a few months nearly half the railroads in the west, including the Northern Pacific, were in the hands of receivers.

The following year brought the great flood of the Columbia river, which washed out some miles of my road between Marcus and the boundary line, causing very heavy damage; however, it was not a time to give up, and I went on with the determination to see it through.

It was with many misgivings as to what would happen next, and a feeling a little like the old man who fired off a gun containing 13 loads and was knocked over by the concussion, when his hopeful son called out, "Lay still, dad, there are 12 more loads in her."

It was a time when a man had either to brace up and fight for his life or lay down and be wiped out. I was fortunate in having associates in the enterprise who had known me long and who trusted me, and in the loyalty of my employes, who refused, at

the order of the anarchist, Eugene V. Debs, and his Spokane lieutenants to go out on a strike, along with the employes of the Great Northern and Northern Pacific railroads, and so after a long and anxious period I managed to sail my ship into calm waters out of the reach of receivers.

A year or two afterward I had the road on a paying basis, and in June, 1898, through negotiations with C. S. Mellen, then president of the Northern Pacific Company, sold it to that company.

I had no thought at that time of engaging in further railroad construction, but in 1904 I was strongly impressed with the belief that a connection with the Canadian Pacific system would be of great benefit to Spokane and the Inland Empire and proceeded with a few friends to finance the enterprise, having the friendly cooperation through its very able president, Sir Thomas G. Shaughnessy, of the Canadian Pacific Company. The construction of the road is now much more than half completed, and I fully expect to have it in operation during the next six months.

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