

Appendix 8

These articles all appeared in *The New Northwest* of Deer Lodge, Montana, over the winter of 1886-1887. In addition to describing the winter most graphically, they reveal a boosterism and an unwillingness to admit to economic disaster, as evidenced by the use of phrases such as: "From all we can learn the stock situation on the great ranges is not so bad as was apprehended by owners a couple of weeks ago, and not nearly so bad as reported to the Eastern press." The situation, it turned out, was every bit as bad as feared.

The date of publication appears with each article.

18 February 1887.

"FREAKS OF THE WIND.

Eighty Miles an Hour at Fort Maginnis.

Special to the Independent.

"FT. MAGINNIS, Feb. 14.--The most severe wind storm ever known in this vicinity struck here about 2 o'clock yesterday afternoon, and raged with increasing violence till 9 o'clock last night, reaching a velocity of eighty-four miles per hour. Up to noon there was a warm westerly wind, which melted the snow rapidly. At 1 o'clock the mercury stood at 40 degrees above, and at 3 o'clock it marked 2 below, with a sixty-mile-an-hour wind from the northwest. In conversation with several cattle men this morning, it was learned that the loss last night was very heavy, as many of the cattle that had so far withstood the severity of this winter were in a poor condition to battle with such a storm as this. During the storm the atmosphere seemed thoroughly charged with electricity, and many persons received moderate shocks by touching any metallic substances. The minimum temperature last night was eight below zero. To-day there are much warmer and light winds from the west and southwest.

"There is a big country full of snow between St. Paul and Deer Lodge--less in the Gallatin valley than anywhere else we saw. With the enormous snowfall of this winter on this parallel, it is not the cause of wonder that trains are blockaded, but that they get through at all. The Northern Pacific Company has used Herculean efforts to keep its trains moving. Two engines are attached to passenger trains nearly all the way, and in some cases four engines, with a double-headed snow plow running ahead. Freight trains were moving last week, but an engine could haul only a few cars, and the requisition on motive power to move the passenger trains was very heavy."

4 March 1887.

"THE STOCK SITUATION.

The Condition Not Nearly so Bad as
Reported.

"Saturday evening last it began blowing great gusts from the south, which eventuated in a chinook Sunday and Monday, and the snow went very rapidly. The weather has been spring-like since, and great areas in this valley are already bare of snow, although the late thaw has been so moderate that there has been no freshet. It seems the backbone of the winter is broken and there are hopes of an early spring. Many persons have discontinued feeding their animals, and stock can now get considerable grazing in the valley and hills.

"Advices from the east side are to the effect that the chinook has bared many of the ranges, it having started in on the northern ranges as early as Feb. 17th. From all we can learn the stock situation on the great ranges is not so bad as was apprehended by owners a couple of weeks ago, and not nearly so bad as reported to the Eastern press. Of course there will be a loss of cattle--heavier than usual--but the talk of 90, or 75, or 50 per cent, so freely sent East, is not within any reasonable probability. We know March and early April is generally a hard season on stock, and many weak ones will yet die, but the loss will be largely confined to 'immigrant' cattle. The old rangers stay on the range, where there is feed, but the 'immigrants' drift to the brush-lined streams for shelter, where there is no feed, and cannot be driven back to the ranges like the acclimated herds.

"In the settlements, or with small growers, who nearly all carry some feed, there will not be a crushing loss. There have been very pessimistic views entertained by many of those whose stock was in peril, and very grossly exaggerated reports have gone abroad, but with anything like favorable weather from now on, cattle will generally rustle through. The bunch grass is short, but there were no rains last fall or successive snows and thaws to leach it out this winter, and what grass there is now is more than ordinarily nutritious.

"Even in this valley greatly exaggerated stories have circulated as to losses. Bielenberg & Kohrs, the heaviest horse raisers in this valley, were reported to have lost large numbers by being drifted in, but it was erroneous. Mr. Bielenberg informs us their loss will not aggregate two per cent, to date. Five per cent, of sheep dying--principally old ewes--is a fair annual average in this county. This year it is not estimated to exceed 8 or 10 per cent, at the utmost. The winter has not been a severely cold one, and as nearly all stock (owing to the snow) has been fed since Christmas, it is in better average condition than stock usually is at this time.

"Altogether, we believe Montana stockowners have been more scared than hurt, and the Eastern press has been simply deluged with outrageous lines about the situation. Montana is all right."

"CATTLE IN NEVADA VALLEY.

The Snow Deep, but Cattle Doing Well.

"Ex-Commissioner J. H. Helm, who brought Mrs. Helm here for medical treatment last week, says there has been plenty of snow in Nevada valley, ranging from two feet about Helmville to three, four and five feet at Montour creek, but he knew of none but that had two or three weeks hay left, and nearly all had six or eight weeks of hay. He thought the Blackfoot Horse and Cattle Co. might lose some stock, but that generally there would be little loss. Of herds in the valley, he enumerated--McArrison, 600 head; Geary Bros., 700; John W. Blair, 800; O'Neill, 500; Blanchard, 400; Sturgeon Bros., 300; Ed. Smith, 170; Blackfoot Horse and Cattle Co., 225; Wm. Williams, 400; Keiley Bros., 300; Jack Brazil, 200; J. H. Helm, 150; Frank Gallagher, 150; Matt Peterson, 175; C. G. Birdseye, 125; P. Cahalen, 125; Chas. Smith, 100; Sam Thompson, 70 head; and others in small lots, aggregating at least 500 head, all of which are doing well.

"The deep snow has driven many of the elk and deer from the mountains into the valley and to the ranches, where doubtless some of them become confused and get lost. A variety quite rare here, known as the 'Caribou deer,' was seen among the intruders."

20 May 1887.

"THE CATTLE INDUSTRY.

The Early Reports of Cattle Losses Considerably
Exaggerated.

"BOSTON,--The *Commercial Bulletin* publishes to day a special report of the ranch and range cattle industry. The reports are furnished by special correspondents from thirteen states and territories, covering the whole field. The conclusion arrived at was that the early reports of winter losses have been considerably exaggerated. The only Territory where cattlemen suffered a severe loss was in Montana, where the mortality will be from 15 to 25 per cent on the average. The losses in Colorado, Western Kansas and North Kansas, were very light the past winter, running under 5 per cent on the average. Parts of Idaho and Wyoming suffered quite severely, particularly in the north-western parts, but the average losses in the territories were not excessive. Utah, New Mexico, and Arizona were particularly fortunate. The New Mexico correspondent writes that the loss will not exceed three per cent in either of the Territories named. Texas reports some suffering on account of the drouth, but the winter was much more favorable for stockmen than that of 1885-6. On the whole the conclusion was arrived at that the past winter was a favorable one for the cattle raising interests of the West, and that the hide and leather market will not feel the effect of what fallen hides will come upon the market. From every section come reports of encroachments of emigrants upon the grazing territory, and particularly from Nebraska, Kansas and Colorado, where the cattlemen are being pushed steadily westward. It is the opinion of some of the correspondents that the cattle raising industry has reached its height. In several States it is reported that it is becoming necessary to raise alfalfa and grass for feed. The Inter-State Commerce law works to the disadvantage of most sections but reports vary on this point. Without exception as to a single State or Territory the spring season opened well with an abundance and a fine outlook for grass. Cattle raisers in Montana feel much encouraged over the outlook and think the favorable spring will go far to recuperate their losses and prevent further losses among weak cattle."