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THE INITIAL ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE SUGAR-BEET  
INDUSTRY IN MONTANA

AN HONOR'S THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE HISTORY  
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BY

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We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.  
Through the unknown, remembered gate  
When the last of earth left to discover  
Is that which was the beginning.

—T.S. Eliot, The Four Quartets

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## Preface

This honors thesis on the initial origins and development of the sugar-beet industry in Montana grew out of an earlier research seminar paper on the same topic. Originally, the topic was born out of necessity. In order to graduate, I needed a topic that had been touched by relatively few hands and possessed a large variety of primary sources. In the fall of 2009, as a senior in search of a topic, I remembered reading an article on how the current government-mandated quota system influenced sugar production in the United States. Having graduated from high school in eastern Montana, where every fall and winter the smell of the sugar-beet refineries permeated the air, the topic naturally suggested itself. A quick perusal of Michael P. Malone's and Richard B. Roeder's *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*, and a survey of the index of *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, showed that very little had been done on a topic that was intimately tied to history of eastern Montana.

As the initial research developed beyond the initial research seminar paper, the topic seemed to draw me to explore areas that were intimately connected with my past, and yet seemed to reveal themselves in the process of research. The first connection was my experience in the Army. I deployed in September 2002 as a young electronic intelligence analyst in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). In March of 2003 OEF transmogrified into Operation

Iraqi Freedom, and working as I did in the ARCENT-JACE I was able to see close up the effects of a misguided public policy in action. At first glance it may seem that American adventurism in Iraq is a far cry from the creation and development of the sugar-beet industry in Montana. Yet, the deeper I delved into the primary source material surrounding the creation of Montana's sugar industry, the more it became apparent to me that there was a story about the creation of a public policy, and the adaptation of ideas concerning the Jeffersonian yeoman farmer to the arid lands beyond the ninety-eighth meridian. Moreover, an exploration of the initial origins and development of Montana's sugar-beet industry allowed me to explore the connection between an abstract realm of public policy and the impact of that policy on the lives of ordinary people.

Moreover, in the summer of 2010, while working in the archives at Bozeman, I began to see the outlines of a much broader story concerning sugar and Native American land, and on a personal level the story became vastly more interesting. The reason for this is that I grew up and came to maturity on the Crow Reservation in eastern Montana. When I was ten years old my parents moved to Busby, where my father taught school, and for a year and a half I lived as a vohoe among the Cheyenne. The next year, and for many years thereafter, my father taught school at Lodge Grass, on the Crow side. Hardin, where I graduated from high school, is one of those edge-of-the-reservation towns common throughout the trans-Mississippi West. However, my family's deepest social ties were not among the whites in Hardin, but among the Crow. From the age of ten until I left

home at eighteen to join the army, my family and I attended church at Spirit of Life Foresquare in Crow Agency, Montana.

The Crow have a deeply held sense of identity that is intimately tied to the land, and the language which they speak. In addition, Crow culture has not remained statically stuck in time, but has continued to evolve over time to include an indigenous Christianity that blends traditional aspects of Crow culture with a grass-roots Pentecostalism. There are hymns that I still remember from my childhood being sung in Crow, which according to the tradition handed down, were originally composed by Goes Ahead. Looking back now at the specter of being ten years gone from the reservation, I can say with certainty that my biggest regret was not taking the time as a child to learn the Crow language. As young men and women we do not often know the gifts we have been given. The emerging story concerning the development of the sugar-beet industry and Native American land, which in fairness still needs further exploration, piqued my interest, for as a young man I had been forced to choose between a broader world which I did not understand but could assimilate into, and the hardships of life on the reservation.

Another crucial element of the sugar-beet story that drew my interest was the role of the government in promoting the industry through education and subsidy. As a young man who came of age in an environment where opportunity was limited, my education has been profoundly shaped by the educational subsidies provided to veterans by the federal government. I found the application of the principles of education by the United States Department of Agriculture



(USDA), and the agricultural college and extension service as what became Montana State University-Bozeman, absolutely fascinating. Here I found the principles of educational subsidy, and the dissemination of information employed, not to promote individual welfare, but to foster an industry. The pamphlets produced by the USDA and the extension service were distributed free to anyone who wanted a copy. Chemists employed at the public expense, and teachers in the form of lecturers who spoke at farmer's institutes, were using education not as a form of individual empowerment, but as a spur to the development of private industry which fed at the public trough. It was extremely interesting to explore this aspect of education in informing and shaping public opinion in the development of industry. As the child of a family of teachers, the idea that information spread for educational purposes was not always an unalloyed good was revelatory in itself.

Ultimately, the research, writing, and conceptualization of this honors thesis has been an enjoyable experience. In some ways I have learned more about Montana history than I ever wanted to know, and in other ways I have constantly been shown both how little I do know, and how mind-bogglingly hard it can be to write history. The story of the origins and development of the sugar-beet industry is a fascinating story. What started out as a requirement has become, in the process of research and writing, a remarkable story about the conceptualization of the West, and an exploration through the medium of an ordinary object of some of the major themes in western history. I hope I have done it justice.

## Acknowledgements

This honors thesis is a small paean to the patience of teachers. My deepest gratitude, thanks, and appreciation goes out to Dr. Robert Swartout, who as advisor, mentor, thesis director, and professor has been a model of kindness, understanding, and accountability as I labored to complete my honors thesis. In five years at Carroll College he has been a guiding star in helping me to understand the rigors of the historical discipline, dealing patiently with my youthful exuberance, suggesting books to read that have broadened and deepened my historical understanding, and leading me through the research process. I have been blessed by his association with me as a mentor, teacher, and academic advisor. I count time spent in his office and classroom as one of the joys of my college career. Dr. Gillian Glaes deserves equal thanks for her kind profferance of advice in dealing graciously with me as I grappled with new conceptions of history, and struggled to find a conceptual framework on which to hang new knowledge. Her insight, serenity, and generosity are a testament to the excellence of the history department at Carroll College. To Murphy Fox, whose knowledge of Native American affairs serves as a reminder that books don't always come with matching covers, and who has remained a reader despite health problems, I owe a word of thanks. In general, the faculty of the history department at Carroll has been exceedingly generous in easing my transformation from a brash, pompous, certain young man into a more humble seeker of knowledge.

To Jeff Bristol, one of my oldest friends and a graduate student at the University of Chicago, who listened to me natter on incessantly about sugar beets and western history for over a year and a half, I owe a deep debt. The finished product has been improved immensely by his willingness to read over early versions, offer comment, criticism and advice. My parents, family, and special friends also deserve a word of thanks, for without their support none of this would have been possible. Lastly, to Ta-Nehisi Coates, and the commenters on his blog, affectionately known as “The Golden Horde,” who daily, since September 2008, have provided a thoughtful community for the discussion of ideas, and who provided much insight in the formulation of the concepts that went into this honors thesis, I also send thanks.

The work of the historian, aspiring or professional, is founded on the work of the archivist and librarian. To Kevin Kooistra-Manning at the Western Heritage Center in Billings, Montana, who loaned me materials to digitally image, and was a great help in locating sources, I owe a special word of thanks. To Kim Scott, head archivist at Montana State University Bozeman (MSU), and the archivists at the Merrill G. Burlingame Special Collections and Archives at MSU; to Zoe Ann Stoltz, fellow refugee from eastern Montana, and to the other archivists and staff at the Montana Historical Society; and to the archivists at Little Big Horn College in Crow Agency, Montana, I thank you all.

To everyone involved, my deepest thanks and humblest appreciation goes out to you all. The undertaking of any work of history is an exercise in the accumulation of debts, and I sincerely wish to thank each and every one for their

kindness, appreciation and understanding in helping me see this work to completion.

## Abstract

The mythic West is often conceived of as the home of the rugged individualist making his way in a land of possibility, wide with Indians, elk, and elbow-room. However, a careful study of western history reveals that most often the West, especially in the realm of public policy, was not the home of rugged individualists, but of a marriage between public interest and private capital that promoted the West as a “land of opportunity,” because doing so was absolutely vital to key economic interests. The story of the development of the sugar industry in eastern Montana reflects this understanding of western history. Originally conceived of both as a crop and a means to benefit the Jeffersonian small-land holder, the western sugar industry was the beneficiary of nineteenth century free labor ideology. Unfortunately, the benefits of the sugar-beet industry would not go to the 80-acre farmer eking out a living in subsistence agriculture. Rather, the profits of this industry would go to larger land-holders, sugar-beet refiners, and the eastern sugar trust. Therefore, the story of the development of the sugar-beet industry mirrors the more general western paradox between the individual, enticed by opportunity, and the corporation feeding at the public trough. Fostered through studies undertaken by the Department of Agriculture and the Agricultural extension service, grown on land ceded by Native Americans, nurtured by water brought by reclamation projects, and protected by tariffs, the growth of the sugar industry in Montana is a story of the westerner’s relationship to the federal government.

## Introduction

Because a multiplicity of topics find expression within the general discussion concerning the influential marriage between public policy and private interest that created the western sugar-beet industry, what follows is a brief outline of the major themes discussed in each chapter. Chapter one introduces the western sugar-beet industry in Montana, serves as a preliminary discussion of the distinctiveness of the trans-Mississippi West in American history, and illustrates the interplay between conceptions of the mythic West and its dependence upon the federal government.

Chapter two is a discussion of the national sugar problem prior to the passage of the Newlands Reclamation Act in 1902, a parallel discussion of the roles of free-labor ideology and the idea of the Jeffersonian yeoman farmer in promoting the West as a land of opportunity in the formulation of reclamation as federal policy, and their impact on the formulation of an assimilationist Indian policy that sought to absorb what it could not comprehend.

Chapter three comprises a discussion of the work of the United States Department of Agriculture, and the agricultural college and experiment station, in promoting the sugar-beet industry in Montana. It further discusses late nineteenth and early twentieth-century notions of the environment and the conflict between public policy concerning the environment and the natural climate of Montana.

Chapter four discusses the impacts of the emerging sugar industry and reclamation policy, from the Newlands Reclamation act of 1902 to the foundation

of the Billings sugar factory in 1906, with regards to immigrants, tariffs, and Native American policy. Finally, the epilogue details the effects of the sugar industry on the dependent labor force created as a byproduct of the marriage of public policy and private interest.

In every chapter the common theme is how the actualities of life in the state of Montana and the trans-Mississippi West conflict with more abstract notions in the realm of public policy. However, because the federal government left such a large footprint in the trans-Mississippi West, and because the actions of sugar-beet industry promoters, irrigation boosters, and public policy makers are so inter-related and dependent upon each other, it is almost impossible to say where traditional political history ends and social history begins. In keeping with the interrelationship of all these themes, the public policy history of the western sugar-beet industry is best viewed as a natural outgrowth of the social and economic movements within the western United States that gave rise to the industry. Furthermore, the interdependence of a multiplicity of historical actors, forces, and ideologies makes it difficult to determine a sole cause, or even the hierarchy of causes, which gave rise to the sugar-beet industry in Montana. Rather than seeking to rank and sort historical causation in order of precedence, the sugar beet in Montana is best viewed as a nexus, rooted in the trans-Mississippi West as a place and a historical point in time, around which a multiplicity of factors coalesce. Ultimately, the history of the emergence of the sugar-beet industry in Montana serves as a portrait of the region's history in miniature, and illustrates

how the broad historical changes taking place in the region found expression in the history of an ordinary plant.



## Chapter 1

### Sugar Beets and the Western Myth in American History

Willard Bacheller remembered his arrival in the Yellowstone Valley circa 1927 as follows: “When we came over the bluff at the Yellowstone River we saw one of the most beautiful places in the U.S., miles of alfalfa, sugar beets, wheat corn, beans, also green water running in nice little ditches everywhere.”<sup>1</sup> In February of that year the Great Western Sugar Company headquartered in Denver, Colorado, posted total profits of \$5,686,902.89, a net profit of \$3,365,713.27, and paid an income tax of almost \$500,000.<sup>2</sup> The total assets of the Great Western Sugar Company for 1927 totaled \$84,898,923.32 and dividends totaling \$5,850,000 were paid to stockholders.<sup>3</sup> At the time of Bacheller’s arrival, the Billings sugar refinery was one of the company’s many factories throughout the west.

Three years before Bacheller’s arrival, during the 1924 harvest, a total of 1,375 sugar-beet farmers had been contracted to grow beets for the Billings refinery. Crops covering a total of 31,242 acres had been harvested at an average of 10.32 tons to the acre, producing a total of 326,782 tons of beets.<sup>4</sup> That year the Fox Movie Tone News Company shot a ten-minute news release from the Grimrock ranch east of Custer concerning sugar-beet farming which made national news: “The Grimrock ranch comprising some two hundred acres recently planted sugar beets, an outstanding example of progressive cultivation. In an expansive valley beside the rushing waters of the Yellowstone, a vast area of

seemingly barren soil has been converted into productive farms through modern irrigation.”<sup>5</sup> On December 14, the following advertisement ran in the *Billings Gazette*: “The Billings plant of the Great Western Sugar Company established a world’s record in 1924 in the production of beet sugar with an output of 925,000 bags of 100 pounds each. This is the product of 33,000 acres of land and the farmers’ share of the yield was about \$3,192,000.”<sup>6</sup>

To hear the publicists, boosters, sugar men, and old-timers tell it, the story of the growth of the sugar industry in the Yellowstone River Valley and eastern Montana is a story of progress whereby the irrigation farmer, “the most independent man on earth,” created a paradise out of a prairie dog town with little or no help from anyone.<sup>7</sup> Part of this narrative is true, for certainly sugar beet production was at the heart of the industrial revolution as it applied to agriculture. I.D. O’Donnell, one of the founders of the Billings factory, said as much in 1914 when he was part of the five-member reclamation commission for the Department of the Interior:

The science of successful manufacturing consists of taking raw materials and making them into finished products that are required and desired by the public. Every farm should be a manufacturing plant. Every farmer should market not his raw materials, but a finished product that the public wants. By so doing he will receive the reward for making them into the finished product.<sup>8</sup>

However, the reality of sugar-beet farming was far different from the statistical narrative of industrial progress put forward by newspapers, annual reports, and government publications. The *Billings Gazette* would have a person believe that the average sugar-beet farmer’s share of the profits in 1924 was

\$2,321.45. The truth was that the average sugar beet farmer on an 80-acre farm in 1924 received only \$739 for a year of intense, backbreaking labor.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, while the 80-acre farmer received \$739, and most small-scale sugar-beet farmers lost money, profits from the 1923 harvest for the Great Western Sugar Company had totaled \$12,004,303.74.<sup>10</sup> Far from receiving a reward for offering a finished product, the sugar-beet farmer was at the center of a narrative concerning the adaptation and exploitation of the western United States in its relation to an industrial economy. In reality, the growth of the sugar industry in Montana was not the result of independent, Jeffersonian farmers eking out a living from the soil, but by a hard-shelled marriage between capital and government. Therefore, to properly understand the forces that gave rise to the sugar-beet industry in Montana, it is first necessary to understand the western United States, not just as a point in space, but also as a historical place in time.

The Trans-Mississippi West occupies a distinctive place in the life of the nation. Indeed, the story of the creation of the sugar industry in eastern Montana, and in the west as a whole, is first and foremost a story of man's relationship to the land. Eastern Montana is a land of extreme weather conditions, with summer temperatures often reaching above 100°F and winter temperatures routinely reaching to -30°F. In addition, the lands beyond the ninety-eighth meridian have historically lacked the necessary precipitation required for agricultural production. In wet years, such as 1911, average rainfall in eastern Montana is about fifteen inches per annum, while in dry years the total can be as little as six or seven inches, with the largest amount of rain falling in the months of May and June.<sup>11</sup>

Likewise, the growing season in eastern Montana, and in parts of the northern Trans-Mississippi West, is necessarily shorter than that of other more hospitable districts such as California or Illinois, with the mean length of the growing season usually amounting to a mere 120 days.<sup>12</sup> A study by the U.S. Department of Agriculture published in 1912 recorded that the last spring frost might be as late as May 20, and that the first fall frost usually arrived well before October 20.<sup>13</sup> Such conditions left sugar-beet farmers in constant fear that the last spring frost would arrive as crops were being planted and that the first fall frost would arrive during harvest time.

Overall, because the Trans-Mississippi West lacked a suitable climate required for the natural growth of agriculture and settlement, the region was forced into seeking large-scale government involvement in its affairs. Westerners, especially westerners of the generation between 1880 and 1920, believed firmly in both individuality and American exceptionalism. Convinced that the west was a place where “the cowards never started, the weaklings fell by the way, and only the strong men and women arrived,” westerners came to view the region as uniquely American.<sup>14</sup> Arguably the two largest factors in the creation of the national myth of what constitutes the “American Experience” are the conjoined narratives of arrival and westward expansion. These narratives, tied together for so long, eventually merged into one single story—the story of the successful immigrant or poor-boy-made-good. Indeed, such a story lies at the center of the American soul, for on one level Americans wish to see themselves as erstwhile or future Horatio Algers, whose novels and name conjure up a mythical path from

poverty to respectability, while on another level they are constantly moving, never content, and always in search of that which they do not know.

If the central features of the “American character” are its malleability and attachment to “tradition,” then these features can be traced back to the twin stories of immigration and expansion that form the storied bedrock of how almost every group became “American.” Yet, embedded deep within the story of immigrant assimilation and triumph is the tragic narrative of Indian displacement and despair. America was not born a nation state on the Westphalian model, which following the dictum of *cuius regio eius religio* based the concept of statehood within the framework of religious and ethnic identity. Rather, it became a nation through a process of assimilating disparate identities into a common experience. Underneath, and interwoven with this story, is the tragedy of how indigenous peoples were ultimately pushed aside so that immigrants, drawn from all parts of the world, could be given room to expand, assimilate, and create the idea of “America.” As historians Ray Allen Billington and Martin Ridge have characterized it, “The result was the Americanization of people and institutions,” as each group of immigrants, with help from the federal government, adapted to the unique climatic and cultural traditions of the lands beyond the ninety-eighth meridian.<sup>15</sup>

Central to these ideas is the place of the West in the national life, for it was on the frontier that the various threads of this narrative would combine to create the American story. Therefore, the western United States occupies a unique place in the national mythology. With the possible exception of the antebellum

South, no other place in American history has been the subject of so much romanticism. From the myth of the “noble savage,” to Buffalo Bill’s Wild-West Show, and to the pulp magazines of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that spawned the dime-store novels and the western film, the West has become the nexus of a very powerful American mythology where cowboys, Indians, fur-trappers, and mountain men are portrayed as the knights of the old frontier. Outside of working ranches and rodeos, the cowboy hat has been transformed from the useful accoutrement of the range-worker’s life to a chivalric emblem, which calls to mind romantic ideas of a life that never really existed. As one recent western singer, speaking out against the assortment of cowboy myths phrased it, “Pushin’ horns weren’t easy like the movie said it was and I don’t recall no dance-hall girls, or hotel rooms with rugs. You worked hot and tired and nasty, rode your pony’s head too low, and there were all the nights you couldn’t sleep ‘cause it was too damn cold.”<sup>16</sup>

Stripped of romantic elements, however, the lands beyond the ninety-eighth meridian lose much of their grandeur but none of their fascination, for the West is a land of contradictions. From its inception, the Trans-Mississippi West has been a land of great diversity, in language, customs, religion, and ethnicity. Yet, for all of its diversity, the West has been unified both by a colonial economy that found its major centers of finance and trade in eastern cities and by an almost uniform lack of water. Moreover, the frontier has long been imagined as the home of the libertarian spirit in America. No other place is so bound up with the idea of the rugged individualist making his way free from government interference.

Indeed, no less a western mythmaker and storyteller than Louis L'Amour dedicated his book, *Bendigo Shafter*, to "The hard-shelled men who built with nerve and hand that which the soft-bellied latecomers call the 'western myth.'"<sup>17</sup> In part, the "western myth" exists because of the conditions encountered by early pioneers. In the West notions of distance, of space, and of time are necessarily different than they are in the east. Especially in eastern Montana, where the broad expanding ocean of grass meets the jagged mountains of the Pryors and the Bighorns, the sense of isolation can be intense. Such experiences were especially difficult for homesteaders well into the twentieth century, before the region was linked together by electricity, telephones, and an interstate highway system. As homesteader Lillian Stephenson recounts, for many settlers in eastern Montana the overwhelming fact of life was its separation from everything: "No trees, no flowers, no, just hills and sagebrush, mountains. I thought it, I just couldn't take that. It was pretty hard to get used to after comin' from the city where there's lots of pretty trees and flowers and walnut trees and hickory nuts and all of that, you know.... I couldn't get used to that. I just couldn't see where there was any greatness to bein' out here on the homestead."<sup>18</sup> Out of this loneliness and isolation the farmer and rancher of the West would forge his customary way of doing business, unique to the West, where a scarcity of written agreements and a dearth of population led to a system that historian K. Ross Toole has characterized as follows:

Because it was short of many things, the West was short of law enforcement people and facilities and shorter still of judicial structure based on precedential legal procedures. It therefore developed its own systems which, while often summary, were imperative. Contracts were

rare and “fine print” nonexistent... You did what you said you would do and did not do what you said you would not do because otherwise you could not operate.<sup>19</sup>

Unfortunately, the West’s distrust of “fine print” and an overly long reliance on custom in lieu of arbitration delayed the establishment of effective regulation. Ultimately, such practices would lead to a mentality of “get rich and get out,” whereby, in the interest of monetary gain, the long-term regional interests of the West, in terms of environmental regulation, agricultural planning, land use policies, and water and labor law, would be sacrificed for short-term monetary gain. Moreover, such ad-hoc customary arrangements often left whole regions, and sometimes entire states, at the mercy of powerful corporate interests more concerned with their pocketbooks than the long-term needs and welfare of the population.

Indeed, the libertarian, small-government legacy of the West is troubling because of its effects on environmental and labor policy. However, it is even more troubling because the libertarian ideology of the West was founded upon the emotional experience of those early settlers. Instead of basing itself in reality, this libertarian view towards government grew out of a homesteader’s sense of loneliness and isolation from the broader society. In many ways, the West as a place in the sphere of public policy was not the home of independent-minded Jeffersonian farmers working hard to construct a new nation from a limitless expanse of prairie. Instead, the framework within which western development took place was almost exclusively the product of government legislation set forth in Washington.



The General Mining Law of 1872, a codification of several statutes from 1866 to 1870, gave the miner or mining corporation full possession of the public domain wherever minerals were worked, and established the principle of first in time first in right, which would so bedevil western water users.<sup>20</sup> The building of the Northern Pacific Railroad, authorized by Congress in 1864 and completed in 1883, resulted not only in the Northern Pacific being at one time the largest landowner in the state of Montana, but also in the founding of the town of Billings, where Montana's first sugar refinery would be built.<sup>21</sup> The Morrell and Hatch Acts created the land-grant agricultural colleges and experiment stations that played such a vital role in the development of western agriculture.<sup>22</sup> Finally, the building of huge reclamation projects, under the Reclamation Act of 1902, finally made agriculture in the West a sustainable possibility.

The truth of western history is that the west was rarely the scene of small independent farmers working without governmental assistance. Rather, the western United States was a place created through a conscious policy of governmental subsidies and corporate welfare. In fact, the key to comprehending western history is to understand how the West engaged in a symbiotic relationship with the federal government that greatly affected both. On the one hand, the federal government fostered development through a policy of subsidizing private industry and individual settlement. On the other hand, influential western power brokers, industry moguls, and developers promoted the West as a land of individual opportunity for the common man because the maintenance of such an ideology was absolutely key to the well-being of their economic interests.<sup>23</sup>

The story of the growth and development of the sugar industry in eastern Montana demonstrates how each of these disparate themes would unite into a common narrative of extraction, government subsidy, growth, assimilation, and wealth creation for a very few. The early relationship between Montana's economy and the national sugar industry reflect the colonial nature of the early Montana economy. First contact between the emerging national sugar trust and the economy of Montana came at a time when the "first exploiters were slaughtering 150,000 buffalo a season on its plains."<sup>24</sup> Before any sugar-beets ever grew in Montana, any refineries erected, or any sugar produced, the bones left over from the wholesale slaughter of the buffalo were shipped to eastern sugar-refineries to be used in the refining process.<sup>25</sup> In later years the emerging sugar industry in Montana came to symbolize how westerners were searching for "methods of controlling production and mastering their own destiny," with the paradoxically western stipulation that the means for such mastery were provided by the federal government.<sup>26</sup> The initial studies that ultimately determined the viable areas for growing beets would be marked out by the federal government and the state agricultural college at Bozeman. The industry would be further subsidized by tariffs and bounties established through national legislation. However, perhaps the greatest impetus for the growth of the sugar industry in the state of Montana would be the building of huge reclamation projects after the passage of the Reclamation act of 1902. Ultimately, it was these projects that provided the water necessary to grow beets, water that was necessarily provided at government expense.

The sugar-beet story in Montana also illustrates the disconnect between frontier ideas of the Jeffersonian yeoman farmer and the reality of mechanized industrial agriculture. Because of reverence for the family farm, child labor in agriculture would be exempted from state and federal statutes that covered work in smelters, mines, and other occupations.<sup>27</sup> An exemption which allowed sugar companies to employ whole families; children as young as ten years old were routinely employed in the arduous work of topping, thinning, and harvesting sugar beets.<sup>28</sup> Also central to the story of the creation of the sugar-beet industry in Montana are attitudes about immigration and race. German-Russian immigrants would be held up as an industrious, model minority, who in time would become primary landowners on their own farms. Mexican immigrants, however, who were brought specifically to Montana by the sugar companies to work the beets, were viewed primarily as units of labor. Although the area around Sidney would provide a notable exception to this rule, the majority of Mexican immigrants to Montana would not become primary landowners working their own farms, and instead were employed for long hours at low pay in the most menial tasks.

Through it all, in this most western of stories, runs the tragic story of the Native American experience. Ultimately, the sugar industry in Montana would be the beneficiary of misguided attempts to assimilate the Indian. Land set aside by treaty, and irrigated by monies stipulated in the same treaties, would then be allotted or leased to white people on the reservation. Attempts to open up the Fort Belknap reservation to sugar-beet farming would lead to the *Winters* decision and the concept of Indian reserved water rights, fundamentally changing the tribes

relationship with state and federal government.<sup>29</sup> Finally, farther south on the Crow reservation, the national thirst for sugar would be responsible for the cession that created one of the first federally-funded irrigation project in the nation, and, as late as 1937, would lead to the removal of Hardin from reservation land.<sup>30</sup> Ultimately, the story of the creation of the sugar beet industry in Montana shows how the frontier experience did not end with Frederick Jackson Turner and the Chicago World's fair in 1893. The saga of sugar shows how the "frontier story" set an enduring pattern in American life that would persist, first strongly and then with fainter and fainter echoes, well into the first three decades of the twentieth century.

## NOTES

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## Chapter 2

### Sugar Beets and the Lords of Yesterday

Initially, the development of the beet sugar industry in the United States was an overwhelming failure. Most of the small beet sugar factories built in the United States between 1838 and 1879 failed, resulting in losses of several million dollars. Between 1879 and 1902, the year of the passage of the Newlands Reclamation Act, forty eight factories would be built, with forty four remaining in operation. Only twenty three of the forty eight factories built to produce beet sugar during the period would be built west of the ninety-eighth meridian. Only thirteen of those twenty three factories would be built in the arid states outside of California, Washington and Oregon. Finally, only one of those thirteen factories would be built prior to the passage of any sort of national reclamation legislation.<sup>1</sup> The entirety of the western sugar industry, an industry which in the twentieth century would average millions of dollars in yearly profits, could not grow until the government laid the groundwork for its development. Once that groundwork was laid, its growth would be phenomenal, as shown by the profits of the Great Western Sugar Company, which annually averaged approximately 5.2 million dollars between 1923 and 1937.<sup>\*2</sup> However, the growth of that sugar industry, and the resulting profits, did not spring magically out of the ground. Rather, the western sugar industry was the beneficiary of attitudes and policies regarding the West that dated back to the American Civil War, attitudes that extended down to the passage of the Newlands Reclamation Act and beyond, shaping the character

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\* Excludes the fiscal years 1925, 1928, and 1935.



of the Trans-Mississippi West well into the twentieth century. These attitudes that Charles F. Wilkinson called the “lords of yesterday,” were conceived as unique adaptations to the lands of Arid America, the lands between the ninety-eighth meridian and the Cascades and Sierra Nevada Mountain ranges.<sup>3</sup> The resulting marriage of private capital and public interest, once exported to the rest of the nation, would come to dominate much of twentieth century history.

The dearth of population and overabundance of resources within the western United States was an abiding force that helped to shape the region’s history. The 1870 census had enumerated a mere 20,595 people in the territory of Montana, concentrated in the state’s western mining districts.<sup>4</sup> The region seemed cursed by geography and climate to pursue a policy of boom and bust. Valuable to the rest of the nation only for its large untapped reserves of gold, silver, and copper, the state seemed destined throughout much of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to be a place whose vast mineral resources would be exported for the benefit of eastern capital. However, underneath the mining frontier, grew the forces that caused the sugar industry to take root in Montana and the West.

The first of these forces was the old conception of the West as a safety valve, which in the decades prior to the Civil War gave rise to “free labor ideology.” Free labor ideology, because it involved both a debate over the parallel questions of slavery and its role in the western territories was a debate over the future of America. Its net effect was that it created and cemented the idea of the West as a home for free white labor. As historian David Blight argues, free labor ideology “was really a fanfare for the common man, a defense of the white

Anglo-Saxon Protestant small farmer.”<sup>5</sup> The idea, conceived by lawmakers familiar with farming in the humid region, was that the West would ultimately be settled by white Jeffersonian yeoman farmers. In the words of David Wilmot, author of the Wilmot Proviso, “I would preserve for free white labor a fair country, a rich inheritance, where the sons of toil of my own race and color can live without the disgrace which association with Negro slavery brings upon free labor.”<sup>6</sup> Ultimately, free labor ideology was one of the guiding principles that led to the Homestead Act of 1862, where people, including women, could lay claim to 160 acres of the public domain as long as they spent five years in residence and paid the ten dollar filing fee. The Homestead Act was expanded again in 1877 by the Desert Land Act, which gave prospective landowners title to 640 acres at the nominal price of \$1.25 an acre, provided that a portion was irrigated within three years. Constantly modified and updated to meet new conditions, and in the case of the Dawes Act new peoples and cultures, the idea of the West as the home of the Jeffersonian yeoman farmer would form a large part of the bedrock that gave rise to the western sugar industry.<sup>7</sup>

However, the geography and climate of the West would not permit the growth of settlement along the same lines that developed in more humid parts of the country. Montana was vastly different from Michigan, another beet-producing state, and other humid areas of the Middle West in one key respect. As I.D. O’Donnell once explained to Journalist Esther Price, “Montana didn’t have rain. Thirteen inches a year was unusual. Get[ing] the water off the land --was the Michigan farmer’s problem. Get[ing] it onto the land was the Montanan’s.”<sup>8</sup> As

early as the 1870s, John Wesley Powell, the father of western reclamation, recognized the need for water in the lands beyond the ninety-eighth meridian. In keeping with the idea of the West as the preserve of the yeoman farmer, he advocated a system of irrigation districts as homes for poor men:

If these lands are to be reserved for actual settlers, in small quantities, to provide homes for poor men, on the principle involved in the homestead laws, a general law should be enacted under which a number of persons would be able to organize and settle on irrigable districts, and establish their own rules and regulations for the use of water and the subdivision of lands, but in obedience to the general provisions of the law.<sup>9</sup>

Even so, it was Powell's misfortune that he identified the central paradox of the arid West. If the western United States was to be the future home of democratic, small-land holders, then the overriding fact of western life, its aridity, was a problem that would have to be dealt with communally in order that the individual farmer could prosper. The adaptation of free labor ideology to the arid lands beyond the ninety-eighth meridian provided the impetus for the legislation embodied in the Carey Land Act of 1894 and the Newlands Reclamation Act of 1902. Ultimately, these two acts provided the legislative framework within which irrigated agriculture in the west, and by extension the whole western sugar industry became a sustainable possibility.

Without government involvement, the transformation of the West from an arid inhospitable region home to Native Americans and buffalo might have remained an empty dream. Nevertheless, the key to understanding how free labor ideology gave birth to the western sugar industry does not lie entirely with the creation of the Homestead Act or the idea of the West as a safety valve. Rather, the missing part of the story lies in the federal government's creation of

institutions that promoted the idea of scientific agriculture. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) was founded in 1862 by President Abraham Lincoln.<sup>10</sup> Empowered to “acquire and to diffuse among the people of the United States useful information on subjects connected with agriculture,” the USDA, made a cabinet-level department by President Grover Cleveland in 1889, advanced and promoted the idea of scientific agriculture because it saw the development of agriculture on the plains as vital to the nation’s development.<sup>11</sup> The actions of the USDA were further supported by the Morrill Act of 1862, which established the land grant agricultural college, and by the Hatch Act, which created the agricultural extension service. In effect, the growth of the sugar industry in Montana would be the result of pamphlets produced by all three agencies that stressed the necessity of developing a domestic sugar industry.<sup>12</sup>

On the other hand, it was not entirely certain from the beginning of the attempt to develop scientific agriculture in the western United States that the sugar industry would be the beneficiary of such efforts. Several factors would coalesce in the decades between 1870 and 1900 that, working in conjunction with the pamphlets produced by the USDA, the agricultural college, and the extension service, would ensure the establishment of the sugar industry in Montana and the West. The first of these was the high price of sugar itself. In 1870 the average wholesale price of refined sugar was at an all time high of 13.53 cents per pound. A decade later in 1880 it was 9.6 cents, and in the 1890s it reached a stable benchmark of approximately 5 cents per pound, where it would remain for the next 25 years.<sup>13</sup> The initial high price of sugar was bound to fall as investors built

more sugar factories between 1870 and 1900. However, the fall in the price of sugar was offset by a growing demand, as America's population increased drastically between 1870 and 1900. Both immigration and industrialization fueled consumption, and sugar once almost a luxury became a normal good. In 1870 consumption of sugar was 32.7 pounds per person, but by 1900 it had almost doubled to 58.9.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the population explosion among western states fueled the search for a sustainable industry not geared to mining. In 1880 the population of Montana was a mere 39,159 people; by 1890 it had tripled to 132,159. And by 1900, it almost doubled again to 243,329.<sup>15</sup>

The increasing population of the western United States along with the eventually stabilized price and rising demand for sugar in the nation as a whole prompted a search for a sustainable means of producing sugar at the local, state, and federal level. Ultimately, the promoters of the sugar-beet industry looked to Europe for guidance, as sugar beet culture in Europe had been at the heart of the European Agricultural revolution. Initially fostered in France as part of Napoleon's continental system, it grew in France and Germany to become an essential part of European agriculture that was necessary to feed an expanding industrial population. The old three crop system where one field lay fallow in alternation with a field of barley, and a field of wheat was abandoned. The previously fallow lands were put into production under a system where sugar beets were cultivated one year in four. The implementation of sugar-beet culture led to large increases in the acreage of cereal crops grown, yield per acre, and weight.<sup>16</sup> Writing in 1853, Prince Napoleon Louis Bonaparte noted that "wheat

sown after a crop of beets produces 10 per cent. more than after any other culture.”<sup>17</sup> Indeed, the promoters of the western sugar industry repeatedly compared the miracle wrought by sugar-beet cultivation in Europe with the performance of agriculture in the United States. The hope was that the introduction of sugar-beet culture in the lands of the arid West would create a similar type of agricultural revolution. As late as 1915 Truman G. Palmer, secretary of the Beet Sugar Association, would continue in this vein of comparison, stressing the necessity of beet-culture in the United States:

Where before only the better lands would yield 12 bushels of cereals three years in four, or 9 bushels yearly per acre, now with all the poor land added to the cultivated area, the worn out and the worthless soils have been so rejuvenated that the present combined average yield of wheat, rye, oats, and barley in Western Europe, including the yield of the less progressive states of the south is 27.2 bushels per acre, while in Denmark it is 36.3, in Germany 39.4, in Holland 41.9 and in Belgium 51.9 Bushels as compared with an average yield of 21.6 bushels of the same crops in the virgin soils of the United States.<sup>18</sup>

However, Increases in sugar consumption, stable prices, an increase population population, hopes for a western agricultural revolution similar to its European counterpart, and free labor ideology would not of themselves have brought the sugar industry to Montana. It was the weaknesses inherent in the colonial economy of the West that ultimately did more than any other factor to bring the sugar-beet industry to Montana. The dependence of the state upon an extractive metal industry, first in the form of gold, then silver, and later copper, meant that the state was long dominated by mining interests. The state’s mining industry wrote a net-proceeds tax into the 1889 state constitution of Montana. The net proceeds law, by which the states mining corporations could only be taxed upon their net proceeds after expenses, meant that a disproportionate share of the

tax burden fell upon agriculture. However, the biggest impetus to the founding of the sugar industry in Montana came from the destruction of the state's silver industry during the Panic of 1893. On February 22, 1893, the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad folded, which brought about the "Panic of 93," as it came to be known. Conditions were further worsened on April 22, 1893, when the value of the gold reserve fell below \$100,000,000. In May the panic worsened when the stock market crashed as a result of the collapse of the National Cordage Company. In June of that year British mints in India closed themselves to the free coinage of silver.<sup>19</sup> These events, coupled with the repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act on October 30, had a disastrous effect on the fortunes of Montana.<sup>20</sup> By the end of 1893, 20,000 people, a full third of the states labor force, were out of work.<sup>21</sup> Montana's fortunes as a silver producing state never recovered. However, the failure of the state's silver interests and the resulting unemployment caused by the Panic of 1893, dramatically shaped the actions of the agricultural college and experiment station, established in the midst of panic and depression. From its inception, the agricultural college and experiment station were devoted to promoting agriculture as an industry in the state of Montana. As was noted in the first bulletin put out by the station in March 1894, "the depression...[of] the silver mines and the sheep industry, compel[s] the development of other industries, and that of agriculture being the most promising and beneficial to the state, demands the attention especially of Station workers."<sup>22</sup>

The growth of the sugar industry in Montana was the result of collusion between the public and private sectors founded upon the nineteenth century

ideology of the free-laboring Jeffersonian yeoman farmer. However, in the West, within the space envisioned as the preserve set aside for free white labor, were Indians who did not originally fit anywhere within the concerns of free-labor ideology. One of the sad realities of Native American history is that “the white man has almost always seen the Indian through his own eyes.”<sup>23</sup> As a consequence, the two antithetical principles of assimilation and separation shaped, and continue to govern, Native American History. If free labor ideology envisioned the West as the home of the yeoman farmer, then there was no place in this version of the West for the original inhabitants. However, after the failure of reconstruction Republican reformers saw in Native Americans a chance to employ the same rhetoric of racial uplift that had been opposed by white supremacists in the south.<sup>24</sup> Of course, African Americans had been part of American culture and society from its very inception. They self-identified as Americans. Native Americans, on the other hand, were products of an entirely different historical development. Indian tribes, with their own culture, heritage, language, and customs, had the distinct displeasure of being the sole minority that could neither be forcibly assimilated nor forcibly separated from the life of the Trans-Mississippi West. The ultimate tragedy of Native American history is that for want of a solution that allowed Indians to adapt to new conditions on their own terms, Native Americans were alternately forced to assimilate into white society or to separate themselves from it when assimilation failed.

At the bottom of this failed policy of assimilation rested nineteenth century anthropological theories concerning civilization. Until Franz Boas, who



created modern anthropology in America, began training a new generation of students at Columbia University, anthropologists continued to subscribe to the theories of Lewis Henry Morgan, who viewed civilization as a ladder stretching from savagery to civilization. Native Americans were not viewed by educated reformers of the nineteenth century as individual people who were products of a distinct historical development, but as “Homeric children” who with proper government involvement could be made over into white people.<sup>25</sup>

The General Allotment Act, or Dawes Act, of 1887 was the federal government’s attempt to make free-labor ideology applicable to Native Americans. Under it, every head of family would receive 160 acres, and non heads of family who applied would receive 80 acres. The governing principle was to make Native Americans into farmers who would then receive full citizenship. The failure of Native American tribes to embrace this notion of themselves as yeoman farmers meant that westerners, and well intentioned reformers, were left to craft a new-solution to the “Indian problem” without Indian consent. As Francis Ellington Leupp, member of the Board of Indian Comissioners from 1892-1895, wrote in 1900, “The duty of our higher civilization is not to forcibly uproot his strong traits as an Indian but to induce him to modify them”<sup>26</sup> When in 1905 Leupp became Comissioner of Indian Affairs, The “modification” advocated by him would take the form of employing the Indian as an agricultural laborer on white-owned farms. In Montana those farms would be sugar farms, for as one white landowner noted, “the hand labor of beet-thinning and beet-topping is like sheep-shearing – rush work and good money, and then the chance to idle for a

while. That is the kind of labor an Indian likes: work, then lay off – it just suits the Indian temperament.”<sup>27</sup>

With the passage of the Newlands Reclamation Act in 1902, all of these disparate threads would unite into a common thread that gathered force as the first few decades of the twentieth century proceeded. The philosophy of free-labor ideology would finally have the water and the crop necessary to make it a viable possibility in the West. The American thirst for sugar would be responsible for the last of the Indian land grabs in Montana. Native Americans would be cemented in the white western mind not as primary landowners working on their own farms, but as units of agricultural labor on white-operated farms. However, the rewards of sugar-beet farming would not go to the small yeoman farmer envisioned as the hero by so many nineteenth century policy makers. The profits would go to those who held large farms, the national sugar trust, and the white communities that surrounded reservation land. The stage was set for the emergence of government subsidized environmental engineering and modern factory farming, ostensibly for the benefit of farmers, which would enrich a few, while leaving many unfulfilled.

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## Chapter 3

### Exploring the Possibilities of Sugar-Production in Montana

The exploration of the possibilities of sugar-beet production in Montana by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the experiment station and agricultural college at Bozeman illustrates several key features of Montana history. The first concept is the importance of understanding nineteenth and early twentieth century notions of the environment. Before the advent of modern notions of environmental impact, the realities of economic expansion were often in conflict with the realities of nature. In the western United States, where rainfall is often in short supply, and the vagaries of nature dictate a reliance on artificial water sources this disconnect is especially strong. The pamphlets produced by Professor F.W. Traphagen on the alkali soils of Montana, and on the sugar beet illustrate the conflict between late nineteenth and early twentieth century notions of environmental use, with the actualities of nature inherent in the western landscape. The second concept is the value of governmental action in acting as an educator of the public consciousness. Indeed without the bulletins produced by the USDA and the experiment station, which were distributed at no cost to farmers, it is doubtful whether the sugar industry would ever have become part of Montana's economy. Despite notions of the independent westerner in the public consciousness, the sugar industry in Montana was most definitely a product of government sponsored education. The final concept is the divide between eastern and western Montana. Because of climate, soil, and economic interests the history of eastern Montana is markedly separate from the history of western

Montana. The exploration of the possibilities of sugar-beet culture and reclamation in Montana ultimately illustrate how these divides would interact with each other and help to produce the distinct histories of each region that played out as the sugar industry became a larger part of the economy of the state.

In keeping with themes of free-labor ideology, the beet-sugar industry in Montana grew out of the efforts of the United States Department of Agriculture to establish a crop suitable for small-landholding farmers, and to find a solution to the national “sugar problem.” The first experiments at adapting the culture of sugar beets to the Montana climate happened in 1891. The effort was part of a national survey conducted by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to determine areas of the country suitable for sugar-beet culture. The USDA purchased five and a half tons of sugar-beet seed, and mailed it out to 5,000 addresses in some thirty-six states. Sent along with the seed was a copy of Farmers Bulletin No. 3 on the proper cultivation of sugar-beets.<sup>1</sup> Spurred on by a state bounty that promised growers one cent per pound upon the first million pounds of sugar-beets produced in the state, some thirty two people, sending some thirty five samples, took part in the experiment, including a group of Chinese merchants.<sup>2</sup> The next few years witnessed a falling off in samples received from Montana. Only six were received in 1892, two in 1893, and four in 1897.<sup>3</sup> It was manifestly uncertain whether Montana would ever have a sugar industry, and indeed the entire industry could have remained a figment in the heads of planners and chemists at the Department of Agriculture. However, in his special report to Congress on the status of the sugar-beet industry in 1898, Dr. Harvey Washington

Wiley lent encouragement to the infant industry with two actions. The first was the publication of a map that depicted areas in the state with a mean average temperature suitable for beet cultivation (see figure 1). The second major spur to the growth of the sugar beet industry in Montana was that he reported on work being done by F.W. Traphagen at the Experiment Station in Bozeman, and encouraged further exploration of the industry's possibilities:

The results obtained at the experiment station show what can be done by careful culture, and indicate that Montana, under proper conditions, is capable of producing a fairly good sugar beet. The data in general are sufficiently encouraging to warrant the agricultural experiment station of the State in making a more thorough and careful agricultural survey of the possibilities of beet production.<sup>4</sup>

The establishment of the sugar industry in Montana owes its existence largely to the efforts of two men, Frank W. Traphagen, the first chemist at the experiment station in Bozeman, and I.D. O'Donnell, a farmer in the Yellowstone Valley. Both men were active promoters in the development of the sugar industry because "it represented the principles of farming in which they both believed."<sup>5</sup> Those "principles of farming," included a strong belief in the Jeffersonian yeoman farmer, and a belief in modern scientific agriculture.

In many ways I.D. O'Donnell was the embodiment of the nineteenth century man. A farmer with strong ideas about eastern capital, he "never did like wolves, not even the wolves and lambs of Wall Street N.Y. Coyotes on the range were much better."<sup>6</sup> He held firm notions of progress symbolized by his belief that "a successful factory made everything pay, even the waste. A successful farm ought to do the same."<sup>7</sup> However, along with a belief in progress he also believed



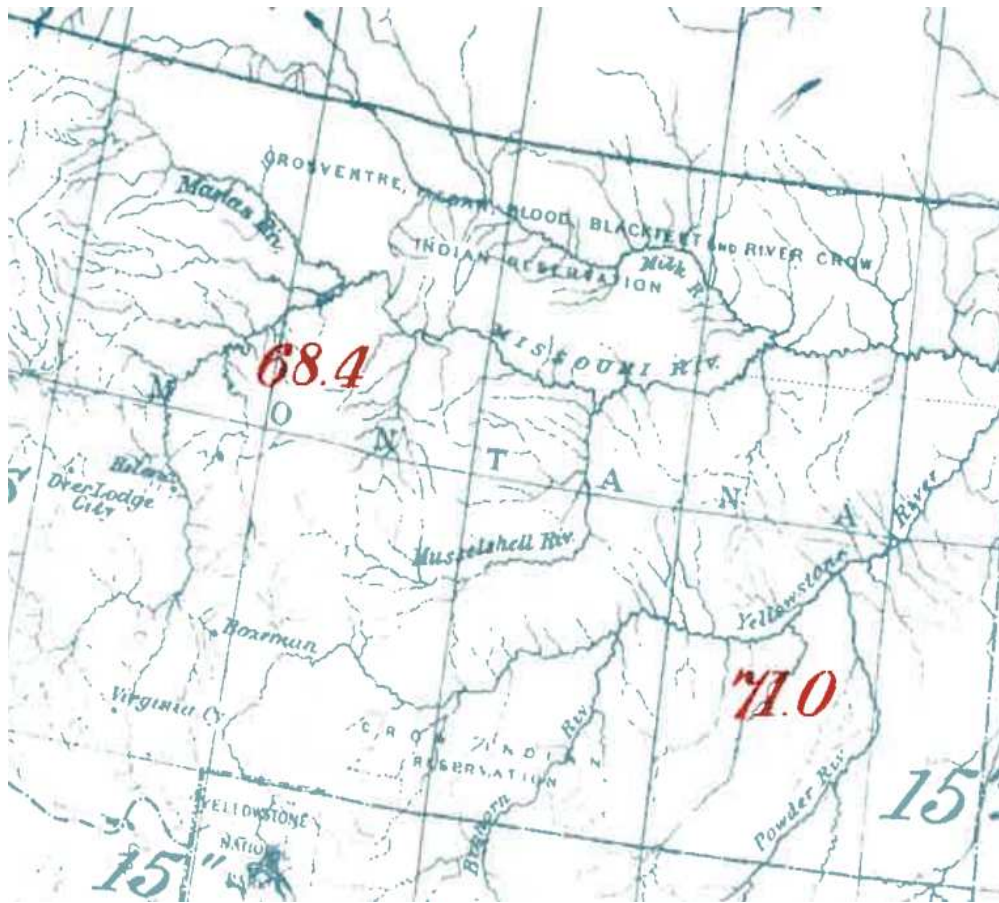


Figure 1. Map showing areas suited to sugar beet culture in Montana. Source: United States, Department of Agriculture, Division of Chemistry, *Special Report on the Beet-Sugar Industry in the United States*, by Harvey W. Wiley (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1898).

paradoxically in astrology, telepathy, and held strong ideas about the type of work that suited the “temperament” of Mexicans and Native Americans.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, as the need for western reclamation became apparent, and as the eastern sugar trust integrated itself into the business of Montana, the fortunes of I.D. O’Donnell, despite his views on the independence of the irrigation farmer, would in time become intertwined with the actions of eastern capital and federal legislation. In many ways, the life of I.D. O’Donnell embodies the western paradox, for he would constantly preach the virtues of a reclaimed paradise in the arid west, as a home for the small-land farmer. Yet as a western land-holder, his own personal fortunes, and the destiny of his dream of an irrigated western paradise, would ultimately be dependent upon the actions of the state and federal governments and the eastern sugar trust.

Between 1896 and 1899, probably in 1896 or 1897, I.D. O’Donnell met and started collaboration with Frank Traphagen about the possibility of growing sugar beets in Montana.<sup>9</sup> The experiment station began its work on adapting sugar beets to the soil and climate of Montana in 1896. Results were promising, and samples grown and dug at the station in September of 1896, under controlled conditions, showed an average of 16 percent sugar in the beet, a relatively high yield.<sup>10</sup> However, despite asking for help, farmers in the rest of the state were uncooperative, and only three samples were received from places outside of the Gallatin Valley.<sup>11</sup> In an effort to enlist support, Traphagen began to visit the Farmer’s Institutes held all over the state. As he stated “I have attended meetings at Livingston, Big Timber, Laurel, Billings, Red Lodge, and Bozeman, and have

given talks on Soil, Alkalai, Food, Principles of Feeding, and miscellaneous subjects.”<sup>12</sup> It was probably at the Laurel Farmers’ Institute that Traphagen met O’Donnell, who owned Hesper Farm, and took an interest both in the alkaline soils of the region and its possibilities for agricultural production:

The Yellowstone valley above Billings, of which Laurel is nearly the geographical center, is, in places, badly affected [by alkaline soils]. It is estimated that nearly 10,000 acres are incapable of yielding crops under present conditions. *On the other hand, some of the finest crops I have ever seen are grown in this same valley* [emphasis added]. The Hesper Farm has yields of 1200 tons of alfalfa hay from 250 acres.<sup>13</sup>

The relationship between O’Donnell, Traphagen, and the experiment station would prove to be a fruitful one for the sugar industry in Montana. Already, O’Donnell possessed a reputation throughout Montana as a producer of alfalfa. In 1900, gross profits on his Hesper farm totaled approximately \$60,000 from raising sheep and the selling alfalfa to stock growers.<sup>14</sup> The introduction of sugar-beet culture into Montana stood to profit the larger alfalfa growers and the Montana sheep industry enormously. As experiment station pamphlets later suggested, beets could potentially be grown in rotation with alfalfa, and the beet-tops, mixed with the molasses byproducts from a sugar factory, could then be sold as feed to stock raisers. Indeed, the whole sugar beet industry in Montana was based in part on the initial meeting between O’Donnell and Traphagen at Laurel. As O’Donnell related years later to journalist Esther Price, “At a Farmers Institute...he learned that young Professor Traphagen was also experimenting with sugar beets on the experimental farm at the College. They got together, and

compared results. Between them, they started the sugar-beet farming in Montana, and introduced one of the state's best crops."<sup>15</sup>

Nevertheless, much work still remained to be done to make the sugar industry a reality in Montana. However, the meeting between Traphagen and O'Donnell at a farmers' institute represents, both personally and symbolically, the melding of public policy and private interest that created the western sugar industry. In the intervening years between 1897 and the building of the Billings sugar factory in 1906, the marriage of public institutions and private individuals would intensify. Throughout twentieth American century history, this "special relationship" between government and capital would intensify and both reclamation and sugar beets would be among its progeny.

The first major issue that needed to be dealt with before the sugar beets could be studied was the question of soil. The dry climate of Montana, and the preponderance of limestone and other soluble sedimentary rocks, led to the fear that the propagation of alkali through irrigation could ruin the soil of Montana. When studied, the waters of the Yellowstone River were found to be relatively free from alkali salts, which further promoted irrigation work already being done in the Yellowstone Valley.<sup>16</sup> However, the problem of seepage and the concentration of alkali through intensive irrigation, which raised ground-water levels, still posed a problem. As Traphagen indicated in his bulletin, *The Alkali Soils of Montana*: "With the advent of irrigation, unless the underdrainage be very perfect, the ground water begins to rise, and with it brings all the alkali contained in the soil, through which it passes, [and after the water evaporates]

concentrating it in the upper parts of the soil.”<sup>17</sup> Along with underdrainage, surface washing, and limiting water use, the implementation of sugar beet and alfalfa culture on irrigated lands was seen as one of the ways to resolve the potential collection of alkali salts in the soils of Montana.<sup>18</sup> To prevent the harmful effects of alkali concentration, Traphagen warned that “irrigation should be practiced with caution” and advocated for “patience allied with intelligent farming.”<sup>19</sup>

Even in this relatively mundane pamphlet concerning alkali, the conflict between the necessities of land use as dictated by the environment and the dreams of the irrigation booster were already in conflict. Indeed, as the sugar industry developed in Montana beyond the experimental stage, the visions of those who advocated Montana as a home for independent small-land farmers would constantly be in conflict with the environment. The problem of alkali seepage remained a constant worry to farmers, and the reality of agriculture in an arid region would, as the dry-land farmers of the 1920s learned to their peril, often reassert itself with a vengeance. The conflict between the West as it was conceptualized, and the needs of the region as dictated by environment would never be completely resolved, and would remain one of the hallmarks of western history.<sup>20</sup>

The very next pamphlet issued Traphagen on the sugar-beet culture would illustrate the disconnect between the needs of the environment and the dreams of those who wanted to promote the sugar beet as a means to create an irrigated western paradise. Bulletin No. 18, on the alkali soils of Montana, warned against

the incautious use of irrigation in agricultural production. Bulletin No. 19, however, summarized the ongoing work of the experiment station to promote the sugar-beet industry in Montana. In it, the question of the economic promotion of industry would take precedent over questions of environmental impact, though there were subtle warnings about the potential impact of over-irrigation.

Among the topics explored by Traphagen were the economic possibilities of sugar beet culture, and the potential impact of commercial agriculture on the state of Montana. In 1898 the sugar industry in the United States was still a relatively new endeavor, a fact Traphagen acknowledged in his initial report, stating that “not until within the last ten years has this industry established itself upon what may be considered a secure foundation.”<sup>21</sup> Traphagen advocated that Montana produce its own sugar as a means of promoting a stable economy. He estimated that the yearly sugar consumption of the state was approximately 12,520,000 pounds—based on a population of 200,000 people—and advocated that it be produced within Montana. If produced within Montana and sold at the average wholesale rate for 1898, Traphagen’s estimated sugar consumption had a market value of approximately \$621,618.<sup>22</sup> Given the fact that the tax-burden in the state was disproportionately borne by the agricultural interests, and given the disastrous effects of the still-remembered Panic of 1893, one can almost see the various threads coalescing around Traphagen’s statement that “If this [sugar] were produced within our own State all this money could be diverted to other uses and we would be proportionately richer.”<sup>23</sup>

However, if the economic interests of the state were to be advanced through the importation of the sugar industry, the question of climate could not be ignored. In order to grow beets, an average temperature of 70 degrees fahrenheit was required during the three summer months of June, July, and August. Building on the earlier work of Dr. Wiley, Traphagen stated that the Yellowstone Valley provided one such location.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, the necessity of finding a source of water also needed to be addressed. It was not yet completely clear if sugar-beets could be produced by depending on the vagaries of rainfall in the arid region. However, Traphagen stated for the first time regarding sugar beets and the climate of Montana that dependence upon natural rain-fall was impractical: “Where irrigation is used the question of the extent of rainfall is of no great importance. Where irrigation is not practiced the rainfall for the months from April to October inclusive should amount to about twenty inches.”<sup>25</sup>

Twenty inches of rain from April through October! This was the minimum amount of water needed to grow beets in Montana without irrigation. As the history of the state later showed entire decades would elapse without the state of Montana receiving twenty inches of rainfall in an entire year, much less during the months of April through October. The lack of water in the form of rain meant that the success of the sugar-beet industry in Montana would depend upon reclamation for its very existence. Moreover, the dearth of population in the state, and the imbalance in the state’s tax structure, meant that the federal government was the only entity that possessed the requisite funds to provide the water necessary for the growth of the sugar industry. It is in the period from 1898 to

1902 that those interested in sugar industry in Montana began to seriously agitate for a more comprehensive federal reclamation law that resulted in the Newlands Reclamation Act of 1902.

In addition, it was hoped that the emergence of the sugar industry would provide a new means of providing feed to the state's enormously profitable cattle and sheep industry. As S.M. Emery, the station's director wrote in the fifth annual report of the experiment station in 1898, "The Yellowstone Valley is at present the greatest field of sheep feeding activity in Montana.... Winter feeding of cattle and sheep *must come in* and *summer fallowing go out* before the full measure of profit from Montana farms is enjoyed by the owners."<sup>26</sup> In his initial bulletin on sugar beets in Montana, Traphagen detailed the benefits of sugar beets as stock food, saying that "it may be said with perfect confidence that it will be far more profitable for the farmer to grow sugar beets at 12 tons per acre for cattle food than other root crops, such as turnips and rutabagas, which will yield double that quantity per acre."<sup>27</sup> Indeed, Montana sheep and wool growers would remain one of the strongest advocates of the sugar beet industry in Montana.<sup>28</sup> The strength of the sheep industry in eastern Montana was one of the deciding factors that, after the passage of the Newlands Reclamation Act, led to the building of the first factory in Billings.

At the end of his very influential pamphlet, *The Sugar Beet in Montana*, Traphagen listed seven factors to consider when selecting a site for a possible factory, including: an abundance of beets of standard grade, cheap transportation, plenty of pure water, cheap fuel, the presence of nearby limestone, the necessity



of the factory being located on a railroad for easy shipping, and the presence of a stock-raising industry to dispose of the beet tops. In addition to these factors, Traphagen also mentioned, in passing, the needs of Montana agriculture for a large transient labor force. He then advocated for the building of a sugar factory in the Gallatin Valley.<sup>29</sup> However, when in January 1902 Traphagen reported that “great interest has been taken in the sugar beet work this year, because for the first time, the question of our ability to meet the commercial conditions of this crop has been taken up seriously by capitalists,” it was not in the Gallatin Valley that those “capitalists” took an interest.<sup>30</sup> Rather, it was on Clarke’s Fork of the Yellowstone River that experiments were carried out that “would indicate this valley as an ideal locality for the establishment of a factory.”<sup>31</sup>

Another divide that needs to be considered is the divide between eastern and western Montana. The emergence of the sugar industry in Montana, and of reclamation more generally, marks a division in the state’s history between the development of the eastern and western parts of the state.. The division was one of locality and of industry. Generally speaking, the divide between eastern and western Montana is a question of geography. The state’s western mining districts served as the first sites of settlement in the region. Western Montana looked to Butte, for decades the state’s most populous city, as its power center and what went on in Butte disproportionately affected the actions of the state legislature in Helena. Eastern Montana, however, was far more dependent upon the actions of the federal government, and looked to Washington, D.C., and Minneapolis for its development.<sup>32</sup> Intensifying in earnest with the advent of federally-funded

reclamation, and continuing through the dryland homestead boom of the first two decades of the twentieth century, the competition between the different models of development for eastern and western Montana remains a central feature in the state's history.

The divide started in the 1890s and by 1900, when I.D. O'Donnell and the farmers of the Yellowstone Valley bought the Big Ditch from eastern financiers for \$64,000, it was no longer a question of if the sugar industry would come to eastern Montana, but when and how.<sup>33</sup> When the experiment station began its investigation into the potential effects of irrigation by establishing agencies to record water duties in the river valleys of Montana, it was to I.D. O'Donnell that Professor Fortier wrote to secure help with monitoring the progress of irrigation in the Yellowstone Valley. In addition, Fortier asked O'Donnell to "please state the nature and extent of the experiments on the duty of water which you would agree to perform and give estimates to the cost of same to the U.S. Department of Agriculture."<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, when the legislature needed to be lobbied in 1901 to secure additional funds for irrigation investigations, it was to I.D. O'Donnell that S. Fortier wrote in trying to bring the Yellowstone County delegation of the state legislature into line behind further appropriations to study irrigation.<sup>35</sup> Finally, it was during the time in which O'Donnell was cementing a working relationship with Fortier that the Newlands Reclamation Act passed in 1902. The Newlands Reclamation Act would fundamentally change the westerner's relationship to the federal government, and do more than all of work of the experiment station during the past decade to bring the dreams of those who envisioned the West as the home

of future economic expansion to realization. In the process, the sugar industry in Montana would become tangible and create far reaching effects in the state's relationship concerning water, land use, Native American policy, and settlement. It is to these developments that we must now turn.

## Notes

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6. "And It Is Sunday on the Yellowstone. "And They Came to a River" Must Be Here.," I. D. O'Donnell to Esther Price, Box 1, Folder, 136, Price Papers.
7. Esther Price, "Early Object Lessons," MS, Box 1, Folder 141, Price Papers.
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Archives, Montana State University Library, Bozeman, MT.(Hereafter referred to as O'Donnell Papers)

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11. Ibid., 93.

12. Ibid., 94.

13. Ibid.

14. Esther Price-Ingraham, "'Between the Rivers': The Story of the United States Reclamation Service As Told by I.D. O'Donnell, Supervisor of Irrigation 1914-1918," Chapt.18, P. 281 (HW), MS, Western Heritage Center Archives, Billings, MT. The MS page numbers will be referred to by the acronyms HW handwritten, TW typewritten, and where necessary CB comes before and CA comes after. Thus the first page of chapter 21 would be P 391 (HW) or 397 (HW) CB 392 (HW).

15 Esther Price, "The Silver Wedge," TS, Box 2, Folder 19, Price Papers.

16. Traphagen, *Bulletin No. 18: The Alkalai Soils of Montana*, 23.

17. Ibid., 24.

18. Ibid., 26.

19. Ibid., 50.

20. Toole, *The Rape of the Great Plains*, 156-157.

21. F. W. Traphagen, *Montana Agricultural Experiment Station of the Montana College of Agriculture Bulletin No. 19: The Sugar Beet in Montana* (White Sulpher Springs, MT: Rocky Mountain Husbandman, 1898), 54.

22. Truman G. Palmer, *Concerning Sugar*, E8.

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25. Ibid.

26. S. M. Emery, *Montana Experiment Station of the College of Agriculture of Montana, Bulletin No. 20: Fifth Annual Report of Treasurer, Director, Horticulturist, Botanist, Entomologist, Chemist, and Agriculturalist. "Rotation of Crops."* (White Sulpher Springs, MT: Rocky Mountain Husbandman, 1898), 118.
27. Traphagen, *Bulletin No. 19: The Sugar Beet in Montana*, 69.
28. Montana Wool Growers Association, "Resolution," 1943?, TS, Box 16, Folder 36, Accession 0002 Agricultural Economics Department Records, 1912-1949, Merrill G. Burlingame Special Collections and Archives, Montana State University Library, Bozeman, MT.
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31. *Ibid.*, 4.
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## Chapter 4

### Through the White Man's Eyes: Reclamation, Sugar, and Indian Policy in Montana 1902-1906

When President Theodore Roosevelt signed the Newlands Reclamation Act into law on June 17, 1902, the Secretary of Agriculture, James Wilson, said to him, "Mr. President, today you have solved the sugar problem of the United States. Not only will that legislation reclaim an empire, but the most natural enterprise to be established at the foot of those huge dams will be beet sugar factories."<sup>1</sup> The passage of the Newlands Reclamation Act represented the fulfillment of a half-century of agitation by those who wished to create, in the arid West, a home for the Jeffersonian yeoman farmer. The Newlands Reclamation Act also represented potentially one of the largest outlays of capital in the West by the federal government since the building of the transcontinental railroads. Within four years, between 1902 and the building of the Billings sugar factory in 1906, the effects of the Newlands Reclamation Act would radically alter the physical geography of the state of Montana, and its relationship with the federal government.

Those effects would continue and intensify with each passing decade of the twentieth century. New reclamation projects would be built and new immigrants would arrive, bringing with them new customs and ideas. A new industry would arise, where formerly there had only existed an academic prospectus. Along with all of these changes, new policies would be implemented concerning Native Americans. The end result did not fulfill the hopes of irrigation

boosters and policy makers who wished through reclamation to “SAVE THE FORESTS—STORE THE FLOOD WATERS—RECLAIM THE DESERTS— [and] ANNEX ARID AMERICA.”<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the effects of the Newlands Reclamation Act created a model for public policy makers, in collusion with private industry, sustaining a system of economic development that persists to the present day.<sup>3</sup> However, the first major beneficiary of western reclamation was the western sugar-beet industry. All of the later controversies concerning environmental impact, the rights of indigenous peoples, the hopes of immigrants for a better life, and the needs of industry were contained within early reclamation and the emerging sugar industry in Montana. The study of the intersection between federal western water policy and the sugar-beet industry illustrates the transformation of the West from a region conceived of as an area set aside for poor men to a region heavily influenced by corporate farming interests. Reclamation and sugar would grow up together, and in their coming of age integrate the western irrigation farmer into the modern industrial economy.

The problems that would be encountered by reclamation boosters and sugar beet industry promoters were elucidated by President Roosevelt in his First Annual Message to Congress on December 3, 1901. The first of these problems was that of labor and immigration. Roosevelt stated:

All persons should be excluded who are below a certain standard of economic fitness to enter our industrial field as competitors with American Labor. There should be proper proof of personal capacity to earn an American living and enough money to insure a decent start under American conditions. This would stop the influx of cheap labor, and the resulting competition which gives rise to so much of bitterness in American industrial life.<sup>4</sup>



However, already it was becoming apparent that notions of an “American living” were incompatible with the emerging sugar-beet industry. The sugar-beet industry was dependent upon hand labor for thinning, topping, and hoeing beets, arduous labor done for relatively low pay. If the dreams of irrigationists and sugar boosters were to become a reality in Montana, a solution would have to be found to the hand-labor question because this type of work would not ordinarily be done by “native[-born]” Americans.<sup>5</sup> As the *Report of the Industrial Commission on Agriculture and Agricultural Labor* in 1901 phrased it, “The most successful beet raisers are foreigners who are not afraid to work; Americans do not like to go down on their knees.”<sup>6</sup> If white Americans would not stoop so low as to become thinners and toppers of beets, then the necessary labor, so vital to the establishment of a successful sugar industry, would have to be done by others. Ultimately, this labor was done by those least able to defend themselves: recent immigrants from Russia, Native Americans, Mexican immigrants brought to Montana by the sugar companies, and children. Nevertheless, the solution to the labor problem forms part of a larger whole that conceptually fits in with emerging twentieth-century attitudes concerning the West.

The second question posed by Roosevelt in his annual message and faced by the sugar industry was the role of the tariff. As the president stated, “The ability to purchase our products should as far as possible be secured by so arranging our tariff as to enable us to take from them those products which we can use without harm to our own industries and labor.”<sup>7</sup> The sugar industry in 1897 under the Dingley tariff received a subsidy of \$1.65 per 100 pounds of sugar

produced.<sup>8</sup> This system of subsidy would remain in place with minor alterations for the admittance of Philippine, Puerto Rican, and Cuban sugar until the necessities of the World War One and the establishment of the Sugar Equalization Board in 1918 prompted a change in policy.<sup>9</sup> Looking back on the effects of the tariff, John E. Dalton, who oversaw sugar production under the Agricultural Adjustment Act, phrased the effects of protection as something that transformed the sugar industry “from an infant into a full-grown and blooming industry.”<sup>10</sup> The tariff, along with the reclamation project, would remain a central feature in maintaining the emergent sugar industry in the United States. As an example of the crucial role of the tariff in subsidizing the industry, in 1907 the Billings Sugar Company would receive approximately \$247,755 as a subsidy from tariff receipts.<sup>11</sup>

The third issue was the question of water. Water, so vital and so necessary for the settlement of the western United States, was the one element fundamentally lacking in the environment of the arid West. Only the federal government possessed the funds necessary to build the reclamation projects which would provide homes on irrigation projects for settlers in the arid West. As Roosevelt made clear, the identification of reclamation with settlement and opportunity was the driving force behind the new marriage of public industry and private capital: “There remain... vast areas of public land which can be made available for homestead settlement, but only by reservoirs and main-line canals impracticable for private enterprise. These irrigation works should be built by the national government.”<sup>12</sup>

However, in order for reclamation work to take place, the question of water rights still remained to be settled. In many states western water law was an unqualified mess. Governed by the doctrine of prior-appropriation, individuals and corporations could lay claim to all the water in a stream by merely posting a notice at the local court house stating the amount of water desired. No checks were ever made. Unless someone filed a complaint and the action came before a judge, individuals were free to use as much water as they wished. The conflicting claims over water sometimes even led to murder, as was the case with Milt Howell, who was sentenced to hang circa 1900 after hitting an irrigator over the head for “stealing water.”<sup>13</sup> The success of western reclamation depended upon having good regulations in place for the development of water. Warning western states about the inadvisability of continuing in this fashion, Roosevelt stated:

In the arid states the only right to water which should be recognized is that of use. In irrigation this right should attach to the land reclaimed and be inseparable therefrom. Granting perpetual water rights to others than users, without compensation to the public, is open to all the objections which apply to giving away perpetual franchises to the public utilities of cities. A few of the Western States have already recognized this, and have incorporated in their constitutions the doctrine of perpetual State ownership of water.<sup>14</sup>

Despite this warning, and the necessity of enacting a usable water code, it was not until 1934, when the New Deal brought a huge influx of funds to Montana, that the state created a Water Conservation board. In 1903 a report to Governor Joseph Toole showed 26,646 recorded water rights in the state of Montana. During 1902 water rights cases came before twenty of the states existing twenty-three counties. In twelve of those counties cases involving from sixty to 400 litigants came before magistrates. The estimated cost to parties

involved was approximately \$30,000.<sup>15</sup> In the initial years following the passage of the Newlands Reclamation Act in 1902, attempts were made to standardize and regulate Montana's mismanaged water system. However, both in 1903 and 1906 when water codes were presented by the governor to the state legislature those initiatives were defeated.<sup>16</sup> The lack of a usable water code greatly retarded the growth of Montana's sugar industry. Though factories were attempted at Missoula and Whitehall, until the middle of the 1920s, for almost two decades, the Billings Factory remained the only sugar refinery in the state. In other states with more serviceable water laws the sugar industry experienced unparalleled growth. By 1921 Wyoming would have three factories, Idaho nine, Colorado eighteen, and Utah nineteen.<sup>17</sup>

However, the lack of a usable water code did not prevent Montana from developing a sugar industry. Rather, the sugar industry in Montana would integrate itself into an already existing Native American land policy which sought to civilize the tribes by taking away their land.<sup>18</sup> The resulting integration would create far reaching consequences, not only in Native American policy, but also in the perception of German-Russian immigrants, who first worked the sugar beets, as opposed to Native Americans and Mexicans who did the same work. In addition, the introduction of sugar-beet culture would have far-reaching effects upon Native American water law, and provide a stark example of the long term effects of free labor ideology upon non-white peoples. Finally, it is the integration of sugar production into the reservation economies that most strongly illustrates the negative effects of the modern industrial economy, that baleful marriage of

public policy and private industry, upon those least able to defend themselves against it.

Here again, President Roosevelt showed the way in his first annual message to Congress: “In my judgment the time has arrived when we should definitely make up our minds to recognize the Indian as an individual and not as a member of a tribe. The General allotment Act is a mighty pulverizing engine to break up the tribal mass.”<sup>19</sup> After the passage of the Newlands Reclamation Act, the largest beneficiaries of the individualization of Native Americans were the irrigation interests and the western sugar beet industry. In the absence of effective water law in the state of Montana, the effort to “break up the tribal mass,” provides the missing piece of the puzzle that explains the development of the sugar industry in Montana.

In all of Montana the Crow, or Apsáalooke, were perhaps the one tribe making the largest effort to adapt themselves to the white world which surrounded them. It was their misfortune, however, to be surrounded by an ongoing process of development that had very little use for Indians either as individuals or as members of a tribe. By 1900, the Yellowstone Valley was the seat of eastern Montana’s very profitable sheep industry. Soon, hopes for the emerging sugar industry would center on the Yellowstone Valley. All this served to illustrate what Arapooash said in 1830: “The Crow country is a good country. The Great Spirit has put it in exactly the right place; while you are in it you fare well; whenever you go out of it whichever way you go you fare worse.”<sup>20</sup>

As early as 1884 irrigation work had already begun on the Crow Reservation.<sup>21</sup> In 1891 the sum of \$200,000 was appropriated by Congress for construction of an irrigation system on the Bighorn and Little Bighorn rivers and on Pryor Creek. In addition, \$75,000 was set aside as part of an irrigation fund “to be expended under the direction of the Secretary of the Interior for the maintenance and management of the system of irrigation provided for in this agreement.”<sup>22</sup> In 1899, the Secretary of the Interior was empowered to use the tribe’s annuity money to complete the irrigation system, and an additional appropriation of \$120,000 was made.<sup>23</sup> Other appropriations followed from 1901 to 1904, and the Crow irrigation system was finished in 1905.<sup>24</sup> The Crow Tribe continued to maintain and improve its irrigation system and by 1919 a total of \$1.9 million had been expended to create an irrigation system on the reservation.<sup>25</sup>

However, far from creating a self-sufficient system of farming that benefited Native Americans, irrigation work on the Crow Reservation drew the eyes of land speculators and sugar-beet promoters to the region. Few of the irrigation promoters in the Yellowstone Valley believed in the possibilities of Native American farming. As I.D. O’Donnell consistently joked with his wife after visiting the reservation, “If you could make it all horseback farming maybe the Crows would go in for it.”<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, if the sugar industry was ever to become a viable possibility in Montana, a large section of irrigated land needed to be set aside for beet production. Moreover, after the passage of the Newlands Reclamation Act, the Department of the Interior, the same agency which held charge over the Bureau of Indian Affairs, was placed in charge of the newly

formed Reclamation Service. A conflict of interest thus arose within the Department of Interior between protecting the rights of Native Americans and promoting the interests of settlers and sugar boosters. The tragedy was that the interests of settlement and development were placed ahead of the economic interests of Native American tribes.

The settlement of Huntley Project illustrates how deep the conflict went. Despite still being part of the reservation, Huntley Project had been recommended as a possible site for a reclamation project to Frederick Newell, first director of the Reclamation Service, by I.D. O'Donnell in 1902.<sup>27</sup> When first approached about a possible treaty to cede the area, Chief Plenty Coups had "replied in two bawdy words common to the western range."<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, the pressure from all sides grew increasingly great and on April 27, 1904, the Crow tribe ceded 1,150,000 acres along the Yellowstone River in the area that would become Huntley Irrigation Project (see figure 2). The federal government agreed to sell the land to settlers for the nominal price of \$4.00 per acre on irrigated land and \$1.00 on non-irrigated land. The balance of the money was to be held in trust for the tribe by the federal government. In addition, among other provisions the Crows received \$90,000 for the completion of irrigation projects, and another \$100,000 was held in trust at 4 percent interest for their maintenance.<sup>29</sup> Within a month surveyors were working on the ceded strip, and by August of 1904 the

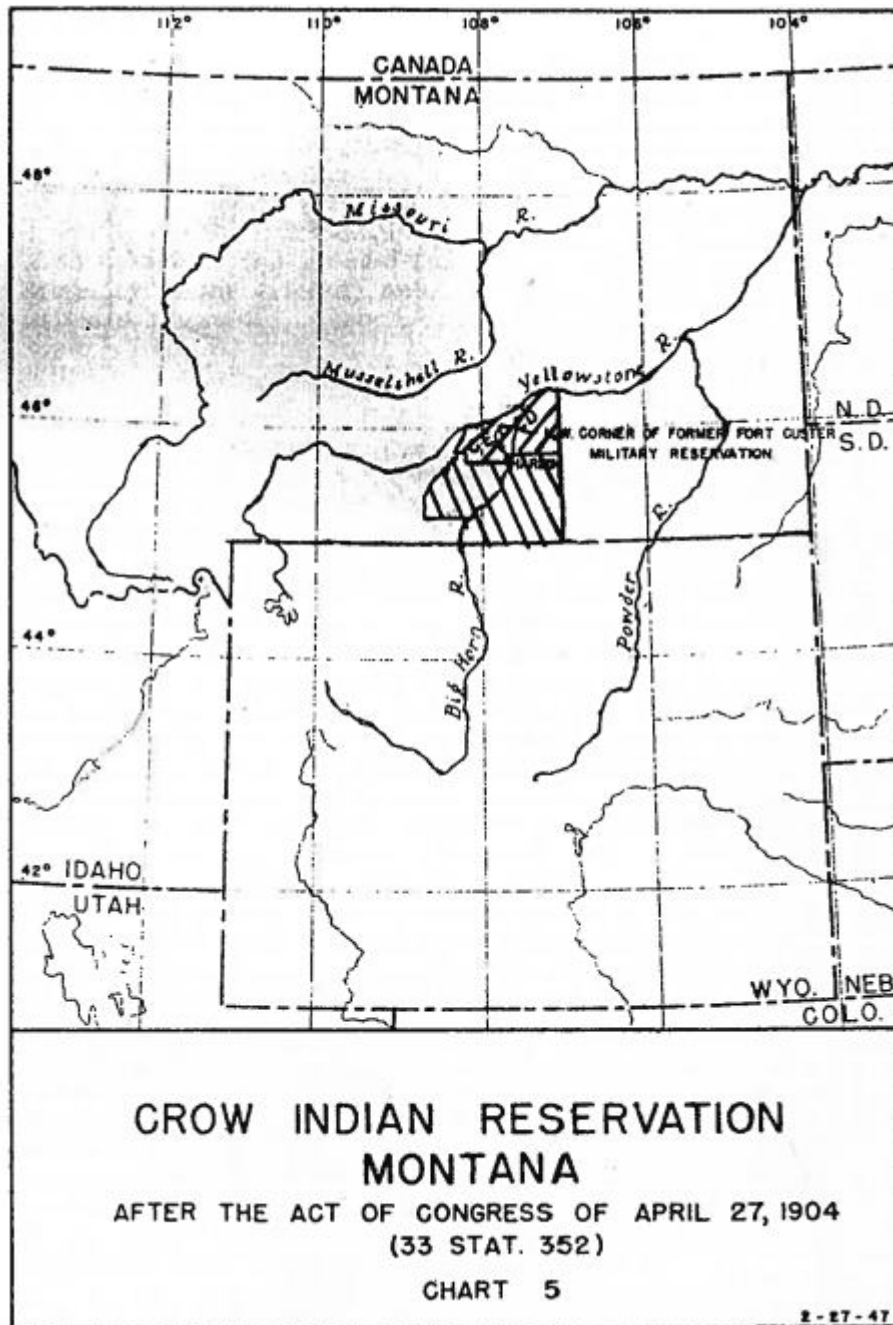


Figure 2. Map showing the area ceded by the Crow tribe to create Huntley Irrigation Project. Source: Joe Medicine Crow and Daniel S. Press, *A Handbook of Crow Indian Laws and Treaties* (Crow Agency MT: Vista, 1966), 41.



location of the main irrigation canal had been mapped. Construction began on April 18 1905, and the area was opened for settlement on May 21, 1907.<sup>\*30</sup> In addition to the money paid to the Crow tribe, the federal government billed settlers \$30 per acre for the cost of constructing the irrigation project and gave them between five and ten years to pay off the cost of construction. However, the federal government honored the settlers' request to construct irrigation laterals, and the subsequent need to construct drainage ditches to prevent alkali seepage increased the cost. The terms of repayment were not finally settled until January 2, 1927, twenty years after the project was opened. Under these terms the total cost of construction billed to farmers was approximately \$57 per acre. In addition, the federal government gave farmers fifty years from the date of filing to pay for construction costs.<sup>31</sup>

The generous terms, extensions, and favoritism extended to the white settlers by the federal government contrasts sharply with the policy pursued regarding the various Indian tribes in Montana. The settlers on the reclamation projects throughout Montana, such as Huntley, were the beneficiaries of the free labor ideology that gave birth to the Newlands Reclamation Act. Native Americans, by contrast, were its victims. As chief Plenty Coups said to I.D. O'Donnell when Huntley Project was opened, "Once again we are being pushed back. We have hunted all the way from the Absaroka Mountains to Dakota. The

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\* The opening of Huntley Project may have been a year earlier to coincide with the building of the Billings Sugar Factory. The public notice announcing the opening is dated May 21, 1907. However, both the *Tenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Agriculture, Labor and Industry*, and Esther Price's Manuscript "Between the Rivers" list 1906 as the year the project was opened for settlement.

whole Yellowstone Valley was ours. Now... my people do not want to live on allotments and dig irrigating ditches any more than McCormick wants these homesteaders plowing up his range.”<sup>32</sup>

At the same time that the negotiations and surveying went concerning Huntley Project, the business interests of Billings went ahead with plans for a sugar factory. On January 14, 1905, the *Louisiana Planter and Sugar Manufacturer* stated that “A stock company has been formed at Billings, Montana for the purpose of buying or leasing 1,000 acres of land, which will be planted in sugar beets. In addition to this it is reported that more than 5,500 acres of beets have been contracted for and that the Billings’ beet sugar factory is now an assured fact.”<sup>33</sup> On March 15, 1905, the Billings Sugar Company was incorporated at Helena with a capitalization of \$750,000, later expanded to \$1,250,000.<sup>34</sup> Originally P.B. Moss was appointed president and I.D. O’Donnell vice president of the Billings Sugar Company. However, on a whiskey-soaked night in May, organized by the Billings Booster Club, Charles Boettcher of The Great Western Sugar Company bought out the independent concern of the Billings Sugar Company amid much jubilation.<sup>35</sup> The Great Western Sugar Company, ostensibly a separate business interest, was in reality controlled by the American Sugar Refining Company by a board of interlocking directors (see table 1). The absorption of Montana’s sugar beet industry into the national sugar trust would have far reaching consequences for the state’s Native American tribes. The establishment of the sugar industry on reservation land was about to become a

Sugar Trust Board of Directors		
American Sugar Refining Company	Great Western Sugar Company	Billings Sugar Company
Arthur Donner (Vice President, Treasurer)	Arthur Donner	
Horace R. Havemeyer	Horace R. Havemeyer	
H.C. Mott	Charles Boettcher	Charles Boettcher (Vice President)
H.C. Neise	C.S. Morey (President)	C.S. Morey (President)
John E. Parsons	John E. Parsons	
C. H. Sneff	C.H. Sneff	
G.H. Frazier	G.H. Fraizer	
John Mayer	John Mayer	
W.B. Thomas (President)	W.B. Thomas (First Vice President)	
C.R. Heike (Secretary)	C.R. Heike (Secretary)	
	S.C. Hooker	
	M.C. Thatcher	M.C. Thatcher (Treasurer)

Table 1. Sugar Company Board of Directors. Adapted from Judson C. Welliver, "The Mormon Church and the Sugar Trust," *Hampton's Magazine* 29 (January 1910): 83.

national policy pursued by the Bureau of Indian Affairs in collusion with the needs of the western sugar beet industry.

Probably between the passage of the Newlands Reclamation Act in 1902 and the completion of the Billings Sugar Refinery in October 1906, I.D.

O'Donnell conceived of an "original idea on the sugar beet labor question." He believed that "in Montana with its various Indian tribes, there was enough surplus labor to practically handle the beet labor."<sup>36</sup> It is not yet known exactly when O'Donnell became interested in integrating Native Americans into the sugar beet industry in Montana. However, the evidence suggests the outlines of a much broader story. As O'Donnell would relate years later to journalist Esther Price:

When he first got this idea I.D. visited the various reservations and Indian Agencies to investigate. He found that the Blackfeet Indians and the Belknap Indians, who are just below the Blackfeet on the Milk River, were making good hands digging potatoes in the fall. If they did this there was no reason why they could not top beets. The Indian Agents were enthusiastic about the Idea.<sup>37</sup>

Quite possibly the Indian agents on the reservations in Montana communicated O'Donnell's idea about the possibilities of sugar beet labor for Native Americans to Francis Ellington Leupp, who was appointed commissioner of Indian Affairs by President Roosevelt in 1905. At any rate, both the Fort Belknap Reservation, and the Crow reservation found themselves at the center of a storm of agitation concerning the sugar industry. In 1906, Leupp made statements that were analogous to O'Donnell's sentiments paraphrased by Esther Price in chapter two: "Our first duty to the Indian is to teach him to work....In this process the sensible course is to tempt him to the pursuit of a gainful occupation

by choosing for him at the outset the sort of work which he finds pleasantest; and the Indian takes to beet farming as naturally as the Italian takes to art or the German to science.”<sup>38</sup>

Leupp’s plans for assimilation were made clear by his remarks at the twenty-fourth annual Lake Mohonk Conference on October 17, 1906. At the same time that Commissioner Leupp made his remarks, the Billings Sugar Factory was starting its first campaign. The conflict of interest that had existed between the Bureau of Reclamation, promoting sugar beets and settlement, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which was supposed to safeguard the rights of indigenous peoples, was resolved in favor of the white settler. Ultimately, Leupp’s remarks show how far the sugar industry had enmeshed itself in almost every important aspect of western life since the passage of the Reclamation Act just four short years before:

I know a group of capitalists today who, the instant that we can procure the legislation necessary for it, will step into one of our reservations in Montana and establish a two hundred thousand or two hundred and fifty thousand dollar beet sugar plant on its border; lease all the unallotted lands of the reservation that are capable of having water brought upon them, and bring water on at their own expense; lease all but the homesteads of the allotted Indians, and bring water there or improve the water facilities already there; import a group of first-rate white people, for whose character as well as everything else they will be responsible, and who are familiar with sugar beet culture; have these teach the Indians the art of raising beets for the factory at the edge of the reservation which will afford a constant market; and teach those Indians who wish to learn, the art of translating the beet into sugar.<sup>39</sup>

Leupp’s efforts to induce the Crow to take up sugar beet farming did not go as planned. However, building on the earlier efforts of the Indian Superintendent at the Fort Belknap Reservation, begun in 1905, Leupp shifted his plans to that reservation.<sup>40</sup> The resulting Supreme Court case that grew out of the efforts of sugar promoters, *Winters v. United States*, established the doctrine of

Indian reserved water rights in January 1908. The concept of Indian reserved water-rights would have a far-reaching effect upon the future of reclamation in Montana. The Supreme Court decision ruled that an Indian reservation, as an entity, had a clearly defined water right that could not be abrogated by white settlers irrigating off of the reservation.<sup>41</sup> Ostensibly a victory for Native American tribes, within the context of Montana's water laws Indian reservations thus emerged as one of the few entities in Montana with a clearly defined, stable water right. The implications for Montana's sugar beet industry were borne out by later events. Of the beet-sugar factories successfully erected in Montana between 1917 and 1937, at Missoula,<sup>†</sup> Chinook, Sidney, and Hardin three of the four were built relatively close to reservation land, where the water rights enumerated under *Winters* could be capitalized on the full effect.

The full impact of the sugar beet industry on Montana's Native American tribes still remains to be written. However, in the four short years between 1904 and 1908 the emerging sugar industry in Montana had a decided impact on the development of public policy concerning the tribes. The state's sugar industry significantly benefited from the federal government's policy of assimilation, and in some cases, as with the *Winters* decision helped to engineer changes to that policy. Even though the policy of assimilation did not originate with the sugar trust, the trust was the beneficiary of that policy, which, in conjunction with the Reclamation Act of 1902, helped to foster its development in Montana. Indeed, as was the case with the initial studies of the industry undertaken by the Agricultural

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<sup>†</sup> Shut down in 1920 and the machinery moved to Mitchell Nebraska. The factory was rebuilt in 1928 by the American Crystal Sugar Company.

College at Bozeman and the United States Department of Agriculture, the impact of the Newlands Reclamation Act, and the federal government's assimilationist Indian policy underscores the West's dependence on the federal government in creating and sustaining a policy of development, which in the later decades of the twentieth century, in multiple areas unrelated to sugar, would prove to be a consistent feature of twentieth century American history.

## Notes

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## Epilogue:

### Dependent Labor on the Sugar Farms

The heyday of the sugar industry in Montana was the period between the final collapse of the dryland farming boom in 1924 and the emergence of a new economic model for the state of Montana beginning in the mid-1960s. Five sugar factories operated in Montana during this period at Missoula, Billings, Chinook, Sidney, Missoula, and Hardin. The large-scale building of sugar factories in Montana continued the integration of Montana's economy into eastern centers of trade and finance. The increased economic importance of sugar beet farming brought with it a model of intensive industrial-style agriculture, and a growing need for dependent labor on the sugar-beet farms. The need for a stable labor force was increased by the agitation of labor leaders and sugar beet workers during the First World War. As W.L. Lawson, the assistant general manager for the Billings factory, stated in the Summary Report of the Montana District for 1917:

The Campaign began with a very serious strike with violence and rioting, necessitating out calling in the aid of the City and County authorities. The strike settled down to a struggle for practically the entire period, and our labor problem was the one outstanding feature of the operations and influenced the work in all phases adversely affecting them in matters of capacity, extraction, quality, and cost of production.<sup>1</sup>

The solution arrived at in part because of the memory of the strike, and in part because of a scarcity of labor, in Montana was the wholesale importation of a dependent labor force. Probably beginning in 1922, the Great Western Sugar Company imported 500 Mexican laborers to Montana as a solution to the labor

problem.<sup>2</sup> In 1923 in an effort to secure further labor, W.P. Hogarty, the district manager for Montana, advocated the expenditure of \$150,000 dollars over three years to encourage the German and Belgian growers to bring over their “peasant relatives” to Montana in an effort to place the sugar-beet industry on a firm footing for the future. The difference in the attitude of sugar company officials towards the two groups was striking. From the beginning, the sugar company conceived of Mexicans solely as units of labor, while the German and Belgian immigrants were thought of as primary landowners on their own farms. However, in both cases the stated goal was the encouragement of a mechanized, intensive, industrial form of agriculture that “the American farmer with his idea of effort can not survive.”<sup>3</sup>

In the case of Mexican labor on the sugar-beet farms what evolved was a near total dependence of the labor force upon the sugar company for the very necessities of life. A minority of these dependent laborers continued to be of German origin; however, the vast majority of these laborers were Mexican, or Mexican-American. Indeed, in the eyes of many people concerned with the sugar industry in Montana, Mexican labor replaced original notions concerning the place of Native Americans in the sugar-beet industry. Journalist Esther Price recorded the feelings of I.D. O’Donnell towards Mexican labor as follows: “The Mexican will work like the devil for a fortnight and then come to town and dress up in silk shirts and have a vacation.”<sup>4</sup>

These attitudes towards Mexican labor were borne out by the statements and actions of the Great Western Sugar Company contained in its annual reports.

The building of a sugar factory at Sidney, in 1925, by Holly Sugar Corporation, provided a notable exception to the conception of Mexican labor. In some cases, as was true of Santos Carranza's family, Mexican American immigrants were able to buy farms and become primary landowners.<sup>5</sup> After working for ten years, the Carranza family was able to buy an 80-acre farm for \$4,000 in 1935.<sup>6</sup> However, most Mexican and Mexican-American families remained in a position of dependence on the sugar corporations of Montana.

As a striking example of this practice, in 1924 the Great Western Sugar Company shipped 4,835 laborers to Montana as sugar-beet labor. While 1,231 of these laborers were German, the other 3,601 laborers were Mexican or Mexican-American.<sup>7</sup> Most of these laborers lived in poverty and dependence on the sugar company, which spent only 64.5 cents per person on their lodging and food.<sup>8</sup> The average per-capita cost of this large, necessary, and dispossessed labor force to the sugar company was only \$22.78, or 34 cents per ton of beets harvested.<sup>9</sup> In addition, in 1924 the sugar company constructed ten "apartments," or tenement houses, for the forty-two Mexican, or Mexican-American families living in Billings at what sugar company officials termed "the colony."<sup>10</sup> The founding of what would eventually become a sizable, vibrant Mexican American community in Billings dates from the establishment of this "Colony," in 1922.<sup>11</sup> However, the primary impetus that led to the establishment of the colony was the need of the sugar company for a dependent labor force. As W.P. Hogarty stated in the nineteenth annual report of the Billings factory:

The benefits derived from the colony during the past two years are good for the following reasons: We have saved in paying or advancing rents to 42 families uptown. There are no houses in town available to house all of the labor we have in the territory. The colony inducement has helped to keep a very good sort of labor. Those who built their houses last year are becoming more prosperous, as they raise chickens, pigs, and some even have their [own] automobiles. Further still, the colony has even helped to keep the good Mexican families from the underworld part of the city where Mexican quarters are only available.<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, inherent in the sugar companies dealings with its labor force was a good deal of paternalism, and specific racist notions about the character of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans. Beginning in 1924 the sugar company began a system of winter employment characterized as “winter feeding.” Under this system men received \$2.00 a day, married men were allowed to work three and four days a week at the sugar factory, while single men were allotted three days a week. A typical married man working for the sugar company could thus expect to receive \$32 a month and a single man \$24 a month.<sup>13</sup> Small wonder then that “Some of the larger families don’t get enough to keep up with rents and fuel, and some small advances to be collected from thinning have been made, as also in the case of funerals, doctors’ bills or hospital bills which are charged to their accounts.”<sup>14</sup> However, instead of realizing that the poverty and destitution among Mexican sugar-beet laborers was a by-product of the labor policy pursued by the Great Western Sugar Company, Hogarty blamed the Mexicans for their own poverty:

We believe that these people should become self supporting and that starting out with almost a clean slate this spring they will save more during the season to be able to at least take care of themselves for the largest portion of the winter, but it will not relieve the general situation as

the Mexican characteristic is to get rid of his earnings as fast as he gets the money....The only real solution of feeding is to make the laborer save their money.<sup>15</sup>

How anyone could be expected to save enough money to pay debts on a winter salary of \$32 a month with a family to feed and clothe and rent to pay still remains a mystery. The creation of a large, dependent labor force largely consisting of Mexican Americans illustrates that by 1924 I.D. O'Donnell's dream of making a successful farm into a factory was a reality—but a reality that brought with it all the grim hopes and unrealized expectations of a dependent labor force being paid subsistence wages.

Furthermore, although winter work at the factory offered little remuneration, it offered a respite from the arduous back-breaking labor of thinning, topping and hoeing beets, labor which compressed the world down to the blade of the beet hook, and the rhythmic motion of crowning, spearing and slicing the beet. The labor usually began in May, continuing through the hot summer months of July and August, where temperatures in eastern Montana reach upwards of 100 degrees Fahrenheit, and did not end until the winter frost and snow covered the beet fields. All day, whole families would work in that harsh, broiling eastern Montana sun, and often the only way to cool off was to swim in an irrigation ditch contaminated with pesticide runoff from the fields. At night, after working in the heat, the mud, and the dust, beet laborers in those early years were even deprived of the simple basic comforts taken for granted by people in the city. For in many cases the house that the beet laborer returned to was not even a house at all, but a simple one-room shack without any facilities for



bathing, or anything else. Subsistence wages, expanding families, and the need to move to town during the winter time to keep from freezing during the bitter cold of a Montana winter made the beet laborers life gruelingly hard and exhausting.<sup>16</sup>

A Mrs. Bertha Devoe vividly recalls her experience working in the sugar beet fields in 1924, where she began at the age of ten:

The farmers tried to grow the beets as large as possible for the profit was better. I could not hold a beet to top but had to lay it across my knee and chop the tops off. The farmer did not want the crowns cut off as that was profit so we had to hold the beet and hack it this way and that until we had the leaves off. Leaves and dirt are called tare and a percentage of tare is allowable but over that is deducted from the checks....Boy, you had to be careful about the tare. You had to be sure that you got off all the green. Some beets had a crown on them that you did not dare cut off the top as the topper does now. You kept cutting this way and that way until you got all the green off. You must be sure to get all the dirt off and when doing this, be careful not to knock the tails off....By the time you went into the finishing it was cold and snow on the ground or frost and heavy dew. We wore a kind of rubber lined glove but we were often wet to the hips.<sup>17</sup>

The thought of a young girl working after school until dark, wet to the hips in that cold eastern Montana fall for a subsistence wage, her family often going into debt because groceries were provided by the farmer on credit, sacrificing her education and her future, and living a share-cropper's life for the sake of sugar, vividly illustrates what the rapacious marriage of public policy and private industry that created the sugar-beet industry meant to those least able to defend themselves. During those same years that Bertha and thousands of children and immigrant families like hers worked in the sugar fields, the western sugar-beet industry wrung millions of dollars in annual profits from their labor. The following year, on the 1925 harvest, the Great Western Sugar Company, with

thirteen factories in Colorado, six in Nebraska, and one each in Montana and Wyoming, posted a net profit of \$6,424,142.09 and paid a dividend of \$5,850,000 to stockholders.<sup>18</sup>

The sad truth that western libertarianism meant, in the years before the New Deal, independence for the strong and exploitation for the weak is forcefully shown by the effects of the sugar-beet industry on its dependent labor. Public-policy makers had envisioned the Newlands Reclamation Act as extending the western “safety valve” to the arid lands beyond the ninety-eighth meridian. However, the largest beneficiary of that policy, the western sugar-beet industry, had not created a safety valve at all. In place of a safety valve, in lieu of the West as the common property of all men, and in the name of the Jeffersonian yeoman farmer, the western sugar-beet industry created a new class of dependent labor. In the process, millions of dollars of profits were created for those in a position best able to benefit, while the little fellow who pinned his hopes on the West and the promise of a better life was left to labor in their stead.



Figure 3. Mexican laborers thinning irrigated sugar beets on the farm of Henry De Clerq, five miles east of Pompey's Pillar on Huntley Irrigation Project. Donald H. Demarest, photographer, May 30, 1950. Western Heritage Center Archives, Billings, MT.

## Notes

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12. Ibid.
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## Conclusion:

### The Broader Lessons of Montana's Sugar-Beet Industry

To study the history of anything in microcosm is to reveal the relevance of broader historical trends that exist in macrocosm. The history of the grand, the epic, and the sweeping is most often revealed by the history of the mundane, for time, and chance, and history happen to everything great and small. The history of Montana's sugar-beet industry provides an example of how the broader trends of western historiography coalesce around a common plant that grows in eastern Montana. The first of these themes is the separation of the mythic West from the actual region that westerners call home. The trans-Mississippi West is the seat of a distinctly national American mythology. The most distinctly American icons are a product of its history. To those not of the West, and even to those who live within its borders, western history conjures up iconic images of cowboys, Indians, fur-trappers, and mountain men. However, these notions of 30,000 cattle on the hoof, propagated by the novels of Zane Grey, or of the strong-minded, laconic, independent, western everyman popularized by Louis L'Amour, and embodied in his fictional representations of the Shafter, Sackett, and Talon families, or of the pickup-driving, guitar-picking cowboy troubadour sensationalized by Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson, are largely mythology.

The western mythology serves to illustrate that the history of the trans-Mississippi West still holds a distinctive place in the life of the nation. Western history, with its paradoxical contradictions, is a study of humankind's relationship with geography and environment, the westerner's relationship with the federal

government, and individual relationships with one another. Separating the mythic West from historical reality plays a crucial role in understanding the various themes found in the formation of Montana's sugar-beet industry.

Geography plays a crucial role in forming the distinctiveness of the West. Unlike the eastern United States, the trans-Mississippi West is a region united by a uniform lack of rainfall. The mandatory amount of rain required for non-irrigated agriculture does not fall in the lands beyond the ninety-eighth meridian. Therefore, if the sugar-beet industry was ever to become a viable part of Montana's economy, water needed to be acquired through artificial means. Furthermore, before the emergence of conceptions concerning environmental rights, westerners viewed the landscape as something to be exploited. However, as shown by the pamphlets produced by the agricultural experiment station at Bozeman, the conflict between the needs of the environment and the dreams of irrigationists and sugar producers forms a central theme in the story of the emerging sugar industry.

Despite notions of an independent libertarianism rooted in the emotional experience of early pioneers and western mythology, the trans-Mississippi West depended heavily on the federal government's involvement in its affairs. The need for government assistance arose out of the natural lack of water and the dearth of population inherent in the region. The history of the sugar-beet industry in Montana vividly illustrates this dependence. The federal government, under the auspices of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), undertook the initial studies that showed the viability of sugar-beet culture in Montana.

Furthermore, the state agricultural college and extension service, founded by federal legislation, undertook the additional studies that further proved the viability of the industry in Montana, and gave the farmer the proper instructions for growing beets. Indeed, without the vital role played by the USDA and the agricultural college and experiment station in educating the farmer, the sugar-beet industry in Montana would have remained an impossibility. In addition, the federal government under the authority granted by the Newlands Reclamation Act constructed and funded the irrigation projects where the sugar beets were grown. In the hopes of promoting the West as the land of the Jeffersonian yeoman farmer, the government also subsidized the farmer, allowing him to claim the land under various homestead acts, and provided generous repayment terms for the construction of irrigation ditches. Once established, the whole industry was sheltered from the harsh reality of competition from foreign sugar by tariffs which transformed the sugar-beet industry in the arid West from a babe-in-arms to an integrated part of the modern industrial economy.

A study of the western sugar industry also illustrates how human relationships, though sometimes governed by altruistic motives, are often motivated by rapacious greed and self-interest. The burden of the western sugar industry did not fall heaviest upon the irrigation boosters, sugar-industry promoters, or large-scale business interests that reaped the rewards of public policy. Instead, the heavy hand of a modern industrialized economy pressed down most firmly upon those least able to defend themselves against it. The wholesale creation of a dependent labor force, once the sugar industry became firmly



established, illustrates most vividly the saddest effects of the creation of the sugar-beet industry in Montana. First, with Native Americans, and later with Mexican and Mexican-American laborers, the history of Montana's sugar-beet industry provides a harrowing example of how those who suffer most in a modern industrial economy are often those in the weakest position in society. In the absence of a proper social safety-net, the beet laborers brought to Montana by the sugar companies endured desperation, long-hours at low pay, and deplorable working conditions. Furthermore, the treatment of these individuals and their families was justified through the wholesale use of prejudice, because doing so was economically profitable. Whatever the claims of those who promoted the West as the home of the Jeffersonian yeoman farmer, it is almost impossible to reconcile the lives of agricultural workers in the sugar-beet fields with the claims of those who believed that the West should be set aside as a "safety-valve" for poor men. Indeed, the saddest legacy of the creation of the sugar-beet industry in Montana was that it provided a workable model for the exploitation of undocumented labor on the modern factory farm.

In the final analysis, the broader lessons of the western sugar-beet industry are still with us. The large-scale marriage of public policy and private self-interest in the name of a higher ideology is still a central feature of American history, and perhaps always will be. The effects of this marriage are still disproportionately borne by the weakest members of society. Endemic poverty persists for many, while financiers and business interests justify their ill-gotten gains in the name of the public good. The poor and the dependent are still blamed by better off

members of society for their poverty. Indian reservations and migrant agricultural communities still remain pockets of destitution in one of the richest countries in the world. The lion's share of the wealth created by public policy now goes to the top one-percent of income earners, whose earnings have in recent decades expanded out of all proportion to their duties. In an age of expanding inequality, where intemperate greed and rapacious public policy have placed the dreams of many Americans for a college education and a middle-class life out of reach without mountains of debt, a study of the creation of the sugar-beet industry in Montana reveals how present fears are a variation of a twice-told tale. In many ways American history, of which western history forms a distinctive part, is a study of the contradiction between high ideals and a grim reality. The history of the sugar industry in Montana shows some of these contradictions in an unfiltered landscape, where the profits from those who wished to reclaim arid America pooled in a minority of hands, and the public good of all was sacrificed to benefit the interest of a few.

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