

1911, 27 June: Surveyors In Fisher Country

The following correspondence from Libby appeared in yesterday's Great Falls Tribune. Inquiry here fails to discover anyone who knows anything in regard to the supposed surveyors, although one suggestion was made that probably some of the forestry people who have been in the woods may have been taken for surveyors. It is quite certain that if it is actually a railroad surveying party that it did not go in from Kalispell:

Libby, June 24 – Quietly and apparently unobserved a crew of surveyors, supposedly representing some railroad, about two weeks ago went into the Fisher river country and since then they have been working on or near the line of the old Libby cut-off survey which was made by the Great Northern several years ago, according to reports that reach here. How the surveyors got into the country with their outfit is not known here, but, it is thought that they came through Kalispell. Neither is known what railroad they represent, although it is probably either the Great Northern or the Milwaukee, as it has been reported at various times that three roads would build in here over the line of the old survey.

A significant feature to connection with the railroad talk that is going the rounds is that the Great Northern, for the first time in a number of years, has listed for taxation the right-of-way on the old survey which was purchased about ten years ago. The old survey passes through the south part of town and up Libby creek, and along this line the right-of-way was purchased for several miles before operations were called off. This was just previous to the building of the Rexford cut-off.

1911, 28 June: Great Northern Springs A Surprise

Without advance notice contractors on ground to build the Sun River road. Part of new through line. Will come down South Fork of Flathead river to the present line above Columbia Falls.

Without any trumpet sounded, without any notice or warning so are as the public knew about it, the Great Northern Railway yesterday morning brought in about seven car loads of grading machinery, horses and a construction crew, and shipped these out to Vaughn to commence construction work on the sixty miles of road from Vaughn to Augusta that will connect Great Falls with Augusta by rail. The contract has been let to the firm of Morris & Shepherd and it calls for the completion of the road into Augusta by November 1 next. The contractors themselves arrived here yesterday and after quietly registering at the Park hotel, left for Vaughn to get the work started. C. J. A. Morris, one of the contractors is a son of one of James J. Hill's first chief engineers in the old days when his road was only the St. Paul and Manitoba road. The other, S. M. Shepherd, is a son of the well known railroad contractor, D. C. Shepherd. The first grading crew to arrive on the scene of the work with their outfit is under the charge of Contractor Palusha. Other sub-contractors will be here soon and the grading of the roadbed conducted with vigor, as it must be completed by November 1.

This new railroad construction between Vaughn and Augusta would be a matter of no little industrial and commercial importance in that it joins Great Falls with the city of Augusta by rail,

and opens up a very rich agricultural country to this city's trade and commerce, if that were the end of the road and it was simply a branch line or feeder of the Great Northern. But it is very much more than that. It is the first link in the construction of the Mondak cut-off, which will bring the main line of the Great Northern through Great Falls, and at the same time cut down the distance between St. Paul and Seattle and give the Great Northern a better grade than it now has on its main line, and one that will be cheaper to keep open in winter.

The new railroad will not stop at Augusta long. While construction work may stop there this year it will be pushed up the North Fork of the Sun river soon, and crossing the range into Flathead county will join the present main line east of Columbia Falls. At the same time a line leaving the present main line at Mondak on the North Dakota border will bend south of the Missouri to a junction with the Billings & Northern in the Judith Basin, and then the Mondak cut-off bringing the main line through Great Falls will be complete.

Just when the rest of this construction work will be completed no one can say with any authority. From the history of the past we may learn that Mr. Hill gives no preliminary sign when he builds. It was vigorously denied in St. Paul that there was any construction of the Billings & Northern contemplated up to the moment that the grading crews arrived on the line and commenced moving dirt. The same thing is likely to be repeated in reference to the building of the Mondak cut-off. The first authoritative announcement of such construction is likely to come with the contractors on the ground who are actually moving the dirt. At least we know now that work has been actually commenced on one portion of the larger scheme of the Mondak cut-off, in the building of rail connection between Great Falls and Augusta, or to be technically correct, between Vaughn and Augusta.

The rumor has been current in New York in railroad circles that some twenty million of the money from the recent bond issue of the Great Northern is to be devoted to the building of the Mondak cut-off, and other millions to double track the road at other points. The rumor is not unreasonable, and the construction of this Sun river link in that scheme makes the rest more probable, but, as we said before, the first thing the public is likely to know in confirmation of such rumors is the commencement of construction work.

There has been a hope and desire for closer commercial relations between this city and Augusta for many years. It was with that end in view that a number of Great Falls, Sun River and Augusta business men incorporated an electric road proposition and got a franchise for it. They failed to raise the necessary capital and finally turned their franchise over to the Milwaukee people. This fact, no doubt, had its influence in turning the attention of the Great Northern to this rich agricultural region. The certainty of the Valier-Conrad irrigation work going on, and the settlement of the Sun river irrigation project, were also factors which, no doubt, induced Mr. Hill to begin work on this part of the projected cut-off at once. The Milwaukee railroad also has its eye on the Sun river country, through which its line from Melstone to Bonner, via Great Falls, must pass and this fact, doubtless, was present in the mind of Mr. Hill. It is worth something to be the first railroad in a new field.

At any rate the news that work has actually begun on this line up the Sun river to Augusta will be received with undisguised satisfaction by the business men of this city and all the population

along the line of the road, because it is a consummation of a desire long cherished and long waited for.

--- Great Falls Tribune

1906, 16 February: Giant Railroad Idea

Alleged plan afoot to join four great systems. St. Paul papers predict greatest railroad deal ever known. N. P., C. M. & St. P., and G. N. and Burlington into two great transcontinental lines - keeping Harriman out.

Last Sunday's St. Paul papers disclose that the most gigantic transcontinental railroad deal ever known is being formulated. It means the consolidation of the Northern Pacific and the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul and the Great Northern and Burlington into two great transcontinental lines. It also means the shutting out of the Harriman interests on the Pacific coast. It also means a desperate fight between the four lines mentioned and the Harriman lines. As disclosed today by an authority of unquestioned integrity, the situation is as follows:

The undertaking involves two separate transactions. They have been in the minds of the promoters for several years. The proposal means two of the greatest railroad systems in the world.

The Great Northern is one. Its \$120,000,000 iron ore lease and the sale of rights to its own and Burlington stockholders, amounting to \$50,000,000 more, will cement these two roads into one vast double track system to the coast.

The Northern Pacific is the other. Its stockholders may easily devote \$100,000,000 toward the purchase of stock in the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul, extending to the Pacific coast and practically paralleling the Northern Pacific. The Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul will find it more convenient at points along the route to use the Northern Pacific tracks. Indeed, conferences have already been held between the officials to this end.

A railroad attorney, whose business brings him in touch with the financial end of all these roads, declares that affairs are so shaping that one can reach no other conclusion, and he predicts that within two years at least and possibly sooner the four roads mentioned will have become two great transcontinental lines by a process worked out by James J. Hill.