Robert N. Sutherlin, "prophet for the people; a study of the editor of the Rocky Mountain Husbandman, 1875-1926"

Frank Reginald Grant
The University of Montana
ROBERT N. SUTHERLIN: PROPHET FOR THE PEOPLE.
A STUDY OF THE EDITOR OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN
HUSBANDMAN, 1875-1926

By

Frank R. Grant

B.A., University of Puget Sound, 1962
B.D., Garrett Theological Seminary, 1966

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

1971

Approved by:

[Signatures]
Chairman, Board of Examiners
Dean, Graduate School

[Date]
Robert N. Sutherlin, editor of the Rocky Mountain Husbandman from 1875 to 1926, has made a lasting contribution to early Montana history. Through his newspaper's columns he consistently and thoroughly traced the development of Montana agriculture during its formative years. With zealous perseverance he dedicated its pages to the best interests of Montana's farmers.

Montana historians have recognized the Husbandman as a valuable and unique primary source of information about early Montana, but they have not exhibited an awareness of the prophetic insight which Sutherlin brought to his editorship. It is this prophetic insight which moved

---


Stout, Miller, *Progressive Men of Montana*, and the Society of Montana Pioneers Register do not mention Sutherlin. Raymer mentions him as a member of the Montana Wool Growers Association and the Montana Horticultural Society. Leeson notes that Yogo Gulch in Fergus County, now known as Sutherlin Gulch, was named after the editor of the Husbandman and that the Husbandman was "valuable for columns devoted to farm and domestic economy." Dunbar viewed the Husbandman as a Grange organ, which it was in a limited sense, but says nothing more about Sutherlin or the paper's history. Burlingame uses the Husbandman as a source and states: "The paper had a unique usefulness. Will [Sutherlin] became
Sutherlin to embark upon a publishing career and supported him throughout his long editorship. It is his ability to see the future significance in the issues confronting Montana that has marked him as a visionary among Montana's early voices. It is the printing of these visionary ideas that has identified him as a spokesman for Montana's common man.

Sutherlin envisioned Montana as a country where land and people were bound together in a mutually sustaining relationship. The land, rich in resources, yielded its wealth; man in return was commanded to invest in the land. Sutherlin assumed that this relationship could best be accomplished by establishing thousands of small irrigated farms, owned by the families who lived upon them, as the foundation of Montana's economy. He insisted that agriculture would in time surpass mining as the major source of Montana's wealth.

Sutherlin and the Husbandman cannot be separated. The paper gave voice to Sutherlin's compelling vision; through its columns he prophetically challenged Montana's boom-bust economic development and corporation domination of the state; in its pages he chronicled the life of Montana's rural population with whom he identified.

Sutherlin edited the Husbandman for fifty years. He began in Diamond City, a gold mining center in the Belt Mountains northwest of White Sulphur Springs. Four years later he moved to White Sulphur Springs, since placer mining was on the decline and Diamond City was the traveling correspondent and his weekly letters revealed a great deal of the growth of the entire territory." Howard and Toole both quote from the Husbandman and Osgood uses it extensively; yet they say little about Sutherlin.
rapidly becoming a ghost town. In 1904 he moved to Great Falls, where he remained until his death in 1926.

This study will concentrate on two periods during Sutherlin's long editorship of the paper: the formative period at Diamond City (1875-1880), and the period of conflict with corporations and promoters (1900-1912). During the early years at Diamond City he formulated his basic understanding of Montana. That understanding guided his editorial policy for the remainder of his life; it undergirded his faith in Montana's future; and it sustained him in times of conflict and stress.

The period of greatest stress came between 1900 and 1912. During that time his vision of Montana was challenged by the mining interests and the dry farming boosters. Though the paper's existence was precarious, Sutherlin endured and was able to continue to publish the Husbandman until his death.2

The complete file of the Rocky Mountain Husbandman at the Montana State Historical Society Library furnished the primary source for this investigation. At present the records of the paper and Sutherlin's personal papers are not available. It is hoped that they are not permanently lost. Yet, so thoroughly does the Husbandman reflect Sutherlin's ideas and opinions that through its pages one can grasp an understanding of the man and his thought.

---

2The Rocky Mountain Husbandman was published as an agricultural journal until 1942. However, after 1926 it bore only superficial resemblance to the paper edited by Sutherlin. It continued to chronicle the development of Montana agriculture, but without Sutherlin's guiding insight the spirit was gone from its pages.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PREFACE</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. THE FARMERS' PAPER</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. HOMES FOR THE POOR</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. THE SELF-SUFFICIENT COMMONWEALTH</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. WATER ON THE LAND</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. OVERSELL</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. THE FARMERS' PROPHET</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDICES</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. WILLIAM H. SUTHERLIN</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. WILL SUTHERLIN'S TRAVELS IN MONTANA IN 1877</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. MONTANA'S POPULATION</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. &quot;A CLASSIC ON IRRIGATION&quot;</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. THE COST OF A MONTANA IRRIGATED HOMESTEAD</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. THE RELATIONSHIP OF WEATHER TO CROPS</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. MONTANA FARM BANKRUPTCIES</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

THE FARMERS' PAPER

On Thanksgiving Day, November 25, 1875, twenty-five to thirty men, women and children gathered at the former Good Templars Hall in Diamond City, Montana Territory, to witness the publication of the first edition of the Rocky Mountain Husbandman. Little did they dream that fifty years from that day, when Diamond City had become a ghost town, the Rocky Mountain Husbandman would be a household item in thousands of rural Montana homes and that the editor, Robert N. Sutherlin, would be known throughout Montana as a prophetic voice for Montana agriculture.¹

The publication of the Husbandman was a perilous venture for Robert Sutherlin and his brother Will, farmers by trade with no journalistic experience.² Will had come to Montana in 1864 intending to mine, but had instead taken up a homestead near White Sulphur Springs. Robert had come to Montana from Missouri in 1865, but unlike most of those coming to the territory, he was more interested in livestock and crops

¹Rocky Mountain Husbandman, November 26, 1925. The following persons participated in the publication of the first issue of the Husbandman: William H. Sutherlin, Thomas Burke, Thomas P. Street, Robert N. Sutherlin. The owner of the first copy is unknown.

²Ibid. William H. Sutherlin was the "silent partner" of the publishing company from the beginning to his death in 1900. He served as traveling correspondent and financial officer for the paper. While the paper is usually associated with Robert N. Sutherlin, in the early days its success was very much dependent on Will's efforts. See Appendix I.
than gold and brought with him plows and other agricultural implements.³

Agricultural prospects appeared better than Robert had anticipated. He drove the wagon train's nearly three hundred head of oxen, which he intended to use for freight in the spring, to the Missouri River Valley northeast of present-day Townsend for the winter. There he located a farm, christened "Ravens' Roost," which served as home for the next ten years.⁴ When he rounded up the oxen in the spring, the cattle were "in a better fix" than they had been the previous spring when gathered in the Mississippi Valley. This suggested to him that "Montana was an agricultural region of more than ordinary importance."⁵

During the ten succeeding years Robert Sutherlin became convinced that this first suggestion was only an intimation of Montana's agricultural potential. At "Ravens' Roost" he cut an irrigation ditch and produced crops superior to those he had cultivated in Missouri. He continued to bull-whack between Fort Benton and Virginia City, often travelling through excellent farm land, especially the Gallatin Valley.⁶

³Sarah Raymond Herndon, Days on the Road (New York: Burr Printing House, 1902), p. 121. This book is Mrs. Herndon's account of her journey to Virginia City, Montana Territory, in 1865. It was originally published in the Husbandman in 1880. Robert Sutherlin was with a wagon train which accompanied Mrs. Herndon's. He nearly died on the trip and Mrs. Herndon prepared bread to feed the sick boy (Bob was 20 years old). His uncle was captain of the train.

⁴Husbandman, May 2, 1912; November 25, 1909.

⁵Ibid., October 5, 1911. Many others coming to the grasslands of the western plains had similar experiences. The brown grass which appeared both scanty and parched proved to be excellent winter feed, and most years cattle could rustle for themselves all winter and stay in good shape.

⁶M. L. Wilson, "The Evolution of Montana Agriculture in its Early Period," Mississippi Valley Historical Association Proceedings, IX (1918),
The more he saw the more encouraged and delighted he became, for here was fertile soil awaiting the plow, thousands of acres of pasture land without cattle or sheep, and millions of gallons of water "wasted" by running unused to the sea.

While traveling throughout the territory he met others who shared his enthusiasm and confidence in Montana's agricultural future. Many farmers had come to the territory as miners, and due to high prices and unemployment they had taken up farming as a necessity rather than by choice. Their farming efforts had proven successful and many had decided to continue farming rather than go back to the mines. Furthermore, as the news of farming potential was spread back in the States, immigrants started to come to Montana to farm rather than mine.7

By 1870 there were about two thousand farmers in a population of 20,000, and in the early seventies these farmers began to establish Granges.8 Robert Sutherlin became an active Granger and as National Deputy sought to organize local Granges throughout the territory. At the Territorial Grange meeting in Gallatin City in the spring of 1875, a committee approached Sutherlin on the question of a newspaper for the farmers, in spite of the fact that there were already ten newspapers in

433-434. Wilson says of the Gallatin Valley in 1865: "A more favorable setting for agriculture can hardly be imagined, with high prices, close proximity to markets, an almost protective tariff in the freight rate on food supplies from Salt Lake City, and fertile well-watered mountain valleys, free from Indian depredations." He also noted that there were no farming tools, seed was scarce, and there were few men with any farming experience in the mountain valleys.


the sparsely settled territory. Believing that "our agricultural and stock growing interests were suffering from want of proper representations," he was induced to begin the publication of the **Husbandman**, even though he had no journalistic experience.  

The **Husbandman** was designed to fulfill a unique function in Montana journalism, for there was no other territorial paper designed primarily to meet the special needs of the Montana farmer. The response of the other papers of the territory indicated agreement with Sutherlin's aims. The **Missoulian** said the Husbandman was "well worth the money to any farmer in the country." The farmers are "usually unprovided with papers devoted principally to their interests," reported the **New Northwest** of Deer Lodge, "but let the farmers of Montana be an exception, and the **Husbandman** found in every farmer's house." Though it appeared to the editor of the **Benton Record** that the newspaper business was "overdone" in Montana, he believed that there was "room for a well-regulated agricultural journal, and such the **Husbandman** proposes to be. We earnestly wish it a profitable career."

When Sutherlin tallied up the cost of printing the first edition of the **Husbandman**, it appeared that "a profitable career" was precisely

---

9 **Husbandman**, January 6, 1876.

10 Robert L. Houseman, "Early Montana Territorial Journalism as a Reflection of the American Frontier in the New Northwest" (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Missouri, 1934), pp. 118-140. The **Husbandman** was not the first Montana newspaper to show an interest in Montana's agricultural development. The **Montana Post of Virginia City** (1864) and the **Bozeman Pick and Plow** (1869), which later became the **Avant Courier** (1871), had agricultural columns. However, Sutherlin was the first to establish a paper solely on the prospects for agricultural development, and Houseman calls him "the father of agricultural journalism in Montana" (p. 122).

11 **Missoulian**, December 8, 1875; Deer Lodge **New Northwest**, December 3, 1875; **Benton Record**, December 12, 1875.
what the paper would not have. It cost $50 per week for labor and he had sold only 300 subscriptions at $.00 per year. He had no paying advertisers and he had mustered all the local support available. In spite of the impending early demise of the paper, Sutherlin was not dismayed, but determined to make the paper a financial and journalistic success.

Sutherlin overcame his lack of journalistic experience through hard work and tireless effort. On February 22, 1876, he "mounted the hurricane deck of a cayuse" and started a "pilgrimage" of the sparsely settled valleys of Montana Territory to carry glad tidings of "human independence," "green country homes" and "fields richly laden with harvest" to Montana's farmers. On September 15 he returned to Diamond City having visited over half the farmers of the territory, adding 800 names to the subscription list. He had introduced his paper, had been well received and was financially prepared to keep the press going. He then set out to confirm the farmers' confidence in him. 12

Sutherlin labored diligently to speak to and for the agricultural interests of Montana. He wrote numerous editorials for the paper, sometimes two and three a week. He prepared informative articles on poultry, livestock, irrigation and crop management. He gathered information from the farmers and ranchers of the territory and published accounts of their experiments and experiences. To supplement these accounts, he culled articles from newspapers and a wide variety of magazines. And

12Husbandman, November 26, 1925. A complete and detailed account of the seven months' journey through Montana Territory is found in the several issues of the Husbandman published from March to October, 1875.
finally, he cranked off an issue a week by hand, a job that was eventu­ally to take two days in itself. Promising nothing more than "a manly effort in the cause of truth, justice, and right," he pictured the hopes, trials and success of the Montana farmer. 13

Though the Husbandman was a journalistic success, there was strong opposition to its view of Montana as basically an agricultural country. In the first place, Montana was being built on mining, and in 1875, 90 per cent of the population was dependent upon the mines. In fact, farmers had to look to the miners for a market for their products. The Missoulian was especially outspoken in its opposition to the Husbandman's efforts to encourage the immigration of farmers and their families to the territory. Sturdy, energetic young men to take chances in the mines were needed more than were farmers, according to the Missoulian. There were farmers enough to supply the needs of the small population. As long as farming was dependent on the local miners for a market, the Missoulian considered it a mistake to encourage men with families to settle in the territory. 11 Addison Smith of the Helena Independent suggested to Sutherlin before the publication of the first issue of the Husbandman that it would be useless to publish an agricultural paper in Montana, for it was a mining territory. 15

The view of the opposition was valid at the time, for in 1875 Montana was in the midst of a depression. The population was decreasing

13Husbandman, November 25, 1875.
11Missoulian, December 15, 1875. "Any immigration scheme to bring immigrants into a country has about as solid reasons to rest upon as does a convention to raise the price of wheat."
15Husbandman, September 28, 1905.
due to the waning of the mining boom of the late sixties. Those who had
taken up farming discovered that they could produce far more than the
territory could consume and with no way to profitably transport produce
beyond the local mining markets, the agricultural surplus drove prices
down. Declining population, over production and isolation seemed to be
destroying Montana agriculture's future.\(^\text{16}\)

The **Husbandman** noted a restlessness among the people for Montana
did not "enjoy as great a degree of prosperity as we desire."\(^\text{17}\) More
emphatically, Professor M. L. Wilson of the Agricultural College at
Bozeman claimed that "discontent and distress was rife among the farmers,
and they complained bitterly of the low prices of their produce and the
high price of incoming supplies."\(^\text{18}\)

For Sutherlin the depression was the inevitable result of the
territory's dependence on mining and the people's reluctance to invest
in new industry. While conditions were "no worse than most other mining
countries undergo before an era of permanent greatness begins," he could

\(^{16}\) Wilson, "The Evolution of Montana Agriculture," p. 435. "The
population of the territory is given at 20,505 of which 2111 were males
over twenty one engaged in agriculture (1870 census). The **per capita**
production was nine bushels of wheat and five bushels of potatoes. The
census, however, did not take into account Indians, soldiers, and the
migratory population; but after making allowances for these, and deduct­
ing seed requirements, smutty wheat unfit for milling, and other grain
losses, it is still apparent that the **per capita** production was consider­
ably in excess of the ability of the population to consume. Attention
should be called to the fact that although approximately only twenty per
cent of the population of the territory was engaged in agriculture, that
fraction was producing an abundant supply of meats, flour, vegetables
and potatoes." See also, Harrison Trexler, **Flour and Wheat in the Mon­
tana Gold Camps, 1862-1870** (Missoula: Dunstan, 1918).

\(^{17}\) Husbandman, December 23, 1875.

see little improvement without a concerted effort by the people toward steady development and promotion of the territory. Montana needed "more labor, more capital, and more men of moderate means seeking permanent homes" instead of persons expecting to pick up a fortune on top of the ground and hurry back to their native homes with it. Montana needed farmers.

The Husbandman's controversy with the Missoulian was greater than a difference of opinion over immigration policy and the relative importance of mining and agriculture. It was rooted in the hostility between the Grangers and the territory's commercial interests. This hostility was not limited to the Missoula area; it was felt throughout the territory. Sutherlin noted the attitude in Virginia City.

We are loath to say that Virginia is no good place for a granger. Her people, as a rule, do not seem to have much use for one from the rural districts, save when they wish to indulge in the luxury of cheap butter, eggs and other commodities which unavoidably they are forced to accept at their hands, or go without.

The hostility was made public in 1875 when the Montana Grangers decided to market their grain directly instead of selling it through established grain merchants. Sutherlin, a recognized Grange organizer, through the Husbandman, a semi-official Grange organ, supported the Grangers' marketing efforts. The Husbandman portrayed cooperative marketing as an opportunity to wrest economic control from the middlemen and speculators.

---

19. Husbandman, April 5, 1877.
20. Ibid., March 28, 1878.
21. Ibid., April 6, 1876.
[Farmers] have seen their dearest interests trampled in the dust; great commercial marts built at their expense; the speculator become a prince from the profit of their labor. True monarch of the soil! The sceptre is in your hands; wield it if you will!22

The Missoulian responded to the Husbandman with an article entitled "Agriculture and Business." In the article the Missoulian questioned the wisdom of farmers' cooperatives and suggested that Grangers stick to farming and let merchants handle marketing.23 The Husbandman called the article "a vain attempt to discourage farmers, and make them feel that they . . . are a very dependent set of people and could not help themselves, even though they try ever so hard."24

The controversy continued throughout the winter of 1875-1876. Sutherlin kept track of the loads of grain being delivered to Fort Baker in order to fill contracts signed between the farmers and the military. The fulfillment of these contracts indicated to Sutherlin the wisdom of cooperative marketing.25 However, the Grangers did not fulfill the contracts, and it was only through the efforts of Representative Martin Maginnis that the farmers were able to have the contracts annulled and payment made for the portion of the contracts completed.26 The Husbandman suggested that part of the reason for the farmers' inability to meet the contracts was the refusal of commercial freighters to carry their grain.27

22Ibid., December 9, 1875.
23Missoulian, December 15, 1875.
24Husbandman, January 6, 1876.
25Ibid., December 23, 30, 1875; January 6, 20, 1876.
26Ibid., April 6, 1876.
27Ibid., March 30, 1876.
M. L. Wilson viewed the matter quite differently. He blamed the failure to deliver the grain directly on the Grangers. The Grangers had underbid the regular post contractors in April, 1875, for the right to provide hay, oats and other Montana-grown products to the territory's forts. The Grangers' bids were so far below those of the regular contractors that the regular contractors were charged with making excessive profits from the military contracts. In the summer grasshoppers destroyed large amounts of the year's crops, and the farmers claimed they were not able to save enough to fill the contracts. They were released from their original contracts to deliver oats at $1.29 a hundred and the quartermaster's department called for new bids. A second contract was let to the farmers at $2.25 a hundred and was promptly filled. Immediately the War Department issued an order that in the future the quartermasters should receive no bids from the farmers.28

According to Wilson, the contract incident killed the Grange in Montana. Though it remained as a social institution for some years, it was never able to grasp the political and economic power the farmers desired.29

Sutherlin appears to have generalized the antagonism felt toward the Grange in particular into a widespread hostility toward farmers in general. He thus pictured the mining-agriculture dichotomy to be greater than it actually was, and his portrayal of the mining opposition is colored by the hostility he felt as a Granger. It was one thing to

28Wilson, "The Evolution of Early Montana Agriculture," p. 439. It must be pointed out, however, that the $2.25 per hundred bid of the farmers was still far below the $1.70 per hundred bid of one post contractor.

identify Montana as a farming country; it was quite another to identify it as a Granger country.\(^3^0\)

Sutherlin had a further problem. The belief that Montana was a desert also conflicted with his view of Montana as a farming country. From 1810 when Zebulon Pike announced the Great Plains to be a desert to Sutherlin's own era Americans had understood the area immediately east of the Rockies to be nearly useless for agriculture. As late as 1875 the concept of Montana as a desert received popular national re-affirmation. W. B. Hazen, who had served with the military in the West, wrote in the *North American Review* that perhaps a million acres of Montana were arable and that only with the "unAmerican system of irrigation." The thrust of Hazen's argument was that there was little future for agriculture in Montana and the other Plains states, and what agriculture there was would be located in a few favored locations, such as the area around Bozeman.\(^3^1\)

The *Husbandman* contended that Hazen and the others who called Montana a desert were giving the East an inaccurate picture of the territory. If the people from the States could only visit the country and

\(^3^0\)Sutherlin's connections with the Grange lessened as the Grange movement waned in the late seventies and early eighties. The *Husbandman* continued to carry Grange news, but it was not a Grange organ. Sutherlin was convinced of the need for the farmers to organize and work together to promote their own best interests, and he supported efforts to organize farmers' associations, such as the Farmers' Free Union, the Farmers' Equity Society, as well as the Grange. See *Husbandman*, June 30, 1901; January 12, 1905; August 3, 1905; June 11, 1906; September 12, 1907; September 6, 1906; July 18, 1912. It is interesting to note that in supporting the movement to rejuvenate the Grange in 1912 Sutherlin reminded the farmers that they were not merchants.

see the farmers plowing and sowing, they would no longer trust the words of such men. 32

The Husbandman did not deny that Montana was a semi-arid country, but it did claim that aridity did not limit agriculture as greatly as Hazen had asserted. It argued that through proper cultivation and irrigation the limitations which aridity placed on Montana farming could be overcome. Following several good seasons in the middle seventies it even claimed that the Great American Desert was vanishing and began to assert that there was some validity to the pseudoscientific theory that "rain follows the plow." 33 "The statements of scientists that civilization and agriculture produce rains is being verified each year." For five years springs and summers had become increasingly seasonable and the Husbandman concluded that "within another decade agriculture will be carried on in Montana almost without irrigation." 34 As late as 1901, in fact, it held out hope that man could alter the climate. It pressed for the construction of large reservoirs claiming that the presence of so much water "would make it far more humid and increase the rainfall very much." 35

Four years later the Husbandman rejected the notion that cultivation or irrigation would alter the climate. "We do not fall in with the

32 Husbandman, January 31, 1878.
33 Henry Nash Smith, Virgin Land (New York: Vintage, 1950), pp. 209-213. Smith attributes the coining of this epigram to Charles Dana Wilbur. He also argues that building irrigation systems and devising techniques of dry farming "were functionally equivalent to increasing the rainfall."
34 Husbandman, June 6, 1878; August 21, 1879.
35 Ibid., June 2, 1901.
popular idea that the seasons are changing and that we will soon be able to grow crops without irrigation." Sutherlin recalled that in 1878 he had argued for such a theory when there had been several good years, but he believed the four good seasons preceding 1904 had been "an accident of nature rather than an effect from some general cause," and added, "dry seasons will drop in ever and anon." A quarter century's experience in Montana had taught him not to trust the weather.36

Though Sutherlin rejected the notion that cultivation would change the climate, he never lost faith in irrigation. He had marked success with irrigation at "Ravens' Roost," and saw immense crops grown in the Gallatin and Bitterroot Valleys. He also watched wheat fields dry up and produce only a little hay when the rain came at the wrong time or not at all. He came to believe that "putting water on the land" was the key to successful farming in Montana, and the Husbandman became an irrigationist journal.37

In spite of the opposition to the Husbandman's point of view, Sutherlin's faith in the territory as an agricultural land gained increasing support and acceptance. The Husbandman's subscription list steadily increased, and its columns on stock raising gained national recognition.38 Will Sutherlin traveled throughout the territory keeping

36 Ibid., February 18, 1904. Yet the notion that irrigation could influence the rainfall persisted. In 1907 Sutherlin stated that there was a tendency in irrigated valleys to require progressively less water through the years.

37 Sutherlin's views on irrigation will be fully developed in Chapter IV.

38 Husbandman, February 13, 1879. "The Rocky Mountain Husbandman, published in Diamond City, Montana Territory, shows a commendable zeal in looking after the livestock interests of the territory. Last week
the paper in close touch with agricultural development in every valley, and several correspondents wrote regularly from the Boulder Valley, the Bitterroot and the Black Hills. So thoroughly did the *Husbandman* trace the development of Montana agriculture in the early years that David Hilger of the Montana Historical Society wrote Sutherlin in 1925, "from a historical standpoint your paper is the most valuable we have for reference work."  

By 1879 the subscription list had grown to over 1,300 and the capacity of the original printing press was reached. In making the decision to purchase a new press, Sutherlin also decided to move the *Husbandman* office, since Diamond City was in sharp decline and well off the main traveled roads of the territory. He moved the office to White Sulphur Springs, which was only a hotel and a few out buildings surrounding the hot mineral springs at the time.  

Though White Sulphur Springs was on the eastern edge of Montana civilization, the decision to locate the *Husbandman* there was a wise one. It was near the center of Meagher County, potentially one of the richest  

The editor did better than usual, and that is saying much, as he gave his readers four or five long articles about the stock business in Montana. We find them so good that we reprint them." *American Stockman.*  

39. All Sutherlin made an annual tour of the territory. He described in detail the people he met, where he stayed, crops being grown, new livestock purchased. In later years Miss Carolyn Murphy, J. H. Bridges and J. M. Burlingame continued Will's regular visits. The *Husbandman* also printed extended correspondence from Jack McGoeal, who took part in the Black Hills gold rush; an account of the Custer Battle by Captain Clifford of Fort Logan; the musings of "Orestes," a farmer in the Boulder Valley; and a women's column by "Pandora." Sutherlin readily printed the views and opinions of leading political and business leaders even when those opinions differed from his own. See Appendix II.  

counties of the territory. Stretching from the Musselshell on the east to the Missouri on the west and from Choteau County on the north to Gallatin County on the south, it contained about 20,000 square miles (12,800,000 acres). Thousands of square miles of superb grasslands, which had supported herds of buffalo, elk and antelope, could feed untold numbers of cattle and sheep. As early as 1878 the grazing potential was readily apparent as the county had received $130,000 from the beef driven from the county and $75,000 from the wool clip.

However, Sutherlin believed the country's true prosperity would be measured by how many people it supported, not how many cattle it exported. Where water was available for irrigation the grasslands could be farmed with excellent results, and there was water available from the Missouri, Musselshell and Smith rivers plus numerous smaller streams. Sutherlin looked forward to the day when the vast pasture lands would be divided to support many small farmers and their families.

There was also great wealth below the surface. The Belt Mountains were rich in gold, and the Husbandman predicted that quartz mining in Meagher County would raise that county to top place among the mineral producers of the territory. The Castle Mountains were rich in silver and the first copper ore treated in Montana came from Copperopolis.

---


2 Husbandman, August 29, 1878.

3 Ibid., August 29, 1878.

4 Sulphur Springs Chamber of Commerce, "Meagher County History" (Mimeographed sheet, n.d. Prepared in cooperation with Meagher County Historical Society).
In the Musselshell Valley the most extensive coal mines of the region were thought to exist and the area could be easily reached by rail.\footnote{15} It appeared that Meagher County had the resources to develop both mining and agriculture to a very high degree.

Its central location made White Sulphur Springs the logical location for the county seat. As early as 1879 the Husbandman had waged a campaign to move the county seat from Diamond City. Though this early campaign was unsuccessful, in 1880 the county seat was moved to White Sulphur Springs.\footnote{16}

As county seat White Sulphur Springs benefited greatly from the vast resources of the county. It became the commercial, political and agricultural center for the area. The hot springs located there made it a resort of some note. Unlike Diamond City, which was located in the mountains, White Sulphur Springs was in the center of Smith River Valley, easily accessible from all directions. In fact, its location made it a potential railway center for both east-west and north-south lines.

Sutherlin early recognized White Sulphur's potential and invested heavily in the town and surrounding area. He built a substantial office for the Husbandman there. He zealously advertised the hot springs and

\footnote{15} Husbandman, February 11, 1878. The area did eventually become an extensive coal producing region.

\footnote{16} Ibid., February 13, 1879; May 8, 1879. Sutherlin believed the failure to move the county seat to White Sulphur Springs rested with the people who followed pastoral pursuits. "They don't want the country settled up. They don't want any neighbors . . . They want a free boundless prairie, and no stock but their own within a day's journey." Even though the people turned down the moving of the county seat he claimed that "time will prove the correctness of our position, the opinion of the majority to the contrary not withstanding."
their healing waters and was one of the promoters of the Auditorium, a
clarge entertainment center called "the only significant building in the
town" by one long-time resident. ¹⁷  He wrote and published a book,
Legends-Historic or Smith River in Verse, which he sold to help defray
the cost of the Auditorium. ¹⁸  On the Missouri River he invested in an
unsuccessful irrigation scheme to water a large portion of the benchland
near "Ravens' Roost." ¹⁹  He was a constant promoter of a railway through
White Sulphur, and when a line was finally laid to the town, Sutherlin
"the greatest booster of any place," was called to drive the golden
spike. ²⁰

Though Sutherlin was interested in the development of the entire
state, he always had a special concern for White Sulphur Springs. Even
when he later moved to Great Falls, he did not forget his old home town,

¹⁷ Warren Woodson, Pioneering Tales of Montana (New York: Exposi­
area.

¹⁸ Robert N. Sutherlin, Legends-Historic or Smith River in Verse
(White Sulphur Springs: Rocky Mountain Husbandman Publishing Co., 1900).
This book of descriptive verse, illustrated, traces the history of the
area from pre-historic times.

¹⁹ Husbandman, November 23, 1904. Failure of the investors to
work together made it impossible to carry through on the irrigation
scheme. At a later time promoters from Helena projected an irrigation
system which would carry water from the Madison River along the eastern
side of the Missouri River to Prickly Pear Valley. It would have watered
the same area as Sutherlin's scheme. Today there is another project pro­
posed to carry water from the Big Hole River along the Jefferson River,
across Broadwater County to water this area.

²⁰ White Sulphur Springs was by-passed by the Northern Pacific,
the Montana Railroad (Jawbone), and the Milwaukee. In 1910 investors
raised $50,000 to construct a line from Dorsey, 15 miles south on the
main Milwaukee line. Letter from F. H. Mayn to Sutherlin, Husbandman,
November 10, 1910; November 17, 1910.
and when he died he was buried there. At the celebration of the fiftieth year of the publication of the Husbandman in 1925, a friend wrote:

Some day White Sulphur Springs will be the greatest health resort of the nation, and when that time comes a monument to Bob Suttherlin and the Rocky Mountain Husbandman should be erected on the town square, to the one who spent a fortune in boosting the town for the public good, and to the child of his brain for the record it made along the advertising path for half a century in building up the state.51

By 1880 the Husbandman was on the road to success. Financially sound, widely read, located in a promising new town, it held out promise for the poor in a new and growing country. Speaking for the agricultural interest of the territory it gave the farmers a welcome and much needed voice. Not content with either success or failure in the present, Robert N. Suttherlin pressed the people of Montana to lay lasting foundations for the commonwealth's future.

CHAPTER II

HOMES FOR THE POOR

When Robert Sutherlin looked out across the vast reaches of Montana, he envisioned "a home in every nook and corner, by every water-course" where, without constant and excessive toil, the yeoman farmer could "secure enough of the world's goods to make life happy, home cheerful, our children intelligent, and an accumulating safety fund for our declining years."¹ "The Rocky Mountain rural home may be made the ideal home on earth," and the crowning glory was that it could be made a "home for the poor." Throughout his career Sutherlin insisted that the Husbandman be filled largely with messages for the poor. While he gave counsel to the well-to-do and the rich, his words were directed to homeseekers, "a class that are presumed to be poor," and he "sought to discuss conditions that those without means must face."²

The Husbandman's most important message to the poor was that Montana had millions of acres of land awaiting settlement, and that those acres could be theirs. Land was available at government price or by homesteading. If a person had no ready cash for entrance fees on a homestead, a squatter's right would hold the land until enough could be made to pay for it. "A yoke of cattle or a pair of horses and a plow, all together worth less than $100, is all the capital that many of our thriftiest farmers had when they began, a few years ago."³

¹Husbandman, December 23, 1875.
²Ibid., August 18, 1904; June 8, 1905.
³Ibid., December 16, 1875.
The "thrifty farmers" who had pioneered in Montana also had readily available water. They located near springs or creeks where water could easily be turned onto the land. In the grazing areas there had been so few men that each could have a watering place for his stock without interfering with his neighbors. In 1875 there were still locations where water was available for irrigation and stock, but a living water supply needed for the numbers of poor farmers sought by Sutherlin was not there. And without water to irrigate, the poor man could not farm enough land to keep himself from starving. Therefore, in addition to offering land to the poor, Sutherlin sought ways to increase the available water supply. Land for the poor and water for the land was his combination of enticements to encourage the poor homesteader to try his skill in Montana.

Not only could a man claim a homestead in Montana, he could also use the remaining public domain for grazing. Calling the free open range a "principal inducement offered by Montana to the poor," Sutherlin fought all attempts to dispose of the public domain, with the exception of the Homestead and Pre-emption laws.\(^1\) In 1879 changes allowing the government to "rent, lease, or sell at a nominal price large districts of the country for grazing purposes" were introduced in Congress. Sutherlin charged those supporting such measures with attempting to "exclude the poor from the privilege of free grazing, free homes, and an even show in the great battle of life with those born to wealth." He argued that leasing the public domain would be "detrimental to the best interests of the government" for it would tend toward the "centralization of power, the creation of a moneyocracy, the reduction of the poor of the country to the

\(^1\)Ibid., December 4, 1879. The free and open range was also a great boon to the large cattle and sheep men of early Montana.
position of serfs." And Montana, "the best country on the globe for a laboring man: literally a poor man's paradise," would be transformed into a "poor man's hell." In 1901 he was still holding out for a free open range. "The homesteader is always poor," he claimed, and "goes into the wilds to erect a home with little save his labor to depend upon." No harm could come from allowing him the "privilege of the public domain on which to turn his milch cow or work horse until it is occupied." Sutherlin stated that he was not an advocate of dry farming, never had been and probably never would be; nevertheless, he looked on with some satisfaction in 1910 as dry land homesteaders poured into the state and claimed that without "the long hard battle waged by the Rocky Mountain Husbandman, the rush now being made for lands in Montana would not have occurred since there would have been no public domain available."

The poor for whom Sutherlin sought to preserve the public domain were the "wage earners of the older states, the renters of farms and the tenants of rookeries in the great cities." It was the laboring class of people "who did not own homes in the Middle West or even in the effete East" whom he encouraged to settle in Montana.

Sutherlin's propaganda was directed especially to those with whom he had grown up in the Midwest, "who have had their faces to the grindstone since life began--who are hopelessly encumbered by debt, and preyed

---

5Ibid., October 23, 1879.
6Ibid., November 21, 1901.
7Ibid., March 24, 1910.
8Ibid., November 21, 1901.
9Ibid., February 20, 1908.
upon by merciless money loaners." He appealed to those who were either tenants or, if they owned their own land, were deeply in debt with little hope of ever being otherwise. Those who had good farms would hardly leave them for the privilege of building a new home in the wilds of Montana. 10 In 1910 Sutherlin, with other Montana land and development companies, urged support for the Western Land Products Exhibit in Omaha where Montana could "show our products to thousands of people right in the heart of the country where our new settlers are coming from." 11

Though Sutherlin emphasized the opportunity for the debt-ridden farmers of the Midwest, he did not fail to encourage the poor of the cities to take up land in Montana, where they could "rise to a position where they can secure a home of their own." In words suggesting a "safety valve" theory he argued that parcelling out the public domain in quarter sections for farm homes was "calculated to relieve the congested conditions of our great cities and add renewed strength and thrift to our nation." 12 Especially after the Amalgamated Copper Company closed its Montana mines, mills and stores in 1903, when the full impact

---

10 Ibid., December 16, 1875.
11 Ibid., December 15, 1910. See Appendix IIIA.
12 Ibid., July 11, 1901. See also, Smith, Virgin Land, Chapter 20. Smith quotes Horace Greeley, one of the leading exponents of the "safety valve" theory, in words almost identical to Sutherlin's. "Make the Public Lands free in quarter sections to Actual Settlers and deny them to all others, and earth's landless millions will no longer be orphans and mendicants; they can work for the wealthy, relieved from the degrading terror of being turned adrift to starve. When employment fails or wages are inadequate, they may pack up and strike westward to enter upon the possession and culture of their own lands." (pp. 234-235).
of the new industrial order had been felt in the state, he developed this line of thought. When rumors that F. Augustus Heinze, the last large independent copper king of the state, was going to sell his interests to Amalgamated, Sutherlin wrote, "should it prove true, there will be but one course left to the mining and smelting employees to pursue . . . and that is to secure a home on Uncle Sam's domain and be ready to make the earth produce a sustenance." Since "wreck and ruin" had always followed in the wake of the Rockefeller gang, the only hope for the laboring man to escape a life of slavery, dependence, humiliation and drudgery was "to fortify himself with a home where he can make a living."\(^{13}\) For Sutherlin a farm home provided the laborer with security against economic uncertainty. "Mills may close down, factories stop and industrial stagnation turn hundreds penniless into the streets, but the man with a home in the country with land he can cultivate and water with which to compel a crop will always have plenty."\(^{11}\)

While Sutherlin encouraged the immigration of the poor to Montana, he was concerned that those coming be Americans. To those who were hiring Orientals as farm laborers he said, "we do not want to substitute our intelligent American laborers on the farm for the almond-eyed Mongolean [sic], Chinaman or Japanese." And for the railroads and other immigration agencies he added, "nor do we wish to have the places of the intelligent American at the plow taken by the Greek, Pollander [sic] or

\(^{12}\) *Husbandman*, June 30, 1904. Amalgamated Copper Company closed down its operations in Montana in October, 1903, putting over half the workers in Montana out of work. The Amalgamated Copper Company was controlled by the Standard Oil Company. This phase of the "War of the Copper Kings" is covered in Chapter III.

\(^{11}\) *ibid.*, December 29, 1904.
the Russian." Contrary to Sutherlin's wishes, immigrants from outside the country did come to Montana, for the desire for land knew no boundaries, and Montana had land.

The possession and tilling of the land conferred upon the poor homesteader a new status: he became a yeoman farmer, "the only true sovereign and monarch among men." When plowing his fields, the Montana farmer took his place in history alongside "the noblest specimens of humanity," who came from the ranks of husbandry. He also fulfilled the American ideal of a "fee-simple empire"—a society composed of predominantly free men tilling their own acres—which had been born in pre-Revolutionary days, developed as the nation moved west, and found full expression in the Homestead Act of 1862.

In an editorial written for the November 22, 1877, issue of the Husbandman, Sutherlin drew together his beliefs about the life of the yeoman farmer and set them down as the philosophical framework which gave form and content to his work. The central belief of his philosophy was that the yeoman farmer is the one man on earth "who enjoys civil and religious liberty in its fullest sense." He understood religious and civil liberty to be rooted in ownership of the land. The model citizen

---

15 Ibid., August 15, 1912.

16 The number of Orientals living in Montana between 1870-1920 was never very large, reaching a peak of a little over 3000 in 1900, and then declining. The number of foreign-born whites was large, comprising a high of 28 per cent in 1890, and then dropping to 17 per cent in 1920. See Appendix IIIB.

17 Husbandman, May 16, 1878.

18 Smith, Virgin Land, pp. 151ff.

19 Husbandman, November 22, 1877.
was a homeowner; further, "American greatness in war and peace rests upon the interest lodged by the people in their homes." There was no room for tenancy, "a curse worse than slavery," in Sutherlin's modern utopia, where every man owned and tilled his own farm. The yeoman farmer plows, sows and reaps as season follows season and sits down by his own fireside when his work is done, happy and contented. 20

The Homestead Law had made just such a utopia possible in the American West, according to Sutherlin, for it provided homes for the people, "the greatest of all boons that a nation can provide for its subjects." 21 He fought to reserve the public domain for actual settlers, insisting that the wisest policy for the nation was to seek to locate a family on every 160 acres of land where a man could farm. He argued against Socialist oratory calling for government ownership of the land, for he pinned his faith in the future on a citizenship "that is riveted to land and country by individual ownership of a home." Sutherlin urged the taking of a homestead as the "solution to life's problems" for "it is the shortest road that we can find to a better condition of things." 22

With his homestead firmly in possession, the yeoman farmer could carve out his own sphere in life. The straightforward, progressive farmer in Sutherlin's utopia was independent at all times, and under all circumstances. He was the one man on earth who was "in no wise dependent upon the surging mass of mankind around him for the necessaries of life." 23

20Ibid., November 22, 1877; December 18, 1879; April 11, 1901; February 16, 1905.

21Ibid., July 11, 1901.

22Ibid., August 25, 1901.

23Ibid., September 29, 1901; November 22, 1877.
Sutherlin relished the vision of thousands of small independent farms, each one self-contained. For the happy families within there was always bread and meat at hand, and there could be fruit and vegetables fresh from the garden and orchard. By putting forth a little exertion, by owning a homestead, a man could "live like a King." He recalled with pleasure the days on the farm in Missouri when everything used on the table except coffee, tea and salt came from the farm. Even the clothes he wore were made from home-grown wool spun by his mother.\(^{24}\)

The self-contained homestead could be isolated from the workings of the larger economy if necessary; therefore, the farmer was independent of the fickle changes of the money market. He was also freed from the necessity of dependence on a market for his products. He ate what he produced, and if he had a surplus he could feed it to his animals. The public domain was free for his use and his labor held the land. The "money interests" could not enslave him, for the man on his own tract of land "does not have to bow to the caprice of some big syndicate of wealth." On the homestead the yeoman farmer could rest secure, while his flocks, herds and crops continued to grow.\(^{25}\)

The farmer's security was grounded in the "well-regulated laws of nature" rather than in the "changes of speculation or the fortunes of business." When towns and cities fail, "investors in brick houses are stranded and merchants make heavy losings," but the farmer on his own land goes steadily onward. The land sustains him, for "his sustenance comes from the earth, and he knows that if he performs his part nature

\(^{24}\)Ibid., August 25, 1904; September 29, 1904.

\(^{25}\)Ibid., November 22, 1877; April 12, 1906.
Working closely with nature, the farmer was engaged in "the greatest of all vocations." While the doctor, lawyer, merchant and mechanic had merely a living, the farmer was making a home and building up the country. The farmer was never among the unemployed; while manufacturing and mining flourished and died, agriculture went on.

It can never be said of the farmer that he is a drone in the industrial beehive, that he is a leach on the body politic, that his life's work is to no purpose. He is one of the grand architects in the development of the race. It is the man in the country home that has led the way up the winding stairs of progress.29

Though he vigorously proclaimed the farmer's independence, Sutherlin knew that many Montana farmers were in fact not free and their farms were not sustaining them. They had become "driven by debt" and allowed themselves to become as dependent as other classes.30 Debt was the great dark shadow which threatened Sutherlin's homestead utopia.

Sutherlin attacked the credit system with a vengeance, for he saw in it the ruin of the yeoman farmer. If the Montana farmers would only look at their neighbors in the East, they would see that "this pernicious credit system has necessitated and created mortgages, until they are a common household pest, and hover over them like so many vultures, ready to devour them."31 He cautioned the farmers not to get involved in speculation, but to remain on a cash basis. When times were tough the farmer should pay cash or do without.32

29 Ibid., December 29, 1904.
30 Ibid., September 29, 1904.
31 Ibid., December 13, 1875.
32 Ibid., June 21, 1877.
By remaining out of debt the farmer "need never come under the
direct beck and will of the monied interest," whether in the form of
the land speculator, the railroads, bankers or corporations. Even if
he had to suffer privation and long years of toil with little gain, the
farmer could be a free man if he could maintain his land free and clear
of debt, according to Sutherlin. Without the security of land ownership,
the farmer became a slave. "I would not have all farmers rich if I
could," he wrote, "but I would gladly see the day of jubilee that must
have cheered the ancient world when debts were banished from existence."

The "day of jubilee" failed to come to Montana. Try as he might,
Sutherlin could not argue away the credit system and the farmers could
not stay out of debt. In order to get a homestead producing, a man had
to invest more than his labor. He needed transportation to Montana,
equipment, seed, stock, water and time. The poor, indebted farmer from
the Middle West and the laborer from the city had little, if any of these.
Credit was a necessity. At the minimum it was a year before the farmer
could realize any return from the land. To urge him to stay out of debt
was to ask the impossible.

Furthermore, farmers were not as idealistic as Sutherlin pictured
them. Few men were willing to live at the subsistence level, barely

\[33\] Ibid., March 28, 1901.
\[34\] Ibid., December 23, 1875.
\[35\] Fred A. Shannon, The Farmer's Last Frontier: Agriculture,
1860-1897 (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), p. 55. "It is a fair esti-
mate that for every industrial toiler who made good on the land there
were twenty farmers' sons who moved hopefully, and a few successfully,
into the cities. The failure of the Homestead Act to provide means to
get poor families to the farms, extend them long credit for all the rest
of their needs for at least the first year, and give them guidance in
farming was the first and one of the greatest defects of the measure."
eking out enough to keep body and soul together, even if they were doing it on their own land. They were out to make money, and when things looked good, they speculated in land, livestock and crops. This often resulted in bankruptcy, foreclosure and selling out as Montana went through a series of booms and depressions during the last quarter of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries.

Finally, the land of promise failed to come up to the homesteaders' expectations. It was a semi-arid region requiring farming methods different from those used in the humid East. Many homesteaders experienced failure while learning irrigation and dry land cultivation. Large numbers of homesteaders came to Montana to discover that the best lands were not available, for they had been granted to the railroads, the state, or had been bought by the large speculators. The result was that many homesteaders settled on land which would not produce due to the poor quality of the soil, lack of water, the homesteaders' ignorance or all three. The homesteader had the choice of leaving the country or of going into debt either to purchase good land or to make necessary improvements in order to put poor land into production. 36

Both Montana's environmental conditions and the dreams of most settlers pointed up the lack of realism in Sutherlin's attacks on the credit system. While nature had provided superior resources for agriculture, in Montana, it took capital to develop those resources. Though men can, and some did, live at a subsistence level, few chose to do so when their labor in the forests, cities, mines, and smelters provided them a higher standard of living.

36 Ibid, pp. 51-52.
Furthermore, the homestead could not be isolated from the larger economy. Increasingly, the price of wheat in London and Liverpool, of cattle in Chicago, and copper in Boston and New York determined the Montana farmers' market. M. L. Wilson has pointed out that between 1863 and 1920 Montana agriculture evolved through three distinct periods, and "the change from one period to another was abrupt and was brought about largely by external forces." It was therefore not the needs of the territory and state but national needs and forces which determined the development of Montana agriculture.\(^{37}\)

Those national needs and forces established raw material, rather than "homes for the poor," as top priority in Montana. When the homesteader could be instrumental in providing the raw materials, he was encouraged, wooed, seduced, and at times hauled to Montana to get his "free home." When he failed to produce, he was abandoned, and in turn he abandoned the land.\(^{38}\)

Sutherlin's vision of the Montana landscape, dotted with homes of yeoman farmers, each living and tilling his own land, each self-sufficient, was never realized. True, in many places the farm houses are there, but they are often empty; mute evidence that others shared his dream and that their dream was shattered. As we shall see, Sutherlin took no credit for encouraging dry land homesteading in Montana, but dryland farmers were not the only ones who failed. On the benchlands today in Broadwater County old irrigation ditches filled with weeds, dry and dusty, remain. The climate, the national economy, men's ignorance and greed all conspired to deny "homes for the poor" in Montana.

\(^{37}\)Wilson, "Evolution of Early Montana Agriculture, p. 429.

\(^{38}\)See Chapter V.
CHAPTER III

THE SELF-SUFFICIENT COMMONWEALTH

When Robert Sutherlin entered Virginia City, Montana Territory, in 1865, the country looked forward to an uncertain future. During the previous decade the mining booms in Nevada and Colorado had been followed by periods of depression, and there was little indication that Montana would escape a similar fate.¹ Some Montana miners had taken up farming, but this enterprise was usually due to economic necessity rather than choice. The mining towns provided a good local market for agricultural products, and some of those who had started to farm found it more profitable than prospecting had been. Farming was dependent on mining, however, and it appeared that there would be little prosperity in agriculture when the mines played out.²

¹Rodman Wilson Paul, Mining Frontiers of the Far West, 1848-1880 (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), pp. 56-56, 109-134. The Comstock Lode in Nevada was well launched by the early sixties with output nearly doubling each year in 1861, 1862, and 1863. It reached a peak in 1861 when the output totaled $16,000,000. In that year it became evident to the mining investors that the Lode was beginning to play out and mining stocks took a tumble. A period of depression and loss of population set in. There was a revival of mining interest in Nevada in the early seventies, but it was short-lived.

Colorado's placer mining boom reached a peak in 1861-1862, and was followed by a period of hard times and readjustment as the mines gave out and the population deserted to the gold fields of Montana and Idaho.

²Wilson, "The Evolution of Montana Agriculture." Farming had been carried on for twenty years before the gold rush. Father de Smet had cultivated land in the Bitterroot Valley as early as 1842. When Major John Owen bought the mission property in the 1850's he continued to farm there. By 1862 trappers and traders had settled in the area and Fort Owen had become a supplier for trappers, traders and travelers in the area. In 1860 the government sent implements to the Flathead Agency on the Jocko River where some cultivation was begun. In 1859 cattle were
During his first decade in Montana Sutherlin became convinced that Montana's prosperity need not end with the waning of the mining frontier, for he saw in the embryonic agricultural industry the economic base for Montana's coming greatness. With this conviction firmly in mind, he viewed the territory's future with optimism, even though the country was then in the midst of a depression. He argued that the depression was temporary, and that the territory was enjoying a degree of prosperity "greater than we are aware of." He pointed to decreased delinquent taxes, infrequent sheriff's sales, and empty poor houses to make his case. "The wild speculative mania" was dying out; the "insatiable desire of the people to grow rich in an hour" was cooling. The Montana economy was only dislocated and would improve if Montanans took appropriate action. Such action meant first to recognize agriculture to be as important a sector of the territory's economy as was mining. The two were complementary and should be promoted together. Second, the country needed a larger and more stable population, for prosperity would come only with greater numbers of people investing themselves in the land. Montana needed to encourage men with families to settle the land. 3

Sutherlin was not content with what was already happening in Montana; he pressed on for the Montana of his dreams. He envisioned Montana as a self-sufficient commonwealth with a steadily developing, diversified economy based on agriculture and complemented by mining and

3Husbandman, December 23, 1875.
manufacturing, a land system in which the natural resources were utilized by and for those who permanently established themselves within the territory, and a broad-based democratic political structure controlled by the resident masses rather than the absentee classes. Throughout his career he struggled to make that vision a reality.

Montana had the natural resources to become the self-sufficient commonwealth of Sutherlin's dreams. There were gold, silver, copper, coal and iron deposits awaiting capital and improved mining and smelting methods for development. Rich river valleys enticed the farmer from the Midwest. Boundless pastures beckoned the shepherder and cattleman from California and Texas. A hundred mountain streams thundered the possibilities of water power for industry. All that Montana needed was people, capital, and technology.

In order to get people to Montana Sutherlin argued for a conservative immigration policy, for he considered it a dire mistake to over-sell the country in an attempt to settle it. In place of the "wild rush of fortune hunters" who had come in response to the lure of quick and easy riches in the gold fields, he sought a steady influx of permanent homesteaders who would invest their labor and capital to build up the territory. He was convinced that the truth about Montana would induce persons to come and warned, "it is not required that we write long essays and print argumentative circulars setting forth Montana to be a land of milk and honey—a paradise she is not." Yet he felt Montana should

---

1 Ibid., April 5, 1877.
2 Ibid., February 13, 1879.
3 Ibid., March 23, 1876.
"blow her own horn" and one of the Husbandman's reasons for existence was "to encourage the immigration of a thrifty and industrious population to our rich alluvial valleys."³⁷

The "thrifty and industrious" population would not come, however, unless there was some assurance of steady, profitable employment, an assurance which Montana could not offer in 1875. The placer mines were playing out, and the miners were leaving in search of new bonanzas. Without miners there was no local market to support Montana farmers. No other industries had been developed, and the territory's isolation and lack of good transportation facilities made entrance into the world market unprofitable.

Sutherlin believed Montana could overcome these obstacles to growth and prosperity by building a diversified economy, utilizing and marketing her resources within her own borders. Diversification would provide a broad base for the territory's economy so that dislocation in one sector, such as mining, would not disrupt the entire economy. Varied industries would also provide internal markets. He saw in diversification a means of keeping the profits at home, thereby gradually building up the territory through constant reinvestment.

Agriculture provided the economic foundation for Sutherlin's self-sufficient commonwealth. Though mining would play a dominant role in the economy for many years, eventually the mines would play out. Agriculture alone was permanent.

Within agriculture he also sought diversification. Farmers should not speculate in one area of husbandry, such as livestock or grain. In

³⁷Ibid., November 25, 1875.
1877 he warned the farmers to go easy on raising wheat lest they quickly glut the market.\(^8\) Rather, each farmer should have a diversified farm on which he raised some grain, a garden, livestock, poultry and an orchard. Without diversification the farmer would be left without a marketable crop.\(^9\) While grain and livestock had proven successful, he encouraged the farmers to experiment with new crops. He felt horticulture to be the most neglected aspect of agriculture in the country and urged the establishment of a nursery to develop some hardy fruit strains for Montana's climate.\(^10\) When it was suggested that tobacco could be grown in Montana, he encouraged the Gallatin farmers to try some on a small acreage. Although he did not think the quality would be very high, he thought it might be used for sheep dip.\(^11\)

Sutherlin claimed that diversified agriculture would become the foundation of Montana's future economy, but he did not seek its development at the expense of mining and manufacturing. In his image of a self-sufficient commonwealth the various sectors of the economy were complementary. Though highly critical of the mining industry at times, he encouraged laborers and capitalists to invest in the mines, for the miners afforded a good local market for the farmers' produce. In turn, local farmers were able to supply food for the miners at a much lower price than the miners could import it from outside the territory. During the latter sixties the early mining centers with surrounding farms

---

\(^8\) Ibid., August 16, 1877.

\(^9\) Ibid., May 29, 1879.

\(^10\) Ibid., March 8, 1877; September 20, 1877; June 13, 1878.

\(^11\) Ibid., January 9, 1879.
provided a primitive picture of Sutherlin's self-sufficient commonwealth.\textsuperscript{12}

Agriculture and mining were not enough; Montana needed factories to turn her raw materials into finished products. Sutherlin supported a bill in the territorial legislature to exempt wool manufacturers from taxation for a number of years, for he believed that such a law would "have the effect of building up a needed manufacturing interest in the territory."\textsuperscript{13} He noted that the people were "importing too much of their lard and bacon" when it could be raised and processed in Montana, "thus keeping their money dug from the earth here for the prosperity of the territory."\textsuperscript{14} Sugar, which he felt could be produced in Montana from sugarbeets, was also imported. In addition to products from raw agricultural material, he saw in the coal, iron, and copper deposits resources for heavy industry once Montana's water powers were harnessed. Sutherlin saw thriving industrial centers dotting Montana's vast landscape like little oases. Nourished by the surrounding farmlands, these centers produced all the people needed in the way of manufactured goods. The complementary industries of agriculture, mining and manufacturing insured the self-sufficient commonwealth of gradual growth and prosperity.

\textsuperscript{12}Wilson, "The Evolution of Montana Agriculture," p. 437. The effect of local production on the price of wheat is clearly shown by the figures between 1865 and 1870. "In 1865 wheat sold for ten dollars a bushel, but it dropped to four dollars in 1866 and to two-eighty in 1867. During the years from 1868 to 1871 inclusive, it fluctuated around two dollars a bushel, but from 1871 to 1875 it dropped as low as forty cents."

\textsuperscript{13}Husbandman, January 20, 1876.

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., April 11, 1877.
In addition to a gradually developing diversified economy, Sutherlin sought a land system in which the natural resources were utilized by and for those who permanently established themselves within the territory. He saw two ways through which this could be accomplished: broad ownership of the land and an equitable tax policy.

To achieve broad ownership of the land, he advocated a strict adherence to the Homestead and Pre-emption Laws and the repeal of all other laws and schemes for the disposal of the public domain. He opposed the Desert Land Act from the beginning, claiming that it provided for a "gigantic land steal in California" and did not "benefit the poor person at all." Yet he encouraged farmers to take advantage of the act, "even if it is a bad act." His rejection of plans to lease and sell the public domain in large sections has already been noted. He claimed that the argument for leasing and selling the domain to raise revenue for the government was only a pretext used by capitalists and speculators to rob honest industry of its developed resources, for the monied interest "looks with covetous eyes to the boundless West, and longs to possess it." There was only one way to prevent the monied interest from gaining control of the land; that was to keep the public domain in the hands of the government until it was taken by actual settlers. To those who argued that the government was receiving no revenue from the public domain, he replied, "the paltry revenue that the government would derive from the rent or sale of such lands would be as nothing compared

15 Ibid., May 24, 1877.
16 Supra, pp. 20-21.
17 Husbandman, October 23, 1879.
with what it would receive from actual settlement and development.\textsuperscript{18}

Not only was there a need for broad land ownership in the territory, there was also a need for an equitable tax structure which would retain some of the profits from the territory's resources at home. Sutherlin supported Governor Benjamin F. Potts' recommendations that mines be taxed on the same base as farm land. If land was worth $500 in labor, it was worth that much for taxes.\textsuperscript{19} He also supported a tax on bullion taken from the territory.\textsuperscript{20}

Without a land policy which would guarantee that ownership was held by Montanans and the resources utilized for Montana, the territory would become dependent on outside interests, according to Sutherlin. Such interests were not primarily interested in the development of Montana but in the exploitation of her resources.

It was not enough, however, to prevent Montana's land and resources from falling into the hands of outside interests. The land and resources also needed protection from those who came to settle. To accomplish such protection he argued for a conservation policy which would maintain rather than destroy the land.

He did not argue against mining on this count for he had no plan for the reclamation of mined land. He did point out that, because mining did not replace the resources removed, it was necessarily temporary.

The agriculturist, on the other hand, had means of maintaining his land. In fact, Sutherlin argued that through proper farming methods

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., December 4, 1879.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., January 13, 1876.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., May 17, 1877.
land would actually improve. He soundly condemned general American farming practices and agreed with the Englishman who had claimed: "In the American system of agriculture, the settler subdues a piece of land, flogs it to death, and abandons the carcass; and then he repeats the operation on a new subject." 21 Through improper farming methods American settlers had left thousands of acres of worked-out land across the continent.

In order to conserve Montana's agricultural lands, her farmers would have to do a better job of farming than their fathers had done. To this end Sutherlin urged the farmers to educate themselves in scientific farming methods. "Those farmers who are willing to look into new ideas and experiment, rather than simply following what their parents did, will make the most in the long run and will retain good, profitable farms." 22

One of the problems Sutherlin early recognized was that through overgrazing the cattlemen and sheepherders could ruin the rich native grasses. In the seventies such a possibility seemed rather remote, for in eastern Montana there were thousands of acres of vacant land which had supported great herds of buffalo. But Sutherlin sounded a warning and urged the cattlemen and sheepherders to allow one another plenty of room. 23 In 1866-67, due to a combination of overgrazing, drought and a

---

21 Ibid., December 2, 1875.
22 Ibid., August 23, 1877.
23 Ibid., May 17, 1877. At a later date Sutherlin argued against the proposition to control the range through grazing districts to prevent overgrazing. He claimed that it was nearly impossible to destroy the native blue-joint by overgrazing, and that the arguments used by those who wanted the range managed were in reality attempts to get the land into the hands of the big cattlemen and monopolists. Husbandman, January 13, 1908.
hard winter, thousands of cattle starved to death in Montana.\textsuperscript{24}

While overgrazing became a major issue for the large rancher, the homesteader on his 160 acres faced the problem of keeping a small parcel of land in constant high production. Sutherlin maintained that the only way this could be accomplished was through mixed husbandry. Specialization would wear out the soil. The farmer should cultivate his land properly, keep some livestock to provide manure, rotate his crops between soil-robbers such as grain and soil-builders like alfalfa, and irrigate.\textsuperscript{25} Through good farming practice, the self-sustaining independent farmer not only benefited himself, he also made his land more valuable by using it.

In addition to providing economic stability and prosperity, Sutherlin's program for a diversified economy and broad land ownership mitigated against the concentration of political power in the hands of an elite class and encouraged a broad-based, democratic political structure controlled by the resident masses rather than the absentee classes. He saw in diversification and broad ownership the diffusion of power. He believed that several competing industries would act as a check and balance system preventing concentration of power in the hands of one industry. The self-sustaining farmer could turn away from dependence on some big company, and the laborer who owned his own home would not be at the mercy of the corporation.

\textsuperscript{24}Ernest Staples Osgood, Day of the Cattleman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1929), Chapter VII. Osgood used the Husbandman extensively for information on the cattle industry in Montana. Husbandman, July 11, 1878; July 26, 1877. Sutherlin early urged stockmen to put up hay for times of emergency.

\textsuperscript{25}Irrigation will be taken up in Chapter IV.
In 1878 Sutherlin foresaw an inevitable class struggle for control of Montana. He pointed out that when any country reaches a certain stage of development, the wealth of the country, originally distributed among the masses, is gathered into the coffers of the few. When this stage is reached, class lines are more distinctly drawn and "capital, although the legitimate offspring and product of labor, becomes insolent and arrogant ... and with iron heel seeks to rule or ruin." Although this "great battle for supremacy between capital and labor" had not begun in Montana, it would come in time; when it would come, "the Husbandman will be found on the side of the laborers." 26

Sutherlin was not pleased with the prospect of such a struggle, for he feared it would tear his self-sufficient commonwealth to shreds. He worked diligently to encourage the strengthening of labor and agriculture to prevent the usurpation of power by capital and the mining industry. But his prediction came true. By the turn of the century the "War of the Copper Kings" had immersed Montana in the "great battle for supremacy between capital and labor."

The copper war began in 1888 when Montana's two most powerful copper magnates, Marcus Daly and William A. Clark, squared off in a personal, political and economic feud which engulfed the entire state in bitter controversy. At issue were the selection of the state capital city and the elections for the state legislature which, in turn, would select the United States Senator. 27

26 *Husbandman*, June 6, 1878.

The most controversial issue Montanans were called to decide was the permanent capital city. Clark supported Helena, the temporary capital; Daly nominated his home town, Anaconda. The ensuing campaign became a test of power and prestige between the two copper kings, and each of them spent lavishly to win votes for his city. When the election was over, Helena remained the state capital.28

Sutherlin was a staunch Helena partisan in the capital campaign. Helena was "a cosmopolitan city, a city owned and ruled by the people, a city of magnificence, the most convenient and accessible point to all parts of the state." Anaconda was completely out of the way, and "no one will ever visit the place who starts for any other place." Helena was the "people's city," but Anaconda was under the complete domination of the Anaconda Copper Company. With the capital at Anaconda the Copper Company would own Montana. The election of Anaconda would mean the end of freedom in Montana.

Shall it be Montana, the peerless, proud, untrammeled commonwealth, the home of the brave and free, where the happy yeoman and artisan, nature's nobleman, assays to do and dare; or shall it be the Anaconda Company, the most tyrannical monopoly that ever existed in these Rocky Mountains?29

Not only was Helena the more reasonable choice; necessity demanded it. The farmers and laborers who had spent their lives building up the country needed to act to save it. "Will you sit idly by while the copper chains are being fastened about you and you are made the slave of the

28 Glasscock, The War of the Copper Kings, Chapter VIII. The immense popular interest in the naming of the capital is shown by the election returns. Out of a total state registration of 51,500 voters 145,967 votes were cast. See also, Howard, Montana, High, Wide, and Handsome, pp. 66-67.

29 Husbandman, October 1, 1894.
most merciless corporation that plutocracy ever created?" Sutherlin asked his readers.

Montana, hear our warning voice. You have ever been free, proud and progressive. Labor has always had its reward. It has always ate [sic] the bread of freedom and independence. . . . Better for the primal wilderness, the mountain fastness that possessed this land before the gold hunters came; better, yes, a thousand times, that our state had never been, or that chaos should come again, than that our boasted civilization, our land of empire and wealth, should be given into the hands of a non-resident corporation, a corporation that rules with a rod of iron.30

Once Helena had been chosen as the permanent capital, Sutherlin returned to editorializing on problems facing the farmers. But his antagonism toward the Anaconda Copper Company was not forgotten.

In the late 1890's the battle shifted from a Clark-Daly feud to a struggle between F. Augustus Heinze and the Amalgamated Copper Company.31 During this phase of the copper war the power of the people of Montana was so effectively eroded that Montana's courts, resources, legislature and labor became tools used by Heinze to maintain his precarious foothold in Butte, and by Amalgamated to achieve the corporation's national and international economic and political goals.

The Heinze-Amalgamated controversy was initiated when the Boston and Montana Mining Company claimed that the ore being taken from Heinze's Rarus mine belonged to the Boston and Montana's adjacent Michael Davitt mine. The inability of Heinze to come to terms with Boston and Montana led to a suit against Heinze, the first of the law suits that were to close mines, fill courts and prevent the payment of corporation

30Ibid., October 4, 1894.
31Sarah McNelis, Copper King at War (Missoula: University of Montana Press, 1968), Chapters II, IV.
While the copper war was evolving in Montana, Henry H. Rogers of the Standard Oil Company was investigating the possibility of forming an international copper trust. In April, 1898, he and his associates formed the Amalgamated Copper Company for this purpose. The initial plan to use the Boston and Montana holdings for Amalgamated's core was thwarted by the litigation between Heinze and Boston and Montana. It became necessary for Amalgamated to seek a different foundation for its Montana operations. This was achieved in 1899 when Amalgamated purchased Marcus Daly's Anaconda holdings.

With the purchase of Anaconda, Amalgamated became directly involved in Montana's economy and politics. The Daly-Clark feud was replaced by warfare between the Amalgamated Company and the combined forces of Clark and Heinze. In the election of 1900 the Clark-Heinze combination won an overwhelming victory, assuring Clark's election to the United States Senate and sweeping into the Butte District judiciary Heinze's three candidates: Edward Harney, William Clancy, and John D. McClernan.

The Heinze-Clark union was short-lived, however, for with his senate seat secured, Clark joined forces with Amalgamated, leaving Heinze to battle alone. Heinze did not shrink from the battle, but in the mine shafts of Butte, in the Montana courts and legislature, and on soap box before thousands of miners he fought a desperate fight for

32 Ibid., Chapters IV, VI, VII.
33 Ibid., Appendix II, pp. 211-213.
34 Ibid., pp. 94-96.
survival against the Standard Oil Company in the guise of the Amalgamated Copper Company. In the election of 1902 Montanans showed that they were yet with Heinze in his war on Standard Oil by electing a majority of Heinze's Fusionist Party candidates to office.35

By the fall of 1903, the Standard Oil Company was ready to make clear to Heinze and the people of Montana that it was no longer to be thwarted in its efforts to gain absolute control of the copper industry, and set out to remove the thorn in its flesh, F. Augustus Heinze. In a show of brute power, Amalgamated threatened the entire state with economic devastation if the Company's demands were not met. While Heinze was the center of the immediate controversy, the ultimate issue at stake was corporation domination of the state.

On October 22, 1903, Amalgamated swung the economic cudgel by closing all its Montana operations except its newspapers. So wide-ranging were the company's interests that well over half the wage earners of the state were out of work within a week. "This was no mere strike or shutout; it was the bludgeoning of an entire state."36

For a week Montana waited; its economic life paralyzed. Then came the word. Montana could go back to work if and when a "fair trial" bill was passed. Since the legislature was adjourned, such action required the calling of a special session. Governor Joseph K. Toole, who had strongly opposed Amalgamated's attempts to dominate the state, had little choice and called the legislature into special session. It quickly passed the required bill. Montana went back to work, and

36 Toole, Montana: An Uncommon Land, p. 207.
Amalgamated had the tool to remove F. Augustus Heinze as a serious competitor.  

Sutherlin had shown little inclination to involve the Husbandman in the copper controversy after the capital election, for he claimed to maintain an independent editorial stance. He had argued against special privileges for the mining industry, but he had also praised the men, such as Marcus Daly, who had risked large amounts of capital to develop the gold, silver and copper lodes of the state. While he tended to voice populist and democratic sentiments, he refused to allow the paper to become the mouthpiece for any party or faction.

When Amalgamated closed its mines, mills and stores, however, Sutherlin’s indignation was raised to a point of anger and open hostility. No longer would the Husbandman make a pretense of non-partisanship in the political battles of the state; now it spoke forcefully for the party supporting the anti-Amalgamated forces.

For years the Rocky Mountain Husbandman has suffered in silence, has borne with the people the many wrongs heaped upon them by the Amalgamated Copper Company, but since the close down of its operations in order to compel legislation that would give it an unfair advantage over an adversary, legislation that has practically put the poor classes out of court, forbearance has ceased to be a virtue and the paper with what ability it possesses will not lose an opportunity to show the mighty octopus up in its true light.

Sutherlin set out to rally the people of Montana against the encroachments of the Amalgamated Company, for he saw in the company’s abuse of political and economic clout the destruction of Montana as a

---

37Glasscock, War of the Copper Kings, pp. 277-295; McNelis, Copper King at War, pp. 76-84; Toole, Montana: An Uncommon Land, pp. 208-209.

38Husbandman, January 28, 1904.
self-sufficient commonwealth. Amalgamated had become "such a menace to the liberties of the people . . . that it would be better for Montana that the copper mines cease to produce . . . than that the political control of the country pass into the hands of this mighty coercive power."³⁹ By forcing the passage of the "fair trial" bill, it had placed upon the Montana statute books "the most obnoxious laws in the history of the world." Montana was no longer ruled by the people; it had become the property of the Standard Oil Trust.⁴⁰

Sutherlin made it clear that the Husbandman was not and would not become the property of Amalgamated or any other corporation. "This paper is with the people and for the people," he claimed. "It is an enemy of combine, the trusts, monopolies, and especially of corporation rule." He reminded his readers that the Husbandman "might have been in

³⁹Ibid., January 28, 1904.

⁴⁰Ibid., February 11, 1904. Glasscock does not agree that the "fair trial" bill was a bad law. "In justice and fairness it should be noted that what the corporation wanted was eminently proper. It had been blocked and defied and thwarted for years by Heinze's legal tactics, chiefly Judge Clancy's court. It wanted what it termed a "Fair Trial" bill, under which either party to any suit might demand and obtain a change of venue if it had reason to suspect prejudice on the part of the trial judge before whom the action had been set. Nothing could be fairer than that. Indeed Montana was far behind most states in not already having such a statute.

"But the fact remained that a combination of corporations had, through the threatened starvation of one hundred thousand persons, forced the unwilling governor of a sovereign state to call a legislature to enact laws for its benefit. That the laws themselves happened to be just was ethically beside the point. A combination of capital, for the first time in the history of the United States, openly dictated to a state in which it had invested its money and grown vastly rich, and under the laws of which it was operating." Glasscock, War of the Copper Kings, p. 288. McNelis also believes the Fair Trial Bill to be valuable legislation. "The Fair Trials, or Change of Venue, Bill . . . potenti ally benefited the average Montanan." McNelis, Copper King at War, p. 196.
clover today," if instead of following an independent course he had "listened to the allurements held out by monopoly." He had chosen, however, "to stand shoulder to shoulder with the people in poverty rather than bask in the luxury of ill-gotten gain."\textsuperscript{11}

The \textit{Husbandman's} columns condemning Amalgamated brought a sarcastic reply from the Butte \textit{Inter Mountain}.

How does it happen that the Rocky Mountain Husbandman, professedly devoted to agriculture and poultry breeding, gives columns of profound discussion of the thought that the palladium of liberty is busted bust, and that nothing but Heinze control of the earth can maintain the high price of eggs? . . . If any of these unmuzzled grafters of the press had given expression to an original idea, or a single wholesome truth; if they would point to an existing danger to an honest interest in the state from the operation of the Amalgamated Company; if they would specify a solitary demand or actual purpose of that corporation which is not conceded to every other corporation as a right, they might at once command the respect of the public and confidence of their constituents.\textsuperscript{42}

The Rocky Mountain Husbandman has determined to commence fighting in earnest . . . In future forays for Fritz its clarion yawn will be heard above the clash of contending candidates for county offices in Meagher County. The hen raisers of White Sulphur Springs have awakened to their power . . . The apex of power is located in the weathercock . . . That sort of diversion in an agricultural journal must come high, but presumably Fritz feels that he has to have it.\textsuperscript{43}

Sutherlin refused to be ruffled by the \textit{Inter Mountain's} sarcastic accusations. The insinuation that the \textit{Husbandman} had become a part of the Heinze organization had no substance.\textsuperscript{111} The \textit{Husbandman} was

\begin{itemize}
  \item[\textsuperscript{11}] \textit{Husbandman}, January 11, 1904.
  \item[\textsuperscript{42}] \textit{Inter Mountain}, quoted in \textit{Husbandman}, February 1, 1904.
  \item[\textsuperscript{43}] \textit{Ibid.}, February 13, 1904.
  \item[\textsuperscript{111}] There appears to be little evidence outside the accusations of the \textit{Inter Mountain}, the Meagher Republican, and some of the other presses that openly supported the Amalgamated Company that Sutherlin received any financial support from Heinze. The \textit{Inter Mountain} accused several papers throughout the state with being Heinze mouthpieces, but
\end{itemize}
independent and the Amalgamated Press knew it. Sutherlin looked with incredulity upon the demand that he "specify" in what way the Amalgamated Company could be a "danger" to the state. "Can it possibly be that it is all a dream—that the Amalgamated did not coerce the state?" he asked.

Would the Inter Mountain so soon have the people of Montana forget that the Amalgamated Company "held up the entire state by threatening to starve thousands of employees and their families to death?" With a sense of mission, ardent determination and a little Missouri stubbornness Sutherlin let the Inter Mountain and his readers know exactly where the Husbandman stood.

For twenty-eight years it has voiced dispassionately and without partisan prejudice the best interests of the industrial masses and we defy the Butte Inter Mountain and the entire Amalgamated press of Montana to shake the confidence of the reading world in our utterances. We may err in judgement, for that is a weakness, a shortcoming against which no human being is proof; but this war upon corporation control is not an error and is not a mistake, prone as human kind are to be misled, and the opinion is not given for money. No one knows this better than the Amalgamated Copper Company. We fully understood from the beginning that it would call down upon this newspaper a shower of abuse from the hypocritical self-styled educators of the public, owned absolutely by the Amalgamated Copper interests. But we would rather be right than president and we are right.\textsuperscript{15}

A month later it appeared to the editor of the Inter Mountain that "the bird of freedom has gone goose so far as Montana is concerned."

\textsuperscript{15}Husbandman, February 11, 1904.

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid.
Responding to a notice in the Meagher Republican that Sutherlin had packed up the Husbandman press and equipment and left for an unknown destination, the Inter Mountain bid "the noblest unmuzzled grafter of them all" farewell. In a biting eulogy the Inter Mountain made one more effort to discredit the Husbandman by tying Sutherlin's utterances to an association with Heinze. "Now agriculture has lost her Husbandman. Poultry has lost its poet laureate. Heinzeism has lost its most respectable yammer." Then with condescension and self-praise it added:

But we shall always have the satisfaction of feeling that if the advice of the Inter Mountain had been followed and all of the unmuzzled grafters had compelled the United Court and Copper Company confiscators to put up in advance, things might have been different.47

The eulogy was several years premature. The Husbandman was not out of business; it had only been moved to Great Falls. The move was necessitated by a number of factors, but the failure of Heinze to finance the paper does not appear to have been one of them.

The Amalgamated Copper Company, however, did have an important role in the Husbandman's removal to Great Falls, for the insidiousness of corporation control had permeated the entire fabric of Montana life. It had made a mockery of the Montana legislature; it had held the threat of starvation over the heads of the people; and finally, according to Sutherlin, it had nearly destroyed Montana journalism.48

---
47 Inter Mountain, March 26, 1904. Heinze's copper company was incorporated as the United Copper Company. The Amalgamated interests sought to identify Heinze with the corruption of the Montana judiciary by dubbing the company "The United Court and Copper Company."

Sutherlin claimed that the "mighty octopus" had undertaken the monopolization of Montana journalism by buying the state's newspapers. Where it could not buy a paper, it established a rival and put up the money to cover any deficit in the expense account of such publication. Through this method it drew "well-meaning citizens" into its orbit with the hope of influencing them in order "to control every primary in Montana of both of the old parties and by this means secure ownership of the legislature." Amalgamated had not only destroyed competition; it had "ruined the newspaper industry as a legitimate pursuit." Instead of "an independent, conscientious journalism," Montanans had to read the work of a "bowing, fawning sycophancy." Of the nearly one hundred publications in Montana Sutherlin doubted "if there are as many as a baker's dozen that dare give expression to their honest sentiments." So pervasive was the power of the corporation press that it had become nearly impossible for the independent editor to compete. The general public was left with nothing to depend on "except the feeble efforts of papers that refuse to sell their opinions."

for Sutherlin's accusations against the Amalgamated Press is meager, but it is certain that the Amalgamated Company and later the Anaconda Company controlled many of Montana's newspapers. The extent of that control was strikingly revealed in 1959 when the Anaconda Company divested itself of some of its newspaper interests. Included in the sale to the Lee Newspapers were the Billings Gazette, the Anaconda Standard, the Daily Post and Montana Standard of Butte, the Livingston Enterprise, the Daily Missoulian and Sentinel of Missoula, and the Helena Independent Record.

19 Husbandman, January 11, 1904.
50 Ibid., September 1, 1904.
51 Ibid., September 22, 1904.
52 Ibid., June 16, 1904.
Sutherlin was keenly aware of the Amalgamated presence in Montana journalism because the Meagher Republican, the Husbandman's rival in White Sulphur Springs, was an Amalgamated mouthpiece. The Republican was begun in 1900 as a partisan Republican paper since Sutherlin, though claiming non-partisanship, definitely leaned toward the Democrats and Populists. Also Meagher County was strongly Republican. Max Waterman, the Republican editor, did not intend to establish a permanent paper, and when the election was over in November, 1900, he bid farewell to the newspaper business.\textsuperscript{53}

The need for a Republican paper remained, and in 1902 the Meagher Republican was resurrected, and this time Waterman intended to make it a permanent journal. According to Sutherlin, Amalgamated helped pay the paper's publishing costs.\textsuperscript{54} The Republican continued to publish after the election and directly challenged the Husbandman for local business.

\textsuperscript{53}Meagher Republican, July 20, 1900. "We are simply going to publish this newspaper from this date once a week until after McKinley and Roosevelt have been elected President and vice-President of this, the greatest country on earth, and every nominee of the Republican State ticket shall have been triumphantly elected and the state purged of Democratic rottenness that is a stench in the nostrils of every loyal, law-abiding honest man in the state, regardless of past political affiliations."

Election returns for Meagher County in 1900, 1902, 1904, indicate that the county was strongly Republican. Joseph K. Toole, candidate for governor in 1904, was the only major Democratic candidate to win a majority of the county's votes in those elections. Ellis L. Waldron, Montana Politics since 1861 (Missoula: University of Montana Press, 1958), pp. 91-115.

\textsuperscript{54}Husbandman, August 18, 1904. Sutherlin offers no proof that Amalgamated helped defray the Republican's expenses, and Waterman disclaimed any connection with Amalgamated. Whether Amalgamated was financially connected with the Republican is, therefore, not clear. The Republican did support the Company in its columns.
Once the Republican had declared its permanency, the war with the Husbandman was on. Sutherlin claimed that the county commissioners had denied county printing to the Husbandman and granted it to the Republican for a cost greater than the Husbandman would have received. While the amount of money was not large, it indicated to Sutherlin "the straits a county is reduced to, to support an Amalgamated sheet."\[^{55}\]

The controversy between Waterman and Sutherlin went beyond newspaper publishing and politics. They were on opposite sides in the efforts to establish a county high school at White Sulphur Springs, Sutherlin strongly supporting these efforts. Sutherlin also claimed that Waterman, who was county attorney, had been partner to an attempt to establish a new county from the eastern half of Meagher County. There was thus a background of hostility when Sutherlin openly challenged the Amalgamated Copper Company and its paper, the Meagher Republican, in 1904.\[^{56}\]

Waterman attacked Sutherlin mercilessly. With the reintroduction of the Republican in 1902, Waterman made it clear that the new paper would be not only pro-Republican, it would also be anti-Sutherlin. On the editorial page of the first issue Waterman introduced the theme that Sutherlin had become senile, incompetent, a liar and a grafter. He continued to reiterate this theme often until Sutherlin's departure in 1904.

\[^{55}\]Husbandman, February 11, 1904; November 3, 1904.

There can be no doubt in the minds of the intelligent people but that the Husbandman is on the decline, and has been ever since the brains of that concern died a few years ago. Any one has but to read its pages to be convinced of its senility. We regret it very much and hope for the better, but we very much fear the time is rapidly approaching when the authorities will be called upon to hold an inquisition to determine the sanity of the surviving head.57

According to the Bozeman Avant Courier, a long-time friend of the Husbandman, Waterman was "an obscure and unprincipled pettifogger, ... unprofessional, coarse and brutal," who made "scurrilous abuse of its betters ... a prominent characteristic" of the Republican. The Avant Courier called Waterman's attacks on Sutherlin "wholly uncalled for, vindictive and indecent." The opposition was bitter, and Sutherlin began to look for a new home.58

In addition to the controversy with Amalgamated and the Republican, the death of Will Sutherlin in June 1900 made publishing the Husbandman an increasingly formidable task for Robert. Through his annual investigations of agriculture throughout the state, Will had kept the paper in close touch with the Montana farmers. As the Husbandman's financial officer he formulated a sound fiscal policy for the paper. He also established a place for himself in early Montana history outside his work for the Husbandman. He served in the Territorial Legislature, was in charge of the state's agricultural exhibit at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893, and organized the Montana exhibit at the Omaha

57Meagher Republican, August 15, 1902.
58Avant Courier, January 29, 1901. Husbandman, November 3, 1901. At the time of the 1901 election Sutherlin was not certain of the political conditions of Meagher County, "except that a gang of our Republican friends over there connived with the Amalgamated Copper Company to drive us from the field in order that the coal oil reign in the county might be perpetuated."
Exposition in 1898. His death was a severe blow to the Husbandman. Though there were other correspondents who could report regularly on Montana's agricultural development, there was no one who could take Will's place.59

While the Husbandman was experiencing a period of difficulty in the midst of the copper controversy and the wake of Will's death, White Sulphur Springs and Meagher County were also facing hard times. When White Sulphur Springs became the county seat in 1880, it was the center of a vast domain, but in 1901 Meagher County consisted of only the Smith River and upper Musselshell valleys. Large blocks of land had been taken from the county to form Fergus, Cascade, Sweetgrass, Lewis and Clark, and Broadwater counties. Mining, which had held great promise in the early days, declined as the placer mines played out. The decline of silver closed the Castle Mountain mines and the copper veins at Copperopolis failed to live up to early expectations. The valleys had not been filled with homesteaders; instead, the land had become the property of a few large ranchers. The resources from which White Sulphur had hoped to draw its wealth were gone, and between 1890 and 1900 the county's population was cut nearly in half.60

59 For a full biographical sketch of Will Sutherlin, see Appendix I.

60 Bureau of the Census, Fourteenth Census of the United States taken in 1920, Vol. I (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1921), pp. 114, 115. Between 1890 and 1900 the population of Meagher County dropped from 4749 to 2526. Parts of Meagher County were taken to form Fergus County in 1885, Cascade County in 1887, and Sweetgrass and Broadwater Counties in 1897. Between 1890 and 1900 sections of Meagher County were annexed to Lewis and Clark and Cascade Counties. Meagher County lost further land in 1911 with the formation of Musselshell County and in 1917 with the establishment of Wheatland County.
In spite of its location White Sulphur Springs was by-passed by the railroads. The Northern Pacific chose the Missouri River route, and the Montana Railroad (later the Milwaukee) passed to the south. Without railway access the town had no future as a recreation or commercial center. While the mineral springs were developed, they never became the world-renowned attraction for which Sutherlin had hoped. In 1904 White Sulphur Springs, which had held such high potential, had become just another dusty little Montana town in the middle of a vast cattle range.

With the decline of White Sulphur Springs and Meagher County, the real estate values rapidly decreased. Sutherlin's investments there came to nothing, and the Husbandman went broke. According to William G. Breitenstein, Sutherlin's buildings and land, worth over $50,000 at one time, went to satisfy a debt of $6100. In March of 1904, "being caught between the grinding stones of overinvestment and bitter opposition," the Husbandman was moved to Great Falls "in order to prevent the paper from being put out of existence."

For Sutherlin the move to Great Falls was not a defeat and retreat, but a rededication to building Montana into a self-sufficient commonwealth. He had always considered the Husbandman a state-wide rather than a local journal, and he still had his subscribers. In fact,

61. William Goodheart Breitenstein, "A History of Early Journalism in Montana, 1863-1890" (Master's Thesis, University of Montana, 1915), p. 22. Breitenstein's survey of pioneer Montana journalism is one of the few early accounts of the development of newspapers in the state. He apparently had access to records no longer available and may have known Sutherlin personally.

he saw positive value in the move to Great Falls, for it placed him in
closer touch with the expanding agriculture of northern Montana and in
better communication with the entire state.

Sutherlin maintained the editorial policy he had established in
White Sulphur Springs and urgently pressed in two directions in an at­
tempt to break the copper collar with which Amalgamated was binding the
state. He continued to use the Husbandman as an active anti-Amalgamated
voice in the 1904 election, and he urged the people of Montana to end
the state's economic dependence on mining by pushing for the development
of agriculture.

Sutherlin's anti-Amalgamated campaign consisted of three parts:
a direct attack upon the Amalgamated Company, the support of anti­
Amalgamated candidates, and the passage of direct legislation proposals.
He pressed these issues firmly and consistently for he believed that
success would mean the effective removal of corporation rule from Mon­
tana politics.

Sutherlin reminded his readers that behind the Amalgamated Copper
Company stood the Standard Oil Company and the monied interests of the
East. When Amalgamated had closed its operations in the fall of 1903,
Montanans, who had flattered themselves into believing they were free,
discovered the state to be in the clutches of "the most tyrannical, most
unscrupulous octopus that has ever existed in the history of the nation," and
that the "most offensive and corrupt" of all the great business in­
terests was "striking the final blow at human liberty in Montana."63

The efforts of businessmen in Boston, New York and New Jersey to manage

63Tbid., October 20, 1904.
the political affairs of the people of Montana in order to achieve the corporation's national and international goals and aspirations at the expense of the state had become increasingly distasteful. This abuse of political and economic power threatened the foundations of democracy in Montana.

Control of Montana was important to the Standard Oil Company. In the first place, the resources with which it was intending to build an international copper trust were in the state. The Anaconda Mine, purchased from Marcus Daly, was the greatest copper producer in the world. When added to the holdings purchased from William A. Clark, and the Boston and Montana, it was clear that Montana played a commanding role in the world copper production.

Copper was not Standard Oil's only interest. Behind the Company's political activities in the state was the goal of electing a United States Senator favorable to the Company. Sutherlin claimed the Company already boasted the absolute control of thirty-six members of the United States Senate. But that was evidently not enough, and the Company looked to Montana to increase that number.

Attacking the Standard Oil Company verbally was insufficient to change the situation. Montanans already felt hostility toward the Company. In the 1902 election even Amalgamated employees had voted against Company candidates. Montanans needed more than propaganda; they needed some political tools through which to control corporation activities in the state.

---

64 Ibid., September 22, 1904.
The effort to gain those tools to curb Amalgamated's power began in the attempt to consolidate the anti-Amalgamated forces into a cohesive political body. In January Sutherlin began urging county party conventions to pass anti-corporation resolutions and to see to it that every candidate be required to "renounce any and all allegiance to the mighty octopus and work for the people." A month later he hopefully noted the establishment of anti-Amalgamated clubs in Cascade, Meagher, Fergus, Gallatin and Broadwater counties. He hoped these groups would rally under the banner of Governor Joseph K. Toole to wrest the state from corporation control.

Toole was the leader in crystallizing the anti-corporation sentiment into the major issue of the 1904 election, and as a result he received Sutherlin's unqualified endorsement. In the Eighth Legislative Assembly, Toole had had the courage of his convictions to introduce proposals which Sutherlin believed would have ousted corporations from Montana politics. "Every lover of human liberty" owed Toole "a debt of gratitude for this service." Following Toole's lead the Democrats of Cascade County had risen "in majesty and might" to declare that those recommendations be formulated into the 1904 party platform.

Sutherlin had long recognized Toole as the farmer's friend and believed that two-thirds of Montana's rural people would vote for him regardless of party affiliation. He was an early advocate of government

---

65 Ibid., January 14, 1904.
66 Ibid., February 4, 1904.
67 Ibid., May 26, 1904.
68 Ibid., June 9, 1905.
irrigation; he stood for an equitable tax; and he "had anticipated the future in such a way as stamps him as one of Montana's most profound statesmen."69

In addition to supporting Toole and other anti-Amalgamated candidates, Sutherlin fought for the passage of three measures—the initiative, the referendum and the primary election law—which, he contended, would take political power from the corporations and put it in the hands of the people. These measures would allow the common sense of the masses to prevail against the special interest of the classes. He argued that the initiative and referendum would keep "corporate power, money, greed and jobbery out of our legislative halls" and hold the legislators responsible to the masses. The direct primary would prevent corporations from controlling elections, for no longer would the party leaders choose the nominees for public office. Rather, the will of the masses would prevail.70

If we are to preserve the state and nation from the iniquitous rule of the plutocracy, the iron heel of money, of corporate greed and the grinding trusts, we must make it impossible for money to name our county, state and national officials and write the laws as they desire them upon our statute books. If Montana is to be a free and independent state, if all the people are to have a voice in her affairs, the poor as well as the rich, these measures must be instituted.71

The Amalgamated Company could not ignore the anti-corporation feeling in the state. Toole was popular and experienced. Corporation rule was established as the number one issue. There appeared to be a

69 Ibid., October 6, 1904.

70 Ibid., June 2, 1904.

71 Ibid., May 26, 1904.
large anti-corporation contingent within the Democratic Party with influence beyond party affiliation. The Company therefore moved to counter the efforts of the anti-Amalgamated forces.

According to Sutherlin, the Amalgamated Copper Company sought to regain the confidence and votes of the people through subterfuge, deceit, and a pretended change of heart. He charged that Amalgamated would attempt to fool the people of Montana by using the machinery of the Republican Party to present a "popular" appearance. He predicted that when the State Republican Convention met, it would pass resolutions condemning the Amalgamated Copper Company and declaring its opposition to corporate rule. While passing such resolutions, the party would nominate persons who were either agents of or sympathizers with Amalgamated. The resolutions would be meant as "blank cartridges to make a noise and not do any execution." The personnel selected, rather than finely worded resolutions, would indicate the true position of the party.72

The Amalgamated Company also attempted to convince the people that it had their best interests at heart by selling its stores and newspapers. Sutherlin challenged this move by claiming that the store bill passed by the State Legislature had made selling the stores a move in the best interests of the Company. The proposal to sell its papers was an attempt to "make a play for the galleries by pretending to go out of the newspaper business."73

---

72 Ibid., February 25, 1904.
73 Ibid., March 3, 1904.
It appeared that Amalgamated was pulling in its political horns; in fact, word was out in May that Amalgamated was removing itself from the political business. Sutherlin was glad to see that the Company had "at length seen the errors of their ways." However, he would not be convinced of its sincerity "unless its announcement is followed up by its action," since it was obvious to Sutherlin that Amalgamated was not about to take its hands off Montana politics. Its vested interests in the state were too great. In March, H. H. Rogers of the Standard Oil Company had made it very clear that the 1904 election was important to the Company, and the Company would be actively involved. According to a telegram from Boston to the Great Falls Tribune, it was predicted that "Montana will see in 1904 the greatest political battle ever seen in the state." Mr. Rogers would "take the helm with a stronger grip than ever and is about to make the fight of his life." Sutherlin responded: "We cheerfully welcome Mr. Rogers and his millions of Standard Oil corruption fund to the fray and will endeavor to keep him busy explaining." Sutherlin spoke for the people of Montana, saying that they were not about to be "wheedled about by millionaire leaders" and would not forget the sacred duty they owed themselves, their families and posterity when they entered the privacy of the booths to prepare their ballots.

Should the anti-Amalgamated forces win the election, there still would be no assurance that the self-sufficient commonwealth would be

---

71 Ibid., May 12, 1904.
72 Ibid., March 3, 1904. The Boston telegram is reprinted with Sutherlin's comments.
protected from corporate encroachment. In 1903 the Amalgamated Company had clearly demonstrated its ability to coerce the state through economic pressure. Sutherlin insisted that Montana must end its reliance on copper and seek viable alternative industries in order to protect itself from corporation domination. For Sutherlin, diversification was a necessity for Montana's self-sufficiency, both on political and economic grounds.

Sutherlin saw agriculture as an industry to which Montanans could turn to wrest the control of the state's economic and political destiny from the copper trust. By 1904 agriculture had become independent of mining; in fact, it had developed to a position which challenged the copper industry for first place in the economy. Sutherlin foresaw the day when agriculture would outstrip mining as Montana's major industry. Agriculture had been operating on an independent basis for ten years, "but farmers have never thought to declare the independency of the country until the open declaration of the Copper Company that they could starve the country into submission. This was the straw that broke the camel's back." 76

When Amalgamated shut down its operations in an attempt to force the state into submission, Sutherlin urged the people not to despair but "to seek to locate agricultural homes and become independent citizens instead of children of circumstance." 77 Sutherlin believed that, with the railroads leading to the world's markets, every mine in the state could close, every smelter be extinguished, and Montana would

---
76 Ibid., January 28, 1904.
77 Ibid., January 7, 1904.
still have a market for her cattle, wheat, fruit, and vegetables. He agreed that a local market is advantageous to the rural people and that the state's mines had been a very large factor in promoting Montana's agricultural prosperity, but he denied the assertion that copper should be the dominant industry.

It was neither necessary nor inevitable that the mining and agricultural interests should clash, for they were mutually beneficial. Sutherlin's animosity toward the copper industry did not arise from a conflict of interest between miner and farmer, but rather from the copper industry's attempt to usurp absolute economic and political control of the state.

The agricultural interests of Montana are not hostile to the great mining corporations, as they recognize their importance as an industrial factor in the up-building of a great commonwealth, but they do not propose to surrender this magnificent state to their control. Far from it. They stand upon an independent basis and bow and cringe to no man or set of men... They are building not for themselves alone, but for generations unborn, and when they pass from this sphere of action, they hope to hand the state over to posterity a free and independent people, and untrammeled by any alliance that smacks of monopoly, of corporate rule and the divine right of money and of kings.\textsuperscript{78}

The outcome of the 1904 election did not please Sutherlin, nor did the actions of the Legislature elected that year. Though Toole had been elected and the direct legislative measures passed, political and economic control of the state had not been grasped from the corporations. The people were still at the beck and call of Amalgamated. Yet Sutherlin was not embittered, but determined to carry on. The people had chosen; they could live with the results for four years. For his part he would

\textsuperscript{78}\textit{Ibid.}, May 5, 1908.
continue to press for the strengthening of the agricultural interests to make them an equal power in the self-sufficient commonwealth.⁷⁹

⁷⁹Ibid., January 5, 1905; February 16, 1905.
CHAPTER IV

WATER ON THE LAND

During the first week of April, 1904, farmers throughout Montana received their first edition of the *Husbandman* issued from Great Falls. The move to Great Falls came as a surprise to most of the subscribers. Though rumors of the paper's sale and removal had circulated, Sutherlin had said nothing about a change in location or ownership in his columns.¹

While the change in location caught many readers unaware, the opinions and projects Sutherlin supported in his new home should have surprised no one. He made it emphatically clear that the move was necessitated by local factors and was not indicative of a change in his editorial position. He saw Great Falls on the "threshold of a vast undeveloped agricultural domain" awaiting only someone to give it a push. Here "in the thick of the fight" he was nearer the big projects, closer to home-building on a grand scale. He hoped to make the *Husbandman* a more potent factor in Montana agriculture than ever and rally to his support hundreds who would otherwise remain uninterested.² Though the paper had almost been wiped out of existence, Sutherlin promised to continue with

¹Great Falls Tribune, March 3, 1904. The following notice appeared in the Butte Evening News, March 12, 1904. "W. G. Conrad of Great Falls, has purchased the Rocky Mountain *Husbandman* and will move the machinery today. The *Husbandman* will hereafter be issued from the Falls." The Tribune investigated and reported: "Mr. Conrad last evening stated to the Tribune that he had not purchased the *Husbandman* and knew nothing concerning the ownership of the paper."

²Husbandman, July 14, 1904.
a note of good cheer and urged his friends to say a kind word for the paper. It desperately needed their continued and cordial support.  

Above all, Sutherlin promised to continue the efforts begun in early territorial days to put water on the land. That was the Husbandman's number one mission, for he believed irrigation to be the only absolutely certain method of farming in Montana. So urgently and consistently did he promote irrigation, that he has been called "the father of Montana irrigation" and "the venerable defender of irrigation and the relentless foe of non-irrigated farming." \(^1\) In 1911 Sutherlin wrote, "The Rocky Mountain Husbandman had for its purpose in life that guiding star which meant water on the land and a home where all doubt as to the sustenance was removed." \(^5\)

The water with which Sutherlin would irrigate the vast benchlands and valleys of Montana was stored in her magnificent mountain ranges.

"We never look up at Montana's snowbound mountains that we do not think of the vast treasures bound up in their ice and snow," and he hoped that some day man would learn to treasure water as he does the grains of gold. \(^6\) Each year he watched the late spring flood waters sweep through Montana's canyons and valleys on their way to the Gulf of Mexico and the Pacific. Each summer he listened as Montana farmers wondered if there would be adequate precipitation to produce a crop. And often

\(^3\)Ibid., December 24, 1904.


\(^5\)Husbandman, September 28, 1911. Major Faulds called this article a "classic on irrigation." See Appendix IV.

\(^6\)Husbandman, November 24, 1910.
there was not. He knew that farmers needed a crop every year to keep
from going bankrupt. He concluded that in Montana they could not depend
on the skies; they had to irrigate.

In order to provide a constant and reliable source of water for
irrigation, Sutherlin pressed for increasingly larger irrigation pro-
jects and greater federal involvement. In 1866 he cut an irrigation
ditch on North Creek at the foot of the Belt Mountains and produced
crops greater than those he had raised in sub-humid Missouri. Other
farmers, such as John Bozeman in the Gallatin Valley, had similar suc-
cess. While unaware of the full significance of irrigation for Montana,
Sutherlin was "fascinated" with the idea of a man being able to grow
crops independent of the rainfall. During his first years in Montana,
he became convinced that irrigation was the key to farming success in
the territory, and from its beginning the Husbandman urged farmers to
experiment with irrigation. The plan of individual farmers appropria-
ting water from the living streams as they needed it worked well in
primitive Montana conditions.8

As the population in the valleys increased, it became evident
that a more systematic and cooperative plan for the appropriation and
use of water was necessary. The farmer faced problems too complex for
him to solve alone. The construction of irrigation works required more
capital than the individual farmer had available. As more people sought

---

7 Edmund Burke, A Report on Montana Climate. Montana Agricultural
Experiment Station Bulletin No. 99 (Bozeman: Experiment Station, 1911),
pp. 45-65.

8 Husbandman, June 29, 1876. Wilson, "The Evolution of Montana
water, the issue of water rights became a dominant problem. Farmers who came late found the only land available for settlement was some distance from the streams and springs. Without water such land could not be farmed on a consistent basis.

As early as 1878 Sutherlin urged cooperative action to alleviate the problems of water appropriation, storage, and utilization through either private corporations or irrigation districts. Private corporations took up the challenge and received his enthusiastic endorsement. The irrigation district law had to wait until 1907, for most Montanans believed that the country could best be irrigated by private enterprise.

By 1900 it was evident to many irrigationists that local interests could not solve the problems of extensive reclamation work which Sutherlin deemed necessary to water Montana's irrigable acres. Spring floods continued; in dry years crops failed. The farmers were running the Gallatin River dry each summer. Water rights were in a state of uncertainty. A more comprehensive reclamation program, which would tie

9 Ibid., November 14, 1878. John W. Hakola, "The Development of a Policy Towards Irrigation in Montana to 1908" (Master's Thesis, Montana State University, 1951). Hakola presents a thorough and systematic examination of individual, company, state, and federal irrigation developments in Montana. He traces the history of water rights legislation, state projects, federal projects and private activity. He bases his study on public documents.

10 Husbandman, April 4, 1901.

the problems of flood control, storage and water allocation together, was needed. The Federal Government alone could establish such a program. By 1901 Sutherlin had joined the rapidly expanding group of irrigators demanding government irrigation of the arid lands.

The reclamation of millions of acres of Western lands by irrigation is no longer a sectional issue; it is a national one. It is time that the subject should receive the attention its importance demands. It is legitimately the work of Congress. That body should attend to it.¹²

Congress had not ignored the question of government support for reclamation, but it had been reluctant to place actual reclamation work in federal hands. As early as 1849-1850 Congress had passed the Swamp Lands Acts which ceded land to certain states, provided the revenue derived from the sale of such land be used for reclamation and internal improvements. These acts instituted a means for disposing of much public domain, but they did little for reclamation.¹³

In 1877 Congress took a step toward arid land reclamation with the passage of the Desert Land Act, which applied to eleven western states including Montana. Under the terms of this act a settler could purchase a section of arid land, provided he pay a twenty-five cent per acre entrance fee, irrigate the land in three years, and pay another

¹²Husbandman, June 6, 1901. Sutherlin was a late comer to the ranks of the promoters of government irrigation. Joseph K. Toole had supported the idea of government irrigation at the Constitutional Convention in 1889. "If I have my way ... I believe that I would desire that the Government of the United States would take charge of the whole question of irrigation in these arid regions." Proceedings and Debates of the Montana Constitutional Convention (Helena: State Publishing Co., 1921), p. 551.

dollar per acre at the time of final patent. It was assumed that each individual farmer would see to the irrigation of his own land. In the early eighties the Desert Land Act provided the means through which large blocks of western lands were taken up by cattlemen for pastures, but little was done in the way of reclamation.

After 1886 investors began to turn from ranching to irrigation and several projects were begun on land obtained through the Desert Land Act. In 1891 the law was amended to allow entrymen to associate together and file a joint map showing their irrigation plans. It had become clear to Congress that the reclamation of the arid West was impossible through individual effort alone.\(^1\)

The shift from investments in cattle to the irrigation projects indicated a growing eastern awareness of the value of the reclamation of the arid lands. The result was a boom in irrigation projects and desert land entries.\(^2\) This rapid development alarmed John Wesley Powell, who had become Director of the Geological Survey in 1887, for he feared that full utilization of the water supply in the future would require buying out vested interests at prohibitively high prices. As a result of this fear, he convinced Congress to allow lands designated as reservoir sites and land irrigable from such reservoirs to be withdrawn from entry.


\(^{2}\)Ganoe, "The Desert Land Act in Operation," pp. 145-149. The census figures indicate a rapid development of irrigation projects between 1880 and 1890. This rapid growth cannot be entirely attributed to the Desert Land Act, since Colorado, which was not included under the terms of the original act, had a large increase in irrigation also.
The act served as a virtual repeal of all land laws in a region extending from the one hundredth meridian to the Pacific Ocean, including in whole or in part the states of California, Colorado, North Dakota, South Dakota, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington, and the territories of Arizona, Idaho, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming. No entries would be allowed pending completion of the survey or action of the President to open sections to homestead entry.  

The passage of this measure and the subsequent suspension of further entries on the public domain brought a storm of protest from the West. This strong hostile reaction plus bitter bureaucratic struggles in Washington eventually led Powell to resign his position. Powell had, however, been able to establish reclamation as the most important issue concerning the disposal and settlement of the public domain in the arid regions.

Though reservoir sites were located and certified for reservation by the Geological Survey, there was no agency to build the dams and canals envisioned by Powell. Few private companies could afford the long-term investment needed for large scale reclamation projects, and the states had no funds available for such work. In an effort to prevent the collapse of the entire program Congress passed the Carey Act in 1894. Through the terms of this act several western states were granted up to a million acres each from the public domain, provided the state irrigated and settled the land. "This act constituted a belated recognition that reclamation was too big an undertaking for the individual settler, or even a group of settlers."  

---

The response to the Carey Act was slow. After five years only Wyoming had actually begun irrigation under the terms of the act. While the act was later extended and other states, including Montana, put it to use, it never became the answer to the problems of irrigation in the arid West. It became increasingly evident that any work short of government reclamation would be inadequate to put water on the land in Montana or the other arid states.19

The first official advocacy of federal reclamation projects was contained in Hiram Chittenden's Preliminary Examination of Reservoir Sites in Wyoming and Colorado, published in 1897. Chittendon argued that reclamation in the arid regions was "absolutely necessary" and that the Federal Government should build the needed reservoirs. Reclamation, he pointed out, was interstate in character. Water resources were closely related to the forests owned by the Federal Government. Public opinion in the West increasingly favored government construction of reservoirs. The Federal Government was the largest landholder in the West and the only agency with sufficient means to carry out the program.20

The rationale for government irrigation was clearly established by the Chittendon Report. The irrigation propagandists received a needed boost. In 1900 George Maxwell, representing the National Irrigation Association, toured Montana advocating government aid to reservoir

---

building and canal cutting. Such work, he claimed, "was nothing more than an enlargement of the established policy of river and harbor improvements for which the Federal Government spends millions every year."

It was time the West received its share of those appropriations. He also noted that western reclamation projects would get at the root of the problem of flood control on the Mississippi River for which millions had already been spent. This could be accomplished by "storing the floodwaters in great reservoirs in the mountains as recommended in the now celebrated Chittendon Report."

The Federal Government should not limit its reclamation work to the construction of reservoirs, he added. It should also construct the main line canals that were too large for private capital. Everybody in Montana—stockgrowers, merchants, miners, as well as farmers—would benefit from such work. It was time Montanans and other westerners started putting pressure on the National Congress to get the work started.21

Sutherlin recognized Maxwell as a kindred spirit in the struggle to put water on the land, and he read his comments with great interest. He was, however, reluctant to give Maxwell his wholehearted endorsement. He had always hesitated to support government irrigation for fear of eastern backlash. He knew "the representatives of the greater states of the Mississippi Valley and those further east are jealous of the Rocky Mountain West, since our yields under irrigation are so great." He had

21 Extracts from George Maxwell's speech delivered in Helena in the summer of 1900. Reprinted from the Helena Independent in Husbandman, August 2, 1900. Sutherlin expressed regret at not being able to meet Maxwell in person.
not fought the eastern agricultural interests over this issue, but had been content with "the advocacy of the individual and corporate effort in securing water." Maxwell's visit had caused him to rethink his position and "to discuss the proposition in all its phases from the new standpoint," and he found himself "in hearty accord with Mr. Maxwell in his efforts at reservoir building."  

Within a year Sutherlin had become an ardent advocate of government irrigation. Farmers were running some of Montana's rivers dry, and the farmer whose stream runs dry is no more secure than the farmer dependent on rain. "Montanans need to build storage reservoirs to keep enough water to guarantee a crop and water for their animals. Only a reservoir can guarantee independence to the farmer," and though Montana had many good reservoir sites certified, the dams were not being built.  

It was time for Montana and the West to press for action.  

We very much regret that the whole western country is not devoting its energies to the securing of government aid to irrigation projects calculated to increase the water supply for our western plains. If the government would cut a few long river canals and build a few immense storage reservoirs the production of our country would be greatly increased and homes multiplied.  

Sutherlin had fully boarded the government irrigation bandwagon, which was gathering strength from around the country to push for action in Congress. The drive for federal reclamation was given a tremendous boost by the election of Theodore Roosevelt, who claimed that "the first

---

22 Husbandman, August 2, 1900.  
23 Ibid.  
24 Ibid., January 17, 1901.  
25 Ibid., March 28, 1901.
work I took up when I became President was the work of reclamation.\textsuperscript{26}

With many westerners clamoring for government action and the full weight of the President behind them, the government irrigation forces were able to put the National Reclamation Act through Congress in 1902.\textsuperscript{27}

Sutherlin was elated by the passage of the Newlands Bill. The annual appropriation provided by the bill would mean a steady and gradual reclamation of the country. It committed the nation to the development of its agricultural resources and, hopefully, gave land monopoly an effective check.

The passage of the irrigation bill Friday last by a vote of 164 to 55 in the lower house of Congress is undoubtedly the greatest achievement of the age and will do more toward the development of American homes than anything that has transpired in modern times.\textsuperscript{28}

Sutherlin saw in the Reclamation Act the extension of the homestead principle for providing homes for the poor.

Government irrigation as it has passed Congress means a gradual reclamation and settlement, steady growth and development and the parceling of the domain out to the nation's industrial people. It means small but well-improved production and happy homes. It is the same line of policy intensified that was adopted when the homestead law was ushered in; it means a homestead still to the settler.\textsuperscript{29}

With the creation of the government reclamation program it appeared to Sutherlin that his hope to make Montana a land for the poor


\textsuperscript{27}Congressional Record, 57th Congress, 1st Session, p. 6778. A good cross section of arguments preceded final approval, pp. 6722-6778. U. S. Statutes at Large, XXXII, 338.

\textsuperscript{28}Husbandman, June 19, 1902.

\textsuperscript{29}Ibid.
had come one step nearer fulfillment. He had reluctantly entered the ranks of the government irrigationists, but he had become an enthusiast. In fact, he saw in the national program for the reclamation of the arid West man's cooperation in the realization of a cosmic plan.

When the people of the Mississippi Valley beheld the great freshets from the melting snow sweeping down upon the low lands devastating their crops, they marveled that the world should be so constructed and that there should be floodwaters to destroy their hard labor. But now after the American pioneer has opened up the chief source of these waters it has been discovered that they were created for a purpose, that the earth is so shaped that when the great snow reservoirs melt that man may lay dams across the mountain gorges and hold back these surplus waters to spread abroad over the fertile plains to make them blossom as the rose; and what was a source of distress to the farmer thousands of miles below is arrested in its insipieny in the mountain land that gave it birth where it is turned to best possible account.30

Though Sutherlin was thrilled by the possibilities opened by government irrigation, his joy was tempered by realism. He urged his readers not to expect too much too soon. The Reclamation Law "does not mean a sudden transformation of a vast area into thrifty, happy homes or suddenly make all the arid lands available for agriculture."31 An appropriation of fifty to a hundred million dollars would have been necessary to bring about that kind of transformation, and the Reclamation Fund provided only two and a half million dollars annually to be divided among all the arid states. The people of the West, "instead of resting on their oars and waiting the slow progress of government reclamation," needed "to put their shoulders to the wheel with renewed energy and determination."32

30 Ibid.
31 Ibid., June 19, 1902.
32 Ibid., July 3, 1902.
When Sutherlin moved to Great Falls, he immediately began urging the people of the city to increase their efforts to bring about the completion of the Sun River Project west of the city. He viewed the project as one of Great Falls' greatest assets. "There is no project in the whole scope of government work that promises better results," and he assumed it would be one of the first projects to materialize. He estimated that there would be room for 2500 farm homes there. The Tribune agreed with him, claiming that "the reclamation of this land means a larger support for this city than another smelter would, and it means a more permanent prosperity." Sutherlin hoped "dirt would fly" on the Sun River as early as 1905, and he expressed disappointment with the Federal Government when project plans were slow to materialize.

It is a little disappointing to us that the government is plunging ahead with irrigation projects that it will take years to complete and has set apart no funds at all for the construction of what is conceded and proven by actual estimate to be the cheapest and easiest project of them all—the Sun River irrigation scheme.

Adjudication of the water rights was a major issue on the project. The government was ready to meet the people half way on the issues of water for desert claims and prior appropriation. Sutherlin urged the people to make the necessary relinquishments and have the water rights settled soon. He looked with favor on the efforts to raise money to pay the cost of adjudication.

---

33 Ibid., June 23, 1904.
34 Great Falls Tribune, June 16, 1904.
35 Husbandman, June 29, 1905.
In spite of the settlement of water rights and land claims, the Reclamation Bureau was indecisive. In 1910 the future of the project remained uncertain. Sutherlin believed the dry land propaganda had had the effect of killing enthusiasm for the work. Not until 1912 when the Reclamation Bureau announced that work was to begin immediately did the project's completion seem assured.

Sutherlin was delighted with the announcement. He envisioned 600,000 irrigated acres on the Sun River. The Sun, Teton and Dearborn Rivers would "finally be employed . . . to fertilize the great prairies sweeping eastward from the foot of the grand old Rockies."

Sutherlin's interest in irrigation projects was not limited to the Sun River. He kept the Milk River Project constantly before his readers' eyes. He praised the work on the Huntley Project near Billings and was pleased that Indian lands were being reclaimed. Every project, no matter who was building it or how large it was, received his recognition.

Sutherlin's drive for irrigation projects was rooted in his vision of Montana's future. He was convinced that water was the key element in Montana agriculture. Irrigation alone made the foundations of development—the homestead, diversified agriculture, successful cropping and conservation of the land—possible. Without irrigation none of these could be guaranteed. Realizing that many people considered him a "crank on irrigation," he maintained a constant propaganda for new and expanded projects.

36 Ibid., July 28, 1910.
37 Ibid., June 20, 1912.
While it is not our intention to discourage farming without irrigation, we feel it a duty we owe the country to insist upon the construction of every irrigation project possible and [sic] that is calculated to water any considerable land.38

By putting water on every irrigable acre, the number of homes for the poor would be greatly increased. Irrigation would transform a land of light growth of bunchgrass, which supported only a few head of cattle or sheep, into a garden and dot the landscape with numerous homes. Irrigation made possible the society of small independent farmers which Sutherlin envisioned for Montana.

Sutherlin contended that irrigation was a guarantee to the small farmer that his plowing and sowing would not be in vain. "Irrigation means freedom from anxiety, days without dread, and nights of sweet refreshing sleep. It means that the farmer can make calculations in advance and having made them drive to them safely and surely."39 With irrigation the farmer "controlled the season." He could go to the head of the ditch and turn the water onto his fields when the rains did not come. "There is no such word as 'fail' in the vocabulary of crop raising where the farmer with his own hands controls the seasons."40 There were men who could afford the loss of a crop, perhaps even two or three years in a row. But the poor homesteader had to have a crop every year. Irrigation alone could provide such a guarantee.

Not only did irrigation guarantee a crop every year; it also made mixed husbandry possible and practical in Montana. Nearly every crop

38 Ibid., July 2, 1904.
39 Ibid., June 2, 1910.
40 Ibid., January 7, 1904.
raised in the northern temperate zone could be grown in Montana if there
was water. Orchards produced fruit in abundance. Small irrigated pas-
tures yielded good fodder for milk cows and a horse. Whereas the dry
land farmer depended on either stock or cereals, the irrigator could
fill his table with "vegetables fresh and crisp from the garden," poul-
try and eggs, dairy products, fruit and cereal. "And the beauty is that
once you own the land and supply the water system, you are fortified for
life." Water on the land made the homesteader self-sufficient.\(^1\)

The irrigator's self-sufficiency was permanent, for through irri-
gation the fertility of the land could be maintained indefinitely. It
allowed for the rotation of crops so the farmer could alternate his
plantings—one year planting soil-robbers, such as wheat, another year
planting soil-builders like alfalfa. Thus, year after year through
diversification he maintained his land. Mixed husbandry also provided
a means of building up the land, since livestock manure made excellent
fertilizer. And finally, "water of itself turned in copious floods over
exhausted lands is a great fertilizer," since irrigation water carries
large amounts of silt onto the land.\(^2\) Investment in irrigation thus
insured the farmer against crop loss in the present and guaranteed that
his land would continue to produce in the future. This was the kind of
security the homesteader needed.

Irrigation would provide security for the entire commonwealth.
It would strengthen the power of the masses. In place of one cattle or

\(^{1}\) *Ibid.*, August 18, 1901.

p. 225. \"Where water was available an irrigated farm was the safest in
the world, for it depended on no meteorological luck, and properly wat-
ered it had its fertilizer spread upon it naturally every year in the
form of silt.\"
wheat rancher controlling thousands of acres, the land would be divided and hundreds of small yeoman farmers would live on the land. The country would then be filled with "independent freeholders rather than a population dependent on the push, progress and investments of the few."\textsuperscript{13} They would be homeowners rather than tenants. They would be responsible for the political and economic well-being of the state. They would view Montana as a home, not simply as an exploitable resource.

The cause of labor would also be benefited by irrigation. In fact, only with water on the land could the West act as a "safety valve." Thousands of irrigated homes would provide an opportunity for the men and women in the "pent up hives" of the city to "swarm out of those hives and cover the western fertile valleys and plains with an intelligent and industrious population."\textsuperscript{14} For those who chose to work in the mines and factories of the state, it also offered a chance for a home. On a small irrigated acreage such as Orchard Homes in Missoula, the worker could raise food to sustain him through times of depression. Sutherlin even suggested that the men working at the Great Falls smelter would work half time at the smelter, if they were provided with irrigated homes. The number of men working at the smelter could be nearly doubled, and each man would also have a small acreage to sustain him and his family in slack times at the smelter.\textsuperscript{15}

The entire state of Montana would benefit from irrigation. Water on the land would increase and maintain the total agricultural output.

\textsuperscript{13}Husbandman, July 11, 1901.
\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., June 6, 1901.
\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., January 12, 1905; April 8, 1909.
The state would grow more of its own necessities and be less dependent on outside resources. Agriculture would become competitive with other industries, especially mining. Such an economic position would make it more difficult for one corporation to dominate the state. Irrigation was a tool with which the state might effectively challenge corporation rule.

For Sutherlin, water on the land guaranteed the establishment of a self-sustaining commonwealth providing homes for the poor. He knew that the development of that commonwealth would take time, but he was patient and willing to devote his life to achieving it.

In the fiftieth anniversary edition of the Husbandman an old friend paid tribute to Sutherlin.

From the first the editors of the Rocky Mountain Husbandman told the people of the Territory that the days of the open range would pass, and that the prosperity of their future to a great extent would be grounded upon the marvelous, undeveloped agricultural resources of their vast domain. It urged them— and is still doing so—to "get water on the land." The paper rhapsodied over the magic cure to be wrought by the irrigation ditch. When cleaning out his magic watercourse in the spring with a scrapper, pick and shovel, or repairing breaks in the broiling sun, the toiler had difficulty appreciating the rhapsody.16

Nevertheless, when the rains failed, and the hot Montana wind scorched the land, when dry land crops shriveled, the irrigator also "rhapsodied" over the "magic watercourse." When extended drought drove Montana's population from its dry land farms, it appeared that Sutherlin's demands for water on the land made sense.

Yet irrigation by itself was not an adequate answer to the problems of Montana agriculture. There was not enough water in Montana to

16Ibid., November 26, 1925.
irrigate the vast areas envisioned by Sutherlin. John Wesley Powell estimated that only 35,000,000 acres could be irrigated in Montana if every drop that fell in the state was utilized within the state's borders. Furthermore, it was not feasible to put a dam across every valley and gorge of the Rockies. Outside the environmental questions which should be raised concerning such a scheme, there are engineering and economic problems which render such a plan unsound. Finally, to present irrigation as a poor man's business was stretching the truth. It took capital to start an irrigated farm even under the liberal terms of the Reclamation Act.

In spite of these flaws in Sutherlin's promotional scheme, it stands as an admirable attempt to build some lasting foundations for Montana agriculture and provide secure homes for Montana's laboring people.

---


18 See Appendix V.
CHAPTER V

OVERSELL

Over fifty years ago a great magician ruled in northern Montana. His domain was that section of the state which is now traversed by the Great Northern Railroad. His name, a household word, was James J. Hill, premier railroad builder of his time. When he smiled, robust towns sprang into existence; when he frowned sage brush grew on sites that sought his town creating favor.¹

The "great magician" smiled on Great Falls, Montana. There with his long-time friend, Paris Gibson, Hill founded a city destined to become the commercial and industrial center of northern Montana. The Boston and Montana Copper Company had located its giant smelter there. The cataracts of the Missouri furnished a source of hydroelectric power giving the city the title "Electric City." On the Sun River plains to the west and along the Milk River to the northeast the Federal Reclamation Bureau had tentative plans for large projects which would greatly increase the city's surrounding population. The land to the south had proven to be excellent dry land country. There were also large cattle ranches in the vicinity. And most important of all, J. J. Hill had linked Great Falls to the world trade centers with his Great Northern Railway.

In 1901, Robert Sutherlin entered the land of the "great magician" to begin anew his efforts on behalf of the Montana farmer. Twenty-five years earlier he had moved to White Sulphur Springs with high hopes that a great city would grow up around him, but his dreams had been shattered.

¹Mineral Independent, August 20, 1914.
Now he was setting up his press in a city whose future greatness seemed assured. In Great Falls he was not a founder; he was an intruder.

Sutherlin's first years in Great Falls proved to be a time of testing for the Husbandman. It was a personal trial for him to give up his "cherished idols" in White Sulphur Springs and leave the efforts which had engaged him there for a quarter century. When he departed from White Sulphur Springs many of his plans had come to nothing. The Bozeman Avant Courier expressed sympathy for Sutherlin in acknowledging his removal to Great Falls.

The Rocky Mountain Husbandman has been moved from White Sulphur Springs to Great Falls, where it will doubtless find a wider field of usefulness, a much larger community and a more appreciative local constituency. Unless a man's inclinations tend toward association with snarling curs and snapping turtles, he should never seriously think of locating permanently in a little pent-up, hide-bound, unprogressive village. The chances are two to one against a laudable ambition to lift such a place out of its old traveled ruts.²

Sympathy was not enough. The Husbandman was bankrupt and Sutherlin pleaded for continued financial support from his subscribers. Furthermore, he was no longer a young man. At sixty, an age when most men are thinking of retirement, he found it necessary to begin anew, to start from scratch to build his long envisioned promised land for the poor.

Though the paper had nearly folded, the vision had not dimmed. Sutherlin chose Great Falls specifically because the city had "the largest field of undeveloped agriculture of any point in the state . . . and will become the greatest agricultural city west of St. Paul."³ In spite of the opposition he had encountered in White Sulphur Springs, he

²Avant Courier, quoted in Husbandman, March 31, 1904.
³Husbandman, April 7, 1904.
continued to have a large circulation, since he had always sought to maintain a statewide interest. The move had been difficult, but Sutherlin was optimistic about the future.

His reception in Great Falls was unenthusiastic, and he could not draw the support which should have come to an agricultural journal in the area. There were other newspapers, but there was not a farmers' paper with which he competed. He could not induce Great Falls businessmen to advertise in the *Husbandman*, and at the end of a year he was asking, "Is there anything wrong with this publication?" He claimed it to be "the most widely circulated weekly between the Twin Cities and the Pacific Coast." The people of Great Falls could "well afford to take an interest in the welfare of a journal so well and favorably known." A little support was all he sought, "just enough to show us you welcome us to your midst." "Are we to have the right hand of fellowship or the marble heart?"[^4]

The truth was that he was not welcome in Great Falls, and he was unwilling to change his editorial policy in order to be accepted. He had founded the *Husbandman* as a spokesman for the best interests of the farmer, and he refused to betray him. "[The *Husbandman*] is fearless and reflects the sentiments of its editor. It does not take dictation from anybody." He would "paint things as they are," even if it forced him to go out of business. "We are for the people."[^5]

There were genuine differences of opinion between Sutherlin and the leadership of Great Falls over the future of the city and the

[^4]: *Tbid.*, December 1, 1904.
[^6]: *Tbid.*, December 14, 1905.
surrounding area. These differences created a constant undercurrent of opposition for years. Sutherlin's most obvious departure from the views of the leadership of the city was his attitude toward the copper industry. Copper smelting was Great Falls' basic industry, and Sutherlin's antagonism toward the copper interests was well known. He put the people of Great Falls on notice that he would continue to work to rid the state of its copper collar, and that he would begin with their city. In the first Great Falls issue of the Husbandman he made his point: "From this day forward Great Falls breaks the shackles of its copper throwdom and starts out on the broad and enduring basis of agriculture."

He chided the Great Falls businessmen for concentrating on the smelter business and ignoring the rich agricultural potential surrounding them. "The merchants are enterprising and progressive, but they seem to be imbued with but the one idea that this is a smelter or manufacturing town." He recognized the importance of the smelter, flour mills, foundry, breweries and woolen mills, but these paled in significance when compared to the fertile lands tributary to the city. There was need for push to develop those agricultural resources, and the businessmen were holding back.

Sutherlin criticized the Great Falls merchants for paying too little attention to the local farmers. "They do not advertise in the farmers' newspaper or make any effort to induce the farmers to come here." The farmers needed a good cash market for their produce. Though Sutherlin had urged farmers to bring their vegetables, eggs, butter,

---

7 Ibid., March 31, 1904.
8 Ibid., April 14, 1904.
poultry, and fruit to Great Falls, he had received "little encouragement" from the city people. Great Falls merchants needed to let the farmer know that they would buy his produce. "The farmer will not forget the man who offers him the most consideration."^\(^9\)

The Husbandman was also one of the few Montana papers that supported organized labor. "We are not so selfish and narrow as to presume that labor is always fair and right in its demands," Sutherlin explained to his readers. He supported unions because he believed that in the modern world organized labor had become a necessity. He argued that capital was not concerned with the welfare of labor, but measured the value of the worker in terms of competition only. "It is better for the human family that we have organized labor and that [the] effort be made to hold wages up to a fair scale than that the many submit to the dictates of the few." Montana's industries were in the hands of the "moneyed kings of the East." All that Montana was receiving from her resources were the costs of production. The state could not afford to allow wages to fall, for in doing so even more money would go out of state. "The men of toil must stand together--the welfare of the state demands it."^\(^11\)

Sutherlin believed that the interests of the farmer and laborer were complementary. He appreciated the participation of the Montana farmers in the Knights of Labor organization. He also encouraged laborers to turn to agricultural pursuits for their own security, but realized

---

^9Tbid., August 24, 1905.
^10Tbid., April 11, 1904.
^11Tbid., August 17, 1905.
that "some people will always have to be wage workers." Combined labor was "acting the part of wisdom" when it pursued a course "calculated to give it dignity and standing." Laborers had to stand together to protect the working man from the encroachments of capital.\textsuperscript{12}

Certainly Sutherlin's open hostility toward the copper interests, his chiding of Great Falls businessmen for their reluctance to encourage the farmers, and his ardent support of organized labor were cause enough to incur the opposition of the commercial interests of the city. In 1904 and 1905 these issues appeared as the basic reasons for Sutherlin's early rejection in Great Falls.

Though these were the most explicit sources of opposition to Sutherlin in the city, there was another more significant battle line being drawn between Sutherlin and the dry land farming promoters. This conflict did not peak for several years, but Sutherlin was apprehensive concerning the direction of agricultural development in northern Montana when he first moved to Great Falls. Long before the dry land promotion became a full-fledged propaganda campaign in Montana, he was raising arguments to challenge its contentions.

There was good reason for Sutherlin's apprehension over the dry land farming movement, even when it was in its infancy. When J. J. Hill built the Great Northern into the Milk River region in 1890, the railroad and the local press made the mistake of booming the area by claiming that good crops could be grown there year after year without irrigation. "[The \textit{Husbandman}] gently hinted that . . . there was no district in Montana of any considerable size where crops could be grown safely and

\textsuperscript{12}Tibid., July 21, 1904.
successfully one year with [sic] another without artificial watering."

The warning was not heard, and a number of farmers were induced to settle on the dry lands along the Great Northern. Many did not stay long, for the outlay was too large and crops failed. Sutherlin saw what the result would be and told the railroad and the boomers. "Yes, the Rocky Mountain Husbandman fearlessly and alone stood up and denounced the scheme as ruinous to the country and it was correct." ¹³

Being correct does not mean acceptance. Sutherlin's challenge to the early booming of the Milk River was not lightly received. "It was suicidal in a business sense to oppose the boomers and expose their tricks, but it was a duty and we did not shrink from it." ¹¹ Some patronage was withdrawn and the Great Northern instituted a lengthy boycott of the paper. The Husbandman was not badly hurt, however, for there was a growing irrigation movement which promised development of the Milk River area, and the Great Northern soon began to promote irrigation there. ¹⁵

In the dry farming talk of the first five years of the century Sutherlin anticipated a renewal of the old controversy. The battle line was by no means clear in 1904. Irrigation was receiving strong support in the Great Falls area. As Sutherlin pointed out, "we simply drifted in on the agricultural wave which government irrigation vouchers to arid America." The report of the Montana Bureau of Agriculture,

¹³Ibid., June 1, 1893.
¹¹Ibid.
¹⁵Ibid., July 14, 1904. Hill became one of the most ardent promoters of government irrigation by 1900. The boycott of the Husbandman had been lifted and the Great Northern advertised in its pages regularly when Sutherlin moved to Great Falls.
Labor and Industry for 1900 supported the idea of federal reclamation. The Great Northern Railway promotional pamphlet, *Across America Via the Great Northern*, published in 1899 and 1900, made no mention of farming without irrigation west of Minot, North Dakota. According to Mary Hargreaves, "neither the State nor the railroad companies featured dry-land cultivation between 1900 and 1906."\(^{16}\)

There was strong irrigation sentiment in Great Falls. When land around Great Falls was withdrawn from entry pending surveys to determine reservoir sites and canal lines, the Tribune claimed "the government is actuated solely by a desire for the best interests of Montana; and the policy will result very greatly in Montana's interest."\(^{17}\) It urged immediate action on the Sun River Project, asserting that such work would be more beneficial to Great Falls than another railroad.\(^{18}\) It criticized the Teton County Republicans for seeking to have the Sun River area reopened to desert entry, calling such a move a request for the government to abandon irrigation in northern Montana.\(^{19}\) When word reached Great Falls that work on the Milk River Project was to begin immediately, the Tribune labelled the message "the best news that has come to Montana for a long time."\(^{20}\) It pressed for increased national

\(^{16}\)Mary Wilma Hargreaves, *Dry Farming in the Northern Great Plains* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), pp. 132-142. Hargreaves presents the dry farming movement as a promotional attempt to people the northern Great Plains. She claims that promotionalism was the key innovation of the dry farming movement of the early twentieth century. Though Sutherlin consistently criticized the dry farming movement, Hargreaves does not mention him.

\(^{17}\)Great Falls Tribune, January 7, 1904; June 26, 1904.

\(^{18}\)Ibid., June 16, 1904; June 26, 1904.

\(^{19}\)Ibid., April 5, 1904.

\(^{20}\)Ibid., April 27, 1904.
support for reclamation by backing proposals that Congress make a direct
appropriation from the treasury for the work. Sutherlin's irrigation
ideas thus had firm backing in Great Falls.

However, there were also some dry farming experiments under way
in north, central and eastern Montana, and the dry land propaganda was
filtering in from the Midwest. In 1898 the Montana Agricultural Experi­
ment Station at Rozeman began experiments with the Campbell Soil Culture
System. After a season the results were uncertain, but R. S. Shaw,
assistant agriculturalist, believed that the system "should prove of
great service on arid lands where water is unavailable." A year later,
after a comparison of crops grown by the Campbell system and by general

---

21 Ibid., June 19, 1904.
22 Hargreaves, Dry Farming in the Northern Great Plains, pp. 85-95.
Hardy W. Campbell was the best-known exponent of the dry land propaganda.
Between 1885 and 1902 at work on his farm in South Dakota, as a lecturer
and farm manager for the Northern Pacific, Burlington, Soo, and Chicago
and Northwestern railroads, he developed a system of cultivation which
he claimed would bring about the successful cultivation of the arid
region of the United States without irrigation.

By the time he published his first Soil Culture Manual in
1902 Campbell had merged the concepts of sub-surface packing and
inter-row cultivation into the pattern of recommended agricul­
tural practice in the northern Plains. The system which became
identified with his name thus included also deep fall plowing,
thorough cultivation both before and after seeding, light seed­
ing, and alternating summer fallow with the land tilled during
the season of fallow as well as in crop years (p. 87).

So completely was Campbell identified with dry land farming that the
Campbell label was applied to much cultivation that bore little resem­
blance to his procedures. "Whether as the exponent of a procedure, a
theory or a faith, Campbell was the early embodiment of the dry-farming
propaganda on the Great Plains" (p. 53).

23 Montana Agricultural Experiment Station, Sixth Annual Report,
Montana Experiment Station Bulletin No. 2h (White Sulphur Springs: Rocky
farm culture using irrigation, he concluded, "the Campbell system will
not compete with methods of irrigation, though it may hold an important
place in crop production in arid regions where water is not available." The Experiment Station gave only qualified support to the Campbell sys­
tem, and publicity given to dry farming development by the state govern­
ment and the railroads was tentative and limited.

Dry farming had found an enthusiast in the person of Paris Gibson,
founder of Great Falls. He had become convinced that there was a future
in dry farming, though he was also a firm believer in irrigation. In
1900 he wrote an article for the Great Northern pamphlet General Informa­
tion About Montana, in which he concluded:

The time, in my opinion, is not far distant when the great
plateau between the Sun and Missouri rivers and the Marias
River will be dotted all over with fields of wheat and barley,
grown without irrigation ... There never was a greater error
than the belief that a large rainfall is necessary to succes­
ful grain growing on the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains.

Even though the Great Northern played down dry farming and the Experiment
Station gave it only qualified support, Gibson continued to promote dry
land farming efforts. In 1904 he wrote a letter to the Husbandman sup­
porting the dry farming success in northern Montana. He asserted that

24Montana Agricultural Experiment Station, Seventh Annual Report,
Montana Experiment Station Bulletin No. 28 (White Sulphur Springs: Rocky

25Hargreaves, Dry Farming in the Northern Great Plains, pp. 133-
135.

26Great Falls Tribune, April 27, 1904. "[Paris Gibson] was one
of the main factors in getting the national irrigation law passed, and
he has been the main factor in getting it applied to Northern Montana
projects."

27Great Northern Railway, General Information About Montana, pp.
19-20, cited in Hargreaves, Dry Farming in the Northern Great Plains,
p. 135.
there had been no failure of the wheat crop between 1890 and 1901 in Cascade County. He proclaimed the area ideal for the homesteader seeking a free home in Montana. He sought the repeal of the Desert Land Act and the commutation clause of the Homestead Act, for he believed that repeal would be in the best interests of the small homesteader who could claim his heritage on Montana's dry lands. Montana farmers were split over these repeal efforts and uncertain in their attitude toward dry farming.

Unlike those who wavered on these issues, Sutherlin was very certain in his attitude toward repeal of the Desert Land Act and dry farming. He wanted all the land disposal laws except the Homestead Act and the Pre-Eemption Law repealed, and he was an irrigationist. For him Montana's agricultural future demanded water on the land. He viewed the talk of farming without irrigation as a false hope for the homesteader. So firmly was he convinced of the futility of dry farming for the homesteader, that even before the promotional propaganda of the Experiment Station, the railroads, the state and other "boosters" was fully mobilized in the efforts to sell dry farming in Montana, Sutherlin was attacking the idea. He warned the people of Montana and would-be homesteaders to shun dry farming and put their faith and money into irrigation.

Sutherlin's reaction to the embryonic dry land promotion was grounded in his experience. He had lived in Montana for over thirty-five years and had carefully chronicled agricultural development

---

28Letter from Paris Gibson to the Husbandman, July 21, 1901.
29Hargreaves, Dry Farming in the Northern Great Plains, pp. 136-140.
throughout the state. He had witnessed efforts to make a living by ranching, stock farming, homesteading, with both irrigation and dry land techniques. All his experience had pointed to one basic conclusion: the farmer in Montana had to have a water supply with which to irrigate in order to have a crop every year. To tempt a homesteader to settle in Montana without seeking to help him secure a water supply was to court disaster. The uneasy warnings Sutherlin voiced upon entering Great Falls became a crescendo of attacks on the dry land farming movement which constituted the major theme for the Husbandman during the remainder of his career.

The first indication that the dry farming movement was to receive an emphatic boost came in the spring of 1903. At Wayne Siding near Great Falls a temporary sub-station was established by the Experiment Station with three objectives in mind: first, to test the methods of cultivation and kinds of crops that would yield the best without irrigation; second, to determine how to construct a small reservoir to catch the flood water of the spring for stock water and limited irrigation; third, to control overflow from the reservoir and use it to irrigate spring and fall.\(^3\) This appears to have been sound experimental work by the Station. During the following year four more sub-stations were established specifically for dry land research. The funds for this work came from the Northern Pacific Railroad, the United States Department of Agriculture, and the state.\(^3\) F. E. Linfield, Experiment

\(^3\)Montana Agricultural Experiment Station, Eleventh Annual Report, for the fiscal year ending June 20, 1904 (Bozeman: Experiment Station, 1904), p. 191.

\(^3\)Montana Agricultural Experiment Station, Twelfth Annual Report, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1905 (Bozeman: Experiment Station, 1906), p. 211.
Station director, expressed the hope that the work could be extended for several years. The Great Northern, Northern Pacific, and the state fulfilled this hope the following year by providing $4500 which could "only be used for tests on the dry bench lands."

While the funds for experimental work in dry farming were increasing, the irrigation department of the Experiment Station was short of funds. It lacked adequate equipment, it was dependent on inexperienced personnel, and it was placing too much work on one director.

By 1907 the Experiment Station was ready to make some definite statements concerning the possibility of dry farming in Montana. The conclusions drawn by F. B. Linfield are about what the experience of Montana farmers since 1870 had shown.

The crops on the dry land are going to be affected to a considerable extent by this variation in rainfall. In the wetter seasons crops will generally be extra good; the average rainfall should also bring good crops. However, when the rainfall is below the average, as it was in 1904 and 1905 at Havre (as well as over much of northwestern Montana east of the range), when the rainfall for the two years was but 15.37 inches or but little more in the two years than the average annual rainfall, we may expect under such conditions partial or complete crop failure.

Through his work at the Experiment Station farms, Alfred Atkinson developed a method of dry land cultivation which closely resembled the Campbell system. The railroads and the state continued to support the dry farm investigations, while the irrigation division of the Station

---

32 Ibid., p. 237.
33 Ibid., pp. 292-296.
34 F. B. Linfield, Dry Farming in Montana, Montana Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin No. 63 (Bozeman: Experiment Station, 1907), p. 11.
35 Ibid., p. 25.
did only minor work.\textsuperscript{36}

In 1908 the results of dry land experimentation were offered to the state's farmers. The \textit{Sixth Annual Report of the Montana Farmers' Institutes} was devoted entirely to dry farming. In a combination of educational information and commercial propaganda the full scope of the dry land program in Montana was described. Much of the material in the report was based on the work of the Experiment Station. The theory behind the current dry land methodology was discussed and a description and illustrations of the implements needed to carry out that methodology were presented. The dry farming technique was understood principally as a means of retaining the natural moisture from one year for the next through intensive cultivation procedures.\textsuperscript{37}

In addition to the work of the Station, the report also contained some of the more speculative propaganda of H. W. Campbell and his followers. The main thrust of Campbell's argument was that through a systematic tillage procedure farming could be carried out consistently and successfully in regions where the rainfall averaged less than 15 inches per year. Through his work for several railroads on dry land farms in North Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas and Colorado, he concluded that "the crop growth and grain yield was governed largely by the physical condition of the soil." He had become so convinced of his technique that he believed he could "grow larger crops of grains and vegetables

\textsuperscript{36}Montana Agricultural Experiment Station, \textit{Thirteenth Annual Report}, for the year ending June 30, 1906 (Bozeman: Experiment Station, 1906), pp. 112-114, 155-157.

under a 15-inch annual rainfall, on the average high level prairie, than is now grown by the average man who farms by irrigation."

W. X. Sudduth, one of Campbell's most outspoken disciples in Montana, made even greater claims for Campbell's tillage methods. "Under modern methods of tillage even a land of from seven to ten inches of precipitation may be made inhabitable and support a dense population." With proper instruction the newcomers to central and northern Montana would find certain success.

Mr. Campbell comes as a prophet indeed, a bearer of good tidings, for by his methods the deserts may verily be made to blossom as the rose, and the land that now produces only sage brush and cactus be made to flow with milk and honey and produce bread for the nations of the earth.39

Sudduth testified that Campbell had so perfected his system that "where his methods are intelligently followed, he affirms that there need never be a crop failure, even where the annual precipitation is as low as seven inches."40 What a promise! If true, every tillable acre in Montana could be farmed successfully every year.41

Sutherlin saw in the dry farming emphasis of the Experiment Station and the Farmers' Institutes a betrayal of the best interests of the Montana farmer and the immigrant homesteader. He felt the betrayal

38 H. W. Campbell, "The Campbell System; What is it?" Montana Farmers' Institutes, Sixth Annual Report, pp. 75-77.
40 Ibid., p. 81.
41 Edmund Burke, A Report on Montana Climate, Montana Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin No. 55 (Bozeman: Experiment Station, 1914), pp. 45-65. The records show that rainfall was less than 7 inches in Butte, 1895; Chester, 1901; Cut Bank, 1910; Great Falls, 1904; Hamilton, 1899; Helena, 1899.
deeply, for he had once been an enthusiastic supporter of the Station and its Farmers' Institutes program. In the late 1890's he and his brother Will had worked closely with the Station organizing local Farmers' Institutes. From April, 1897, to April, 1900, the Husbandman printed the Station's bulletins. When the Farmers' Institutes received an appropriation from the State Legislature to enlarge their work, Sutherlin and W. M. Wooldridge were credited with preparing the first draft of the bill. Until 1905 he was an active participant in the Institutes, but he could not tolerate the use of the Experiment Station and the Farmers' Institutes to "boost" Montana on the basis of an "unsound" agricultural system.

Sutherlin's alienation from the Experiment Station continued throughout the period, for he believed the experts were "endeavoring to turn the country over to dry land farming before the work of irrigation has reached half its limit." It appeared to him that the Experiment Station people had "abandoned irrigation for the fickle and uncertain method of depending on the skies," and in doing so they had abandoned the best interests of Montana agriculture.

---

1) Montana Agricultural Experiment Station, Fourth Annual Report, for the year ending June 30, 1897. Montana Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin No. 16 (White Sulphur Springs: Rocky Mountain Husbandman Publishing Co., 1898), p. 63.

2) Montana Agricultural Experiment Station, Bulletins No. 11-46 (April 1897-April 1900), title pages.


4) Husbandman, December 29, 1910.
Sutherlin was not opposed to dry farming as a partial though uncertain answer to the problems of arid land cultivation, but he refused to accept it as a panacea. Cultivators in many areas of Montana had worked out procedures for growing crops without irrigation before the name "Campbell" had been heard in the state. Sutherlin claimed that he had been the first to introduce the summer fallow method in Montana. The only Campbell innovation which he recognized was the dust mulch. Sutherlin did not care to "detract from the modern law giver on dry land farming," but he was unwilling to accept Campbell's ideas as a new method. He had urged some of these same procedures previous to "the days of an Experiment Station maintained at public expense." Dry land farming had an important place in western agriculture and he had devoted a great deal of space to explaining sound dry farming techniques. "We would not rob the new theorists of their hallucinations, but the reading farmers of Montana are not carried away with the proposed new idea, but believe it to be a rehash of practice already in vogue." Sutherlin knew that millions of Montana's arable acres could never be irrigated, and that if they were to be farmed at all, it would have to be through some dry farming technique.

Though dry farming had been practiced throughout Montana for several years and in many cases had proven successful, Sutherlin could

---


48 Husbandman, November 16, 1905.
give it only qualified endorsement. He saw in non-irrigated farming too many problems to make it a viable option for the Montana homesteader. Those problems were not solved by the Campbell method.

In the first place, dry farming specialized in soil-robbers. Though the Experiment Station discussed the necessity of crop rotation and diversification, its main emphasis was on the successful cultivation of cereals, especially wheat. Sutherlin had always counseled against specialization, even on the irrigated farm. He recognized that wheat was a profitable crop and that farmers were tempted to push production to the limit. But dry lands could not stand continuous cropping to wheat. They eventually became exhausted.\(^{49}\)

Sutherlin saw in the failure to maintain the fertility of the land the "most serious drawback to dry farm wheat raising." The summer fallow answered the problem for a limited time, but even fallowed land loses its fertility. If it were possible to get a good crop of alfalfa or red clover to grow on dry land, the problem could be partially solved. But many Montana farmers had difficulty growing the legumes without irrigation. Dry land farming thus threatened the farmer with increasingly poor returns from his land.\(^{50}\)

The homesteader planning to dry farm in Montana was also faced with a land problem, for dry farming is extensive. "The dry farming

\[^{49}\text{Ibid.}, \text{February 2, 1905; July 27, 1905; June 23, 1905; June 30, 1904. Alfred Atkinson, \textit{Dry Farming Investigations in Montana}, Montana Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin No. 83 (Bozeman: Experiment Station, 1911). The Station studied the question of continuous versus alternate cropping and clearly determined that alternate cropping was more productive, and advised farmers against continuous cropping.}\]

\[^{50}\text{Husbandman, May 7, 1908.}\]
region of Montana, contrary to the general idea of the masses, is not a land of small farms ... The majority own as much as a half section and many own several sections of land." In Paris Gibson's highly acclaimed dry land region south of Great Falls men commonly had fields of 300 to 600 acres, and few indeed were the men who did not own more than 160 acres. There were in fact some men who owned as much as 2200 acres of plow land. Large acreage was necessary, for the dry farmer had to be content with light yields, and if he summer fallowed he could have only half his ground in production at a time. Sutherlin had no doubt that crops could be raised on dry land, but if he were going to farm in the dry land areas he would want "a thousand acres and a steam plow." Three hundred, four hundred or a thousand acres of plowed land posed another problem for the Montana dry farmer: dust storms. Sutherlin recalled seeing huge dust clouds rise from a large ranch in the Smith River Valley where three hundred acre fields had been fallowed. He believed there were sections of Montana where the wind blew so hard and steadily that it was impractical to fallow the land. He suggested that grain raising be abandoned altogether in such sections and that they be seeded to grass for permanent grazing and hay if they could not be irrigated.

Finally, the dry farmer had to come to terms with the unpredictable weather.

---

51 Ibid., June 23, 1904.
52 Ibid., June 18, 1908.
53 Ibid., September 22, 1904.
We are not fighting the proposition of farming without irrigation. We give columns of instruction on dry land farming every year that goes by and we would not do this if as some claim we were fighting the proposition. We simply say that the skies are fickle and uncertain and that the man who depends upon drifting winds and shifting clouds for a crop leans upon a slender reed.\(^5^4\)

When it did not rain, there was no water for the dry land farmer. Sutherlin looked skeptically at the Campbell moisture retention claims. He accepted the proposition that proper cultivation would conserve moisture to a limited extent, but he doubted that an adequate supply for farming could be retained from one year for the next.

The Experiment Station's suggestion that the Campbell system had solved the problems of dry land farming in Montana provided grist for the propaganda mills of the state's "boosters"—a varied group of national and local interests including the railroads, real estate operators, bankers, merchants, grain men, and public institutions. Eagerly accepting the Station's conclusions, they heralded the Campbell system as a panacea for the problems of dry land farming. The resulting high pressure campaign guaranteed results on Montana's plains and benchlands. Through their efforts the Campbell method of cultivation was turned into a promotional tool which lured thousands of homesteaders into the state.\(^5^5\)

\(^{5^4}\)Hargreaves, *Dry Land Farming in the Northern Great Plains*, pp. 84-85. "The dominant innovation of the twentieth century with respect to dry farming was the element of publicity which became attached to the early efforts. The methods which had become more or less generally accepted for farming in the region and the faith in the possibility of successfully cultivating benchlands without irrigation were linked into a panacea for the problems of utilizing the arid lands." Hargreaves does not place responsibility for the dry land propaganda on any one group, but sees a variety of interests involved. She classifies these as follows: railroads, real estate operators, bankers, merchants, grain men, public institutions (Chapter VII). Sutherlin uses the term
The "boosters" treated the would-be Montana homesteader to a grand display of facts, statistics, pictures and claims depicting Montana as a land of opportunity for the farmer. In 1911 E. C. Leedy, immigration agent for the Great Northern Railway, urged easterners to "act without delay" to secure a 320 acre homestead in Montana as "a national birthright." Since low-priced agricultural lands in the East were nearly gone, the poor man and the man of moderate means would have to look elsewhere for their opportunity. On thousands of pamphlet covers produced by the Milwaukee Railroad the opportunities for the Montana homesteader were depicted by a man plowing gold coins. The gold of the placer mines had given way to the gold of fertile fields as a source of wealth in Montana. Now, instead of a pick and pan, a team and plow was all that a man needed to become rich in Montana.

The opportunities in Montana were not limited to making money. Those who came early could become the social and political "first families" of the rapidly growing state. Wealth, status and prestige awaited the man who would quickly come to settle in Montana.

There was also opportunity for the man with capital. Large areas of cheap benchlands were available at low prices. The Northern "boosters" indiscriminately for the various promotional groups. Throughout this paper "boosters" will apply to the groups as a unit.

Great Northern Railway, Montana, The Treasure State (St. Paul: Great Northern Railway, 1911), p. 2.


Pacific had land to sell and there were many large ranches available for purchase. These could be farmed extensively or held for speculative purposes.\(^{59}\)

The boosters portrayed the climate of this land of opportunity as exceptionally good. The clear dry air was extremely invigorating, healthful and pleasant. The state had "never known a tornado or a cyclone." The winters were tempered by the warm chinook and the summers had long bright days and cool nights.\(^{60}\) The winters were so mild around Great Falls that frequently in February and March the people worked in their shirt sleeves and "it is difficult to hold back the spring clothes until Easter arrives." The climate was especially beneficial to farming, for the many long bright days gave the farmer ample time to do his work, and the mild winters allowed stock to graze freely on the open range.\(^{61}\)

The boosters were also quick to point out that the idea of Montana as a desert was a misconception. The average rainfall in eastern Montana ranged from 15 to 18 inches, which the boosters claimed was very adequate for dry farming. A further "fact" which the boosters tried to impress upon the would-be homesteaders was that "in Montana two-thirds of the moisture falls during the growing season."\(^{62}\)


\(^{60}\)Milwaukee Railway, Montana (1910), pp. 4-5.

\(^{61}\)Great Falls Board of Commerce, Great Falls, Montana (Great Falls: Ridgley Calendar Co., 1908), p. 1. The pamphlet failed to note that the climate often was somewhat less temperate than pictured. On February 23, 1910, it was \(-34^\circ\) in Great Falls and \(-45^\circ\) at Ulm. Snowstorms and blizzards delayed trains. Great Falls Tribune, quoted in Portage Historical Society, Prairie Pioneers (1966), p. 6.

In case the easterner hesitated for fear that even 15 inches of rain might be insufficient for crops, the boosters revived the "rain follows the plow" theory in order to assure them of success. "It seems to be a matter of common observation that rainfall in a new country increases with settlement, cultivation and tree planting," according to the Milwaukee immigration agent. Conditions in southern Minnesota, northern Iowa, South Dakota, Nebraska and Kansas "proved" the theory. There it was found necessary to dig drainage ditches where it was once considered too dry for cultivation.

The would-be Montana homesteader was promised soil so fertile that it could not be worn out by constant cropping to wheat. "It seems probable that, owing to all the elements of plant life being retained in the soil, without loss from leaching, products of nitrification received from the air during a fallow year are quite sufficient to overcome any tendency toward the exhaustion of the soil." The soil also pulverized easily and formed a dust mulch to conserve moisture, yet it was also heavy enough so that it would not blow away. Analysis showed the soil in most of Montana to be rich in all elements of plant food. While there was a variety of soil, "in all instances the crops are well nourished."

63 Milwaukee Railway, Montana (1910), p. 7. A "scientific" explanation for this phenomenon is given by Frank N. Meyer, Agricultural Explorer, U. S. Department of Agriculture.
64 Ibid., p. 3.
The ultimate proof of Montana's high agricultural productivity were the superior yields from her cultivated lands. The boosters enthusiastically compared the pounds, bushels, or tons per acre from Montana lands with those of the eastern states.

In 1909, according to the Department of Agriculture, at Washington, D. C., Montana raised over 10,000,000 bushels of wheat that averaged 30.8 bushels per acre, much of it grown on new homesteads. The average for the United States for the same year was 15.8 bushels per acre. Montana oats averaged 51.3 bushels; barley, 38 bushels; rye 29 [bushels]; potatoes, 180 [bushels]; hay, 1-3/4 tons per acre; flax, 12 bushels; corn, 35 bushels per acre. All of these yields exceeded the average for the United States by from 15% to 100%. The crop values are high. The market is exceptionally good.67

Not only did Montana's land produce great quantities of cereals, it also produced cereals of the highest quality. The judges of the New York Land Show in 1912 "decided that Montana wheat, oats, barley and alfalfa excel those [grains] grown in any other state in the Union."
The wheat prize was awarded to a Judith Basin farmer whose wheat ran 77 bushels per acre.68

If the statistics failed to convince the easterner of Montana's agricultural superiority, he had only to look at the pictures which filled the publicity pamphlets. Wheat as high as a man's shoulder with rich, plump heads covered the Montana landscape.69 Corn as tall as a man grew in the farm garden.70 And if you can believe your eyes, the ears of such corn were about 18 inches long and four inches thick.71

---

67 Great Northern Railway, Montana, The Treasure State (1911), p. 16.
69 Ibid., p. 5; Milwaukee Railway, Musselshell Country (1913), p. 18.
70 Milwaukee Railway, Musselshell Country (1913), p. 17.
71 Great Northern Railway, Montana, The Treasure State (1911), p. 34.
The corn picture mentioned above illustrates the type of deception used by the boosters to sell Montana dry farming. It is found in the Great Northern bulletin, *Montana, The Treasure State*. To the candid observer it appears to be a retouched photograph showing ten giant ears of corn and the boy who grew them. The caption under the photograph reads:

Ignatius O'Donnell, the Billings, Montana, boy and his corn. Won first prize in the James J. Hill corn-growing contest, at which $1000 in prizes were given away. The exhibits showed that corn could be grown all over the state at altitudes under 1,000 feet.72

The picture appears at the head of an article by Professor Thomas Shaw entitled "Scientific Farming in Montana." The picture and article thus imply that corn will grow, mature and produce huge crops throughout Montana, if "scientific farming" methods are used.

Aside from the fact that the photograph appears retouched (a more accurate picture of Montana prize corn is found on the cover of the same bulletin), the reader is deceived by the information not given. Was the prize corn actually grown on dry land or on irrigated land? If it was grown on the farm of I. D. O'Donnell of Billings, it was probably irrigated, since O'Donnell was a well-known irrigationist. While corn can in fact be grown throughout the state, no mention is made of the fact that often the corn does not mature. It is greatly affected by late and early frosts, cool summers, and lack of moisture at the proper time. Even under irrigation corn often does not develop full, mature ears in Montana. It is grown successfully as a fodder crop and for silage.

The bulletin also attempted to convince the reader through its

72Ibid.
appeal to "scientific farming," a term used synonymously with "dry farming." When first formulating his dry land procedures, H. W. Campbell had appealed to the work of scientists, such as F. H. King at the University of Wisconsin, for scientific support for his theories. Eventually he called his method "scientific soil culture." Following in the footsteps of Campbell, the agricultural scientists at Bozeman, through their experimental farms, gave added support to the belief that dry land farming methods had grown out of scientific investigations. The work of the United States Department of Agriculture, though often in disagreement with Campbell, also gave the movement an aura of scientific respectability. By titling the article, "Scientific Farming in Montana," the Great Northern invoked the authority of the scientific community to substantiate its claims.

There was not, however, a consensus among agricultural scientists as to the value of "scientific farming." Even among the dry land promoters there was conflict, and at the Dry Farming Congresses held in Cheyenne and Billings in 1909, these conflicts came to a head. In the climax to a lengthy battle between the Campbell faction and Ellery C. Chilcott of the Department of Agriculture, the Cheyenne Congress resolved:

---

73 Hargreaves, "Dry Farming Alias Scientific Farming," pp. 45-46. Much of the dry farming in Montana bore little resemblance to the Campbell methodology. "Campbell system," "dry farming," "scientific soil culture," and "scientific farming" came to be used interchangeably, often with little precision as to exact techniques being utilized.

74 Ibid., pp. 46-47.

75 Ibid., p. 50.

76 Ibid., pp. 51-52.
That it is the sense of the Third Trans-Mississippi Dry Farming Congress that in the publications of official bulletins or other publications of this Congress, no special system of so-called dry farming, or scientific methods shall be advocated, but that the Congress shall aim to give us as much definite information about each and all systems, or the work of any and all experimenters [sic] as may be possible to assemble from time to time.77

This resolution officially repudiated Campbell's leadership of the dry farming movement.

At the Billings Congress there was an attempt to enhance the reputation of dry farming by changing the name from "Dry Farming Congress" to "Scientific Farmers' Congress." Those backing the change believed "dry farming" had negative connotations to prospective settlers from the East. The railroads were the main instigators of this change, but the Congress refused to be persuaded, and "Dry Farming Congress" remained as the association's official title. 78

Thomas Shaw, a respected professor at the Minnesota Agricultural College, strongly defended the retention of the title "Dry Farming Congress." "There is no use to shut our eyes to the fact that this is a dry country," he told the Billings gathering. Whatever name it was called, it would still be dry. "Let us try to handle the land with the full understanding that we are handling the land in a country where the annual precipitation is less than the average."79


In the following years Shaw replaced Campbell as the leading authority on dry land cultivation in the Northern Plains. He was a frequent speaker at the Farmers' Institutes in Montana and was employed by the Great Northern and Northern Pacific to operate dry land farms in the state. He seemed more flexible, more aware of the Northern Plains peculiarities, more willing to investigate special crops than was Campbell. Yet he basically agreed with Campbell's principles.

By publishing the article by Thomas Shaw, the Great Northern appealed to a respected and well-known authority in the field. Shaw had demonstrated his independence at Billings and had worked with the local farmers in Montana.

Thus, through various means, including dishonest portrayal of Montana reality, the use of ambiguous results and statistics, and the appeal to science and scientific authority, the dry land boosters sought to fill the Montana-bound trains with hopeful homesteaders. And underlying all the promotion was the implication that the homesteader would become rich, and that he would do it easily and quickly.

The would-be homesteaders heard the siren song of the dry farming promoters and the gradually increasing flow of settlers into the state became a deluge. On the Burlington from the south, on the Great Northern, Northern Pacific and Milwaukee from east and west they came. Former doctors, railroad men, blacksmiths, bricklayers, teachers--single and married, men and women--they hurried to Montana to seek their fortunes.

---

81 MacDonald, After Barbed Wire, pp. 24-29. Lists homesteaders and former occupations.
With a mixture of joy and foreboding Sutherlin watched the immigrant trains pour forth their land-hungry, expectant multitudes. There was plenty of work for the newcomers—houses to build, wells to dig, sod to bust—but there was no assurance of success. The "only wonderful" thing about the situation was that as many as ten thousand pioneer homes would be located in a season, and these newcomers were "robust, thrifty, young people who would succeed if any one could." 82

Encouraging settlement was no new labor for Sutherlin, for in over thirty years no issue of the Husbandman had gone to press without "something in it calculated to allure the man in search of a home to our state." 83 Increasing immigration had always been a primary aim of the paper. Even in the face of criticism from other newspapers, the Husbandman had "sounded Montana's praise" in order to encourage settlers to take up land in Montana. 84

In sounding Montana's praise Sutherlin sought to "advertise the greatness of Montana's resources by the achievements of those already here." He was not interested in a booster movement which would suggest that Montana was a "garden of Eden." 85 He wanted people to come to Montana, but he wanted them dealt with fairly. There were good things to say about Montana without deceiving the would-be immigrant. 86

82 Husbandman, January 6, 1910.
83 Ibid., May 19, 1904.
84 Ibid., September 7, 1905; Missoulian, December 16, 1875; December 23, 1875.
85 Husbandman, June 22, 1905.
86 Ibid., September 7, 1905.
Sutherlin was "very careful" in regard to the enticements the Husbandman held out to the newcomers. He dealt with the promotion of the state "as though it [the Husbandman] expected to be held strictly accountable for every sentence published." He expected to continue publishing a paper among the people he induced to come to Montana and could "not afford to misrepresent the conditions as we find them."87

Through his promotional activities Sutherlin worked for a steady, gradual population growth in Montana. He believed that there was "no danger of stagnation in production [and] labor or the overdoing of any production or industry when things increase gradually."88 The homeseekers would come without a boom. The economy was healthy and Montana's products told their own story. "If the outside world, attracted by what we are doing, wishes to seek homes in our sunkist valleys, all well and good; but we will not go out into the highways and byways to drum them up."89

As the dry farming propaganda increased between 1905 and 1910, Sutherlin tried to dissociate himself from the Montana promoters. He continued to support a steady population growth, but he expressed weariness with the boosters, who were seeking to establish a homeseeker's magazine to promote the state. He denounced the implication that the state's newspapers were doing an inadequate job of promotion.90 The Husbandman was "criticized because we would not turn aside from a noble

87 Ibid., May 11, 1905.
88 Ibid.
89 Ibid., November 3, 1910.
90 Ibid., July 20, 1905.
purpose and aid in the flooding of the state with dry land farmers."91 In spite of the opposition, Sutherlin stuck to his gradualist, irrigationist position.

While we are fighting the battles of irrigation singly and alone, every other fish in the puddle having turned turtle and walked out on the dry land, we are still happy, for we know that our friends have been beguiled by shifting winds and drifting clouds.92

Sutherlin would accept no responsibility for the booster movement. "We can face every man that reads our statements after he has examined into the facts and not blush." The truth was good enough for him to publish.93

The truth was that thousands of homesteaders were coming to Montana, settling on 160 or 320 acres of dry land, and in many cases they were successful. Sutherlin was pleased with the people and the success. In spite of his reservations about dry farming, his opposition to dry farming propaganda and his anti-booster position, he hoped things would go well for those who came to Montana's unirrigated lands. He continued to write columns of instructions for the dry land farmers.

Sutherlin felt a certain amount of joy at the increasing agricultural population, but his joy was tempered by foreboding. He saw in the dry land promotional program a dangerous overselling of the country with potentially disastrous results for the homesteader and the state. He believed the dry land boosters had lured homesteaders to the state with false information. He condemned the railroads and claimed that they

91 Ibid., November 3, 1910.
92 Ibid., November 18, 1909.
93 Ibid., November 3, 1910.
had quit advertising in the Husbandman because "we tell the plain truth about things." Though the railroads' advertising was usually not completely dishonest, it sometimes was. More often than blatant dishonesty, the boosters misled the homesteaders by presenting distorted reports. They failed to distinguish between crops grown on dry land and those grown on irrigated land; they used figures for good years without stating the results of poor years. Often they failed to distinguish between sections of Montana. Even the official government reports were misleading to the unwary. The Great Northern Railway used official Department of Agriculture figures from 1909 to show the remarkable production of Montana's land. Sutherland criticized those reports for presenting a distorted picture of Montana agricultural production.

We have often spoken of the injustice to the state perpetrated by the reports of the Agricultural Department at Washington, D. C. It comes about in this way. The government, in getting crop reports, makes no distinction between irrigated and dry farming lands. In 1909 there was a great deal of rain and fabulous crops were raised everywhere. The average of the entire state was sent out in the government reports at 30 bushels per acre [wheat]. In the year 1910 the irrigated farm produced as good a crop as in 1909 and the government report gives the average yield per acre at 22 bushels, so that the stranger at once concludes that the claims made by this paper that the farmers with irrigation can always grow a crop and a good one, appear to be false. However, it is advantageous to the dry land end of the business, since the yield of the irrigated land of a dry year is sufficient to bring up the general average to a respectable figure notwithstanding the dry land crop left to itself would not make much of a showing.

91 Ibid., July 15, 1909.
92 Ibid., November 15, 1906.
93 Supra, note 67, p. 106.
94 Husbandman, May 18, 1911.
So thoroughly had the dry land promoters oversold dry farming that Sutherlin thought the Montana Booster Clubs should change their name to "Fool 'em Club." He was not about to allow the "rot of pilgrim editors who have scarcely been in the state over night" go unchallenged. Had people ignored the boosters, it would have made no difference; but people read and believed statements made by the promoters. These editors gave publicity to information they knew was "at variance with the truth." He claimed the Great Falls Commercial Club would not subscribe for 10,000 copies of the Husbandman for use on railway exhibition cars "because it does not contain a full account of the big crop of oranges and bananas grown on the prairies of northern Montana this season." 98

In their efforts to populate the state with dry land homesteaders, the boosters ignored Montana's experience. They averaged the Montana temperatures for several years and discovered that the state was much more temperate than the eastern states. In the Musselshell Valley "there are no blizzards or cyclones, [and] mild, clear weather usually extends beyond Christmas time." 99 The railroad companies insisted that the country was becoming more seasonable every year, but Sutherlin was skeptical. "The leopard may change his spots, but he never has yet. Our seasons may change, but in a residence in Montana of nearly forty-three years, we find conditions much the same." 100

Montana's experience had shown that average temperatures and precipitation meant nothing. In Montana the extremes were important.

---

98 Ibid., April 14, 1910; November 17, 1910; November 3, 1910.
99 Milwaukee, Musselshell Country (1913), p. 3.
100 Husbandman, May 28, 1910.
"When a Montana summer turns out dry we have no reason to call it a drought. It is the habit of the country."¹⁰¹

Some of the boosters belittled Sutherlin's advice to homesteaders to put up a wall of sod around their shacks for protection against the winter. They insisted that the winters were not so harsh. Drawing upon his years of experience in Montana, Sutherlin chronicled for the "pilgrims" the reality of Montana winters. In all his years in Montana, the winter failed only once, in 1876. He recalled that on several occasions in Diamond City and White Sulphur Springs there had been picnics on Thanksgiving and lawn tennis on Christmas. But winter had always come. Cold waves of -40 degrees were frequent, and only one winter did the thermometer fail to reach -20 degrees. "It is hard to convince an old time Montanan that Montana does not have some pretty severe winter weather sometimes."

Poverty anywhere is a terrible thing, but the brave women on the prairies of Montana are no better off than thousands in the tenement houses of the great cities. There is nothing gained by misrepresenting the true conditions or by pretending that we never have any winter. We do have cold winters, and lots of snow and wind sometimes, and our admonition to fortify the primitive board shack with a wall of sod . . . was timely and to the point, and was founded upon the experience of years. The pilgrim will learn these things as the years roll on and on.¹⁰²

Not only did the boosters refuse to acknowledge the extremities of Montana's climate, they also ignored the experience of Montana's long-time farmers. The "self-styled lawgivers" and the "palace-car pioneers" came to Montana to show the Montana "moss-back" farmers how to farm; "and about the only thing the pullman car pioneer has been able to

¹⁰¹Tbid., July 4, 1912.
¹⁰²Tbid., December 8, 1910.
demonstrate is gall." When Hardy W. Campbell came to Montana, Sutherland welcomed him with pleasure, for "the great dry land exponent has been for several years giving us lessons on our Montana work without having any practical knowledge of what the results will be." Sutherland believed Campbell would "find it different in Montana from what he has found in Colorado, Kansas and Nebraska." Sutherland hotly disputed the idea that Campbell and his disciples had discovered a "new" and "scientific" method of dry land farming for Montana. "We have no patience with the idea advanced that these people have some new system by which they can make our dry lands yield a crop." He doubted the "pilgrim farmers" could teach Montanans much they had not learned through over a quarter century's experience. Montana farmers had summer fallowed, plowed deep, and cultivated regularly for years. The use of the dust mulch appeared to be the only new technique, and Sutherland was unconvinced that it could conserve moisture as the dry land promoters claimed.

Not only did the claim that the Campbell system was "new" but also the assertion that it constituted "scientific" farming was misleading. "We believe 'scientific farming,' when applied to dry land operations, to be a misnomer," protested Sutherland. "There is far more room for scientific exploitation in the artificial use of water in plant growth than can be employed without it." Yet he did not care to quibble over names, and the "scientific farmers" could keep their monopoly of

103 Ibid., May 18, 1911.
104 Ibid., July 16, 1907.
105 Ibid., April 16, 1908.
He would be satisfied to teach "practical farming" based on the "revelations of years" rather than the theories of self-styled scientists. In spite of all that men might say about better methods, he was convinced that the "Montana system of fertilizing with the legumes, supplying moisture by artificial means and diversified husbandry cannot be excelled."\(^{107}\)

Sutherlin's controversy with the dry land boosters was more than a difference of opinion over farming methods and promotional schemes. He saw in the dry land promotion a danger to the poor who came in response to the booster campaign, and he feared the retardation of the irrigation program he viewed as essential to the development of the self-sufficient commonwealth he envisioned for Montana. Dry farming promotion loomed before him as a threat to all he had worked for since the *Husbandman's* first issue.

Sutherlin was disheartened by the prospect of poor farmers and their families homesteading on Montana's lands without irrigation. Dry farming simply was not a poor man's proposition. It required extensive cultivation; machinery to plow, cultivate, and harvest dry land crops was expensive. Even with the 320 acre homestead, a farmer would have to have a bumper crop every year to make his land pay.\(^{108}\)

---


\(^{108}\) Sutherlin opposed the enlarged homestead idea when first proposed by Joe Dixon. "Montana prefers to hold her lands for the people and when the irrigable lands are taken, they will hold the remainder in common rather than turn it over to the big outfits." (*Husbandman*, January 12, 1905). He believed the Desert Land Act to be superior to the Enlarged Homestead Act, for it contemplated the reclamation of the land. In 1906 he continued to oppose the enlarged homestead, but he argued
it was "little short of criminality on the part of railway companies or any one to try to settle poor people on vast arid plains . . . under the idea of building a home without water." 109

At the end of the dry summer of 1910 Sutherlin tried to stir the emotions of his readers against those who encouraged poor men and their families onto the dry land. He pictured the desperate plight of the dry land homesteader.

Our heart bleeds for the women and children on the ten thousand dry land homesteads located during the past year. These women and children are in hundreds of instances living in one room, a board shack with but one thickness of board between them and the elements, with no fuel except the coal they get from town. Many of them are hauling water. The man of the house has gone in search of work. Whatever he is able to earn he will send to his family, but think of the anxiety of waiting, the uncertainty of relief and the martyrdom of those noble women in their effort to get a home. 110

The dry land homesteader was the exact opposite of Sutherlin's yeoman farmer, who found freedom and independence on his own land in Montana. The dry farmer was dependent on the weather, and when it failed, he had to look beyond his land for work to keep himself and his family fed. Instead of a source of security year in and year out, his homestead was a constant source of anxiety. When the good years came, and the fields yielded forty bushels of wheat per acre, there was joy in the

that dry land farmers would have to have more than 160 acres to survive. When the Enlarged Homestead Act was passed in 1909, Sutherlin accepted it, and approved the amendment made later to allow dry land farmers to be absent from their land for part of the year. "To compel continuous residence on the land would be a cruelty to the women and children. The men must go away or starve with the family, and they have not enough in many instances to live on through the winter." (October 20, 1910).

109 Husbandman, June 8, 1905.

110 Ibid., September 1, 1910.
house. When a dry year came and the farmer looked in vain for rain in
June and July, the joy began to disappear. A second rainless year
brought despair. By the third year many of the homesteaders' shacks
stood empty. Few poor men have the resources to see them through two
bad years in a row.

Dry farming was for the man of means who can "buy big teams, ex-
pensive implements and mow a wide swath as he goes." He would have to
accept losses that would put the poor man out of business. He would
have to be content with light yields which could not justify small scale
operations. Sutherlin's advice to the poor man was:

Leave the dry land farming to those who are well to do and
do not waste time and take chances on farming without irrigation.
Life is too short for the man with a family to so spend his time.
When we have exhausted every means of providing water for irri-
gation we will listen to an attempt to farm without it, but not
until then.  

Here was the crux of the matter. Sutherlin's experience had con-
vincing him that irrigation was necessary for successful homesteading in
Montana, and that dry farming could not produce the consistent results
necessary for the poor homesteader's security. Therefore, if Montana
was to have a large, permanent, secure agricultural population, it was
of supreme importance that its irrigation potential be developed as
fully and rapidly as possible. By proclaiming dry land homesteading a
success, the boosters denied Sutherlin's basic premise. If, in fact,
it was not necessary to irrigate in Montana, then the withdrawal of
land for reservoirs, the construction of large and costly reclamation
works, all the efforts to put water on the land could be halted

\[\text{Ibid., July 27, 1905.}\]
indefinitely. Whether this was the avowed purpose of the booster or not made little difference. The high pressure campaign to sell dry farming psychologically, and at times literally, retarded irrigation development in the state.

The negative effects on irrigation brought about by the dry land propaganda played an important part in Sutherlin's anti-dry farming sentiment. Before the dry land propaganda was fully underway, Sutherlin sought the help of the Great Falls Townsite Company in developing the water powers of the Missouri for irrigation purposes. The Townsite Company put him off and in 1906 announced that it was going to establish a dry land experiment farm. "Why fool away valuable time?" Sutherlin asked. "It is easy to write now what the result will be. Sometimes there will be a crop and sometimes there will be none." In the meantime the mighty Missouri continued to plunge its way to the sea, and "50,000 acres we desired to make glad with orchards, and shrubbery and berry patches and hedge rows and homes will go on producing bunch grass."112

Sutherlin felt a powerful opposition from the businessmen of Great Falls in his efforts to irrigate the area. He urged them to "call off your dogs. Let up on your fight against the Rocky Mountain Husbandman and irrigation." But the opposition did not relent. After early enthusiasm in Great Falls for the Sun River Project, the dry land boosters seemed to have successfully squelched interest in the project by 1910. Sutherlin claimed to be the only editor who continued to show any concern for the Sun River. The remaining northern Montana papers insisted that dry land farming was yielding forty bushels of wheat per

112 Ibid., November 8, 1906.
acre, "which, if true, renders irrigation unnecessary." He believed the claims were invented "for the purpose of cutting the Sun River Project out of any share in the [reclamation] loan fund." If that was the case, Sutherlin warned the people of Great Falls that they were "treading on dangerous ground" by allowing the "one chance to lay the foundation of the city in an agriculture that never fails" slip by.\textsuperscript{113}

Sutherlin was "unable to comprehend" why the business interests of the city would do anything to retard irrigation. "Irrigation means a perpetual revenue for all the years that are to come." He believed the irrigation of the Sun River plains would mean more to Great Falls than half a dozen smelters. If the Great Falls people would only look at what irrigation had done for Missoula and the Ritterroot, they could see how it would benefit them.\textsuperscript{114} Yet in Great Falls there was "an undercurrent that has bubbled out ever and anon in actual warfare against this publication," because it maintained an aggressive irrigationist stance. He had kept up the fight because "every encouragement was necessary to see Montana's reclamation projects finished."\textsuperscript{115}

Of course, Sutherlin was not ignorant of the reasons behind the opposition to irrigation, especially the Federal Reclamation Program. It took time to raise money, survey reservoir sites, lay out canals, adjudicate water rights and build the irrigation structures; the boosters wanted immediate settlement. Under the terms of the Reclamation Act large areas were reserved from entry; the boosters were opposed to

\textsuperscript{113}Tbid., July 28, 1910.
\textsuperscript{114}Tbid., December 15, 1910.
\textsuperscript{115}Tbid., November 30, 1911.
the reservation policy. They wanted the land in private hands. The amount of land for which a farmer could receive water from a Federal Reclamation project was limited to 160 acres; the boosters did not want that kind or restriction on the buying and selling of land. The establishment of large reclamation projects was thus in opposition to the interests of the boosters.

Though the dry land propaganda seemed to overwhelm Sutherlin's efforts to put water on the land, he remained optimistic concerning irrigation in Montana. When "boosting" was at its peak in 1909-1912, he detected signs that his point of view was being heard and appreciated. As early as 1909 there was word that the Great Falls Townsite Company was again preparing to build an irrigation system to water 50,000 acres east and south of the city. Sutherlin saw in this work the possibility of thousands of small farms which would be homes for the city's workers. The area would also be ideal sugar beet land, and he hoped a sugar factory would soon be added to Great Falls' industries. ¹¹⁶

During the following year his efforts appeared to be affirmed at the national level. Throughout the spring of 1910 Congress debated the merits of a loan to the Reclamation Fund, and in June passed a $20,000,000 appropriation for that purpose. Montana's share of the fund would help get the work already begun completed. This would give Montana 6,000,000 acres of irrigated land, according to Sutherlin. What a day that would be for the state! He thought it would double Montana's agricultural revenue from $75,000,000 to $150,000,000 annually. ¹¹⁷ Sutherlin also

¹¹⁶ Ibid., August 12, 1909.
¹¹⁷ Ibid., March 31, 1910; April 7, 1910; June 30, 1910.
claimed the Department of Agriculture bulletins on dry farming for 1910 agreed with the position he had advocated for years. 118

In 1911 he moved away from the defensive position he had held in relation to the boosters, and claimed the tide had turned in irrigation's favor.

We are having an awakening of interest in irrigation this spring, little dreamed of before. It has taken seven years of constant drumming to convince Great Falls that irrigation is the thing, but at last things are coming our way. 119

Several factors contributed to his growing optimism during the year. In April the completion of the Milk River Project was assured. 120 During the summer, Thomas Shaw, "the great high priest of dry land farming," declared in favor of irrigation, claiming that lack of water in the Milk River area had meant a loss of $5,000,000 to the people there.

This declaration must have carried consternation into the camp of our Great Falls boosters, who have fought the Rocky Mountain Husbandman with the viciousness with which a mad bull fights a red flag for the seven years we have been working to put water on the land. Will these people now ease up a little on us or will they now take up arms against their own prophet? 121

118 Ibid., May 19, 1910. E. C. Chilcott, A Study of Cultivation Methods and Crop Rotations for the Great Plains Area, United States Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Plant Industry Bulletin No. 187 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1910). Lyman J. Briggs and J. O. Belz, Dry Farming in Relation to Rainfall and Evaporation, United States Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Plant Industry Bulletin No. 188 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1910). These two bulletins appear to be the ones to which Sutherlin refers. Chilcott was a long-time critic of the dry farm promotion. He had stressed diversification and discounted the exceptional claims made by Campbell's disciples. These two bulletins present conclusions which are in fact similar to Sutherlin's views.

119 Husbandman, April 13, 1911

120 Ibid., April 6, 1911.

121 Ibid., July 13, 1911.
Campbell, too, had modified his dry land propaganda and began to include an irrigation section in his magazine. It appeared to Sutherlin that the boosters were finally moving toward his point of view.

And what had they accomplished in their battle against irrigation? They had turned the public domain over to the 320-acre homesteader. They had destroyed several Carey Land Act Projects. But they had not defeated the Sun River and Milk River projects. They could not restore any of the reclamation withdrawals to the public domain. Finally, many dry land farmers had begun the search for sources of water to irrigate their lands.

By the end of 1911 Sutherlin was exhilarated by Great Falls' future prospects. "For lo, these many years, Great Falls has been a smelter town pure and simple. But today it begins to mount above the copper fumes that float away through the heavens." His new-found enthusiasm carried over into the new year. His efforts had not been in vain. The battle had not destroyed the farmers' paper. In fact, the Bureau of Labor and Industry published an article from the Husbandman in its promotional book, Montana. Sutherlin reviewed his years in Great Falls with satisfaction.

Six years ago the country went wild over the idea of conserving the moisture from one year to the next... We refer to this because it is a vindication of the experiences the

122 Ibid., August 24, 1911.
123 Ibid.
124 Ibid., December 21, 1911.
Rocky Mountain Husbandman fearlessly announced when the dry land farming excitement was at its height, and when to discredit a single statement of the dry land propaganda was heresy, punishable by ostracism, boycott and all the possible means a community could muster. But the storm has swept by, the men doing the work recant. They pronounce the propaganda of six years ago to be a worthless dogma and advise against it, even to the discarding of the sub-surface packer. . . . Yes, the "palace-car" farmer that took the state by storm declaring the experience of forty years of farming in the country amounted to nothing has had his day.126

Sutherlin noted a "feeling of irrigation in the air." He hoped that there would be some reconciliation between the Great Falls business community and the Husbandman. It had been a long and at times bitter battle he had waged to put water on the land. It appeared that his efforts were bearing fruit.

Beat the tom-toms . . . send glad tidings throughout the land! Northern Montana is to be irrigated . . . We care not who is responsible. It is enough for us to know that irrigation triumphs. We are to have water on the land, prosperous happy homes, light hearted women and children . . .127

Sutherlin was optimistic in 1912, for it appeared that his demands for water on the land were finally being heard. He also noted a change in personnel at the Experiment Station. He was pleased with the new professor, M. L. Wilson, who would talk dry farming before the Farmers' Institutes. Professor Wilson was a "practical man and undertook to demonstrate his theories by practice." He was doing demonstration work to "ascertain the truth," not boom the country. Sutherlin accepted Wilson's experience for what could be done on Montana's dry lands, for Wilson was "not the property of any railroad or milling company, compelled to make a favorable report whether he gets returns or not."128

126 Ibid., January 4, 1912.
127 Ibid., June 20, 1912.
128 Ibid., October 24, 1912.
Wilson's reports were favorable for the dry land farmers in 1912. Results on non-irrigated land in Montana seemed to be fulfilling the boosters' promises. There were big yields at low cost and a good market. Credit was easy and land values were rising.

An optimistic outlook invaded the entire section and expansion was hastened by the purchase of hundreds of engines which could break the sod more rapidly. Farming and the community business of banking, merchandising and marketing which followed, were built on the assumption that this combination of favorable circumstances would continue.¹²⁹

Good dry farming results continued through 1916 in northern Montana. In fact, the yields for 1915-1916 went from good to exceptional. With an inflated market due to the war, the farmers reaped huge cash surpluses, which went into machinery, buildings and more land.

In 1917 the bubble burst. The rains failed, and there was no moisture for the dry land farmer. The following year was worse, and the third year dry land farming hit bottom.

The year 1919 came as a great climax of drought to set the seal of broken hope upon a majority of homes in [northern Montana]. There was no reserve of moisture from the two previous dry years; grass made practically no growth--there was no pasture for feed. Most of the grain that was seeded did not germinate, and as a result the farmers began shipping out their livestock.¹³⁰

The drought lasted through 1922 in northern Montana. By then a great many of the homesteaders had abandoned their farms. Towns which had appeared on the plains with the flood of immigrants stood empty. "There was little more in the way of defeat that could be experienced."


¹³⁰Ibid., p. 19.

¹³¹Ibid., p. 22.
In spite of the disaster there were those who were convinced that Montana's vast prairie lands could be farmed successfully during seasons of drouth. Professor H. E. Selby of Bozeman was encouraged by the fact that "in every area and in every year [1920-1922] there were some farmers who made satisfactory incomes." He attributed this success to proper cultivation methods and practices. The Experiment Station continued its dry farming studies, and there was optimism among the station's personnel that dry farming problems were being solved.

The optimism was tempered in 1927 with the publication of an analysis of the relationship of weather to crops, by P. Patton, statistician at the Montana Experiment Station. In his efforts to construct an agricultural history of early Montana, he clearly indicated the uncertainty of farming Montana's dry lands.

Patton contended that the dry farmers who came to Montana between 1910 and 1917 had no way of knowing what to expect. Without a knowledge of the past upon which to base predictions for the future, the present is likely to be taken as the rule. In this instance the years from 1911 to 1916 were good crop years, with the possible exception of 1911, while the last two years,

---

132 H. E. Selby, Statistics of Dry-Land Farming Areas in Montana, Montana Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin No. 135 (Bozeman: Experiment Station, 1926), p. 2.

133 Wilson, Dry Farming in the North Central Montana "Triangle"; A. E. Seamans, Experiments with Corn on Dry Land, Montana Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin No. 191 (Bozeman: Experiment Station, 1926); George W. Morgan and M. A. Bell, Wheat Experiments at the Northern Montana Branch Station, Montana Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin No. 197 (Bozeman: Experiment Station, 1926); Ralph W. May, Wheats in Central Montana, Montana Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin No. 203 (Bozeman: Experiment Station, 1927); A. Osenburg, Cultural Methods for Winter and Spring Wheat in the Judith Basin, Montana Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin No. 205 (Bozeman: Experiment Station, 1927).
1915 and 1916, gave bumper crops. Such a period of good years could induce only optimism for the country. There was apparently nothing to warn of any adverse future. Thus the drought and attending crop failures of the period 1917-1921 were wholly unexpected.\textsuperscript{134}

Though Patton appears to ignore Sutherlin, his findings confirm Sutherlin's assertion that weather played the key role in Montana dry land crop yields.

This high correlation of .64 indicates that 69 per cent of the variation in crop yields may be said to be affected by the variations in the combination of the weather elements as expressed by the weather crop index.\textsuperscript{135}

From his statistical analysis Patton projected a probable history of crop yields on Montana dry lands from 1882 to 1921. His history indicated that on land continuously cropped to spring wheat there would have been 6 years of complete crop failure, 9 years of poor crops, 8 years of medium crops, 9 years of good crops, 5 years of very good crops and 3 years of bumper crops. An important factor made clear by the history was the cyclical nature of poor crop years. In almost all instances poor years came two at a time.\textsuperscript{136} A homesteader could not afford to lose one crop; two in a row meant ruin.

\textsuperscript{134} Patton, The Relationship of Weather to Crops in the Plains Region of Montana, Montana Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin No. 206 (Bozeman: Experiment Station, 1927), pp. 4-5 (my underline). Patton does not state the case accurately. There had been dry farming in Montana well over a quarter century before the dry farming boom, and the territory and state had experienced intermittent drought accompanied by crop failure during that time. Sutherlin had repeatedly warned the dry farming promoters and farmers of the probability of periodic dry periods. Unfortunately, his warnings were not heard.

\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., p. 41. Patton uses the average relative humidity as the weather index.

\textsuperscript{136} Ibid. Also see Appendix VI. Patton's analysis does indicate that better cultivation practices could improve crop yields and in some years prevent total crop failure.
The extent of the financial ruin brought about by the dry farming boom from 1909 to 1918, the drought from 1919 to 1922 and the resulting bankruptcies were examined by R. R. Renne in 1938. A summary of his findings is revealing. Nearly 3900 Montana farmers went bankrupt between 1898 and 1937. Three-fourths of these bankruptcies occurred in the twenties. That record was the highest in proportion to total farms of any state in the Union. In some counties one out of every four farmers went bankrupt during the decade. And finally, bankruptcies were heaviest in the dry farming areas of the state where development and settlement had been most rapid during the teens.\(^{137}\) While other factors—over-investment in land and equipment, a depressed world market and unsound loan policies—contributed to the abnormally high number of bankruptcies, lack of adequate precipitation was the key factor in the farmers' failures.

Sutherlin was vindicated. He had insisted that Montana's dry lands were no place for the homesteader, and the tragic results of the dry farming boom and succeeding drought clearly revealed the wisdom of his position.

\(^{137}\)R. R. Renne, *Montana Farm Bankruptcies*, Montana Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin No. 360 (Bozeman: Experiment Station, 1938), p. 3. See Appendix VII.
CHAPTER VI

THE FARMERS' PROPHET

Robert N. Sutherlin is remembered for his untiring efforts to put water on the land. When he died, April 2, 1926, the editor of the Great Falls Tribune wrote:

When the later history of Montana is written and the period from 1908 to 1920 is evaluated, R. N. Sutherlin's name will be as prominent as it is in the chronicles of the State's earlier periods. To him will be given credit for having fought a good fight for a condition he considered paramount to all others in the state's development—the putting of water on every possible acre in Montana.¹

Though it is difficult to measure the precise effect of Sutherlin's efforts on irrigation development, he claimed credit for keeping the Milk River and Sun River projects alive when the dry farming propaganda threatened to bring them to a halt. In the fiftieth anniversary issue of the Husbandman Sutherlin wrote:

We claim but little part in the bringing in of the 17,000 dry land farmers, but we do feel that the Rocky Mountain Husbandman has been an important factor in the establishment of 20,000 stable homes below the ditch.²

In 1921 he received a letter of gratitude from F. H. Newell of the Bureau of Reclamation in Washington stating, "you are one of the few men who have unswervingly held to the line in spite of the allurements of dry farming."³

¹Great Falls Tribune, April 3, 1926.
²Husbandman, November 26, 1925.
³Letter from Newell to Sutherlin, Husbandman, November 1, 1921.
Sutherlin thus holds an important place in the history of Montana as a constant spokesman for the efforts to irrigate the state. Yet Sutherlin was more than an enthusiastic irrigationist. He was a prophet. In the conventional meaning of "prophet," as one who has insight into the future, Sutherlin envisioned the major trends of Montana life. He foresaw the time when agriculture would replace mining as the state's basic industry. He recognized the conflict of interest between labor and capital and forecast the day when that conflict would break out in open warfare. He warned Montanans of the dangers of corporate encroachment and predicted corporation domination of the state's politics and economy. He called the dry farming promotion a mistake and anticipated the disaster which was the outcome of luring thousands of homesteaders onto Montana's dry lands.

To label Sutherlin a "prophet" in the conventional sense, however, fails to do justice to either the prophetic tradition or Sutherlin's prophetic insight. The term has much richer significance. The prophet is a realistic visionary. He has in his mind a vision of what the future can hold. He is therefore not a disinterested observer; he is a partisan in the course of history. The prophet's vision for the future does not appear ex nihilo. It is rooted in a tradition. In this sense the prophet builds upon the past.

Sutherlin was a realistic visionary. When he first entered Montana Territory, he was struck by the fabulous productivity of the land. Other men also recognized the territory's agricultural potential, but Sutherlin formulated that recognition into a plan for Montana's future development and gave it wide expression.
Sutherlin envisioned Montana as a home, not a production line. He did not measure the state's progress primarily by the output of the land; he measured it by the number of homes made available for the country's laboring classes. He grasped the reality that unrestrained development directed toward either accelerated resource exploitation or rapid population growth endangered the land and the people. He was convinced that only gradual development which would provide homes and employment for those who came to the state was worthy of support.

When Sutherlin made the trek across the plains to Virginia City, he brought with him, in addition to animals and farm implements, a long-standing agrarian tradition. It is that tradition which undergirded his point of view. A tradition that can be traced to some of the founders of the nation, such as Franklin and Jefferson, it viewed the yeoman farmer as the ideal citizen. Refined in the Mississippi Valley frontier where Sutherlin grew up, it is firmly imbedded in his writings.

Sutherlin examined Montana from the agrarian point of view. With the help of his brother Will he carefully observed contemporary rural life throughout the territory and state. He poured forth a constant flow of suggestions, criticisms, and plans, urging Montanans to act upon them. In later years he reminded his readers that his statements were not based on what he hoped or imagined to be true, but on his careful observations and experiences in Montana for many years. He felt those observations and experiences confirmed the agrarian tradition which he proclaimed. Sutherlin was thus a realistic dreamer, steeped in a long agrarian tradition, and deeply committed to the realization of his vision.
The commitment to the realization of his vision compels the prophet to be a critic of the contemporary situation. He recognizes forces in the present which are detrimental to the best interests of the people. He believes that events are not the result of fate, but rather the outcome of men's hopes and men's decisions. Through his criticism he seeks to provide his contemporaries with the basis for present action through which they can mold the course of history.

Sutherlin was such a critic. Throughout his career he fought a running battle with the interests he deemed detrimental to the laboring people of the country. He wanted the men and women of the state to decide their own destiny and urged them to action. He tried to show them that their dreams could only be realized if they challenged the opposing interests.

A prophet's visions and criticisms are useless unless they are known. A prophet is therefore a spokesman. He makes his point of view a matter of public record and accepts the consequences of that action. He leaves himself open to opposition. Knowing there is always the chance that future events will show him to be absolutely wrong, he takes that chance. Aware that the opposition may be much more powerful than he is, the prophet risks his all for his people. The prophet believes he has a message that must be heard.

For fifty years Sutherlin was such a spokesman. Week after week the Husbandman carried his ideas, plans, and criticisms to the people of the state. There were others who shared many of his beliefs, but few there were who were willing to make their visions of the future and criticisms of the present a matter of public record. Through the
Husbandman he advocated the agrarian ideals which he believed were the strongest foundation for Montana's future society. He envisioned Montana as a land where the yeoman farmer reigned supreme. He unceasingly challenged those interests he believed to be harmful to Montana and its people. Through the Rocky Mountain Husbandman he provided the Montana farmers with a voice.

Throughout the years that voice never turned sour. Sutherlin believed in the land, and he had faith in the people. He was convinced that the common sense of the people would ultimately prevail.
BIBLIOGRAPHY
BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. NEWSPAPERS

Inter Mountain. Butte. 1901.
Meagher Republican. White Sulphur Springs. 1900, 1902-1904.
Missoulian. Missoula. 1875-1876.
Rocky Mountain Husbandman. Diamond City, 1875-1879; White Sulphur Springs, 1879-1904; Great Falls, 1904-1926. Robert N. Sutherlin was editor during the entire period. After his death the Rocky Mountain Husbandman continued until 1942, as an insert of the Montana News Association.
Tribune. Great Falls. 1904.

B. OFFICIAL REPORTS AND PUBLICATIONS

Atkinson, Alfred. Dry Farm Moisture Studies. Montana Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin No. 87. Bozeman: Experiment Station, 1911.


Linfield, F. B. *Dry Farming in Montana*. Montana Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin No. 63. Bozeman: Experiment Station, 1907.

Montana Agricultural Experiment Station. *Fourth Annual Report, for the year ending June 30, 1897*. Montana Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin No. 16. White Sulphur Springs: Rocky Mountain Husbandman Co., 1898.

- *Seventh Annual Report, for the year ending June 30, 1900*. Montana Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin No. 28. White Sulphur Springs: Rocky Mountain Husbandman Co., 1900.
- *Ninth Annual Report, for the year ending June 30, 1902*. Montana Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin No. 42. Bozeman: Chronicle, 1903.
- *Eleventh Annual Report, for the year ending June 30, 1904*. Bozeman: Experiment Station, 1904.
- *Twelfth Annual Report, for the year ending June 30, 1905*. Bozeman: Experiment Station, 1905.
- *Fourteenth Annual Report, for the year ending June 30, 1907*. Bozeman: Experiment Station, 1908.
- *Fifteenth Annual Report, for the year ending June 30, 1908*. Bozeman: Experiment Station, 1909.
- *Sixteenth Annual Report, for the year ending June 30, 1909*. Bozeman: Experiment Station, 1910.


Second Annual Report, for the year ending November 30, 1903.

Third Annual Report, for the year ending November 30, 1904.

Fourth Annual Report, for the year ending November 30, 1905.

Sixth Annual Report, for the year ending June 30, 1908.


Ray, R. H. Irrigation, Ought Montana to Aid It? If So, How? A report to Gov. J. K. Toole, Supplement to the report of the State Arid Land Grant Commission, 1902.

Renne, R. R. Montana Farm Bankruptcies. Montana Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin No. 360. Bozeman: Experiment Station, 1938.


C. PROMOTIONAL LITERATURE


Montana. Chicago: Milwaukee Railway, n.d.


Great Falls Board of Commerce. Great Falls, Montana. Great Falls: Ridgley Calendar Co., 1908.


Opening the Sun River Irrigation Project. Minneapolis: Great Northern Railway, 1909.


D. BOOKS


James, George W. Reclaiming the Arid West. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1917.


E. ARTICLES AND PERIODICALS


Fletcher, Robert S. "The End of the Open Range in Eastern Montana," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XVI (September, 1929), 188-212.


F. UNPUBLISHED MATERIALS


APPENDICES
APPENDIX I

WILLIAM H. SUTHERLIN

William H. Sutherlin was born in Missouri in 1810. He remained on a farm there until the outbreak of the Civil War when he joined the Confederate forces. He was captured and imprisoned for several months in McDowell's College, St. Louis. He was then removed to the penitentiary at Alton, Illinois. He was paroled and in 1863 went to Denver, Colorado. When he heard of gold strikes in the northern Rockies, he returned to Missouri, outfitted a mule team, and went to Montana in the summer of 1864. In 1865 he took up residence in Meagher County, where he lived until his death, June 2, 1900.

Will Sutherlin was active in early Montana history, and was well-known throughout the territory and state. He was sheriff in Meagher County and served in both the House of Representatives and Council Chamber of the Territory. He had charge of Montana's agricultural exhibit at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893 and was superintendent of the Montana exhibit at the Trans-Mississippi Exposition at Omaha in 1898. He was one of the organizers of the Montana Press Association and served as its president in 1888.

With his brother Robert he founded the Rocky Mountain Husbandman and served as associate editor. He was the "silent partner," but the paper's pages reflect his views, observations and insight. Of particular importance is the editorial correspondence he wrote from throughout the territory and state on his annual tours for the paper. While the tours were used to promote the paper, their primary purpose was to keep a close watch on agricultural developments in the country. Today that correspondence offers a detailed picture of rural life in early Montana. Will was also the financial officer for the paper and was responsible for establishing it upon a sound fiscal policy. Though the Husbandman is usually associated with Robert Sutherlin, its early success was in a great measure due to the able assistance of Will.
APPENDIX II

WILL SUTHERLIN'S TRAVELS IN MONTANA IN 1877

Each year Will Sutherland made journeys throughout the Territory and State of Montana to report on current agricultural developments. He was often on the road for months at a time. He would stop at all the farms along the way and write a short description of the land and the people. The following itinerary gives some indication of the travels.

Pony, March 30 (April 12).* Description of trip from Diamond City to Pony.
Pony, March 31 (April 19). Description of Pony and surrounding area.
Madison Valley, April 1 (April 19). Description of farms in the area.
Virginia City (April 26). Description of Virginia City, Alder Creek, Ruby Valley.
Sweetwater (May 3). Description of Sweetwater, Blacktail, Beaverhead.
Sheridan, April 16 (May 10). Trip from Beaverhead down the Jefferson River.
Iron Rod, April 19 (May 10). Trip down Jefferson River to Three Forks.
Butte, April 26 (May 17). Travels in Bell Creek, Whitehall, Boulder, Butte area.
Butte (May 24). Description of Butte. Comments on possible future growth.
Deer Lodge (May 31). Description of developments in the Deer Lodge Valley.
Deer Lodge, May 9 (June 14). Description of Deer Lodge and its people.
Diamond City (June 21). Description of return from Deer Lodge Valley to Diamond City after 600 mile journey throughout southwest Montana.
Helena (June 28). Description of merchants who do business with the Husbandman.
Missoula, June 20 (July 12). Missoula is a city of beautiful gardens.
Bitterroot Valley, July 3 (August 16). Description of people and farms in the valley.
Bitterroot Valley (August 23). Description of Fourth of July celebration in valley. Discussion of Flathead Indians who attended festivities, including Chief Charlo.
Bass Creek (August 30). Bass Brothers' farm in the Bitterroot could be one of the most desirable farms in the Rocky Mountains.
Stevensville (July 12). Looks rather peaceful in the near future for the Bitterroot. Indian troubles not causing fear, though concern. Silver strikes at Salmon City.

*The first date indicates the date written. All the correspondence is not dated. The date in brackets indicates the issue of the Husbandman in which the correspondence was printed. Since mail service was irregular, the correspondence is not always in chronological order.
Bitterroot (July 19). Description of farms, military bases in the valley.
Bitterroot, July 18 (July 26). Citizens of Western Montana are being armed. Fear success of Joseph might encourage other tribes to join him. Missoula County in danger. Indians may come through Plains area. Farmers can not fight Indians and harvest crops. Need government help.
Bitterroot (July 26). Comments on Stevensville, Fort Owen, farmers hit by grasshoppers, discussion of small fly which destroys grasshoppers. Sweetland, July 26 (August 2). Plans being made for battle with Joseph at Lolo.
Deer Lodge, July 27 (August 2). Will Sutherlin is joining with group of men to fight Joseph.
Corvallis and Skulkaho (August 2). Description of farms in the Bitterroot Valley.
Deer Lodge (August 9). Description of the activities of the volunteers against the Indians. "What promised to be an interesting drama ... ended in a humiliating farce." Not a gun was fired.
Frenchtown (September 6). High praise for agricultural possibilities in area.
Flint Creek (September 13). Description of the farms up the valley from Missoula along the Clark Fork to Bear Gulch and New Chicago area.
Nevada Creek (September 27). Description of stock growers in Nevada Creek and Little Blackfoot area.
Gallatin City, September 8 (October 4). Description of trip from Confederate to Crow Creek to Gallatin City.
Gallatin City, September 7 (October 11). Description of farms and female seminary in Gallatin River Valley.
West Gallatin, September 10 (October 18). Description of people and farms in the area.
Butte, October 18 (October 25). Butte growing rapidly. Seems to be a lot of activity and good ore.
West Gallatin (October 25). Description of West Gallatin and Middle Creek farms and people.
Jefferson City, October 20 (November 1). City is growing. Silver mines in area.
Bozeman (November 1). Bozeman will become the metropolis of the area. Good wheat country, will soon be settled.
East Gallatin (November 8). Description of farms and flour mills. Description of Spring Hill and Highland Farm area.
Reese Creek (November 15). Description of farms and people in the area.
Diamond City (December 13, 20, 27). Throughout the winter Will made short trips to the ranches of the Smith River Valley and wrote descriptions of them for the paper.
### Montana's Population

#### A. State or territory of nativity of Montana's population compiled from the ten-year census reports.

The chart indicates the five states in which the greatest number of Montana residents were born. Montana is excluded. The shifts in the source of American born Montana immigrants is clearly visible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>Penn.</td>
<td>Illinois</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>Penn.</td>
<td>Illinois</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1683</td>
<td>1305</td>
<td>1127</td>
<td>911</td>
<td>797</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>Penn.</td>
<td>Illinois</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2493</td>
<td>2470</td>
<td>1841</td>
<td>1703</td>
<td>1548</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>Penn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6283</td>
<td>6105</td>
<td>5138</td>
<td>5017</td>
<td>4871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>Minnesota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10562</td>
<td>9005</td>
<td>8223</td>
<td>5145</td>
<td>8078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>Illinois</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17455</td>
<td>17503</td>
<td>15703</td>
<td>14928</td>
<td>14527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>Missouri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33517</td>
<td>27666</td>
<td>23505</td>
<td>22739</td>
<td>22366</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### B. Foreign-born white and Orientals in Montana population compiled from the ten-year census reports.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Montana Population</th>
<th>Foreign-born White</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
<th>Orientals</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>20595</td>
<td>7979</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>1943</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>39159</td>
<td>11521</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>1765</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>142924</td>
<td>40330</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>2538</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>243329</td>
<td>62373</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>3180</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>376053</td>
<td>91644</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>2894</td>
<td>.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>548889</td>
<td>93620</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX IV

"A CLASSIC ON IRRIGATION"

Major J. R. Faulds, editor of the Stevensville Northwest Tribune, called the following article by Robert N. Sutherlin "a classic on irrigation." In this article Sutherlin presents the vision which guided his efforts to irrigate Montana.

We have stood by the sounding shore of [the] old ocean and looked out over its vastness, have heard its sullen roar when the winds lashed its water to a fury. We have stood alone upon the unbounded prairie and contemplated its immensity; we have heard the rush of many a wild storm in Montana's mountains, and we have seen civilization in its beauty, its undulating fields and quiet homes from whose chimneys curled the smoke of comfort and contentment; but the most beautiful, the most soul-inspiring picture we have ever beheld, the most wonderful impersonation of happiness is found on our own mountain valleys. But yesterday, as it were, we stood upon an eminence overlooking one of Montana's older settled valleys. We marked the main line of a great canal as it wound in and out over ridges and above dells and across long stretches of bench lands; we noted that this winding waterway fringed with willows marked hundreds of laterals conveying the waters to the farmstead where, almost hid in a grove of trees, was a quiet home; we contemplated the miles and miles of bench lands and valley lands, the orchards, the grove, the barn, the stockshed, the windbreak, the purple meadow, and when we noted the absolute certainty of a crop which these waterways, filled with flowing water, insured, we said in our heart, here is happiness, here is the fountain head of plenty and to spare, the citadel of contentment. There is complete freedom from anxiety in regard to what the season, or the years may bring forth, and we remarked to a friend at our side that there was a condition that would bring joy and happiness to the children of men. And we congratulated ourselves that the Rocky Mountain Husbandman had for its purpose in life that guiding star which meant water on the land and a home where all doubt as to the sustenance was removed. We were glad that it was possible for such a condition to maintain in this great world of ours and that Montana was a land where we irrigate, and that there was still flowing from our mountain ranges, great and glorious floods of water which, if properly impounded, would make no less than ten million more of Montana's acres blossom as the rose. Climb to any eminence, if you will, and survey, if you will, the land where the water flows, and you will behold in the green and growing field that never failing promise of abundant harvest, long ricks of hay for live stock, big bins of grain for breadstuff, and you will see lightheartedness written on the billowy crest of the meadow and even in the green willows that trace the meandering of every waterway. "Wohl!" said the Indian as he saw the water climb alongside the mountainside to the placer mine, "the white man make water run up hill." And his
untutored mind marveled all the more when he saw the water ditch turn the range of the elk and bison into alfalfa meadows and apple orchards. This is the work of irrigation, man's mastery of the elements; his plan of compelling an answer to his prayers for rain. It is the one thing which gives independence to farm life, dignity to farm labor and causes the rosy flush to mantle the cheek of the farmer's wife and daughter. Tie to it, in season and out of season, for it is the mainspring that awakens nature to its greatest energies and never, never fails.

Source: Rocky Mountain Husbandman, September 28, 1911.
APPENDIX V

THE COST OF A MONTANA IRRIGATED HOMESTEAD

In a bulletin on irrigation prepared for the Montana Agricultural Experiment Station in 1915, S. T. Harding wrote of the costs of starting an irrigated farm. It is evident from his presentation that a "free homestead" in Montana would cost the homesteader money, if he wanted water.

In settling upon raw land for the purpose of improving it and making a home, the average settler underestimates the capital required. The first payment on the land is only the beginning. Buildings must be erected, a working outfit secured, and subsistence for family and stock provided until the first crop can be harvested.

The first payment on lands usually varies from $5 to $10 per acre or from $400 to $800 for an 80-acre tract. Fencing 80 acres will cost about $125. A house which will do for the first year can usually be built for from $200 to $400, a barn or shed from $50 to $100. The necessary equipment such as plows, drills, mowers, binders, wagons, harnesses, horses and a cow will cost $800 to $1200. Settlers who have farmed in other sections can bring their implements and live stock. However, when bringing work stock to altitudes much higher than those to which they are accustomed, it is usually advisable to work them carefully the first year.

Sagebrush clearing is not usually a very heavy expense in Montana. Many of the projects are all sod land which only requires plowing. This breaking is being largely done with power tractors, the usual contract prices running from $4.00 to $5.00 per acre for five or six inch plowing. Some leveling will be needed to prepare the land for irrigation. If the cost of this is excessive some reduction is generally made in the price of the raw land. The building of the distributing system for the water on the farm should be well done as it saves time and loss in actual irrigation. Most of the land in Montana is irrigated by flooding from sub-laterals, a method requiring less preparation of the ground than others if the laterals are well-located. The methods of distributing water and the irrigation of various crops are described in the different bulletins of the Department and the State Experiment Station.

The above items and cost of living and incidentals until the first crop can be sold make from $1500 to $2500 needed as capital by one taking 80 acres of new land. By improving the land slowly and depending on some working out, a new settler might succeed on less, but the loss of productiveness from the land during the longer period of development counter-balances the gain.

S. T. Harding, Irrigation Development in Montana, Montana Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin No. 103 (Bozeman: Experiment Station, 1915), pp. 262-263.
Appendix VI

The Relationship of Weather to Crops

In 1927 P. Patton, statistician at the Montana Agricultural Experiment Station, compiled a history of early Montana agriculture based on weather records and crop reports. The following graphs indicate the probable crop production for the years 1882 to 1921. (P. Patton, The Relationship of Weather to Crops in the Plains Region of Montana, Montana Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin No. 206, Bozeman: Experiment Station, 1927).

A. A classification of types of growing seasons based on weather index, the attending years, and average conditions of various weather elements and combinations at Havre (page 44).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range of Weather Index and Type of Season</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Average rainfall Apr.-Aug. inclusive</th>
<th>Av. max. temperature June and July</th>
<th>Av. No. of hot winds per yr. and range June and July</th>
<th>Average relative humidity June, July</th>
<th>Average spring wheat yields</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very dry</td>
<td>1882, 1889, 1890</td>
<td>6.05 Inches</td>
<td>81 Degrees</td>
<td>14 Number</td>
<td>39 Per cent</td>
<td>3 Bushels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-42</td>
<td>1883, 1886, 1893</td>
<td>7.70</td>
<td>79 Degrees</td>
<td>12 Number</td>
<td>39 Per cent</td>
<td>6 Bushels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dry</td>
<td>1897, 1904, 1920</td>
<td>10.36</td>
<td>77 Degrees</td>
<td>7 Number</td>
<td>47 Per cent</td>
<td>10 Bushels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moist</td>
<td>1891, 1892, 1895</td>
<td>10.28</td>
<td>76 Degrees</td>
<td>3 Number</td>
<td>55 Per cent</td>
<td>20 Bushels</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. The most probable yearly condition of range grass in the "Triangle" from 1882 to 1921 (page 50).
C. Probable crop yields of wheat on spring plowed lands and summer-fallowed lands for the years 1882 to 1921.

D. Probable production of family farm garden on summer-fallowed land for the years 1882-1921.
Appendix VII

Montana Farm Bankruptcies

In 1938 R. R. Renne of the Montana Agricultural Experiment Station made a study of the number, characteristics, and causes of farm bankruptcies from 1898 to 1937. The following maps and charts indicate the relationship of farm bankruptcies to the dry farming movement. (R. R. Renne, Montana Farm Bankruptcies. Montana Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin No. 360 (Bozeman: Experiment Station, 1938).

A. Montana farm bankruptcies by counties, 1921-1937.
Note the heavy concentration in the dry farming areas of the state. More than four fifths of the total farm bankruptcies in Montana for the 40-year period 1898-1937. occurred in the seventeen years covered in the figure.
B. Montana bankruptcy trends, 1910-1937 (page 1).

C. Montana farm bankruptcies per 1000 farms, by counties, 1921-1925; 1926-1930; and 1931-1937. A comparison of these three charts shows not only the proportion of total farmers going bankrupt in each county by five year periods, but the decrease in recent years (page 18). 1937 (page 18).
D. Proportion of farmers bankrupt in Montana and the United States, 1900-1935. Note the very heavy proportion of Montana farmers who went bankrupt during the twenties compared with the national average (page 21).

E. Average number of bankruptcies per 1000 farms annually in Montana, the Mountain States area, and neighboring states, 1899-1935. Note that Montana showed the highest proportion of farmers bankrupt of any of these states during the twenties and that only North Dakota approached the Montana record (page 26).
F. Homestead entries and the number of farm bankruptcies in Montana, 1899-1937. Note the very heavy amount of settlement in the state during the years 1910-1918 and the apparent lag of from 10 to 12 years in farm bankruptcies. This heavy influx of settlers during this period of rising prices and soaring land values contributed to speculation and excessive borrowing and laid the foundation for the heavy failures which followed in the next decade (page 42).