

BILLINGS, MONTANA, TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 1940

### Modern Billings of Today —and— The Billings of Tomorrow

An Editorial

Progressive communities take pride in their accomplishments, but those responsible for their advances are ever looking to the future. Billings is fortunate in having its full quota of such residents. They are the men and women who have made possible today's Modern Billings Edition of 'The Gazette.'

In the 92 pages of this edition are presented a comprehensive account of the varied factors contributing to the record 10-year growth through which we have just passed.

One of the accounts visions a Billings of 50,000 or more residents 20 years hence. Some regard the figure as fantastic, but actually it calls for a less rapid rate of growth than we have experienced in the last decade, during which the population of Greater Billings expanded from 18,724 to 28,734, a matter of 53.31 per cent. This is nearly ten times our population at the turn of the century, and three times what it was 30 years ago.

The growth of the city but reflects the development of its far-flung and rich trade territory, in which construction of irrigation projects was considerably accelerated during the last decade. Others on which work is well under way, extending among which are the Heart Mountain in Wyoming and the Buffalo Rapids in Montana, or in the serious study stage, will vastly swell the total of irrigated acreage during the next few years.

One of the latter alone, encompassing the vast Lake Basin extending west and north from near Billings to Meeteetse, would mean the irrigation of a million acres, compared with about 600,000 acres now under the ditch in the entire Midland Empire. These 600,000 acres are responsible for about \$15,000,000 annually in cash crops, this exclusive of the returns from our large and growing livestock feeding industry.

Yellowstone county, with an annual purchasing power of in excess of \$21,000,000, is the most highly developed of the Midland Empire subdivisions. Others have comparable possibilities, however, and with their development this city, as their wholesale distributing point and metropolitan shopping center, will prosper proportionately. Yellowstone county provides a third of the purchasing power of the Midland Empire. Farms account for most of the buying power of the county, but the pay rolls of Billings are in excess of \$7,000,000 annually. Wholesale establishments alone are responsible for a third of this, and others are just as sensitive to developments throughout the trade territory.

Our per capita retail sales lead the state, and our favored geographical situation and the greater utilization of water resources assure a continuation of the trend.

Residential construction in Greater Billings during the last 10 years, consisting of more than 2,000 homes at a cost of in excess of \$10,000,000, was extensive but not so much so as our population growth.

During the same period this has become the largest packing center between Fargo and Spokane, the most important marine terminal between the Twin Cities and the Pacific coast. Contributing vastly to both of these results are a fine network of highways and three transcontinental railroads extending in every direction from the city.

And in this material advancement we have not lagged behind in the less tangible but equally essential aspects of community progress. Our school system, including two institutions of higher learning, our hospitals and medical and surgical clinics, the city's fine system of improved parks embracing 75 acres, an unusually good public library and our several churches are but a few of the many features that mark Billings as a city of stable confidence.

The spirit and enterprise that have carried the city and surrounding territory to their present position of eminence are still strong among us. There is much yet to be done, but accomplishments of the last decade more than prove the practicability and worth-whileness of the task. The future lies before us, and happily it is one which we are fully justified in facing with the utmost confidence and enthusiasm. A continuance of the determination and drive which have made the Modern Billings of 1940 a reality will make it a much greater Billings of tomorrow.

## Gazette Features Edition on "Modern Billings of Today"

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