



The crowds of land-eager men and women leaving the Spokane-Cœur d'Alene Interurban train for a steamboat excursion across Cœur d'Alene Lake, Idaho, and up the St. Joe River into the reserved region—behind the hills in the background—which was about to be opened by the Government for homestead claims.

## Uncle Sam's Grab-Bag at Cœur d'Alene

*The Unparalleled Flood of Home-Seekers and Speculators to the Lottery of Indian Land*

By ARTHUR RUHL

**T**HERE was about one chance in thirty of winning a homestead from the Flathead Reservation; one in one hundred from the Cœur d'Alene; one in five hundred from the Spokane. All in all, about seven hundred thousand acres of this untouched north country land was to be given away—given, that is, to those who would give in return. You first must register at Missoula or Kalispell, Montana, for the Flathead lands; at Cœur d'Alene, Idaho, for the Cœur d'Alene lands; and at Spokane, Washington, for the Spokane lands. The drawings for all were at Cœur d'Alene.

Those who won must return next April when, in the order in which their names were drawn, they will choose their homesteads. To do this intelligently, they must first cruise the country over pretty thoroughly themselves or pay some one to do so for them. They must live on the lands for five years, improve them, and pay in yearly instalments the Government's price of \$1.25 to \$7 an acre, or—on the Spokane and Flathead tracts—"commute" after fourteen months continuous residence by paying the entire sum at once. Most of the Cœur d'Alene land is timber land, and these claims may only be proved up by actual homesteading for five years.

The Flathead country to the east of Spokane in Montana was the most attractive "proposition" of the three. It stretches northward from above Missoula to Flathead Lake—four hundred and fifty thousand acres of valley, bench lands, and upland range between the Cabinet Mountains on the west, and on the east the Mission Range and the Kootenais. There is timber and water here, much can be cultivated without irrigation, and in the southern part, in the Joeko Valley country, the Reclamation Service already has a project under way.

The Spokane lands, against which there were such prohibitive odds, were also the least alluring as homesteads. They are sandy and rocky and dotted with slender scrub pines. There was a rumor of possible power sites, however, and as the registration point was the city of Spokane itself they were as much sought as the other two. Naturally, nearly everybody in Spokane registered. It was also regarded as a patriotic duty.

### Drawing for Mountain-Sides

**T**HE Cœur d'Alene country, which extends southward in Idaho from the shores of Cœur d'Alene Lake, is mostly mountain land clothed in pine and somber fir. A vast store of white pine lies beyond it, and a new continental line has just pushed through the reservation. There is said to be valuable timber on the reserve, and the whole country is beautiful to look at, but, as a

farming "proposition," rather like the Adirondacks or the Maine woods.

And into this curious grab-bag between one hundred and two hundred thousand people—the total registration was nearly three hundred thousand—stretched their eager and unthinking hands. Comparatively few had any real notion of what it means to get down face to face with the raw land and fight it into farms. Thousands, of course, merely took a chance just as they would drop a nickel into a slot machine, because they happened to be on the ground.

### The Coming of the Thousands

**P**ERHAPS they saw the wheat rolling in a golden flood across the Montana plateau, just as it was rolling during the days of registration down in the Palouse and on the shimmering hot hills to the west of Spokane. The harvest was in full swing. Millions and millions of bushels were piling up, and every day despatches came up from the wheat country where the long "combined" harvesters crept like huge beetles across the yellow carpet under their slowly ascending spirals of dust.

Perhaps they merely saw a great heap of envelopes on a platform at Cœur d'Alene and the little girl in the white dress picking out one, and heard a loud voice read, while the telegraph operators tapped their keys: "John

Bluestem, R. F. D. No. 6, Gopher, Minnesota—NUMBER 1!" And then, while the congratulatory crowd closed in, some representative of the Government stepped forward and promptly offered to buy the first number for \$25,000, that the claim might be used for a town site. This was a favorite vision during the registration days—this and that stand of giant white pines over behind the Cœur d'Alene hills for which a lumber company was waiting to pay \$30,000 cash.

For weeks the railroads had reached out their long arms and drawn the people in. In June, three thousand miles away in lower Broadway, you could read in the ticket office windows: "Uncle Sam Will Give You a Home." Thousands on their way to the Seattle Exposition stopped to register. A great many of these were capable, canny farmers from the Middle West, who, with a safe anchor to windward, studied the country shrewdly, not anxious, but ready, in case lightning should strike. There were many women—city school-teachers, widows, stenographers—dreaming vaguely of a quiet refuge in the country, and selling out after they had proved up at a price which would let them live happily ever after. And there were some who were thinking—yes, hungry, and almost ready to fight for—a home.

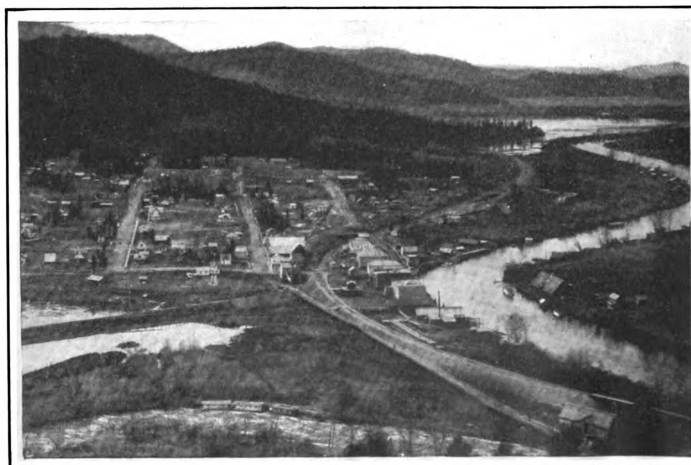
I came across one such on a steamboat excursion across the lake and up the "Shadowy St. Joe" into the Cœur d'Alene reserve. He sat on the upper deck with the wood sparks sitting down from the smokestack unheeded, his derby hat pulled back low over his ears. He was tanned, the corners of his mouth were tobacco-stained. He looked like a baseball player from a bush league team, except for his overwrought eyes and voice. He was talking to a bored giant in a black slouch hat who chewed a cigar and nodded, but said nothing.

### Hunger for Home

"I'll take a surveyor down there and get the thing lined up," he declared, "so there won't be no doubt about it. I wanta know just where she lies. Huh? Cost too much? All right—I'll get an Indian. You gotta know your section lines when you go up in April to tell 'em where she lies."

"Suppose you aren't drawn?" I suggested. He turned at once to me. "If I ain't," he said, "I'll go to some man in the Government. You know the Government's helping the people put in irrigation projects. I'll go around to every one of 'em again until I find a place to stay. I'm going to see this thing through. I'm going to get a piece of land. What do you think of this country?"

I said that it was good to look at, but pretty difficult to homestead. "Work?" he demanded. Do you think any one who wants a home as bad as I do 'ud care about the work



The town of St. Marie in the middle of the Cœur d'Alene reserve. The wooded mountains surrounding the place must be homesteaded—lived upon for five years—to perfect the title

I can have the satisfaction of workin' for myself? I n't care *what* it is. I'll take what they give me. I tell u I've had enough of working and seeing the other in get everything out of it. An' now these capitalists ant to stop the Government helping people irrigate be- use they say we're getting too much for nothing. I ar there is goin' to be a big fight on in this irrigation ngress at Spokane. As if these guys hadn't done noth- g else but get things for nothing. Hell! What's all er business anyway but speculating on some other an's labor? I gotta enough of it!"

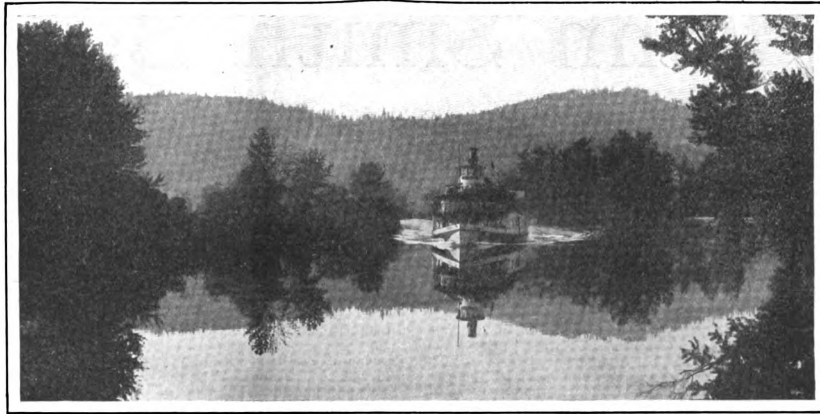
**A Friendly Fireman**

**I**E HAD been a railroad fireman and then turned carpenter. "Say," he asked suddenly, "ain't you t some relatives down in California? You look just ke a fireman I knew, used to run out of Los Angeles. id went into the grocery business afterward." We ssed a little houseboat where a camper was just slip- ng some black bass from the stringer into the fish-box. his curious little river is choked with logs in the ring, in summer lined with homely little houseboats id fishermen's camps. "Say, look at that! Why, if I red up here, I'd be hog fat with fish. All you gotta is snake 'em out of your front yard on to the stove. oka that flat there—there'd be a place for a ranch!" I suggested that it might be covered with water when e melted snows came down in the spring. "Well— ke one of them camping sites. Now I'll bet that guy er there gets good money for that. Why, a man uld raise garden stuff on the flat, build a raft and t a little launch, and tow it all down to Cœur d'Alene- mself." He swept his arm up and down the little river id across the steep slopes of fir turning from dark green black in the twilight. "Why, this place'll be the sum- er resort of the world some day!" Later, on the way back to my hotel, I dropped into a ick-lunch restaurant. The subdued, patient-looking, unglish man who waited on me and set the dishes down owly, as if he were afraid of breaking something, had gistered at Spokane and Cœur d'Alene. He had no oney to go over to Kalispell. I asked him if he would ve on a claim if he got one.

"Sure," he said quietly, "I want a home." He had unged the year of the panic and rented some wheat nd. The crop failed, he went broke, then rheumatism ight him, and he was doing this waitering to get ong. Even the young Russian, into whose little tailor ep I stepped to have a button sewed on, intended to ose up. It was difficult to imagine him clearing a ountain-side of heavy timber as he squatted there, ill-eyed and pale, beside his hot iron, but he said: "A ung fellow can afford the time. Sure. And I can ork at my trade in some of the little towns."

**General Honesty of Intention**

**N**ONE of these three was the sort of pioneer the West prefers—the shrewd, seasoned man with a little oney who can "stand the gaff" and make a success of odern irrigation and intensive farming, yet each faced ie task with cheerful confidence. The gullible ex-rail- ader who had a grievance was at least not nourishing on the depressing air of a city tenement and the un- althy sympathy of parlor Socialists. He had a notion what he wanted and was going out after it. And if e Government land is to open a road to salvation to y it surely should be for such as these. The thing that impressed me, in view of the gamble ey were taking and the almost insurmountable dif- iculties of making a living for the first five years of uch nd, was the apparent intention of every one honestly prove up. Each of those I talked with had worked it some sort of plan. Indeed, the very gamble of the ing, and the contagious enthusiasm of a crowd, none of hom knew what sort of sudden turn-down his life might ke, filled all with unquenchable optimism. The trained irse who sat in our section on the way to Seattle merely ighted at the prospect of being buried for a winter in e Cœur d'Alene snows. "One thing is sure," she said, "I'll have some chickens. You could fill the shack with agazines. And anyway, what a good rest it would be!"



On the "Shadowy St. Joe"—carrying homesteaders through the rugged country they will have to overcome

A wise old lady also shared the section. She and her husband had come out from Wisconsin and tried to prove up on a homestead in the Nez Percé country. He cleared nine acres, but there was no living on the place, and

would stalk into the cabin, solemnly wait until she had cooked dinner for him, eat it, and as solemnly and silently stalk away. That was years ago. They were in comfortable circumstances now, and homesteading would be only a sort of vacation. "If you get a claim next to mine," she said, "I'll bake you a pie now and then. There is some great berries up in those woods."

On the steamboat that day were farmers from Wiscon- sin and Illinois who knew villages and people I knew. There was a mild little old gentleman from the Puget Sound country—which he thought the finest country in the world—and there was a husky young Swede who told the old gentleman he would not live in the Puget Sound country if they gave him a ranch. He didn't mind cold, but he couldn't stand the coast rains or the muddy roads, where, he said, people "burrow all vinter like vood chucks."

He had been in the Cœur d'Alene country for a year and knew it root and branch. He had registered, of course, and he would take up a claim if he got in the first fifty. After that, what was the use? You could go outside of the reservation and prove up on much bet- ter timber without the trouble of homesteading.

**Three Millions Spent in Railroad Fares**

**T**HERE were two soft-voiced giants from California, who said little and smiled all the time a vague im- penetrable smile. They had cut their eye-teeth long ago. It is pretty hard to tell a Californian anything new about boosting or promotion or real estate or the profits from farming. Talking comfortably in the shadow of the lower deck as the moon came up over the lake, we went over the whole West from "San Bernadoon" to Wenat- chee and Snake River. Rain, spring frosts, alkali, gumbo, subsoil irrigation, apples, town lots, and wheat—the whole story. The next day they were going over to Kalispell— determined, in spite of their good-humored skepticism, to see all this north country had to show them.

There was a little tanned farmer with a catfish must- ache who had been in the rush for the Cherokee strip, sixteen years ago, and had come up from Oklahoma to see what he could see. He had missed out on the Strip, but rented land from the Indians.

"I was looking for a homestead," he grinned, "with a good two-room house and a wind-mill and a team of horses and a forty or so in wheat—and so I went in one side and come out the other."

Crowds as diversified as ours swarmed up to Spokane from all over the land. The overland trains, dusty and travel-stained, came up over the horizon each morning, crowded to the rails. The land-hunters spent, it was estimated, three million dollars for railroad fares— enough to have paid between four and five dollars for every acre of land the Government gave away. They packed the Spokane hotels until an outsider, like myself, had to tramp to half a dozen of them before he could find a room.

Every other window carried a notary's sign—"So-and- so has been designated as and is" an authorized notary public. The fee for each registration was twenty-five cents. Some notaries in good places—the lobby of the Pentages Theater, for instance—made \$100 a day. "The only trouble," one of them said to me, "is the time it takes some of these old shell-backs to write. They get a good grip on the pen and—slucks! You could register a dozen while they're signing their names." Another \$75,000 was spent in this way.

**The Harvest of the Barbers**

**T**HE less experienced had quaint adventures. Dusty and tired, they came up out of the sage-brush and steered for the nearest barber-shop. The barbers cut their hair and innocently suggested other delights. Their weather-beaten old faces were massaged and anointed with perfumed creams, they experienced electric vibra- tions, champoos, and the "neck rub." They thought it was all being given away, and they awoke to be handed itemized checks amounting to several dollars. Two of them rebelled one evening when their bill was \$8.65. The barbers pounced on their baggage. They arrived at a police-station carrying, it was said, only the handles of their "grips." There were so many such cases that the Mayor finally issued an order commanding the barbers to behave.

They packed the post-office, and every day sent twenty thousand post-cards home. It would be hard to appraise the value of the advertising they freely gave Spokane. Spokane is the center of this newly-awakened Inland Empire—the northwest country west of the Divide and east of the Cascades. Set in a background of pine-



The Coveted Envelope

Miss Helen Hamilton with the first envelope which she selected from 105,696 upon the platform. It held the application of Isadore Selig, Myrtle Creek, Oregon

while he was away working in Spokane she lived alone up there in the forest for as long as three months at a time. Sometimes she had to get up at night to drive the wild horses out of the yard, and sometimes an Indian



Summer cottages on Cœur d'Alene Lake—predicted by enthusiasts to become the summer resort of the world