HIBBING—HEART OF THE IRON COUNTRY

Standing on The Rim of The World's Greatest Open-Pit Mine Hibbing is The Chief Gateway of Nature's Most Wonderful and Stupendous Storehouse of Iron.

A Village Where Opportunity is Made and Where Big Things Are Achieved. Immense Army of Industrial Workers Soon to be Fed Through Prolific Yield of Surrounding Farms. A Few Acres Near Hibbing Spell Independence.

Special Correspondence to The News Tribune by Don Carlos W. Musser.

Hibbing clings to her swaddling clothes notwithstanding she is 20 years old, has bank deposits of a million and a half dollars, about fifteen thousand people and more taxable property than any city in the great state of Minnesota. Hibbing is a village, you understand,—not a city, but a village with an assessed valuation of more than thirty million dollars, with a half of a million dollars worth of public schools, a one hundred and thirty-five thousand dollar village hall, a thirty-five thousand dollar library, a thirty thousand dollar club house, a Commercial club, fair grounds, churches, stores, theaters, business blocks and, in short, all the ear marks and characteristics, habiliments and trimmings of a wide-awake, up-to-the-minute city.

Hibbing is one of the wonders of the wonderful northwest.

A glance at the iron industry of the Lake Superior region will establish Hibbing in your mind as the richest and most important village on the face of the globe,—the very heart of a mining section to which the world owes much of its twentieth century civilization. Bridges spanning the Nile, Snake river and the Columbia; thousands of miles of steel rails binding and holding together all parts of this mighty continent, and contributing to the peace and commercial welfare of the Philippines, China and Japan and barbarous Russia; millions of tons of structural iron that have been woven into the skyscrapers of the east and west, and into the palaces and architectural monuments of all parts of the civilized world; millions of tons of iron entering into the manufacture of machinery, by the aid of which was made possible the wonderful development of our mines, mills, factories, our methods of transportation and our agricultural resources, were taken out of the iron ranges of Minnesota and Michigan.

Minnesota Leads.

Figures mean very little to most men. For want of an adequate measuring stick or mental means of comparison, a million tons of ore in the ground conveys no vivid impression. Men talk of millions and even billions when they are incapable of forming an intelligent conception of what hundreds of thousands mean to a country or community. The figures, for instance, necessary to employ in describing the mineral deposits of the Mesaba range are beyond the average man's conception. We cannot grasp them. In their presence we can only grope and stutter and stammer, realizing as we study them how really insignificant our knowledge is concerning nature's generous stores. Take this statement and analyze it:

"The Hibbing district contains a half billion tons of ore, richer in iron content and more accessible than the same quantity of ore in the same area in any other part of the world."

What does half a billion tons mean? It means ten million car loads of 50 tons each. Place these cars end to end and how far would they reach? From London to New York? Yes, and then on to San Francisco and on to China and around to London again, and then around the earth again and again and again. Is it any wonder that when you speak of Hibbing to a man he refuses to think of anything but iron ore?

The Marquette, first of the Lake Superior iron ranges to be discovered, gave to the world, during the years 1854 to 1893, nearly 89,000,000 long tons or iron ore. In 1877 the Menominee range began shipping and from that time until the close of 1893, produced 66,000,000 tons, and from 1884 until 1893 the Gogebic range shipped over 57,000,000 long tons of iron ore. In 1890 Michigan led all the states of the Union in the matter of iron ore production, and that proud position she maintained until the year 1901, when Minnesota took the lead which, by virtue of the splendid development of the Mesaba range, of which Hibbing is the metropolis, and which contains the most remarkable deposits of iron ore ever discovered, she still maintains and is most likely to maintain for many, many years to come.

Story of Human Interest.

When the full story of the Mesaba range is written, and let us hope that some gifted writer will turn his attention to it before a great while, it will read like a romance. It will be a story full of thrills and surprises,—a story of human interest, with many sidelights and all shades of coloring from the blackest black of discouragement to the purest golden of success.

The story of Hibbing alone will prove a very valuable contribution to the library of the man who likes to read of achievements,— who gathers from the work of his fellows the inspiration for his success. Love and fame and fortune; privation, hardship, suffering, discouragements, heartbreaks and great floods of sunshine and happiness will all find a place in the true story of Hibbing when it shall be written.

The Mesaba Iron Range.

For the past 20 years the Mesaba iron range has attracted more attention than any other on earth. This range contains about 400 square miles, being about 100 miles long and from two to ten miles wide. The first ore shipped from the Mesaba range in 1892, amounting to 29,245 tons. Three years later, in 1895, there was shipped from this range more than 2,700,000 tons, which was more by many hundreds of thousands of tons than was shipped from any other range.

The iron production of the Mesaba range increased mightily from year to year so that in 1906, just 14 years after its first shipment, more than 23,000,000 tons were sent down the lake, and by the close of last season, 1911, the Mesaba range had to its credit the production of more than 200,000,000 tons of iron ore.

Iron Mines—Golden Farms.

But iron is by no means the only wealth of this country tributary to Hibbing. Within the past few years men have gone to farming on the range, and they have learned to their great joy and satisfaction that they can become free and independent, and even affluent by raising the farm products required to feed the great armies of men engaged in digging out the iron for future railroads, bridges and skyscrapers. The call, "back to the land," has come to many in the very voice of God, with the result that the Mesaba iron range is a thousand times richer today than ever before, for men now know that this great, teeming and profitable market can be supplied right here at home. They have demonstrated that the soil of the Mesaba range is as rich and productive as any in the most favored spots of the world, and others are awakening to the fact that they can go on the land and build homes and fortunes for themselves. It requires millions of capital to develop an iron mine to the dividend paying point. There are thousands of men in this state today who could, if they only realized the actual conditions, get dividend paying farms on the Mesaba range within the next two or three years.

Are you one of the unfortunates whose gaze is longingly turned westward or northward or southward—to whom distance lends enchantment and who feels that the opportunity of your life lies in some faraway field, waiting for you to come and pick it up? If you are one of these, you need an eye-opener. You need a dose of Hibbing. You need to shake yourself free from the hypnotism which blinds you to the great and untold possibilities for growth and achievement here at home. You should take a Duluth, Missabe & Northern train and visit the Mesaba iron range. You should come to the twin cities, to Hibbing, and study the gigantic works of your fellow man and get a clear insight into conditions right here at your own door and in your own state.

Thousands to Be Fed.

No, Hibbing and other range towns and cities are not overdone. Get away from this idea as soon as possible. Do not loose sight of the fact that the future of the Mesaba range is more promising today than ever before. Remember that the many thousands of miners, toiling here in the greatest mines on earth, have got to be fed, and that here the market is almost without limit. Here at the very door of this limitless market for the products of truck and dairy farms are many thousands of acres of virgin soil, awaiting the coming of men and women with brains enough and nerve and love of independence enough to develop farms and build homes where they can dwell with their children in peace and comfort.

There are always men waiting, ready and willing to take the $2-a-day jobs. Industry finds no trouble in getting the necessary muscle and backbone to keep her wheels revolving. As long as the sun shines there will be men enough to do the world's drudgery, not only willingly, but they will beg for the opportunity of doing it. But the time is coming and now is when farming will be lifted out of the drudgery class and placed where it has always belonged, among the higher and more dignified professions. There can be no more honorable and independent calling than that of agriculture. There are opportunities here for labor, grand ones, too, better ones than there have ever been before, but they are not in the iron mines of the Mesaba range. They are to be found on the lands—the land of great wealth, where all men are equal before the law, and get the money for our future independence. We can find work in the mines and forests of that great country at much better wages than our fathers ever dreamed of earning, and we can save in four or five years enough to buy us farms and independence."

The Great Melting Pot.

They come and go to work in the greatest iron mines on earth, husbanding their resources, saving their dimes and dollars until they consider they have enough for their purpose, and then they quit, and the iron ranges know them no more forever. Others come and take their places, with the same purpose in view and the result is that we are continually educating and Americanizing the muscle and brains of Europe only to loose them as soon as they reach that point in their growth where they are able to shift for themselves. Seventy-five per cent of the population of Hibbing changes almost completely each five years.

Fully fifty per cent of the men who came from Europe to work in our mines do so with the idea of later purchasing farms and building homes of their own. And they are doing this with a fidelity to their original intentions that is altogether admirable. But the question is, where do they acquire their homes? On the range? Near the villages wherein they lived lived while growing out of their old country notions, and getting the means of shifting for themselves?

No, this is rarely the case. They take the few hundred dollars they have saved to go to Canada or to the surrounding states or back to the old country and settle down. Many of them go back to Europe and pay four or five hundred dollars an acre for worn out land that has been producing for centuries, when they could have bought virgin soil, as fertile as the sun ever shone upon, here, in this new, wonderful country, near the best possible markets for $15 or less an acre.

Why Is It This?

The reason for this condition of affairs is not hard to locate. The man who earns and saves his money here and goes elsewhere to buy his farm, paying very much more for something not nearly so good, does so because he does not know better. His education along this particular line has not been attended to, and for this the business men of Hibbing and other range towns are largely responsible. If proper steps had been taken to impress him while he was working in the mine, with the magnificent possibilities of this land around him, if he had been taught that this soil is more productive than any he has ever seen before,—that it would produce three times as much with one-third the effort as the little farms he knew back in his native country; and if he had been given to understand that he could buy this land at a very low price with the privilege of extending his payments over many years, do you suppose that he would have gone back to Europe, or that he would have gone anywhere off this range to make his home?

And think what it would mean to Hibbing and St. Louis county, for instance, if the thousands of men who have earned their farms here on the range and gone elsewhere to buy them, had purchased them anywhere between Grand Rapids on the Mississippi river and Birch lake. Think of the hundreds of thousands of acres of wilderness that in such an event would have been transformed in the process to wealth producing farms.

The Land Is Here.

We are not taking full advantage of our opportunities so long as we permit the working people in our midst to save and invest their accumulations elsewhere,without making a determined and intelligent effort to educate them to the real, golden opportunities right here. So long as we neglect this duty, so long will we be unjust to ourselves and fellows, and just so long will our community growth be retarded.

The land is here. God never created a fairer out-of-door than this country we live in. No more prolific soil was ever kissed by the amorous sun than this soil around Hibbing. The men, strong, sturdy, deep-chested men to work the soil and reduce the cost of living and multiply the wealth of the country are here, and what more can the range people want? What more can the county of St. Louis want? In justice to all concerned—and all are concerned— the possibilities in agriculture in the section spoken of, should be drilled into the minds of the people here today, but who, in another year may have gone elsewhere to settle.

Follow Hibbing's Lead.

There is considerable being done at the present time to encourage the range farmer. In Hibbing, for example, they are about to build a large public market where the farmer can bring his product, assured of a good price for it. Here also is the headquarters of the St. Louis County Agricultural society, which exists for the express purpose of encouraging and promoting the agricultural interests of this county. The society owns fair grounds to the value of $20,000 at Hibbing and here for the last six years an annual fair has been held, and well attended by people from Duluth and all parts of the range. These annual fairs are of immense value to the farmer of this section as they place before him each year the best results obtained from the best methods known, and by bringing the farmers together an exchange of ideas is constantly going on to the betterment of conditions in general. Again the awards, prizes and purses given to exhibitors at the fairs held in Hibbing, besides encouraging friendly rivalry, amount to considerable in themselves. At the fair last year there was $2,522.96 disbursed in this manner.

In Hibbing there is an aggressive Commercial club composed of far-sighted men who are constantly looking for opportunities for promoting the community growth and prosperity. Anything of community interest will find hearty support by this body, and anybody desirous of investigating the land situation on the Mesaba range would do well to address his inquiries to the Commercial club of Hibbing.

Hibbing Schools.

And lest many should get the idea that in coming to this section of the country he is saying "goodbye" to all educational opportunities for his children, it may be well to point him certain facts which stand out in bold, startling relief. For instance, let him be told emphatically, that the "richest village on earth" is not without its school system, and then show him that the independent school district of Hibbing is richer than the splendid district of Duluth by two and a half times.

The Hibbing school district has an assessed valuation of $100,400,763. Pause now a moment and let this statement of fact percolate through your brain. And now consider this: The school district of St. Paul has an assessed valuation of $100,000,000, and that of Duluth, $41,000,000. The Hibbing district includes six townships and has a population of perhaps 15,000. Duluth with much less than half the assessed valuation has a population at least five times as great, and St. Paul, with less valuation than Hibbing has a population 16 times as great.

In the Hibbing district there are 18 school buildings, 15 of which are outside of the village of Hibbing. The schools of this district are about as good as money can furnish. Do not, however, glean from this statement the idea that the school buildings have an excessive amount of marble trimmings, or that money has been lavishly spent in seeing how large and expensive they could be constructed. The school buildings of this district are such as reflect credit on the community, and insure comfort and, in so far as such a thing is possible, the health of the school children. After health and comfort have been secured in school buildings the most important consideration is the quality of the teachers to be therein employed, and here it is that Hibbing shines. More than half the teachers of the Hibbing district are college graduates. They came here from the east as far as the Atlantic and the west as far as the Pacific, and it is safe to say that no system of graded schools in the country is presided over by a more efficient corps of teachers than this same district of Hibbing.

It is the admirable policy of Prof. H. F. Blair, superintendent of the Hibbing school district, heartily endorsed and backed by the board of education, to pay more attention to the selection and compensation of teachers than to the decoration and lavish equipment of school buildings. And it must not be inferred from this that the school buildings are not all they should be, or that they lack in any of the essentials. The Hibbing schools are solidly constructed, fireproof buildings, containing all the furniture and equipment necessary, but there is nothing lavish or extravagant about them. Surrounded as they are for the most part by very inferior structures, mere shacks at times, they look more monumental and imposing than they naturally would with better surroundings. Per school child, or per school room, the Hibbing schools cost less than those of Duluth.

An Object Lesson.

And again, lest any man get the impression that the foreigners who come to our marvelous country for the purpose of delving in the mines and clearing the forests are entirely without healthful ambitions and ideals, it would be well for him to visit these same schools, and especially the night school at Hibbing. I was there a few evenings since and was conducted through room after room where young men ranging in age, let us say, from 18 to 35, were literally wrestling with the rudiments of the English language. These men were from all parts of Europe. Most of them had toiled all day in the mines, had walked to and from work, had eaten their suppers and then washed and shaved and dressed up, and again walked, miles in some instances, to attend night school.

In one room, that of the beginners, a dozen broad-shouldered, hard-handed, deep-chested men were standing at blackboards painfully, laboriously scrawling with chalk, at the dictation of the teacher, a bright, college-bred woman from the east, such words as head, and hand and foot, and arm and leg, as happy as youngsters and much more determined to succeed, and much more grateful for the opportunity offered. It was an object lesson and prompted the thought: "Is it any wonder that foreigners, in so many instances, get along in this country so much more rapidly than the country's native sons?"

Roads Most Urgent Need.

The greatest need of St. Louis county today is roads. Before this absolute and crying want all other wants pale into insignificance. The real, indistructible wealth of this country will never become appreciated until there is a network of roads radiating from the villages to the farms. In most sections of the range country there has been a woeful lack of road building, and there are many farmers but a few miles from good markets who find it impossible to get their stuff to town except when the roads are frozen up in winter. This condition is lamentable, but it is being remedied and each year finds a greater area brought under the life-sustaining and health-promoting influence of good roads.

But this road question is a most serious one. The actual needs of this section, with reference to wagon roads, are so great that past accomplishments are scarcely a drop in the bucket in comparison with what is urgently required at this time. And though Hibbing and the town of Stuntz are especially fortunate in this respect, $80,000 having been spent in the township in 1911 for roads alone, the fact nevertheless remains that $800,000, and even more, could have been most profitably spent for the same purpose, in the same section and in the same time if it had been available.

Difficult to Realize.

It is indeed difficult to realize in the face of the tremendous economic annual loss, occasioned by the absence of adequate roads uniting farms with villages, why provision is not made in so wonderful and so rich a country as St. Louis for the immediate expenditure of millions of dollars in road extension. There is no investment possible for the county to make that would add anywhere near so much to its per capita wealth as the investment of from five to ten million dollars in road building. There is absolutely nothing St. Louis county can do to greatly add to its wealth, its magnificence as a county, its contentment and welfare of its people, or that would so could attract to it settlers from all over the country as the early expenditure of millions of dollars in the construction of roads uniting farms with villages. "Roads From Farms to Villages" should become the county slogan, and every man should shout it, and every woman sing it, and every child lisp it until the roads are built, and then instead of a scant two hundred thousand population, this great county contains at least a million happy, contented and prosperous people.

St. Louis county has about 1,200 miles of roads—she needs 3,000 miles. To maintain the 1,200 miles already constructed she should expend about $240,000, and in order the roads actually needed she should reasonably expend $6,000,000.

Lots of money, yes. But placed in the balance of the wealth it would stimulate and produce, it would be a drop in the bucket.

If railroads can bond for construction, and then, through a charge of not more than one cent per ton mile, pay its stockholders dividends, we cannot St. Louis county bond for wagon road construction and reduce the cruel and criminal present cost of wagon haulage which ranges all the way up to three dollars per ton per mile?

St. Louis county, containing 6,000 square miles, four billion feet of standing timber, three billion tons of iron ore and three million acres of arable land is perhaps the most favored spot of like area on the face of the globe. Think of this tremendous wealth, and then consider how really destitute this wonderfully God favored county is in the matter of roads. Three million acres of land to be cultivated and scarcely fifty thousand acres under the plow, and most of these producing at a sickening, discouraging loss because the farmers have not roads over which to haul their produce to market.

Dog-in-the-Manger Policy.

Another very serious feature in connection with the land situation in St. Louis county, and one that greatly handicaps the development of the county is the fact that large corporations hold hundreds of thousands of acres of the raw wilderness for which $15 an acre is demanded. There are other hundreds of thousands of acres owned by non-resident speculators who refuse to sell on any terms or at any price. The taxes paid on all this land is insignificant, indicating that it is not worth more than $5 per acre, and in truth, if sold at this price the present owners would reap tremendous profits.

This land today stands in the very path of progress, blocking its wheels and discouraging the efforts of those who are truly seeking to build up the country.

Every man who settles on the range and clears his little farm adds value to the range. Every foot of land near a developed farm is enhanced in value, and so long as the taxes on this land are so low it costs the large holders practically nothing to retain their holdings until such time as the real builders of the country have, through their tireless efforts, their great hardships and overcoming of difficulties, multiplied their value. It is a dog-in-the-manger policy and calls loudly for some remedy. If the corporations referred to would sell say one-fourth of their agricultural lands for $5 an acre, they could then get $35 an acre and even more for the balance of it much more readily than they can sell it for $15, and the development of the country would be greatly facilitated.

If the land is worth $15 an acre in its uncleared state, and this is the price demanded, why not tax it on a $15 valuation and in this way add to the road building fund of the county? And is it unreasonable to expect that if the taxes were increased the owners of the hundreds of thousands of acres of uncleared wilderness would be more anxious to sell than they are now, and the real farmers and pioneers—the men who must make the country and who are the very salt of the earth would be encouraged to come in greater numbers? Non-resident owners who refuse to sell on any account and who do nothing by way of clearing or improving their holdings, but who hang on to be benefited and enriched by the efforts of the real settler, that is, by virtue of his improvements adding value to

THOUIN HARDWARE COMPANY, HIBBING, MINN.

ITASCA BAZAAR COMPANY, HIBBING, MINN.

This is one of the institutions of which the village of Hibbing has a right to be proud. It is a consolidation of the old Itasca Mercantile Co. with The Bazaar, and makes a commodious, well-stocked and well-managed department store, with a frontage of 100 feet on Pine street, with 130 feet on Third avenue. The entire business is under the direct management of Mrs. D. M. Power.

This splendid store contains about $125,000 worth of up-to-the-minute stock in the following departments or sections: Ladies' ready-to-wear section, a millinery section, a dry goods section, a shoe section, a rugs and draperies section, a shoe section, a clothing section and a bargain basement. Mail orders are given prompt and careful attention.

The Itasca Bazaar is the largest, best and busiest store on the range and its motto, "We never fool the public," is strictly lived up to.

FARMING SCENE NEAR HIBBING, MINN.