

THE POST
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THE CLARKE'S FORK TRAIL

Billings to Cooke City—Valuable Suggestions for a Wagon Road from Billings to the Park

In an interview with Mr. George Geer, at present of the Park Hotel, in this town, regarding the most feasible road from Cooke City to Billings, the following information was obtained. Mr. Geer is quite familiar with the country between here and Cooke City, having frequently traveled it, when hunting, during a number of years past. Last fall Mr. Geer guided General Sheridan and his party with an outfit of over 300 animals from Cooke City to this town, by a route which had up to that time, been deemed impracticable. Heretofore the great bugbear, in any of the trails from here to Cooke City and the Park, has been the canyon of Clarke's Fork River, which until a short time since was impassable even to pedestrians. Through the efforts of Robert Neumeyer, who lives in the neighborhood, a pack trail has recently been cut through the canyon, and, with a moderate expenditure of money, a wagon road could be built through it. Following Clarke's Fork on its west side from its debouchure into the Yellowstone, a point about 16 miles west of Billings, the proposed road would cross Big Rocky Creek, a tributary of Clarke's Fork, and between that and Little Rocky or Line Creek, it would cross and re-cross Clarke's Fork to avoid some precipitous bluffs on the west side of the river. Thence in a westerly direction, crossing Line Creek, (so named from its situation on the line between Montana and Wyoming) and the two branches of Bennett Creek, to and through the canyon of Clarke's Fork. Thence crossing Crandall Creek to the Nez Perces trail, which, with the work already done by Mr. Davis of Cooke City, is capable of being made a good wagon road, to

Cooke City, the center of the Clarke's Fork mining district. From Cooke City to the edge of the Park is but three miles by a good road leading from there to the various points of attraction in the Park. In order to make a good, serviceable wagon road by the foregoing route, open all the year around, three bridges would be required, but these could be constructed for a moderate sum, as the river is a favorable one to bridge, and timber for building is present in abundant quantities. The total cost of bridging and making a good road would not exceed \$5,000. By this route Cooke City would be but 90 miles distant from Billings, and the journey could be made in a day and a half. Visitors to the Park and the Clarke's Fork Mines would, by this road effect a saving of mileage of over one-half, and would enter the Park at a more desirable point than those reached by the Livingston or Bozeman routes. If such a road were constructed it would command all the travel from the Stinking Water, Grey Bull and Cedar Mountain districts. At present when people from these districts come to Billings, which is their natural supply point, they can follow this route pretty closely in the winter, when the Clarke's Fork River is frozen over, but at other times they are compelled to make a troublesome and circuitous trip by way of Fryor's Gap in order to avoid the crossing of the Clarke's Fork River, necessitating a trip of about 140 miles, while by the proposed road only 80 miles travel would be necessary. The road and bridges could be kept in repair at a small cost as the country through which it passes is free from floods. Heretofore it has been necessary for travelers from the Park and the mining district of Clarke's Fork, to adopt the Nez Percés trail, a very circuitous route, in order to avoid the Canyon of Clarke's Fork. Were a wagon road cut through this canyon the journey would be shortened nearly one-half, and the discomfort of the trip entirely done away with. The inducements offered for the construction of such a road are various. To the tourist a region would be rendered accessible which, for

grandeur and diversity of scenery is unexcelled, even in the Park. Im-
mense stretches of country, diversified with lakes, forests and mountains
meet the eye of travelers through this section. We have, almost within
a day's ride of Billings, a wealth of magnificent scenery that most people
little dream of. A writer in a recent number of Forest and Stream speaks
of the Canyon in the following language.

"I have seen all the principal canyons of Montana and Wyoming and have
seen enlarged photos of the Royal Gorge on the Arkansas River of Colorado,
yet I have not hesitation in asserting that this (Clarke's Fork) Canyon
in most regards, surpasses them all, and is only secondary in this country
to the "Grand Canyon of the Colorado." There are mountain peaks overlook-
ing the Clarke's Fork Canyon that not only give a magnificent view of the
Canyon below, including Zeta Falls but one of the grandest views of park
and distant mountain peaks to be had in Montana or Wyoming. There are peaks
within twelve miles of this locality 12,000 feet above tide level."

To the people of Billings the construction of such a road would go a
long way towards securing the trade of the Clarke's Fork mines, a trade al-
ready important and destined to be vastly more so with the increased import-
ance of those mines. The facility afforded to the people of the Stinking
Water, whose trade with Billings merchants is already of considerable vol-
ume, will tend to secure to Billings the whole of the trade of that growing
and prosperous section.