

Northwestern Improvement Company

Operating Extensive Coal Mining Properties, Wants More Negro Miners and Laborers. Five Hundred Could be Placed

No industry in the state of Washington employs so many men as that of coal mining and as may be seen on another page hereof in an article from the pen of the **state mine inspector**. Hundreds and thousands of men find lucrative and steady employment in the mines and the annual output for the state runs into the millions of tons.

In some of the coal mines of this state **colored** men are given employment and there is a standing order there for the bosses to never refuse one of them work who asks for it. The mines operated by the Northwestern Improvement Company have such a rule and many colored men are employed by the company. The colored men have been employed in Roslyn, one of the company's mines for the past sixteen years and with their earnings many of them have purchased both city and farm lands that have grown exceedingly valuable, so valuable that many of them could sell their holdings for a price into the "five figures." In the town of Roslyn the colored miners own good homes that are well furnished and all of their surroundings giving evidence of a substantial income. They have two churches, Methodist and Baptist, and four secret societies, Masons, Odd Fellows, Knights of Pythias, and U. B. F. Their churches and lodges all seem to be in a thriving and healthy condition. The colored children attend the public schools and do as well in their studies as any other class of children. Quite a few of them have graduated from the high school department and are making good in life.

Many of the miners now at Roslyn and Ravensdale, another of the mining properties of the Northwest Improvement Company, have been employed for sixteen years and have never lost a shift unless sick. The company not only gives employment to colored miners, but colored men run all of the stationery engines, firemen and watch men. In fact, colored men have a hand in all the work about the mines and all of them are paid wages commensurate with the positions they hold the same as the white employees. In speaking to the authorities about the employing colored miners the general manager, C. R. Claghorn, had the following to say:

"The Northwest Improvement Company operates mines in the State of Washington at Roslyn, Cle Elum, Ravensdale and Melmont. Roslyn and Cle Elum are our largest camps and comprise together six different mines within a distance of five miles. During the year 1906 these mines produced 1,460,000 tons of coal and employed 1,700 men. Roslyn and Cle Elum are four miles distant from each other, are

both incorporated towns and contain many business enterprises other than that of mining.

"In the matter of employing men, the open shop policy is adhered to, and desirable men of all classes, whether affiliated with any labor organization or not, are employed. A large portion of our employees are members of the United Mine Workers of America and we enter into annual agreement with this organization with respect to mining conditions and wages. The same conditions and wages are applicable to all our employees not belonging to this organization.

"The following figures will give an idea as to wages being paid at the present time, on an eight-hour day basis:

- "Mining, per gross ton, 85c and 92c mine run.
- "Miners, per day, 8 hours, \$3.30.
- "Timbermen, per day, 8 hours, \$2.75 to \$3.30.
- "Trackmen, per day, 8 hours, \$2.75 to \$3.30.
- "Rockmen, per day, 8 hours, \$2.75.
- "Drivers, per day, 8 hours, \$2.50 to \$2.75.
- "Firemen, per day, 8 hours, \$2.50.
- "Carpenters, per day, 8 hours, \$3.30.
- "Blacksmiths, per day, 8 hours, \$2.75 to \$3.30.
- "Yardage, depending upon width, \$2.41 to \$9.45 per yard.
- "Other occupations, depending upon class of work, \$2 to \$3.30.
- "Our Ravensdale mine produced, during the year 1906, 230,000 tons of coal and employed 200 men.
- "Our Melmont mines produced, during the same period, 60,000 tons and employed 100 men.

"Wages paid at our different mines are practically the same, except that at Roslyn and Cle Elum mining is mostly on a tonnage basis, while at Ravensdale it is on a yardage basis and at Melmont on a day basis. It is planned to very largely increase the output at all these mines and development work along this line is now progressing, but there is at the present time a great shortage of labor so that the work cannot be pushed as rapidly as is desired.

"The combined production of these mines in 1906 was 1,750,000 tons and the total men employed \$2,000. At Roslyn and Cle Elum we employ about 25 or 30 colored men and about the same number at Ravensdale, although there are probably to exceed 100 colored folks in Roslyn and Cle Elum.

"We are supplying the Northern Pacific Railroad with its fuel requirements, which assures a regular market and also insures regular employment for our men.