

The Weekly Chronicle.

THE DALLES - OREGON
Entered at the postoffice at The Dalles, Oregon, as second-class mail matter.

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OLD WASCO COUNTY.

A FEW BRIEF FACTS CONCERNING ITS RESOURCES.

Fruit, Fish, Farm and Forests—She Has Them All, and Unlimited Water Power.

FISH.

As suggested in the beginning of this sketch the fishing industry is a large one, and the amount of money made at it, under favorable circumstances, is fabulous. There are two modes of fishing on the middle Columbia—one the usual one followed elsewhere, the gill net, and the other peculiar to the location, and admissible only where there is a good current. The latter is by what is known as the fish wheel, and these in turn are divided into two kinds, the stationary and the scow wheel. As the mode is something new, we will devote a small space to its description;

The fish wheel is simply three wire dip nets mounted on a wheel, which is turned by the force of the current. The wire screen, of which the net is composed, is a part of the wheel itself, acting as a paddle. The wire is put on diagonally to the radius, and three nets, or screens, compose the wheel. On the scows these are fastened at the rear end of the boat, the nets striking the water at the up-stream side, dipping down stream. As the fish are caught running up to their breeding grounds, the net gathers them in, and as it lifts rolls them towards the center of the wheel, finally emptying them into an inclined chute, down which they slide into the scow. These scows and wheels cost \$500 to \$1,000. They are generally anchored at some point at the head of an eddy, which the salmon seek to avoid the current. The amount of fish they will catch in a day, with a good run, is almost beyond belief. Last summer a wheel of this kind was left running over night at the upper Cascades, near the western boundary of this county, with no one to watch it. The salmon were running well, and in the morning the owner, going to his wheel, was surprised to find it sunk. It had caught salmon enough to sink the scow, probably fifteen tons in twelve hours. This of course was during an unusually good run of fish. The stationary fish wheel works on the same principle as the scow wheel, but bring built on the bank where it is exposed at high water to a tremendous current, is a much more expensive matter, costing from \$3,000 to \$7,000.

There are two canneries in the county where the salmon are preserved—one at Seufert's, three miles east of The Dalles; the other in the city. The latter was built this spring, and the season that has just opened (April 10th) it began its first run. The other has been in operation several years. Last year, owing to the extreme high water, although the season ends August 10th, and the cannery did not begin operations until June 10th, 36,000 cases, of forty-eight pounds each, were packed. These fish were all caught near the cannery, and hundreds of tons more would have been caught if the cannery could have handled them. Besides this, probably twice as many fish were caught near the Cascades (this county) and shipped a few miles down the river to the Warrendale cannery. Generally many carloads are sent East in refrigerator cars, and sold fresh in the eastern cities. The sturgeon fisheries, although on a much smaller scale, yield considerable revenue. The Columbia sturgeon grow to immense size, an 800-pound fish being no great rarity, and 1,100 pounds being sometimes reached. The latter business requires no capital, but a boat and lines, probably \$100.

POPULATION AND VALUES.

The population of the county by the last census was a trifle less than 10,000. The Dalles, the county seat, is a pretty little city of about 3,500 inhabitants and is one of the best and thriftiest business points in the state. It has two national banks and one private one, with plenty of capital. Four commodious hotels. Two newspapers, The Dalles Chronicle, daily and semi-weekly, and the Times-Mountaineer, daily and weekly. Its stores are the finest in the state, outside the city of Portland, some of them carrying stocks of goods valued at \$75,000

to \$100,000. A steamboat line, owned by citizens of The Dalles, plies the Columbia daily to Portland, making a transfer at Cascade Locks (this county) forty-four miles down the river. Although we have excellent train service, this line of boats serves to keep both passenger and freight rates at a minimum, giving The Dalles cheaper rates proportioned to distance than any point on the river, and putting her in a position to control a large interior trade.

The county has a fine brick courthouse, costing 30,000. It has a debt of \$43,000. The tax rate county and state, varies from 18 to 21 mills. Its roads are good, and solid and substantial bridges are provided wherever necessary on the same. The assessed valuation of the county, made on or about a 40 per cent basis, is \$3,450,000; but this will be largely increased in the near future, owing to the issuing of patents to lands recently forfeited from the Northern Pacific railroad, and which consisted of every odd section for a distance of forty miles back from the river and the full length of the county. These lands were non-taxable, as long as they remained unforfeited. There is a large area of government lands in the county subject to homestead, but of course they are some distance back from the river. The United States land office is located here, a source of great convenience to intending settlers.

THE FRUIT BELT.

As we have shown, the wool and salmon industries yield annually from \$750,000 to \$1,000,000. The stock shipments, which include, of course, the country south of us and not in this county, will amount to \$300,000 more, and our wheat will swell this to a grand total of \$1,250,000. Yet notwithstanding the vast total, the fact is plain that in a few years one other industry, at present in its infancy, but a growing giant, will yield a revenue greater than all that from all other sources combined. That is the fruit industry. Wasco county, although only a few years ago not ranked as a fruit producer, stands today confessedly the best fruit county in the state. The climate and rainfall are perfect for the growing of winter apples, and this fruit will eventually place her in the front rank financially.

The western boundary of the county being, as we have stated, the summit of the Cascade mountains, it is also the limit of the excessive rainfall of Oregon, which commences to decrease at that point, and by the time the agricultural portion of the county is reached it is just right. Commencing at the Hood River valley, which opens to the Columbia, 22 miles west of The Dalles, and which is one of the best known fruit sections of the state, the fruit belt extends to the east along the Columbia river, and as the mountains give place to the prairie, follows around the foothills to the south, and extends across the county to the Deschutes river. Apple trees generally bear in from four to six years, according to variety, and the kitchen orchards, about all that were planted until a few years ago, have never been known to fail of a crop in the thirty years since the first were planted. The crop is sure, and the market in the United States for this kind of apples has never yet been over-supplied. Orchard lands are cheap in the wide state, the principal cost being in preparing them for cultivation. They will run in value from \$2.50 per acre to \$50, according to amount of improvements, location, distance from market, etc. The trees are generally set about 108 to the acre, and are carefully cultivated, potatoes and other crops being raised between the rows.

While it takes time and work to grow an orchard, yet it is safe to say that the first crop will pay for the land, the planting of the orchard and the cultivation. We call to mind a case in Hood River valley of one farmer, Mr. John Sweeny, who planted two acres of orchard on a hillside, not suitable for other crops. It yielded a few apples the fourth year, and the fifth year produced its first crop. The trees were the White Winter Pearmain variety, and the apples were sold to a dealer in the trees for 70 cents a box. The crop netted Mr. Sweeny \$184 an acre. The land was taken up by him, but could have been bought in its wild state for \$10 an acre; its clearing cost about \$30 more an acre, and its care and cultivation for five years, at a generous estimate, \$50, or a total of \$90. This left him as the net profit on his venture, \$94 for five years, or almost \$20 an acre a year, and all for the first crop. The second crop was grown on the same land last year, and although we have not the figures at hand, we are told by his neighbors that it far exceeded the crop of the first year. This is but one of countless cases that could be quoted.

It is only within the past five or six years that orchards were begun to be planted for other purposes than to supply the home demand. Then some small orchards were set with a view to making fruit-growing a business instead of a side issue. It was begun at first on a small scale, a few acres being planted at a time, but the idea has gained ground, as a few of these smaller orchards began to bring in such handsome returns, until now young orchards of twenty, thirty and forty acres are not uncommon. As these begin to bear, the quantity Wasco county will ship will be surprising. We have no doubt but that the winter apple will within

five years yield a return of \$300,000, and within ten years double or triple that amount. While we speak thus of winter apples, do not for a moment imagine that the only fruit that can be, or is, grown here. We have mentioned the winter apple because that is a fruit that can be harvested at leisure and sold when the owner gets ready to sell; but all varieties of apples do well. The Gravenstein, the king of all summer apples, grows to perfection, as do all varieties, and in '93 a carload shipped to Omaha was sold on sight at \$1.50 per box, or bushel, netting the shipper 80 cents. Pear are a certain crop, yielding abundantly, and the Bartlett are superior in color and flavor to any California ever produced. Prunes will also soon prove an important crop, many young orchards now growing being planted after experiments had demonstrated that they yielded well and were finely flavored. Plums and cherries are both certain crops, and the trees bear enormously. Peaches grow finely, but are not a certain crop, many years being a total failure; but when they do bear, the trees seem to try to make up for deficiencies by producing a phenomenal crop.

All small fruits do well here, and the strawberry is quite an important one, not less than \$50,000 worth being sold annually. Hood River and Mosier are as yet the principal points at which they are raised, both being on the line of the railroad, a necessary condition to the shipment of this tender fruit. The variety grown for shipment, and which is the most perfect berry in the world is the Clark's Seedling. It is a deep red, highly epauletted, solid to the core, and a phenomenal shipper, this latter quality giving it its principal value. These berries find their market in the mining towns of Montana, Denver and in Kansas City and other far eastern points. At the Columbian exposition at Chicago the Clark's Seedling took the premium over all other berries, even though they had been four days in an express car and had traveled 2,000 miles. They bring good prices, too, and in '93 many of the patches yielded \$400 to \$500 an acre net. In this connection it might be proper to add that we refer to the year 1893, because in 1894 the unprecedented high water of the Columbia washed away miles of the railroad along its banks, which was not rebuilt until fall, so that for berries and other fruits the market was cut off.

When one realizes the area here that is peculiarly adapted to the growing of fruit, which in this county at a low estimate is 100,000 acres, and also the amount of money produced per acre, it is easily seen that as the hills are set to orchards a vast amount of money will be returned. Acre for acre the winter apple orchard is more valuable than the orange or lemon orchards of California, and besides there is not the same difficulty in handling them. The orange and the lemon must be sold at once; the winter apple is a friend that will wait for you in the cellar, and will not go back on you because you leave him a few days on the tree. Santa Clara county, California, with 36,000 acres of orchards, last year sold \$6,200,000 worth of fruit. There is no reason in the world why Wasco county in a few years should not produce at least as much.

TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES.

One of the most vital questions to every community is its transportation facilities. Wasco county has settled that. Up to three years ago the only transportation company was the Oregon Railway & Navigation Company, operating a line down the south bank of the Columbia. Forty-four miles below The Dalles this great river is obstructed by impassable rapids, there being a fall of 26 feet in a quarter of a mile. As the O. R. & N. had no opposition, both freight and passenger rates were high. Owing to this, a corporation was formed known as The Dalles, Portland and Astoria Navigation Company, which put a fine steamer on the middle Columbia, plying in connection with the Dalles City, a fine boat on the lower river. Of course there was a transfer to be made, but the state generously stepped in and constructed a portage railroad about three-quarters of a mile long, so that freight could be transferred cheaply and quickly. As a result, freight rates were reduced one-half and passenger rates almost as much.

The government several years ago began the construction of a canal and locks to overcome the obstructions. Two years ago the completion of the work was let by contract, and in less than a year this grand work will be completed so that steamers from the lower river can reach us. These works have cost \$3,500,000, and are pronounced by engineers the finest piece of work of the kind in the United States. The completion of this work will make The Dalles a "terminal point," giving us the benefit of through rates from the East, and will thus put our city in a position to compete with Portland for the wholesale trade of a large territory. At the same time it will give us very low rates on our wheat and other products to the seaboard. As it is, The Dalles is now the best market of any place in Eastern Oregon. Wheat brings ten cents more a bushel, simply because the freight rates are that much lower, and they are that much lower owing to the opposition line of boats. They will be lower still when the canal and locks are finished

and cargoes can be shipped without the expense of re-handling at the portage.

WATER POWER.

Wasco county has unlimited water power, not to speak of the rapids of the Columbia, which has a fall of 70 feet in nine miles ending, three miles east of us, but which would require considerable capital to control. Deschutes, a fine river 200 miles long, which drains the eastern slope of the Cascades, has a rapid fall, and Hood river, a stream rising in the glaciers of Mount Hood, falls 6,000 feet in thirty miles, and for the last twelve miles of its course falls seventy-five feet to the mile, and is of volume sufficient to furnish 2,500 horse power for each twenty feet fall. These streams will eventually be used to bring the timber from the mountains, and at the same time will furnish the power to manufacture it into lumber. And while speaking of the timber it may not be out of place to add that the immense forests of hemlock on the heads of these streams will furnish unlimited quantities of bark for tanning purposes.

MANUFACTORIES.

The immense amount of wool received here naturally suggests that it would be a fine place for a scouring mill, which it undoubtedly would; and this is an industry that will soon be established here, as the opportunity is too good to long remain open. There is, besides, a room for numerous other factories. A woolen mill ought to have been running long ago, and only the great difference in wages between the Pacific and Atlantic coasts has prevented it. As wages are gradually equalizing themselves throughout the country, this objection is not now tenable. We already have a fine roller mill, producing 100 barrels of flour daily, if run to its full capacity; but there is room for more, as the supply of wheat is unlimited and the local market utilizes the bran and shorts. A cannery is another necessity, to use up the surplus fruits and vegetables; and a soap factory would find plenty of material and a good market. We have a fine packing establishment, its products ranking high and not beginning to supply the demand.

A flume from the mountains brings a large portion of the wood supply and lumber for the local market. At its head are vast forests of hemlock, the bark of which is the very finest for tanning purposes; and as there are hundreds of dry hides shipped from here East and brought back again in the shape of manufactured products, it is evident that a tannery, and with it a shoe and harness factory, would be profitable investments. Indeed, the field is a promising one, and the above are only suggestions in the line of what might be done here.

SCHOOLS AND CHURCHES.

Our educational facilities are good, the public schools ranking with those of any city in the state. We have in The Dalles 1,240 children of school age, and an average attendance of about 800, and sixteen teachers are employed. The city owns two fine brick school houses and three wooden ones. Besides these the Catholics have here a fine boarding school for girls.

The religious denominations are well represented. The Congregationalists, Methodists, Episcopalians, Catholics and Lutherans all have fine church buildings, and the Baptists two. In these lines the city is ahead rather than behind the great majority of cities of its size.

CLIMATE.

The climate is delightful, the seasons being distinctly marked, but running neither to the extremes of heat nor cold. The west wind, sweeping down over the Cascades, reaches us laden with the odor of cedar and pine, making it of peculiar benefit to those who are troubled with weak lungs. Generally the climate is considered a remarkably healthful one. It is not true that we had to import a corpse to start a graveyard, but it is true that persons do not die often—not more than once. Many who find life unbearable in the wet climate of the coast, find relief at once on coming to the dry climate of Eastern Oregon. Another peculiarity is that diseases absolutely refuse to become epidemic. Diphtheria comes; it is an isolated case. Scarlet fever—it claims seldom more than two subjects, and neither is often fatal. Several times within the past thirty years smallpox has found its way here, but in nearly every case it was confined to the person who brought it, or, at the worst, to those who were in the house with him. The death rate, shows that the percentage is as small here as any where in the United States. The nights are always, as elsewhere on the coast, cool and conducive to refreshing sleep.

TEMPERATURE.

The climate is equable for the latitude, the thermometer seldom going below zero or above 94. In either case the extremes are very short. Our extreme cold weather seldom lasts more than three or four days, and the same may be said of the heat. The reason for this is the prevailing west winds coming from the warm Japan gulf current, and familiarly known here as "Chinook winds." In the summer this wind is moist and cool, and blows almost steadily a gentle breeze full of moisture, and beneficial to all vegetation, almost taking the place of rain. In winter it is comparatively a warm wind, cutting the snow rapidly, preventing any long period of

cold. There is little or no rainfall after the 1st of June, and consequently there is no rush in harvesting. The grain is stacked unprotected in the fields until such times as it is convenient to thresh it. Light rains in the fall start the grass, and stock generally find plenty of good pasturage until Christmas, and many years go through the entire winter without being fed, but depending entirely on what can be found on the range.

CONCLUSION.

What we have presented are the simple facts, told in simple language. We ask you, if you are a home-seeker, to consider them, and consider them well, and in the light of their application to you. We ask you to cast your lot with us; and here on the banks of the grand Columbia, in the shadow of snow-capped Hood, to make your home. The time is propitious, the opportunity ripe. There is yet abundance of unimproved land to be had almost for the asking. The west wind yet waves the bunch-grass on the hills, where ere many years busy hands will have made happy homes. Let yours be of them. In a short time it will be too late. Soon our fields and our hill-sides will in the spring be masses of orchard bloom, and the air, now spicy with the healthful odor of cedar and pine, will be redolent of blossom, and in the fall fragrant with the odor of ripened fruit. Embowered cottages, the homes of a happy, prosperous and contented people, will be on every side; while white-winged Peace and golden-robed Plenty shall be our tutelary goddesses.

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The Wasco Warehouse Co. have on sale at their warehouse Seed Wheat, Feed Wheat, Barley, Barley Chop, Oats and Hay. Are sole agents in The Dalles for the now celebrated Goldendale roller mills flour, the best flour in the market and sold only in ton lots or over. 9-11

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