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# ENGINEER PICKLER ON VALUE OF IRRIGATION

## Gives Review of Great Benefits to be Realized In Grande Ronde Valley.

The extent to which irrigation may be carried in the sub-arip regions of the United States is almost beyond the comprehension of the common man.

The area of land in the arid and sub-arid states which is entirely or partly dependent upon irrigation for successful cultivation is estimated to be 1,000,000 square miles, or 640,000,000 acres, about one third of the entire country excluding Alaska. The total area at present irrigated in the arid or sub-arid states reaches approximately in round numbers the sum of 5,000,000 acres of land, which but for irrigation would be practically valueless for agricultural purposes.

Irrigation is as old as the race and it has been both the heritage and legacy of every tribe and nation.

The dawn of history dimly reveals the practice by those ancient people, and history, both sacred and profane, has revealed its onward march, as it has the march of armies. In Palestine, in Egypt, in Assyria and in India it was as it still is, the life of the people.

As irrigation developed, empires arose, and with its fall, they fell; and where once millions dwelt "in plenty" if not in peace, there is today desert and desolation.

Irrigation was the chief support of the legions of Rome; for the Roman empire was but a union of nations subsisting upon the products of irrigation. Irrigation in that day having sanction, support and fostering care of every monarch and ruler

As the world has progressed so has irrigation, until today a great percentage of the products of the world are grown by irrigation; and at present as in ages past, the tillers of the soil, under a system of irrigation, are the most prosperous of their class and their land the most valuable of any devoted to the purpose of agriculture.

History shows us that irrigation developed during the ages as has everything else; moving forward or backward with systematic regularity, with the progress or decline of the arts and the people of each age and nation.

The system of Spain differed from that of Italy, as differs the system of today from that of one hundred years past.

Irrigation history is most interesting and the people, especially the farmer of the arid and sub-humid regions, would learn much by a thorough study of the same.

Irrigation in the United States was first practiced in Utah and southern and lower California, although perfect systems of irrigation works built by the aboriginers of America were in ruins centuries before people came to this country.

The ancient inhabitants of Mexico and Peru had vast and perfect systems of canals, aqueducts, tunnels, etc., for the purpose of water supply and irrigation, so that the white man's development of the irrigation industry of the present day is but a revival on this western continent of the older irrigation systems of the ancients.

From the feeble beginnings of the pioneers who were handicapped from want of both capital and labor, and were compelled to begin anew, without previous knowledge of the subject, and under new and trying conditions, there has been developed in our own western states a system of irrigation so vast in its extent, so colossal in magnitude, that its worth is measured by the hundred of millions of dollars, and so perfect in detail as to challenge most favorable comparison with the older and highly developed systems of Spain, Italy or India.

The bitter experience of the years like the last one, when we receive no natural moisture, when the hot winds scorch the wheat, shrivel the fruit crop and wither the vegetation, has taught the lesson, that to live in prosperity and get the full and most bountiful yields of our matchless soils, we must practice irrigation. The most fruitful, productive and valuable farm lands on earth are the irrigated lands, and but for irrigation would be desert wastes.

No better soil or climate exists on this continent than that of Eastern Oregon and Grande Ronde valley in particular and with a system for general irrigation, none more fruitful.

No country on earth possesses greater advantages than Grande Ronde valley, a soil of unmatched fertility, a climate suited alike to plant and animal life, a topography of surface best suited to a general system of irrigation.

As to its value as an investment there can be no question, not only on a direct money return, but on the broad principals of general government and policy of the construction of irrigation works is of benefit to the whole country. They furnish homes and agricultural pursuits for many who would be wholly without employment or find less remunerative support in other callings.

Irrigation vastly increases the wealth of the country by doubling many times the agricultural products, and increasing in the same ratio the values of the land.

The great advantage of irrigation is that it is practically an insurance on the production of crops; where irrigation is practiced intelligently, the raising of crops every season is nearly certain as anything human can be. The disasterous results of prolonged drouth are overcome by the intelligence and ingenuity of man.

With irrigation the dread of drouth and scorched fields will not weigh upon the mind of the farmer for he knows that by the mere opening of a sluice gate he can supply the exact amount of water at precisely the proper time to insure the most vigorous growth and obtain the best results. In short he is free from all the worries of the farmer in the humid and sub-humid regions who depend wholly on the natural moisture.

Again —Quoting from R. J. Hinton in his report to the government in the year 1891 on irrigation as a fertilizer: "The value of irrigation as a fertilizer of the soil may be seen in the fact that the Pima Indians of Arizona have cultivated the same lands for the last five-hundred years; their cultivation, though rude, has been extensive and well conducted, nothing has ever been applied to the land but water which quickens and fructifies it."

As large crops are now raised as/ any of which traditions of those Indians have any record.

The average first cost of water—by this we mean the cost of constructing canals to bring water to their land, is shown by the census report of 1890 to be $8.15 per acre, the average value of water per acre is estimated by owners after they have obtained it is $26.00 per acre. This shows clearly the inherent value to which the mere fact of possessing the water gives it. In other words, the water is so scarce and valuable of itself as to increase by over three-fold the cost of making it available. Again from United States statistics we find that the average value of land in the arid region is from $2.50 to $5.00 per acre, while the same land after a water supply has been provided is valued at $35.23.

One in considering the relative values of irrigated and unirrigated lands, may border closely on the marvelous while not transgressing the boundaries of cold facts for it is truly marvelous that the worthless deserts of arid west lands, within a few years, have been clothed in a semi-tropic luxurance through the agency of irrigation, and have been raised in value from actual zero to as much as $2000 per acre.

It is but a few years since California and Colorado were known as the great mining states. Today through the agency of reservoiring the waters of the mountain streams they have been transformed into great agricultural states; the agricultural products having long since superseded the values from the mines.

Millions of acres of barren sage brush and sandy desert lands have been reclaimed and are today the most valuable and productive lands on the continent.

It is true that $1000 to $2000 per acre are fancy prices, but thousands of acres find ready sale at from $100 to $500 per acre.

Any piece of property is truly worth such an amount as will represent the principle upon which a fair rate of interest may be permanently earned.

If land will produce each year a crop that will give a net income of $10.00 per acre, that land is worth $100 per acre to the man who demands a ten per cent investment, such values and only such are legitimate. The remarkable development of Southern California has been almost solely due to irrigation. As an illustration as the increase of property values may be cited the statistics in relation to San Diego, Cal. which may be taken to represent that section of the state.

Real Estate in 1880 is $1,307,302; in 1890, $20,000,000.

Improvements in 1880, $341,948; in 1890, $4,450,286

While no corresponding increase can be expected in Union county there is still room for increase in value far beyond our present values.

Irrigated lands sell more readily for, from $80 to $100 per acre than unirrigated lands $40 to $50 per acre.

What is this that can perform this almost seeming miracle? Create millions of dollars where no corresponding values appear, what is it that will do for Eastern Oregon what it has done for other states? What is it that will enrich, fructify and double the values of the lands in our own beautiful valley? It is the storing of the waters of our mountain streams and a practical system of irrigation.

With a system of general irrigation in operation, what a combination would here be obtained in Grande Ronde valley: soil, climate, topography, water and power, each perfect within its self, each in accord with the other; and all to be controlled by him who wills it.

In writing the above I do not lay claim to any great amount of originality, much is compiled from United States statistics and such authors as T. E. Wilson, of California, H. T. Grierson of New York, and W. P. Butter of South Dakota. Each an irrigation specialist and each peer to the best irrigation experts of the world.

L. A. PICKLER


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