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UNION COUNTY
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VALLEY SETTLED IN 1861; DEVELOPMENT STEADY

COUNTY'S PROGRESS SINCE SETTLEMENT IN 1861 REMARKABLE

Growth of Grande Ronde Valley Along All Lines Has Been Steady and Sure; Agricultural Prospects Are Improving with Each Year and More and More Industries Coming Here

When Benjamin Brown, in the winter of 1861 and 1862 started constructing the first dwelling place in Old Town he did not realize that some 65 years later the city of La Grande alone would spend almost a million dollars on new buildings. Neither did he, in the following spring, in April, 1862, realize when he plowed the first sod ever turned in the Grande Ronde valley, that 65 years later some 420,000 acres of land would be in farms, rich and productive and commanding national markets because of the character of their products.

His was a pioneering job and he did it well; and in the long furrow he left behind him that spring day three generations ago, he planted the seed that was to sprout and grow into a crop, scores of years removed, that would be worth several millions of dollars.

Tremendous Development

The development of the Grande Ronde valley and Union county as a whole is a romance that vies with any in the west in interest and drama and to the modern day citizen, surrounded by every comfort, stable financially, and proud of the beauties that meet his eye on every side, not well enough known.

Today, Union county with its 22,000 persons, its thriving towns and cities, its progressive industries, its productive farms and its general advancement, is a far cry from the early 60s.

In 1862, some 25 years after Mr. Brown plowed the virgin sod in the Grande Ronde, a reliable census showed the following stock in the county:

horses, 75,239; hogs, 21,859; calves, 11,545; mules, 296; and cattle, 42,257.

The land under cultivation amounted to 83,328 acres. Wheat was harvested in the amount of 494,259 bushels, farmers counted 58,678 tons of hay, 144,170 bushels of potatoes, 11,187 boxes of apples, 2,226 boxes of plums and cherries and had in stock 4,190,400 feet of lumber.

Population 10,588
The total population of the county, which then included Walla-walla and part of Baker counties, was only 10,588 and 500 of these were Chinese.

Last year Union county furnished 1,200,000,000 feet of lumber, farmers harvested 110,000 bushels of potatoes, 6,500 dairy cows were milked by farmers and thousands of head of beef cattle were marketed by stockmen, the wheat crop ran more than 3,000,000 bushels and has run as high as 1,500,000 bushels, a million dollars worth of apples were raised, 12,000 calves were kept on local farms and were valued at \$100,000 and the population of the county, La Grande, was nearly 2,000 more than the entire county in 1862.

Total value of taxable property was nearly \$20,000,000 and this figure is considered an advance on the actual market value of the land.

Seven Towns, Cities
Scattered modern towns and cities are within the confines of the county. Progress is seen on every side and the Grande Ronde valley is famous nationally for its beauty, productivity and steady progress.

And what was part of Union county back in the 19th century, is now one of the most scenic regions of the world. Walla-walla, nestled in the surrounding country, often called the "Switzerland of America," La Grande serves as the gateway city.

But to go back several decades. When a handful of settlers started building after Mr. Brown in 1861-62 at the foot of Mt. Rainier, it wasn't long until the nucleus of Union county's present day population was taking shape. The first winter was long and severe and nearly 14 feet of snow fell before spring finally came. Many of the cattle died before the spring grass came and the nine men and one woman who made up that first little village were hard pressed to survive.

During the winter, on Jan. 8, 1862, to be exact, the first wedding in Union county was performed in Old Town when W. Marks and Frances Caroline Leary were united in the holy bonds of matrimony by R. M. Black, justice of the peace.

In the spring and summer others came. Fred Nedine, whose name bears the same name as a resident at Imbler, Ore., located near the present site of Union and Conrad Miller planted the first fruit trees near Union, consisting of apples and pears. T. A. Wood, of Portland, also brought trees here in the fall of 1862 and placed them in the virgin soil.

Mr. Nedine came to this country on June 11, 1862 and later in the year settlers had taken up residence at Cove, Summerville and La Grande. The whole valley then was a mass of rice and hunch grass, as high as a man's head, with great willows growing along the rivers and streams.

In 1862 the Grande Ronde valley was surveyed and a little later Union county came into being by act of legislature, on Oct. 11, 1861. It was taken from Baker county and La Grande was made county seat, a distinction which Union has

AIRPLANE VIEW OF A PART OF THE FAMOUS GRANDE RONDE VALLEY—IMBLER IN FOREGROUND



This airplane view shows a large portion of the Grande Ronde valley, centering around Imbler, Ore., which is shown in the center foreground. In the distance may be seen the rich farm lands that make agriculture one of the leading factors in the county's development.

Below county it was included in Walla-walla county with The Dalles, then a small village, as county seat.

About that time when La Grande now stands the following settlers were located: Charles Goodnow, Prochaska Brothers, Mr. Newby, R. J. Rogers, J. L. Caviness and others. A few houses had been erected in 1864. Town by these men.

On April 13, 1868, two newspapers came into being. The Blue Mountain Times and the Mountain Sentinel. By that time, according to first copies of the papers, the Grande Ronde valley had already changed greatly. La Grande had a population of 600 persons, orchards had been planted, Union was growing, industries were starting and lands were fenced in and cultivated. Summerville and Oro Dell were thriving, prosperous villages.

Records in the year 1870 show that 250,000 bushels of wheat, 200,000 bushels of oats and 180,000 bushels of barley were harvested by Union county farmers. Large herds of beef cattle and horses were being raised.

During the years 1875 and 1876, the settlements increased in population greatly and much advancement was made in all lines.

Mining was an important industry in those days, but it was in the hands of Union county, which included the Cornucopia country, fine valleys and other sections which were later to become a part of the county. In the year 1880 about \$30,000 worth of gold was mined, mostly on placer claims.

In 1885 a census was taken with the following findings:
La Grande, 1,217; Walla-walla, 1,031; Summerville, 920; Indian Wells, 840; Union, 345; Jones, 307; Cove, 68; Island City, 63; South Fork and Annapolis, 324; Alder, 137; Pine Valley, 252; Prairie Creek, 220; Eagle Creek, 222; Big Creek, 229; Redrock, 87; and Rock Creek and Stamp Town, 28.

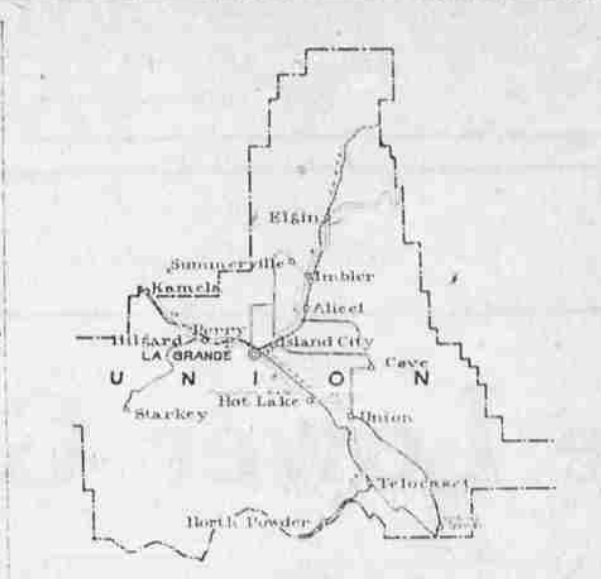
In the year 1888 a movement was inaugurated to separate the Walla-walla valley from Union county and to incorporate it in the formation of Walla-walla county on July 11, 1887. The remaining place from Union county was cut off in 1891 when the peninsula was annexed by Baker county. At one time a movement was started to form an Elgin valley, including land centering around Elgin, but this was defeated and never regained sufficient support later to gain any later headway.

Another interesting phase in the county's history was the finding the valley of nearly half a thousand Chinese. Citizens gathered together one year and gave all children orders to leave the county, excepting those at Union. Some of the Orientals left and some remained near La Grande, but were later brought back here by indentured contracts and placed on an outgoing train, never to return. Today there are probably less than 50 Chinese in the entire county.

Taking the Grande Ronde valley as a whole, general farming is probably the most important side of its development today. Most of the citizens paying taxes directly or indirectly upon almost all farm crops for their prosperity.

Union county agriculture now offers one of the best districts for general farming in the northwest. With a rainfall much higher than most of the intermediate country, and about 100 feet of the best land in the county irrigated, a diversity of crops can be successfully grown.

Even among these comes grapes which yield nearly half of the in-



Elgin In Center of Big Lumbering, Fruit and Agricultural District

Elgin, situated in the north-central part of Union county on the La Grande-Joseph O.W. branch railroad and the La Grande-Walla-walla state highway, has a population of approximately 300 persons. It has a number of thriving industries and, as an educational center, Elgin stands alone in its vicinity.

There are eight teachers in the grade school and four in high school. For the following year E. E. Arant, of Keno, has been appointed as superintendent. The high school is in the center of a number of rural districts and the enrollment is about 80. The building is brick and is equipped with all necessary equipment. The domestic science room is especially well equipped for the work and the commercial room has a battery of half a dozen typewriters and desks as well as the commercial seats.

There are three active churches, at Elgin: the Church of Christ, Methodist church and Presbyterian church. The Methodist church, built about 20 years ago, Dr. and Mrs. Brown and U. P. Wells are the only charter members now living here. The other churches were built about 25 years ago.

The public library is one of the most interesting centers in town. It was established about 15 years ago with Mrs. H. White as librarian. She held the position until this summer when she left for California. Mrs. Nathan Parks is now librarian. There is a large supply of books of every nature, including encyclopedias. Books are also obtained from the state and county libraries.

The water is obtained from Indian creek, with main line enough for irrigation, domestic purposes and fire protection.

The city park is considered one of the best in the parks in Eastern Oregon. Under the supervision of the Women's Improvement club, work has been done to make another park and the intention of eventually installing a swimming pool.

Elgin is the center of a large fruit district, with H. H. Weather-spoon and Root Harris being the principal apple growers. The orchard belonging to Mr. Weather-spoon was planted about 15 years ago. Mr. Harris has gone into the berry business as well as apples. He has loganberries, strawberries and raspberries and has had very profitable yields.

The best-known men are: T. J. Elgin, grocer and dry goods

store, has been here about 15 years, and built the store building in which the Hug garage with Myron Hug and Harry Hug as proprietors, is now located; A. & L. chain stores, Thrift and Serevel groceries under the supervision of Baird and Hug; Elgin Cash store, owned and operated by Frank Koller; City Drug store, owned by S. E. Foster; City Meat market, with E. Myers as proprietor; Elgin Furniture store, owned by E. Harmon; two barber shops, operated by McCallough and Mooney, and the federal post office with O. C. Maxwell as postmaster.

The Elgin Flouring mill renders 125,000 bushels each year, mostly for export, although 600 or 700 bushels are sold locally. E. H. Kiddle is president, Arthur Smith superintendent, Nels Nelson, wheat weigher. The mill has finished 1,000 barrels on this year's crop.

Elgin's principal industry is the Ponderosa Pine Lumber company. Since this company began operations in June, 1925, it steadily growth has taken place and the plant is now handling an annual cut of approximately 12,000,000 feet of lumber.

The operation occupies a floor space of 12,000 square feet and all machines are operated by individual motor drives connected to the most modern machinery, moulder and land-saw machinery obtainable.

The plant is specializing in the production of high grade moulding and interior trim made from Ponderosa pine of which about 30 per cent goes into the New York market. Shipments average 25 cars per month and they handle the manufacture and sale of the production of the following mills: H. E. Reed, Elgin; McKinley-Hampson Lumber Co., Joseph; Fisher & Thompson, Elgin; Oregon Trail Lumber Co., Union; and W. J. Hancock, Enterprise.

The company also acts as the selling agents for the Jacob Bros. Lumber company, of North Powder.

Employment 28 Men
The personnel of the company is as follows: W. E. Moore, owner and manager; J. W. Fitzgerald, secretary and Dewey Henry, superintendent. Employment, at present, including yard and factory, is 28 men.

The Elgin Grain & Storage company, C. E. Merrill as president and general manager, is a stock company owned by local people. It employs two or more men. The present stockholders are Jesse Crum, Harry Hug, Jonathan Green and Mr. Merrill, the latter for owning the most stock. The company handles oats and grain, gasoline, farm machinery, cement, lime, plaster, flour, coal, feed and more. The company buys and ships wheat, and expects to ship 80 or 90 carloads of wheat this year. The volume of business is very high.

Among the business places in the Elgin store, opened March 4, 1902 by W. E. Brown, who conducted a thriving business until the year 1910 when he moved to California for about three years. He then returned to Elgin and has tried three or four times to find a better location but has failed to do so and is located at present in the Elgin store. He says he is content to spend the balance of his days at Elgin, the best little town in the state of Oregon.

Another business firm that is doing a thriving business is that owned by Paul E. Kaddler, which was increased 20 per cent in volume of business since 1925. Mr. Kaddler, in company with E. W. Hardwood, purchased the store in November, 1915, and Mr. Kaddler later bought out his partner's interest. Starting with a \$3,000 stock of staple and fancy groceries he has increased the stock until it is worth \$5,000 at present and Grand roads has added this store in that it has brought considerable tourist trade.

Total Taxes Levied
The total of taxes levied in the county this year for all purposes is \$39,539.95, and, reflecting the stability and prosperity of the county as a whole, it is notable that \$276,961.17 had been collected at the end of the half year, June 30. The county laws provide that only half of the taxes are due and payable on the 15th day of May and the half that is due amounts to more than \$400,000, it is not due until Nov. 5. This represents a total payment of almost 44 per cent at the end of the half year which ranks very high in counties throughout the northwest. This same condition has existed for several years, the number of delinquents remaining at a very low figure.

A segregation of the total amount of taxes levied shows that the money is apportioned to state, general fund, school fund, library fund, road fund, indigent soldiers' fund, market road fund, road bond interest, and road bond redemption. In addition to special taxes levied by cities and towns, high school tuition fund, fire patrol and other special purposes.

Division of Taxes
The state receives a total of \$21,855.32 of the total amount of taxes paid in Union county and \$8,684.63 go to the county's general fund. The school fund received \$23,292.78, the library fund \$515.12, the road fund \$23,542.85, the indigent soldiers' fund \$222.62, the market road fund \$25,223.24, road bond interest \$52,627.43 and road bond redemption \$98,147.24.

A bond issue for about a million and a half dollars was voted by the people of the county several years ago for a system of market roads and most of this money was expended in constructing the present road system that leads into every community in the county and which affords the Union county resident transportation in any direction in which he may wish to go.

Special taxes levied by cities and towns, and also handled by the county, follow:
La Grande, \$118,945.02; Union, \$17,115.69; Elgin, \$2,892.53; Imbler, \$466.51; Cove, \$1,355.82; North Powder, \$6,444.33; Island City, \$735.00; and Summerville, \$231.08, making a total of \$147,644.99.

The assessed valuation of La Grande is listed at \$5,199,982 and the rate of taxes of 22.9. Union city tax is highest at 27.7 and Imbler's is lowest at 6.3 with Island City next with 6.4.

Special taxes levied by schools in the county, in several more districts, totals \$217,991.62.

The tax department is supervised over by Sheriff Jesse Breckers but is actually in charge of Anna Helms, deputy sheriff, whose special duty is collection of taxes.

TAXABLE PROPERTY IN COUNTY LISTED AT OVER 25 MILLION

Tax Money Used by County and City Governments to Build and Maintain Most Modern Schools, Highway Systems, and for Other Purposes, Carefully Expended

Few people regard Union county as a business corporation, but in many respects it, as well as other counties over the Northwest, is just that. It collects more than three-quarters of a million dollars annually in tax monies. It uses these monies to building and operate modern roads and highways, to maintain the public school system that branches out into every populated district, to conduct the judicial affairs, and to hire a large staff of trained officials who supervise its various activities—financial, judicial and executive.

It owns the building that serves as its seat of government, the large two-story brick structure that is located on M avenue just at the top of the Sixth street hill. And from this source emanate a large share of the movements for advancement in various lines that affect residents of this county and future growth of its parts.

Population 22,000
It controls, to a certain extent, some 22,000 persons who reside within its boundaries, and serves them with educational facilities, transportation facilities, protection from the unlawful and other ways in a governmental capacity.

The interior of the court house is always a busy place. On the lower floor is located the county recorder's office, the county treasurer's office, the school superintendent's office, the rooms occupied by the county engineer, the assessor's quarters, the sheriff's office and rooms used for other purposes.

Upstairs, in addition to a large court room and quarters used by the Union-Walla-walla district circuit judge and court reporter, is the county judge's office, the rooms which house the activities of the county clerk and his staff of assistants and election rooms.

Among the busiest offices in the entire court house, especially during certain times of the year, is one adjoining that presided over by the sheriff, which is used by the tax collector department. Here detailed statements of amounts due on every piece of taxable land in the county are carefully prepared annually and it is here that hundreds of thousands of dollars are paid in by property owners, where it is kept until turned over to the treasurer to allot to various funds and sources.

Assessed Valuation
The county assessor's summary of the assessment rolls for 1926 showed that the total value of taxable property in Union county, including the public service corporations which are assessed by the state tax commission, to be \$19,545,416. Incidentally, assessed values are usually well below actual market values of property so that local business men declare that if these same lands were to be offered for sale, prospective buyers would be called upon to pay many hundreds of thousands of dollars more than the assessed value.

The total value of all taxable property in Union county listed for the county tax rolls as \$25,758,552, which includes all properties that pay taxes.

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The form of government is the commission plan, the county electing two commissioners and a county judge at large, who form the judiciary. Each month this body meets in regular session and passes upon executive matters. The county judge is also vested with judicial powers.

County Officials
C. K. McCormick is county clerk and is assisted by Lawrence Graham, Mrs. Florence Bacon is treasurer, David Proctor assessor, S. B. Morgan county engineer, E. A. Sayre, school superintendent, and Carl Helms is district attorney. C. G. Couch is county judge and W. H. Ledbetter and W. W. Stevens are county commissioners.

The court house itself was formerly owned by the city of La Grande, the county renting the building for many years. A few years ago, however, the county purchased the building from the city and since then several improvements and additions have been made in the building and on the lot.

The court house also serves as headquarters for Circuit Judge J. W. Knowles and court reporter Horbert Hanna, both residents of La Grande.

Community Builds Burial Grounds At Summerville

The Summerville Community cemetery, which is maintained by the Summerville Cemetery association, reveals one of the most outstanding examples of community spirit in this county. The burying ground, up on the hillside, just outside the town, where repose the dust of 2000 former citizens of this and other communities would be a credit to any large city. This is true, because every resident of that locality has an interest in the enterprise and cheerfully makes his contribution to the cause of money when the cemetery is necessary.

The cemetery consists of about 19 acres of ground, two plots of ground having been deeded for the purpose away back in the early 80's, about three acres by John and Sarah E. Rinehart and seven acres by Theodore and Rebecca Williams.

The approval of the land deed was given in 1904, which signified that all future requirements for establishment of a cemetery had been had been met. The names of the board of directors were George Chamberlain, F. E. Dunbar and Charles S. Moore.

On May 7th, 1904, the association was perfected. J. A. Woodell was elected chairman, trustees were J. L. McKinnis, E. A. Williams and W. H. Glenn. Harry Huber was secretary and Jennie Rinehart, soci-ety. John Ahred was the first caretaker, but he has passed away some time since and E. R. Long, the present caretaker has served over a long period of years. The present officers of the association are John A. McKee, Summerville, chairman, J. L. Woodell, W. M. Park and Mr. Roe, trustees, Mrs. Wayne Park, treasurer and Mrs. C. C. Welch of Imbler, clerk.

The present chapel, a cut of which may be found elsewhere in this section is a very beautiful and commodious building. It was built by small donations and each family in the neighborhood was asked to contribute \$5 toward the purchase of a plot. A good place installed in the chapel is also the property of the association.

Each year a Memorial day a big bonfire is burned in the cemetery at Summerville, the entire proceeds go toward the upkeep of the cemetery and the improvements of the cemetery. This has come to be an enterprise of such proportions that this year over \$400 was cleared.

The association is in a very good financial condition, with a fund of about \$2000 drawing interest. Each member on building the association pays a fee of \$1 and that is the extent of his financial obligations. There are no assessments and the contributions mentioned above for the furnishing of the chapel, were purely voluntary.

Dunham Wright, Early Pioneer



The Hon. Dunham Wright who represented this section of the state in the legislature from 1872-1882. Mr. Wright, home-stayed the section which is now the famous Medical Springs. He is at present president of the Union County Pioneer association.

George Gray, Oldest Pioneer



George Gray, of Lower Cove, who is probably the oldest living pioneer in this county, is past 75 years of age. Up until two years ago when he suffered a spell of sickness, Mr. Gray was one of the most active figures among the county's pioneers. His career has been a unique and thrilling one.

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