

GREAT PROGRESS MADE BY VALLEY IN LAST 73 YEARS

This District Still Young in Development; Soil Tilled in 1861.

A young country, with many of its resources still far from potential development—that, in brief, describes La Grande and Union and Wallowa counties.

Last month Medford celebrated the state's diamond jubilee, yet La Grande as a town is less than 73 years old! In the lives of communities, this is still in its early youth, with countless decades of advancement and development ahead of it. Natural growth due to its strategic position, undoubtedly some day will make La Grande the metropolis of a great empire—just as today it is the trade, education, recreational and industrial center of Northeastern Oregon.

Seventy-five years ago, the valley was largely covered with swamps, rye grass, here and there sagebrush, and great clumps of willows. This section bordered on the prairie. No soil had been turned in the valley, there was nothing where La Grande now stands.

Yet in the winter of 1861 a group of pioneers came to the Grande Ronde, decided upon what is now called Old Town for a settlement site, and that winter Benjamin Brown constructed the first dwelling place. The following spring, in April of 1862, the same Benjamin Brown plowed the first sod ever turned in the valley, little realizing that some 72 years later some 420,000 acres of land would be in farms, rich and productive and commanding national and international markets because of the character of their products. It was a long furrow Benjamin Brown left behind him that early April.

That was 72 years ago. Union county had a handful of people where today there are more than 17,000. Yet immediately following the settlement in Old Town, the valley began to grow. Scores and then hundreds of pioneers were turning westward, to a land of promise, and with each year increasing numbers stopped their weary oxen in the Grande Ronde valley, to lay the foundation for the empire of the future. As an example of the rapid growth, in 1885, less than a quarter of a century after Benjamin Brown pioneered La Grande, there were 93,328 acres of land under cultivation, wheat was harvested in the amount of 484,289 bushels, farmers counted 58,878 tons of hay, 114,170 bushels of potatoes, 11,167 boxes of apples, 3266 boxes of plums and prunes and lumbermen cut 4,196,400 feet of lumber! The total population of the county had increased to 9588 persons—where a quarter of a century before there had been none, except for the roving Indians.

But to go back to those early days.

The first wedding in Union county was performed in Old Town when W. Marks and Frances Caroline Leasy were united in the holy bonds of matrimony by S. M. Black, justice of the peace.

In the summer of 1862 Conrad Miller planted the first fruit trees near Union, consisting of apples and pears. T. A. Wood, of Portland, came and placed trees in the virgin soil here in the fall of '62. Fred Nodine, whose descendants live in many Eastern Oregon communities, came to the valley on June 11, 1862 and later in the year settlers had taken up residence at Cove, Summerville and La Grande.

Then in 1863, the next year, the valley was surveyed and a little later Union county came into being—by an act of legislature of Oct. 14, 1864. Until then it was considered a part of Baker county, and later Wallowa county was taken from the new Union county—named, of course, after the northern cause in the Civil war.

The next step was the first newspapers came into being. On April 18, 1868, two publications were printed for the first time—the Blue Mountain Times and the Mountain Sentinel. At that time La Grande had a population of 600 and became the first county seat. Later the court house went to Union, but after the turn of the century, La Grande again returned to its former standing as center of the county government.

Then in 1884 the railroad came, and during the last 50 years, progress has been steady and sure. Speedy transportation open-

ed the last door to the development one sees today.

In 1885, the year after the Union Pacific pierced the valley with its life-giving rails, the first accurate census was taken. The counting of heads produced the following results: La Grande 1213, Wallowa 1031, Summerville 920, Indian Valley 846, Union 845, Joseph 807, Cove 689, Island City 633, North Powder and Antelope 524, Alder 437, Pine Valley 362.

MARCILLE TRACES HER ANCESTRY TO PIONEERS

Miss Marcille Conley, 10-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Royal Conley, of Mountain Springs, six miles west of La Grande on the Old Oregon Trail, has been chosen to ride on one of the pioneer floats in the parade of Thursday morning. And the reason was not that Marcille probably has more relatives in the valley than any other 10-year-old hereabouts, but because she has as many if not more antecedents among the real pioneers of the Grande Ronde valley.

In the first place, Marcille is the elder daughter of Royal Conley and Carol Glenn, Royal Conley is the son of Archie Conley and Nettie Golden. Archie Conley was the son of Jabe J. Conley and Alma Brown and Jabe Conley was the son of the valley's early wheat king, A. B. Conley. Alma Brown Conley was the daughter of Ben Brown, one of the first 10 men to break the sod in this valley. Nettie Golden Conley was the daughter of Charles E. Golden, not a pioneer hereabout, but of the Willamette valley, and Mattie Childers. Mattie Childers Golden was the daughter of John A. Childers and Rachel Hudnal, who came here from Missouri in 1864, their first home being the place where Mr. and Mrs. C. B. Zwickler now live in the Grange Hall neighborhood.

Carol Glenn Conley is the daughter of A. C. (Budd) Glenn and Daisy Courtright. Bud Glenn was the son of Tolbert T. Glenn and Sarah Myers, Tolbert T. Glenn and his father, William S. Glenn, pioneered here in the early '60's, coming from Pleasantville, Iowa. The Glenn family has always been prominent in the

Prairie Creek 320, Eagle Creek and Rock Creek and Stump Town 273. Big Creep 220, Bedrock 87, 38. Today many of these early towns do not exist, others have less population than in 1885, and still others have thrived—La Grande's last official census showed 8950 within the city limits, and at least 1400 more residing immediately adjacent, giving the town an approximate population of 9500.

north end of the valley. Sarah Myers was the daughter of Henry Myers, who also came from the middlewest in the early '60's. Daisy Picklin Glenn was the daughter of Ellen Kuhn Picklin, whose sister, Mary Ann is said to have been the first white child born in Union county. They were daughters of Elias Kuhn and it is quite interesting also to know that Elias Kuhn, Marcille's great-great-grandfather and another great-great-grandfather, William S. Glenn, came in the same wagon train from Southeastern Iowa and stopped here in 1862.

So, Marcille can trace her ancestry back to such pioneer names as these: A. B. Conley, Ben Brown, John A. Childers, Tolbert T. Glenn, William S. Glenn, Henry Myers, and Elias Kuhn, names familiar to all students of our valley's earliest pioneer history, and it certainly cannot be gain-

BROWN-CONLEY WEDDING IN EARLY 80's IMPORTANT ONE

When Miss Alma Brown and Jabe Conley were married in the early 80's two of the most prominent pioneer families of the Grande Ronde valley were united, for she was the daughter of Ben Brown, who was one of the first ten men to break sod in Union county and whose name had been linked up with much of the pioneer history of this section, and Mr. Conley was the son of A. B. Conley whose name immediately commands attention, for he, too, was among the early settlers, one of the large landholders and known as the "wheat king."

They lived out in the neighborhood where Clarence Carter now lives. At the time when the train of which they had heard so much was to arrive in La Grande, neither of them had ever seen a train, for while Mr. Conley had known of travel only by covered wagon, Mrs. Conley was born in Union county and had never been away from home. Each day the thrill of anticipation increased and on the morning of July 4, 1884, chores had to be done early so that the father and mother and young Archie could board their "dead-

X" wagon and drive to La Grande. Mr. Conley was freighting over the Blue mountains in those days and by using the lead team of his six horses which ordinarily drew the great freight wagons, because they were faster, the journey could be made in about two and a half hours. And they must needs be early.

There was to be a program up on the hill, but not for them. They had heard and seen speakers on Fourth of July programs before, but they had never heard nor seen a real train. And they were early, and when that train came around the bend and emerged from the Grande Ronde canyon at Oro Dell, they experienced thrills which they had never known before, and, Mrs. Conley adds, she has never experienced since. It met all of their expectations. Mrs. Conley does not remember what all happened, all she remembers is the great excitement and enthusiasm, these being the impressions which remain of the history-making day.

Mrs. Conley is said to be the oldest living white child born in the Grande Ronde valley.

said that Marcille is the proper one to represent the pioneers. She also boasts of having a great-great-aunt living in the valley also, Mrs. S. G. Bradshaw, whose home is on Cove avenue.

BIKE RIDING INCREASES
There are now about 25 bicycle riders in La Grande, and a meeting should be held for the purpose of organizing a club.—La Grande Chronicle, May 17, 1933.

Pioneer Blood



Miss Marcille Conley, descendant of six of the outstanding early pioneers of Union county, who will ride in a place of honor on one of the pioneer floats in the parade Thursday morning, July 19, during the Sent-Centennial U. P. celebration here.



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