

## UMATILLA COUNTY.

THE County of Umatilla is one of the leading agricultural and pastoral counties of Oregon, and is both populous and prosperous. It is bounded on the north by the Columbia River and Walla Walla County, in Washington Territory. The summit ridge of the Blue Mountains separates it from Union County on the east, and Grant and Wasco counties border it on the south and west. The main water-courses flow from the springs of the Blue Mountains in a general northwesterly direction to the Columbia, and with their tributaries give an inexhaustible supply of pure water, with power almost unlimited. Walla Walla River and the Tumalum, with Pine Creek, their principal tributary, run through the northern end and pass into Walla Walla County. Umatilla River flows northwesterly from the mountains to the Columbia, receiving on its way the waters of Wild Horse, Cottonwood, McKay, Butter and Birch creeks. Willow Creek, which has several forks and tributaries, runs through the southwestern portion of the county, and several tributaries of John Day River flow near the border of Wasco County, into which they cross. Wells of pure, living water can be found almost anywhere at a depth of from fifteen to sixty feet. Many drive wells have been successfully put down on numerous farms, water being found easily, even in the driest portions of the county.

The county's greatest length is 140 miles from northeast to southwest—transversely it is eighty miles; and it includes within its limits 5,040 square miles, or 3,225,000 acres. Much of this is grain land of the finest quality, while the remainder is divided between timbered mountains, in which are many fertile, grassy valleys, large tracts valuable for grazing for horses, cattle and sheep, and considerable bordering the Columbia which is practically valueless without irrigation, owing to the lightness of the rainfall. Lying along the base of the Blue Mountains are thousands of acres of wheat lands which have no superior in the world. They possess to a high degree all the requisites necessary to grain producing. The soil contains the highly desirable alkaline properties, is rich and deep; the rainfall is always sufficient and never excessive; frosts do not come early enough to injure the crop; and it is seldom that harvest is interfered with by the elements. Taken on the average, by the summer fallow system, winter wheat will yield thirty bushels to the acre. A yield in certain fields of fifty bushels is not uncommon—not small patches, but fields of from 100 to 500 acres—and the average land, under careful cultivation, will produce at least thirty bushels. It is being done year after year, with no apparent deterioration of the soil. It is of this class of lands that the Umatilla Indian Reservation is largely composed. The line of the reserve is as clear cut and discernible as the track of a cyclone in a forest. On one side of the narrow stream which forms its boundary are to be seen farms stretched out in endless succession, their tilled acres, long lines of fences, neat residences and substantial improvements contrasting strongly with the receding vista of wild, bar-

ren bunch grass hills lying on the other side, upon which a few cattle and cayuse ponies may be seen grazing. Ere long, no doubt, this reservation will be declared open to settlement. When this is done thousands of acres will be added to the productive area of Umatilla, and hundreds of happy homes will be founded where now the intractable cayuse crops the nutritious bunch grass in untrammelled freedom.

A detailed description of the county, beginning at the point where it is first entered from the west, will, perhaps, be taking it in the order in which it is encountered by the majority of strangers; though, of course, now that the Oregon Short Line is completed, many more than formerly are entering the county from the opposite direction. In passing up the Columbia above The Dalles one is struck with the utter barrenness of the country. Long ridges of sand are about all that is observable from the car window, while the grating and grinding of the sand by the revolving wheels of the car is far from agreeable to one of too sensitive a nervous composition. The impression produced is far from favorable, and the natural impulse of the stranger is to class the whole region as a desert. Yet, back from the river, and only a few miles inland, are to be found mile upon mile of rolling bunch grass hills, verdant meadows and bottom lands, and thousands of those fertile acres which have placed Umatilla at the head of the wheat producing counties of Oregon. Umatilla is like the rough diamond, the gem is on the inside; she presents her poorest and most uninviting aspect to him who only judges from outside appearances.

Arriving at Umatilla Junction, a relic of the effervescent prosperity of early mining times, still reposing on the wind-swept sands of the Columbia, the train heads southeastward and parallel with, and a short distance north of, the Umatilla River, through the very heart of the county. It is now that the agricultural resources of Umatilla begin to unfold. Several tributaries enter the Umatilla from the south, each flowing through a long, wide valley, or bottom; but leaving these for subsequent description, we will confine our attention to the region lying northeast of the river. Beginning a few miles from the Columbia, there lies for miles up and down the stream a strip of country where the soil is of undoubted fertility, and, except on the ridges, of sufficient depth to render cultivation easy. Bunch grass, sage brush and flowers grow upon it in profusion, and for years stock have roamed over the hills and fattened on the little green tufts of grass. The rainfall is very slight, and until very recently was considered entirely inadequate to the demands of wheat culture. In 1880 a company was organized and a tract of 5,000 acres of this land secured. Amid all the prophecies of utter failure the proprietors of Prospect Farm went to work systematically, and astonished everybody by raising a crop of wheat averaging twenty-five bushels to the acre. This success was repeated the following year, and people began to change their opinion of this dry land. Since then many claims have been taken up by settlers, and in a few years there will no doubt be a continuous line of farms in a region