

## THURSTON COUNTY, W. T.

THIS is one of the oldest and most important counties in Washington Territory. It was created January 21, 1852, by the Legislature of Oregon Territory, of which Washington was then a portion, and was named in honor of Samuel W. Thurston, first Delegate to Congress from the Territory of Oregon. It was the third county north of the Columbia River, and embraced the first American settlement on Puget Sound. In 1845 Colonel M. T. Simmons, who had crossed the plains the year before, located, with a few companions, where the Des Chutes River empties into Budd's Inlet. Their little settlement was called "New Market," now the town of Tumwater, less than two miles from Olympia. During the next five years many Americans located about the head of Puget Sound, and the town of Olympia was founded, which, being the only one on the shore of that great inland sea, was given the custom house when the Puget Sound collection district was created February 14, 1851. It was naturally made the seat of justice when the county was created the following year. In September, 1852, T. F. McElroy and J. W. Wiley began the publication of the *Columbian* at Olympia, the first paper within the present limits of Washington Territory. When the Territory was created by Congress, by the Act of March 2, 1853, Olympia, being the most important settlement, was made the capital, and retains that honor to the present day.

Thurston County is of irregular shape, lying along the shores of Puget Sound, whose long arms, such as Budd's Inlet, Oyster Bay, etc., indent it deeply in several places. It has an area of 600 square miles, including a large water frontage and much excellent agricultural land. Its watercourses consist of Black River, a tributary of the Chehalis; Des Chutes River, flowing into Budd's Inlet, and many smaller streams, which, with numerous springs and several beautiful lakes, give an ample and never-failing supply of water. The surface of the country is gently rolling wooded hills, reaching, in places, quite high altitudes, especially on the western end, where it borders the Coast Range Mountains. There are many small valleys, flats and stretches of bottom land along the streams where agriculture may be carried on, while several tracts of prairie land add considerable to the arable area. These latter contain a number of the finest farms to be seen in Washington Territory, and have been cultivated with uniform success for many years. The entire area, in its natural state, is densely wooded with fir on the hills, and cedar, oak, maple, ash and alder on the lower levels. This vast quantity of merchantable timber, combined with the facilities for handling and transporting logs offered by the many miles of deep water adjacent, has rendered lumbering one of the leading industries. There are cut annually about 9,000,000 feet of lumber in the county, while a large quantity of logs cut within its limits are made up into rafts and towed by tug-boats to mills located at various points on the Sound beyond the county limits. Besides those brought by water, logs are taken to the mills at Tumwater and Olympia by

the Olympia & Chehalis Valley (narrow guage) Railroad, which penetrates one of the best timber tracts in the Territory.

What is said in the accompanying description of Lewis County about the value of these forest lands, when cleared of timber and prepared for the plow or seeded to clover, applies with equal force to lands similarly situated in Thurston County. For diversified agriculture, dairying, raising cattle, hogs, poultry, etc., they are twice as valuable as the best open prairie land to be found anywhere. The best of grain, vegetables, butter and fruit are produced there, challenging competition with any region on the globe. To Thurston County wheat was awarded one of the premiums of the Centennial Exposition in 1876. There is much vacant land subject to entry under the land laws of the United States, which, when cleared for cultivation, will equal the best now under plow. It requires energy and persistent labor to carve out a farm from the forest, and no one should undertake it who does not fully appreciate the task before him. If he does begin the work with full knowledge, he will undoubtedly have, in a few years, both a home and a valuable farm. This, of course, applies to one who depends solely upon his own labor for success. He who can afford to have all or a portion of his clearing done by contract will escape the personal hardships of the poorer settler, and have a productive farm so much the sooner. The game is certainly worth the powder, as any of the older settlers will testify—men who have encountered difficulties which do not now exist, such as no sale for timber or wood, poor transportation facilities, and almost no market for produce.

Thurston has now a population approximating 6,000, and an assessed property valuation of \$3,149,236. According to the Assessor's report in 1884, there were 50,000 bushels of wheat raised in the county, while at the same time there were 15,000 head of live stock. The county was divided into thirty-four school districts, and contained 1,475 children of the legal school age. The culture of hops has been undertaken in several localities, and is meeting with good success. Oysters, clams and fish are taken from the Sound and find a ready market in the interior. Olympia oysters are well known on the Coast, and though much smaller than the giant bivalve of Atlantic waters, its flavor is preferred by many. The clam of Puget Sound is of Titanic proportions and extended reputation.

The city of Olympia, besides being the oldest on Puget Sound, is, in many respects, the most attractive, and has the most beautiful location. Lying at the head of Budd's Inlet, with wooded hills closing it in and rising gradually above it, it extends back along the extreme arm of the inlet nearly to the mouth of the Des Chutes, at the town of Tumwater. This portion of Olympia lies on a high and gradually rising table land, which terminates in an abrupt bluff on the edge of the inlet. Across this runs the well-traveled road connecting Olympia and Tumwater, along which the town is so rapidly spreading that the two places must be united before many years.