

INDEPENDENCE, OREGON.

ON the west bank of the Willamette river, in Polk county, about seventy-five miles south of Portland by the Southern Pacific railroad, is situated the town of Independence. Its location is beautiful. Here the river wends its course through one of the most picturesque portions of the valley that bears its name. On each side may be seen finely cultivated, undulating fields, having for a background rolling hills upon whose sides and summits, at this season of the year, may be descried well fenced, green fields. The town, with its highly cultivated and beautiful surroundings, has long been the center of one of the most productive agricultural districts in Oregon. The farmers from a wide extent of country come to do their trading. They come from the many farms lying to the north a distance of twelve miles, and to the west as far as the Coast range, which is distant about twenty miles. It is from the forests on this range, at the head of the fertile Luckiamute valley, that the saw mill here, and the mills at Salem, look for their supply. The country extending south as far as the Benton county line also obtains its supplies from this town. A large district on the east bank of the river is also tributary to this place.

The productiveness of all of this tributary country has been thoroughly tested for a period of nearly half a century, large and unfailing crops having been gathered year after year. On the highest summits of the rolling hills, without irrigation, are harvested annually immense crops of wheat and other cereals, such as oats and barley, while the bottom lands are not surpassed in their yields of corn and hops. Cornstalks may be seen growing that have attained the height of fifteen feet. It is to the credit of Polk county of having raised more pounds of hops to the acre, during the year 1889, than any other county in Oregon. The upland soil of this portion of the valley is a black loam, and will average from two to three feet in depth, while the bottom land is principally a sandy loam. Most of the territory that is tributary to Independence was acquired from the government under the old donation law. A large portion of this land is still held in large holdings, such as were then granted to the early settlers. Gradually these large tracts are being broken up and placed upon the market, and there may be obtained in this section the most productive kind of lands at reasonable prices. The people are unacquainted with the wild and inflated prices that usually prevail in what is known as "booming country." If the settler is anxious to enjoy the same social, educational and religious privileges that he was wont to enjoy in the thickly settled portions of the union, he may rest assured that in this portion of the Willam-

ette valley he will have like opportunities; for the people who have settled this section of the country brought with them their love for home, the school and the church.

Independence, on account of the opportunities for trade it has long enjoyed, is one of the most opulent of the small towns to be found in the Willamette valley. It claims a population of about 1,200, and possesses sixteen brick business houses. Its merchants are prosperous, and carry large stocks of goods to meet the demands of the large number of farmers who come here to do their trading. It has two national banks, having a capital of \$50,000 each. There are two well graded schools, upon whose rolls are the names of about 400 children. Five churches have been erected. The Masonic order has a lodge, also the Odd Fellows. A city hall has recently been built at a cost of \$3,500, also an opera house at a cost of almost \$11,000. Two hundred and seventy-five thousand bushels of wheat were shipped from here last season, besides a large quantity of other cereals, and about 400,000 pounds of hops. During the same time about 20,000 bushels of potatoes were raised.

The coming season, it is expected, will be one of the most prosperous this town has ever witnessed. The Independence National bank will erect a new two-story, brick building that will cost about \$12,000. A new school house is also to be built at a probable cost of \$20,000. A new saw mill is in course of construction that will be capable of cutting 30,000 feet of lumber per day. A new flour mill is contemplated which will be equipped with the most approved roller machinery, and will have a capacity of 100 barrels per day. The ties and rails will soon be on the ground for a motor line to connect this town with Monmouth, in which the state normal school is located, and which is distant two and one-half miles. This line will connect Independence with the narrow gauge line of the Oregonian Railway Co., which runs through nearly the whole of this county on its way from Portland to Astoria. A tile factory is soon to be erected, to utilize the large deposits of fine clay that are found adjacent to the town. An electric light and water works company has been organized, and it expects to begin work soon. Arrangements have been made to make 1,500,000 bricks this season. The two navigation companies that trade on the river between Portland and Corvallis intend erecting large wharves and warehouses at this place for the purpose of better handling the products that are shipped from here by way of the river. Besides these numerous improvements, a large number of others are in contemplation, such as the building of a \$4,000 to \$5,000 addition to the city hotel, and several fine residences, and, perhaps, two or three large business blocks. The town is favored by possessing a progressive board of trade, which is working incessantly to advance the city's welfare.