

THE TOWN OF LATAH.

The people of that famous agricultural region in Eastern Washington and Northern Idaho known as the Palouse country never weary of sounding the praises of that favored section. It is a country, too, that will bear all the praise lavished upon it. It is an elevated, rolling plain, bearing no timber to speak of, but possessing one of the richest soils found anywhere. Stories of the productiveness of the Palouse, of undoubted truthfulness, tax the credulity of the farmer from the most prosperous parts of the east. To tell an eastern farmer of a forty-acre field averaging more than sixty bushels of wheat to the acre is to invite disbelief. There are well authenticated instances of such yields, however, though, of course, no one claims that they are general. The usual yield varies from twenty to forty bushels to the acre. Though it is pre-eminently a grain-growing section it is well suited to the production of all the usual farm crops in this latitude.

In the midst of this rich farming region is situated the young town of Latah. It is located on Latah, or Hangman, creek, on a slight elevation sloping to the south and west. That stream and the Palouse river form the main drainage channels for the whole Palouse country, the former flowing to the Spokane river which it joins at Spokane Falls, and the latter southward to the Snake. Latah creek is a stream of considerable size during the driest period of the year, and it performs an important office in supplying an abundance of water for stock and the general purposes that make a reliable stream always valuable. The town of Latah was platted by B. F. Coplen in 1884, but there were only a general store, a flour mill and two other buildings there until last year when the town sprang up in a few months. Late in the fall of 1888 the Union Pacific railway was built there on its way to Spokane Falls, and the following spring the construction of business houses, schools, churches and residences was begun and carried on with vigor. The railway company built a fine depot, the Pacific Elevator Company put up a grain elevator of 75,000 bushels capacity, and two other large warehouses were erected. The railroad was the one element previously lacking to build a town at that point, and, that secured, the growth of the place was a matter of course.

Merely the construction of a line of railroad touching a certain point will not make a city at that point. There are other elements to be taken into consideration. The physical features of the country and its products are important factors. The country about Latah is of such a nature that the town is the most accessible trading center and market within reach. The roads radiate in all directions from Latah, and almost without exception the country thoroughfares are kept in excellent condition. A main spur that extends in a southerly direction east of Latah has a break just opposite the town, and through that pass is a good wagon road over into the Rock creek valley, a section that is well tilled and produces most gratifying results. The trade of that fertile valley goes to Latah. Coplen butte is the most prominent land mark in the east, and between the butte and the town are wide grain fields and orchards maturing a bountiful harvest. Strawberry gulch runs to the northeast, and it is filled with farms. The broader valley of Latah creek holds its irregular course from the southward, and its whole area is the choicest of alluvial land. To the westward are the Pine creek valley and the Cabbage flat country that are bountiful producers and pour their volume of grain into Latah, where the farmers do all their trading. All these variously designated sections are, from the nature of the country, tributary to Latah. The rolling hills, as well as the

bottom lands, are cultivated and with as gratifying results. It is estimated that 750,000 bushels of grain will be marketed in Latah this year, the crop being even more than usually promising at this time of the year. The average elevation of about 2,000 feet above the sea gives the Palouse country a climate that does not hasten the ripening of the ordinary cereals, so the harvest does not come until well into August. The range of crops, the luxuriance with which they grow and the strength of the soil are nothing short of remarkable. A crop failure was never known there. The farmers never think of applying fertilizers to the soil, and after a score of years of continuous cropping its fertility seems not at all impaired. A thorough personal investigation will show the truthfulness of these statements.

Since the advent of the railway, bringing markets within easy reach, considerable attention is being given to the raising of vegetables and fruits. Peaches can not be raised successfully except in the most sheltered places; but apples, pears, plums, cherries, grapes, berries, etc., are safe crops and of the best quality. Considerable tracts of land yet bear the indigenous bunch grass on which stock live nearly or quite the whole year. About the more rugged hills the land is given up to grazing. Some attention is being given to grading up cattle, and most of the animals are of improved strains of blood.

Latah was incorporated last year, but, with many other towns in the state, it fell under a void statute, so the work must be done again. Meanwhile the citizens are going ahead with sundry improvements, such as the grading of streets and the construction of sidewalks that materially better the appearance of the town. Latah business men have public spirit, and the results may be seen on every hand. They have borne the chief part of the expense of constructing a number of bridges that were just charges against the county. They have always been willing to aid any worthy enterprise that came among them. A military school was established there last year by the liberality of the business men, and it is doing good academic work in addition to giving rudimentary military instruction. It enjoys very encouraging patronage, and the enlargement of the building is contemplated in order that the institution may keep pace with the demand made upon it. Latah academy is the only school of the kind in the state. It is conducted on a novel plan and obtains admirable results. The town also has a good public school. There are three churches and no saloons. A flouring mill, a brick kiln and pottery works constitute the chief manufacturing plants. The *Latah Times* is a live local newspaper. A number of fine buildings are being erected this year, among which is a three-story hotel for A. H. Wheeler, who will also build a residence to cost \$8,000. E. Ham has just completed, at a cost of \$5,000, the residence shown on the page opposite. A public school building, to cost \$5,000, is being arranged for. Many other buildings are going up, and the town presents a busy and enterprising appearance.

The town occupies a very pleasant site. The residence portion is well up on the gently sloping hill and in a slightly location. The streets are wide and neatly kept. As a residence place there is a charm about it that would attract even if its business phase were not so promising. Its prosperity rests upon the sure basis of rich agricultural resources. Timber is within easy reach, and those manufacturing establishments requiring wood or the products of farm and range would find a good opening in this new town, and they would receive the generous support of the people. Water is obtained for domestic use from wells or from springs that are numerous, some of which are tinged with mineral. Fossil remains found a few years ago in the vicinity of Latah aroused considerable interest, and there is no doubt that numerous other specimens lie within easy reach of the scientific investigator. The people of Latah take pride in promoting the best interests of their town. It is a pleasant place for a home and a place where many kinds of business may be profitably pursued. Farmers are wanted in the surrounding country.