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EARLY DAY DESCRIPTION OF THE MALHEUR COUNTRY FROM OLD CLIPPING

Interesting as well as valuable in showing past development is the following article reprinted from an early issue of the Portland Oregonian and sent to the Editor of the Enterprise by D. K. Worsham of Malheur City. The exact date of the original publication is not known, but it is certain that it will be better appreciated by the old timers, the real pioneers.

In reading this article we cannot help but wonder what the next generation will think of our times. When the towns have become real cities and the valley ranches are turned into smaller farms, when our ranges are all fenced and good roads and mail service exist all over the country, will the next generation look back on us with the same pride in their hearts, and with a quiet unspoken envy, as we do on the pathfinders of the west.

THE MALHEUR COUNTRY Where It Is, What It Is, and What It May Be.

A GOOD PLACE FOR STOCKMEN. History and Reminiscences—The Indian Reservation—"Meek's Cut Off"—Gossip and Facts.

On the eastern side of the Blue Mountains, partly in Grant and partly in Baker counties, Oregon extending from Snake River to Harney lake on the south and west, is an extensive region known as the Malheur country. Throughout the upper country you will meet old pioneer prospectors and miners who will tell long stories about "finding" the Malheur country, and being in turn found and driven out by Indians. Just when the country was found it is difficult to say, but to the but to the traveler passing through it there is every evidence of its having been there some little time. In 1873 Mr. Samuel Parrish, as United States Indian Agent, took possession of the country for

An Indian Reservation. And with a young Indian who he had picked up at Camp Harney as his only companion, rode out to hunt up the different bands of Indians he had been appointed to take charge of. Considering that these Indians were still maintaining a more or less hostile attitude, his mission was a rather risky one. But he rode right into their camps and the peculiar tact which has always made him deservedly popular with the red man carried him through successfully. He collected the different bands, in all numbering about 800 Snakes, and soon had them encamped around the spot he had selected for an agency. This was in a deep basin immediately under Malheur Peak Or, as it is sometimes called, Horse-

hoof mountain a bold butte towering high above its neighbors and capped by a rocky knob resembling a horse's hoof. In this basin, through which flows one fork of the Malheur river, Mr. Parrish erected about a dozen very substantial frame buildings, using a portable sawmill to make the lumber from timber close at hand. He induced his Indians to go to work, and soon they had an extensive "farm" fenced and under cultivation. About four miles of irrigating ditch was dug by them, Mr. Parrish and the chief, having to do their personal parts of the digging in order to get the fiery, untamed warriors to follow suit.

Crops Were Raised Consisting of wheat and oats and the harder varieties of vegetables. The agent also succeeded in raising some melons and small garden "truck" but found it necessary to get the plants under his kitchen stove during the frequent frosty nights. As a general thing the Indians prospered, although they would insist on burning up their fences for fuel in winter and replacing them in spring. In 1866 Mr. Parrish was removed to make a place for another agent. This was a red-tape move the Indians did not understand, and they went long and loud, and tried by force to prevent the departure of the agent they had learned to trust. But he begged them to resign themselves to circumstances, which for awhile they doggedly did. But they could not get along with their new agent, saying "he was not Sam Parrish." For two years they nursed the hope that the later would come back to them. Then the Bannock brave, Buffalo Horn, with his band of hostiles, swept down the Snake river and up the Malheur to the fishing camp of Otis' and Egan's people. There was

A Yell For War The Bannocks cried, "Why do you sit here and starve on fish bones when there are cattle and horses on the white man's range just beyond? The smouldering spark was fanned into a flame, and instantly every man, woman and child of the Malheur reservation was out on the warpath. Egan, the war-chief, a brave man, with many a scar from the white man's bullet upon his body—talker against war and warned his people against the final result, but was overruled. When he had to fight he fought to the death. His skull adorns a shelf in the Army and Navy museum at Washington. His bones have been scattered by the coyotes among the tall timber near Meacham's station, in the Blue Mountains, where he died fighting like the brave men he was. The loss of Buffalo Horn and Egan, their two bravest men, took the backbone out of the hostiles in '78, and rapidly they retreated. The Idaho Bannocks made their escape back toward the Ross Fork agency, while the Malheur Snakes cached themselves in the timber near their old agency, and finally surrendered to the soldiers. They were taken to Camp Harney, and in January, 1879, sent to Yakima reservation, where they still remain. Since then there have been

No Indians On The Malheur Although the agency and reservation were continued as such until a few months ago. Excepting a small reserved portion, the reservation is now open to settlers. Perhaps because the Umatilla and some other reservations contain considerable choice land, the idea prevails that the Malheur reservation is an excellent agricultural region. This is a mistake. Very fair crops of grain have been raised in the agency basin, which is several hundred feet lower than the surrounding country, but even here the wheat has been frozen while in the milk. In 1878 the crops were very good, and when Gen. Howard's command reached there in August of that year they found plenty of grain for their thousands of hungry horses and mules. This basin is well watered, and is a pretty spot to look down upon from the surrounding heights. But its area is limited, and there is not enough of it to make a dozen decent sized ranches. Further down the stream which flows through it there is some good bottom land, but hardly room to get in a plow. Between the agency and

Camp Harney. You pass over something like sixty miles of country, which will strike you as not particularly good to raise anything, although the Snake Indians considered it a very good country in which to raise crickets, which they roasted and smashed into bread resembling bilcake meal. These crickets are about as large as humming birds, and if you travel through there in the spring it will for miles be impossible for your horse to set his foot down without mashing one. When you camp at night you had better either your saddle or they will park it off bodily. Another crop raised here by the Indians was flint for their arrow-heads. It abounds everywhere. There are also extensive patches of clay where brick yards might do business if there was any one to buy the bricks. There are some very good log buildings at Harney, but the place was

abandoned as a military post a few years ago. This is

A Fine Summer Country But too elevated for agriculture. Between Harney and Canyon City, a distance by wagon road of perhaps 65 miles, you pass through Sylva and Bear valleys, both of them well watered, well timbered and pretty places, but too high for farming. About twelve miles from Malheur agency is this valley, an extensive body of land, where there is some good soil. There is a rank growth of rye-grass, but it looks too coarse for the digestion of any thing but a sawmill. Some twenty miles east of the agency is the Clover creek country, where there are a few ranches, and about twenty miles further you find Malheur City and Eldorado, small towns, around which placer mining is still carried on. On the lower Malheur, and on Bully and Willow creeks there is considerable good agricultural land, and much of it seems to be held by a military road company. In 1878 two of

General Howard's Scouts Left the Malheur agency and striking the main Malheur river, followed it down to within a few miles of where it empties into the Snake. They found a very rough country, with no valley or bottom land for many miles. There is an old Indian trail down the river, in places worn deep into the rocky sides of the canyon, and where the bluffs close in your horse has to swim and wade along the channel of the stream. Along here considerable alkali exists in the water, and if you take a drink of it you will need another one very soon. You don't like it, but if you get started you have to keep on drinking or suffer a torturing thirst. When the trail leads up a bluff you will be actually foolish enough, if you have no canteen, to leave your horse and climb down to get another drink of what you know will in short time make you still more thirsty. But if you will let the water alone at first and keep a bullet or pebble in your mouth, you will have no trouble with thirst. In traveling toward the

Main Malheur From the agency you pass over many miles of high, arid country, much of which is literally sown with shale rock, the sharp corners of which you will find anything but beneficial to your horse's feet. Approaching the stream you find the bluffs cut up by innumerable canyons, down which you can pass to the water's edge. West of the agency is the main range of the Blue Mountains, with plenty of tall timber, grass, game and water: in short, the finest summer country in the world. Some twenty miles from the agency are Crane and Summit prairies. About all they are good for is to start a large ostrich farm. Cranes about as large as small ostriches abound. They make a noise like the hoisting of a ship's sails, and if properly mixed with the sage-hens of the plains below, an article of ostrich which would stand the climate might be produced. Most of the Malheur country is

An Excellent Stock Region. Abounding in bunch-grass, and with plenty of summer range in the timber. The Indians' horses always wintered well on the range, and the agency cattle kept in good condition. The snowfall in the agency basin rarely exceeded 18 inches. On the lower Malheur and its tributaries cattle keep rolling fat entirely independent of grass, their main dependence being the white sage which grows so plentifully in that section. The Harney valley and Steen mountain regions are famous stock ranges, and have furnished thousands of cattle to eastern and California markets. Steen mountain was named after Major E. Steen, of the old First Dragoons, who, with the roopers gave the Snakes many a hot chase in that section about 15 years ago. Harney valley is an extensive stretch of country, containing an alkali lake about 17 miles long by 12 wide. The elevation here is over 4000 feet above the sea.

As a Mineral Region The Malheur country is rich in resources. What little prospecting has been done has been very superficial. In 1843 an emigrant train of some 90 wagons, guided by Stephen Meek, passed through this region, and the deep ruts cut out by their wagons may still be seen. By bearing to the southwest they avoided crossing the Blue mountains going around them through the Ochoco country. Many of this party took up donation claims near Salem and are still living in that vicinity. The story goes that while they were encamped in a region, the description of which tallies with that around the agency, they found in a creek a chunk of amount of yellow metal. A few chunks of the stuff were thrown in a wagon-

(Continued on Page Eight.)

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