

# Crook County Journal.

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NO. 11

## WILLIAMSON'S VIEWS

As Expressed By Him  
Two Years Ago.

Opposed to Lean Law.

The Same Being Detrimental to the  
Development of Our Arid  
Lands.

The following is a copy, from the Daily Oregonian of Feb. 24, 1900, of a letter then written by Hon. J. N. Williamson giving his views two years ago upon the subject of leasing the public lands of the government. Mr. Williamson still maintains the same opinions against any leasing and believes that the public domain should remain, as it now is, open to settlement by our present and soon coming immigration. The letter speaks for itself and any claim that Mr. Williamson is not opposed to the leasing system is a subterfuge of those desiring his defeat for the nomination of representative in congress:

PRINEVILLE, Or., Feb. 20.—(To the Editor)—I discover, from letters received here, as well as through your columns, that our congressmen, in common with congressmen from other grazing states, seeks counsel from his constituents in regard to the best method of procedure in leasing the public domain. Agreeable to this considerate request, I desire space in your columns for a brief expression of opinion upon a subject of very direct and vital importance to all who are interested in the welfare of Oregon—this section of Oregon, in particular.

I desire briefly to consider the effect segregating the public domain into large tracts and parceling it out to certain individuals will have upon industries, established and otherwise, in the state of Oregon. How will such a system work in our state?

It is my humble, yet positive and unequivocal opinion, that any leasing system that may be devised at this time would be premature by many years, to say the least. My principal reasons for such belief might, for lack of space, be summed up as follows:

First—Such a system would undoubtedly have a tendency to arrest the settlement and development of Oregon.

Second—It would suddenly and entirely revolutionize the present system of grazing in this state.

Third—Any leasing system would have an uncollected tendency toward concentration of land ownership into the hands of a few people.

Of other objections, there are many, but for present purposes, these three will suffice.

In regard to the first objection—that leasing the public domain would tend to check Oregon's development. It must be admitted that a lease implies a lessee and a lessor. One must be the landlord, the other, the renter. In order to secure the validity of the contract, the lessor must guarantee the use and benefit accruing from the land to the lessee. That is, the government must secure the renter from intrusion on the part of any one else as to the occupancy of the land. In other words, any system of leasing the public domain must disallow the occupancy of such lands by the homesteader or homeseeker. Any leasing system in which the government does not guarantee title to the land during the tenure of the lease is of no avail, and amounts to nothing except to cause bitter strife between the renter and the homesteader.

On the other hand, when the government proceeds to lease the

public domain, by that action it does away with the long-established American policy of encouraging home-building by donating to each citizen so much of the public land as may be considered necessary for such purpose. Nor can this effect be avoided by undertaking to make exceptions of certain tracts for settlement by virtue of the judgment of any individual. Such a procedure would simply be putting it within the power of one person to declare what portion of the West shall be developed, and that portion shall be devoted to pastoral purposes. Upon this feature of the subject, I do not believe it to be within the power of any singular individual, or set of individuals, to penetrate the unknown sufficiently to declare what portion of the West is susceptible of settlement and development into homes, and what not. I do not except even the heads of any or all the departments of the present or next succeeding administrations.

The future development of our own state of Oregon is a sealed book, even to those of us who have lived here continuously and beheld its gradual progress during the past generation. Judging from the past, to say nothing of the present trend of the times, who is there, what head of a governmental department is there, who has any license to foretell even for the brief period of 10 years what lands in Eastern Oregon, through private enterprise, will be settled and converted into homes, and what not? Are we prepared to declare all the remaining public lands unfit for other than pastoral purposes, and proceed upon that basis to shut out immigration and parcel it out among ourselves? I think not, and I think many others will be of the same opinion upon future settlement.

My second objection, that it would suddenly and entirely revolutionize the present system of grazing in this state, is, like the first, a very vital one. Under the present system, we use the low-lying hills, valleys and desert lands for wintering purposes. As summer advances, we move our stock to the higher altitudes, which abound in the soft, nutritious grasses, which produce the proper growth upon the young, and the accumulation of flesh upon the mature for marketing purposes. The topography of Eastern Oregon is such that, under the present system, we are enabled to carry a very large amount of stock with a minimum amount of friction, and, all the reports of the secretary of agriculture notwithstanding, will, if let alone, continue so to do for years to come. I do not believe any better scheme can be devised for utilizing the public domain in Eastern Oregon for years to come, than the present system, whereby we are enabled to contribute to the aggregate wealth of the state our countless herds of cattle, sheep and horses. Such, at least, are the practical results which we have to show for the present open system of grazing.

Suddenly reverse the system. Inaugurate a barbwire era throughout Eastern Oregon; throw all our stock into pastures constructed from this miserable stuff; shut us out from the mountain ranges, if may be; and if anything further can be thought of to hedge us about, enact that into law also—and what have you done? Have you preserved a single blade of grass? No; for pastured stock will always destroy more grass, head for head, than when not confined. Have you increased the output of the stock product? No; you have diminished that. You have simply and suddenly revolutionized the grazing of stock in Eastern Oregon, as now conducted, with all that implies in the way of loss to present investments and future development, and have inaugurated in its stead a very doubtful, not to say dangerous, experiment, which is sure to fall short of satisfaction in the way of either

immediate or ultimate results, save to those people in the East who own barb-wire factories.

In support of my third objection—that any leasing system would have an undoubted tendency toward concentrating ownership of land—I desire merely to call attention to the fact that it is the history of the leasing idea when applied to public lands in all nations of ancient or modern times, that such a system of disposing of the public domain results ultimately in vested rights. Take each of the measures now pending before congress. Every one provides for re-leasing the same lands to the same individuals, consequently to their heirs and assigns—the only logical conclusion from such a beginning being the vested right of the lessee to the land. He already has the indefinite option to lease the land, which only requires another turn of the congressional wheel to result in absolute ownership. It is but fair to presume that, as in all cases of this nature, history will repeat itself. It occurs to me to be a much easier matter not to lay a foundation for such an evil than to undertake to arrest it when once well along in the stages of development. It is another instance wherein an ounce of prevention is preferable to a pound of cure.

In conclusion I will state it as my belief that this whole supposed need of leasing the public domain is based largely upon an erroneous impression—i. e., that we are destroying ourselves by destroying the grass. Our grass is not all gone. Let me ask him who sets up such a claim. How is it that Eastern Oregon is carrying its usual amount of stock through the present winter in better condition than for 20 years, with little or no artificial feeding? If the grass is destroyed, why do our stock live and thrive? That the hills are not covered with the same quality of grass as when they were unfrod save by the American Indian seems to be taken by some people as ample reason that we should be cared for by the barb-wire process.

Do ever those who endorse such a theory take as much as a cursory glance at existing facts? If so, do they not behold us maintaining even more stock to the acre of public domain than we did a quarter of a century ago? Are they aware of the fact that there now grows upon our ranges, instead of the large, woody grasses of old, a number of even more nutritious, yet smaller, varieties of grasses? Do they comprehend what a wonderful adjunct to the range alfalfa culture has become? That even among some well-watered districts, where the grass may have become somewhat the worse for the wear, that alfalfa culture has more than counterbalanced the evil done?

There may come a time in the distant future when prudence will require some disposition of the fragmentary remains of our public domain. But let us wait until we are sure that nothing is left but fragmentary remains. When, as yet, there are thousands, yes, millions, of acres susceptible of being converted into homes, it is surely too soon to begin parceling out the public lands in large tracts among ourselves. Such action, especially at this particular time, when all eyes are turned westward, would, by any construction whatever of the sign of the times, be entirely premature. At least, it so appears to me.

J. N. WILLIAMSON.

### Dissolution Notice.

Notice is hereby given that the partnership heretofore existing between Frank Elkins and J. H. Wigle, under the name of Frank Elkins & Co., is this day dissolved by mutual consent, J. H. Wigle retiring. All accounts owing said firm will be collected by Frank Elkins and all indebtedness of said firm will be settled by said Frank Elkins.

FRANK ELKINS & Co.  
PRINEVILLE, Or., Feb. 8, 1902.

## THE ELECTRIC ROAD

What the Times-Mountaineer Has to Say.

Of Great Importance

To the Farmers and Stock Men of  
This County—Will Aid Development.

Elsewhere in this issue is published an extract from an article that recently appeared in the Prineville Journal, says The Dalles Times-Mountaineer, which should receive careful consideration from property owners and business men of The Dalles. We refer to the article concerning an electric road from The Dalles to Prineville. That such a road is practicable is beyond question. A preliminary survey of a portion of the route was made a few years ago by a company of Dalles people, and was pronounced by the engineers to be feasible for a steam road. The route surveyed reached well up the Deschutes river, a sufficient distance to show that there is no serious obstructions along the line to railroad building. And a road that is feasible for a steam road is certainly practicable for an electric road, since it is possible to operate the latter on much greater grades than the former. As suggested by the JOURNAL the power for operating such a line is at its very side. After Deschutes river were reached there would be no lack of power, for on that stream are hundreds of waterfalls that could be utilized, and the surplus power generated at White river is sufficient to operate the road from here to Deschutes, provided the road should go by way of Dufur and Tygh Valley.

As to the benefits to accrue to The Dalles and vicinity they scarcely require enumeration. Such a road would make this a distributing point for the country to the south for a distance of 200 miles. The road would pass through a productive country nearly its entire distance and would cause much land that is now lying idle to be brought under cultivation. Nearly all the business that has been lost to The Dalles by reason of the building of the road to Shaniko would be regained, since traffic could be handled more cheaply over an electric road than one whose motive power is steam. Another advantage to The Dalles would be, that all the traffic brought over an electric road would have to be rehandled here, that is transferred either to the boats or O. R. & N. cars.

As stated above the benefits that would accrue are almost incalculable, but we may well consider what might occur in case such a road is not built. A route has already been surveyed from the O. R. & N. line up Fifteen-Mile to Dufur and has been found to be good. Suppose a steam road were built on this route, what would be the result? The products of the country between Deschutes river and the Cascade mountains, the country from which The Dalles now draws the bulk of its trade, would come out over the railroad loaded in O. R. & N. cars and would pass on to market without stopping here, and

the trade of that section would either be kept at home or go to Portland. In consequence The Dalles would be cut off from its most valuable resource. Is it not therefore to the interest of The Dalles to become interested in an electric road from here to Dufur and on to Prineville?

### Signal Victory for Mitchell.

Senator Mitchell won a signal victory with his amendment to the sundry civil bill, directing the secretary of the treasury to investigate and pay the claims of Oregon, California and Nevada, growing out of the equipping of troops during the war of the rebellion. This amendment was attached to the bill in the senate, and was retained by the conference committee. Under it the state of Oregon will receive something like \$340,000.

Senator Mitchell offered a joint resolution proposing an amendment to the constitution extending the right of suffrage to women. He also presented two memorials of citizens of Oregon protesting against the enactment of legislation for leasing of public grazing lands.

### Culver Cullings.

The ball at the hall on the 14th was one of the swellest affairs of the season.

Miss Lilly Read has been quite sick for several days, but we hope for her speedy recovery.

Stormy weather is over and today is like spring. Farming has begun again in full blast.

J. H. Windom, accompanied by his wife, made a business trip to Trout creek the first of the week.

A dance at the hall Feb. 28th. Tickets fifty cents. Basket supper, come boys and bring your best girl.

Misses Fannie Osborn and Lettie Armstrong returned from the city of Prineville Thursday after several days visiting with friends at that place.

John Peck made a flying trip to Prineville last Thursday to bring his city girl out for the dance, but somehow he came home alone his face wearing a sorrowful expression. He must have got the cold shoulder. Don't pine, John, there are others.

Feb. 17. COUNTRY LAD.

### From Lamonta.

The dance given by Mr. and Mrs. Will Peck, of Culver, Feb. 14 was a success in every respect. The supper was simply glorious, the music excellent and these combined with the splendid floor and best of floor management, tended to make it the very best dance of the season. Mr. and Mrs. Peck are manly entertainers. Those who attended from Lamonta were: Mr. and Mrs. James Heifrich, Mr. and Mrs. Everett Moller, Miss Anna Mann, Messrs. Albert Seales, Frank Stroud, Walter Heifrich, John Heifrich, Jr., Emory Seales, Frank Taylor and Ben Heifrich.

LAMONTAITE.

### Attention!

A dance will be given at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. W. Peck, at Culver, on Friday, Feb. 25. Basket supper, splendid floor and good music. Tickets 50c to those bringing baskets and \$1 without. Stable room and feed for 30 head of horses at 25c per head. Everybody invited and a good time insured.