MODERN METHODS ON OREGON FARMS

Annual Wheat Crop Enormous and Quality First-Class—Timothy, Clover and Alfalfa Fields Better Than Mint

Thousands of Acres Are Sown to Wheat, But a Vast Area Lies, as Yet, Untouched by the Plow

By E. W. McComas.

ONE of the most profitable industries of the state is the growing of wheat, and while not the greatest of wheatgrowing states, it is the most certain to produce and harvest its yearly average. If all her available area were supplied with transportation facilities, there is no doubt Oregon would soon rival the leaders in volume of product.

The culture of wheat in Oregon, as a distinct branch of agricultural activity, began early in the history of the state, in the Willamette Valley, and was a source of much of the wealth of that famous region. The beginning was made on or near the banks of the noble stream from which the region secures its local name, its broad bosom furnishing an open and accessible roadway over which to transport the golden harvest to the center of population.

As transportation facilities extended likewise the wheat acreage increased, and following the lines of the Oregon & California road, it soon covered all the available area from the Columbia River, through the Willamette Valley south to the California line. Farm was added to farm, and the rich fields gave a golden harvest. "Valley wheat" became a recognized factor in the markets of the world.

Eastern Oregon was as yet virgin soil; a large area of it much richer in those natural elements necessary to the successful production of wheat than the region already developed; a fact hardly admitted at the time the Oregon Railway & Navigation company was constructing its road up the south bank of the Columbia River, through the sagebrush plains and rugged hills of the Columbia Basin. At that time great bands of horses, and herds of cattle and sheep were grazing on the rich bunchgrass pasturage, extending thousands of square miles. This same acreage today is one vast wheat field, extending from The Dalles, through the Counties of Wasco, Sherman, Gilliam, Morrow, Umatilla and Union to the Blue Mountains.

Of this vast area, Umatilla County alone produces 1 per cent of all the wheat produced in the United States. The lands comprising this vast wheat field are not surpassed in volume or quality of grain by any other locality in the world. Indeed, it is doubtful if any like area can produce for a series of years the per acre average of wheat which is produced here. Several years elapsed before the residents of this section conceded wheat-growing a profitable industry. Most of them considered the land, except along the streams, of no value, except for pasture, and the better the bunchgrass, the more loth were they to destroy it with the plow. Here and there small tracts were broken and seeded, and slowly there was development from bunchgrass and sagebrush to fenced fields of waving grain; and the story of the Willamette Valley was repeated in Eastern Oregon. The wheat farms kept just in advance of the iron horse and bands of steel which are as necessary to the profitable production of grain as are soil, moisture and sunshine.

The end is not yet. Eastern Oregon has scarcely been touched by the magic wand, and a large portion of its area is yet without means of transportation to remunerative markets. Thousands upon thousands of acres of fertile grass lands lie unbroken by the plow in the counties of Harney, Crook, Lake, Klamath, Grant and Wheeler, an area which, when reached with proper transportation facilities, will more than double the present annual wheat crop of Oregon. To those of my readers outside of Oregon, I would say come and avail yourselves of this golden opportunity. Nowhere in the world can wealth wrested from the soil be shown in such evidence as in the great grain belt along the lines of the O. R. & N. road. To mention the individual cases of wealth would seem like a fairy tale if all were recounted here.

The climate of this vast section of country is ideal for the production of small grains. The wheat produced is of good milling quality, carrying a high percentage of gluten and producing a strong white flour. England and Continental Europe must always come to us for a certain percentage of our wheat to mix with their home product, this to insure their flour the necessary whiteness and strength; this is the penalty exacted by nature for furnishing these countries with their limited and highly fertilized lands which give a large yield per acre, but the grain produced is soft and starchy.

The harvest season in Eastern Oregon is nearly perfect. The absence of rain, warm clear days and cool nights, from the first of August until October, give the grower abundant time in which to cut, thresh and sack his grain and the method of harvesting, with the combined harvest machines, whereby he is able to go into a field of ripe wheat in the morning and leave it in the evening, with the grain cut, threshed and sacked, ready to haul to the granaries, is not possible in many of the larger producing wheat countries. This method of harvesting very materially reduces the cost of the operation.

Wheat may be sown in this favored state either in the Fall or Spring, with a positive assurance of an abundant crop, although preference is given to Fall-sown crops, as it gives the farmer more time in the Spring to care for his fallowed land.

Much contention exists over the method of Summer fallowing for a crop; the scientist contending it is robbing posterity, but in the face of this contention the practical farmer swells his bank account, accumulates more land and assures his friends and neighbors that his land grows more fertile each succeeding year.

The following data, taken at random, gives the acreage of wheat in this state and crops from the year 1878:

Year.	Acres.	Yield, Bushels.
1878	365,000	7,665,000
1884	558,824	15,460,000
1887	920,626	16,100,000
1891	692,050	19,700,885
1893	616,822	14,312,460
1902	777,272	18,200,000
1904	742,250	14,030,193
1906	732,411	14,215,567
1907	792,000	15,121,000

The apparent defection in acreage from the years 1884-1887 to the present time is due to the elimination of the Willamette Valley as a wheat producer, the moisture and soil of that locality making it more valuable for intensified farming. The small acreage in the years 1891-1893 was due to the then prevalent "hard times," the wheat farmer being as much if not more affected by the conditions prevailing than the average business man.

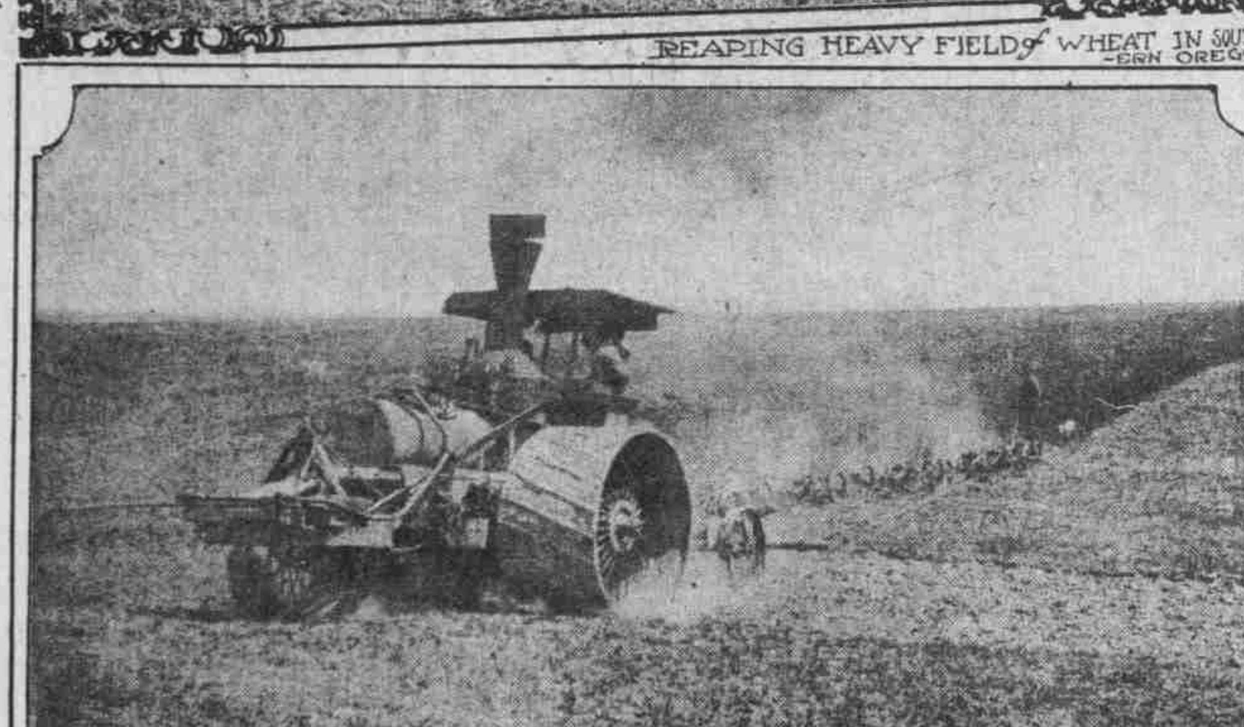
There are many opportunities for the young man of today to be a pioneer in certain sections of the state, and within a decade of years become a wealthy landowner, and repeat the history of the last decade.

HAYING SCENE IN SOUTHERN OREGON

OREGN WHEAT FOR SHIPMENT TO EUROPE

STEAM COMBINED HARVESTER IN EASTERN OREGON.

REAPING HEAVY FIELD of WHEAT IN SOUTHERN OREGON



PLOWING BY STEAM IN EASTERN OREGON.

Unfavorable Conditions in Oriental Marts Affect Flour Milling: Outlook Is Brighter for Coming Year

By T. B. Wilcox, President Portland Flouring Mills Company.

BEGINNING in 1907 and more particularly during 1908, the milling business has been steadily declining, both in volume and in profits. Trade with the Orient has been particularly reduced, due to the large amounts of flour imported in 1907 by Oriental merchants, and the high prices necessitated later on by the prevailing high prices of wheat.

The large amounts of flour which accumulated in the Orient, together with the declining price of silver, resulted in the failure of a good many small dealers in the Orient, and the embarrassment of large concerns, and there has been a general disposition to avoid further importation of stocks.

The financial condition in the Far East and the losses resulting in not only the importation of flour, but in other merchandise, resulted also in the failure of several Japanese native banks and a general falling off of business. During 1906 and 1907, on account of the large amount of flour demanded, there were established in Japan a dozen or more mills of capacity varying from 200 barrels a day to 1000 barrels a day. In Hongkong a mill of 2000 barrels a day was completed and put into operation, and the introduction of these new mills had no small effect upon the volume of the Oriental trade for flour, but increased the demand for wheat from the Pacific Coast.

The operation of the Japanese mills in 1907 and 1908 has resulted in serious losses and the mill at Hongkong was completely wiped out of business early in 1908.

The price of silver, into which all purchases for the Orient must be converted when sold in that country, has constantly declined, until it has reached now a price lower than any prevailing since 1833, with the exception of 1901, when the Chinese war indemnity was paid by China, and the entire Chinese trade greatly unsettled. At the present price of silver with the high price of wheat prevailing on this Coast, the cost of flour in China is from $11 to $12 a barrel, at which price, in a country where wages are no higher than in the Orient, it is not to be wondered at that the consumption is reduced, and I look for no material improvement in that direction until such time as the price of silver is advanced, or wheat materially cheaper, and the latter I do not consider probable in the near future.

The bulk of the flour trade of the Pacific Coast mills is with the Orient, and comments on that trade covers the bulk of the business. There is, however, considerable business in Central and South America and the Pacific Islands, all of which is represented in the local statistics as shipments to California. Trade in this direction has somewhat increased and has been more satisfactory, and with a population of many millions on the west coast of the South American continent with a purchasing power equal to that of any people of Europe, it seems likely that this trade will increase still further. Particularly will this be true with more frequent and rapid steamship service, and further exploitation of the field.

California wheat production has been so reduced of late years, that the demand for Northern flour and wheat in that state constantly increases, and although much of the California trade is supplied from Kansas and Minnesota either in flour or wheat, the latter mixes to advantage with Northern wheats and together are ground by the California millers into a satisfactory product. This, however, goes to meet the demands of the California local consumption, the exports from California being practically nothing.

Portland and Puget Sound continue to send small consignments of flour to Europe, but the most of this trade is supplied from the Atlantic Coast.

Were it not for the increased population of the Northwest and the greater home consumption of the higher grades of flour, the milling business would be in a bad way at the present time, but this trade shows a constant increase year by year, indicating an influx of population, and is rapidly becoming a more important part of the milling business. The reduced output of flour by the mills of the Northwest has so limited the production of offal that extraordinary prices for mill feed and similar productions have prevailed, the production being inadequate to meet the demand.

The outlook is not particularly encouraging, the wheat crop being but little more than one-half that of the previous year, but high prices are always followed by large crops and lower prices, and in my judgment, with the harvesting of a large crop in the Summer of 1909, the business will doubtless improve in volume if not in profits.

In regard to the possible competition of Manchuria in the flour trade, I have no fear from that source. Manchuria grows considerable wheat, particularly in the Sungari Valley. This territory is still dominated by the Russians, and the wheat producing country is chiefly tributary to Harbin, where the Russian government has built mills with a capacity aggregating 67,000 barrels a day. The present production of wheat amounts to some 20,000,000 of bushels, but the principal articles produced in Manchuria are millet and beans, and until the farming, storing and transportation methods are materially improved there will be no great increase in the amount of wheat produced in that territory. Such as is produced at present is consumed by the people in the interior of Manchuria, Harbin being some 400 miles from the seaboard, in which direction but little flour finds its way. We have recently dispatched a steamer cargo of flour to Vladivostok, which was sold in competition with the product of the Harbin mills. Ultimately I look for a material increase in the production of wheat in Manchuria through the efforts of the Japanese and this in time may become serious competition for the Pacific Coast, but I apprehend that before that time comes, the increase in the population of the Pacific Coast from Alaska to Valparaiso, including the Pacific islands, will practically absorb the entire production of the Coast.

James J. Hill predicts that in six years there will be no surplus on the Pacific Coast for export, meaning, I presume, that whatever surplus of the crop is not required for home consumption, will be needed East, and sent thence by rail. If this is true, the Northwest wheatgrowers need have no hesitation to crop their land in wheat, for prices must rule high and it will be for the millers to see that they ship flour wherever wheat can be sent.

SHIPPING GRAIN OVER SEAS

Portland, One of Leading Wheat-Exporting Cities, Sets Afloat Many Cargoes to World-Wide Markets

By Peter Kerr.

WHEATGROWING, one of Oregon's greatest agricultural industries had its origin in this state in the Willamette Valley. Years ago, wheat was the staple article of production by the farmers along both sides of the river. Wheat culture has since extended east of the Cascades and throughout Oregon, Washington and Idaho. Conditions have changed so since the early farming days of the Willamette Valley that in this pioneer wheat district of the state, barely enough of the cereal is now grown for the local millers.

Attention is now being paid to growing wheat in the dry sections of the state that 20 years ago were thought to be worthless, and splendid results are being attained. The combined product of the three states may be expected to reach 100,000,000 bushels within a few years as the result of the improved methods of wheat raising and of new acreage being broken up. The heaviest crop so far has been 60,000,000 bushels for the three states, this yield having been realized in the harvest of 1907.

The climate of the Pacific Northwest seems to be such that while the rest of the country frequently has a poor yield, we nearly always have excellent crops. In fact, such a thing as a crop failure here is unknown, the present season, with its short crop, seemingly being probably the nearest approach to a failure that we have had.

The market for this immense wheat crop of the Northwest is world wide. The main demand is from Europe, where it is shipped in tramp steamers and sailing vessels, and enormous quantities go to China and Central America in the shape of flour. The wheat is also shipped to Japan and South Africa and even eastward to Chicago, Minneapolis and St. Louis by rail on occasions of crop failures in the East. During the season of 1904-1905, the shipments of wheat to this latter market from Oregon and Washington were more than 10,000,000 bushels. Other wheat raising countries, in time of crop failure, come to us for help. In the season of 1902-1903, many million bushels of Oregon and Washington wheat were shipped to Australia, which country usually has a heavy surplus of wheat for export.

California, once a great producer of wheat, has turned its attention to other things until its production of the cereal has been lessened and it now does not raise enough wheat for its own consumption. The great bulk of the milling wheat for the California flour makers comes from Oregon and Washington.

Portland docks present a busy scene during the grain shipping season. Great ocean-going steamers and sailing vessels line the harbor, flying the flags of many nations. Long trains of wheat-laden cars come down the valley of the Columbia River, starting soon after the grain harvest in July. The wheat, sacked, is taken from the cars into the big wheat docks and thence slid into the holds of the vessels lying alongside.

The prominence of Portland as a grain exporting center makes the city a busy place during the Winter months because of this one commercial product of the tributary country. The wheat exporting gives employment to large numbers of workmen and distributes a large amount in wages here every year. When there is a heavy crop throughout the interior, the shipping season lasts about all Winter, whereas with a light crop, the wheat is sent away within a few months.

Although I have no complete statistics at hand for the year's wheat exports, the total is growing year by year as the acreage tributary to this port increases. With high prices for the cereal during the past few seasons, and with wide areas of new wheat land being given transportation, the wheat acreage is being increased and the shipments are constantly mounting upward.

In addition to the wheat set afloat here, there are large exports of barley and oats, both to domestic and foreign markets. California annually takes large quantities of both cereals and eastward to Chicago, St. Louis and other such points almost every season heavy shipments of brewing barley and oats are made.

Better dock facilities are being continuously afforded at this port and there is a steady improvement of the channel to the sea. The Port of Portland tug service, soon to be inaugurated, will take care of the towage and pilotage service satisfactorily. The big wheat docks built here during the year by the Hill interests will add to the importance of this city as a grain exporting center.

BANK CLEARINGS AGAIN INCREASING.

With a financial depression left over from the previous year, Portland shows a slight loss in its bank clearings during 1908 in comparison with the figures by months for 1907. It is a notable fact that the business interests of the city overcame the stringency and went through a Presidential election and still came within a narrow margin of equalling the totals for the preceding year. The final months of 1908 showed that Portland has gotten back into its old stride, for the figures are greater than the totals for the corresponding months of 1907. A comparison of bank clearings, by months, for the past two years follows:

	1907.	1908.
Jan.	$ 28,110,548.00	$ 21,686,685.21
Feb.	24,014,582.00	21,216,256.32
Mar.	32,037,805.43	21,647,121.19
April	32,110,428.56	25,794,812.31
May	32,492,306.98	23,255,344.50
June	31,974,903.71	23,778,623.56
July	32,054,828.37	24,232,271.97
Aug.	29,498,483.69	23,527,587.43
Sept.	30,172,440.91	30,320,884.76
Oct.	26,965,229.06	32,713,066.36
Nov.	20,548,909.06	26,588,072.54
Dec.	18,817,237.10	*26,645,322.00
Ttl.	$350,888,630.97	$327,037,306.16

*Estimated.

SHIPPING STATISTICS OF PAST TWO YEARS THAT SHOW PORTLAND TO BE ONE OF THE GREATEST WHEAT AND LUMBER EXPORTING CENTERS IN THE WORLD

MONTH.	WHEAT—FOREIGN.				WHEAT—COASTWISE.			
	1908.		1907.		1908.		1907.	
	Bushels.	Value.	Bushels.	Value.	Bushels	Value	Bushels	Value
January	2,032,256	$ 1,815,428	842,897	$ 597,026	221,377	$ 188,160	39,977	$ 29,583
February	2,279,790	2,063,505	652,725	470,636	132,930	112,990	53,166	39,343
March	1,421,987	1,304,974	505,535	360,722	154,820	131,597	33,094	24,500
April	1,107,112	986,094	612,723	460,296	247,963	211,969	84,427	63,476
May	464,732	417,237	763,094	596,458	450,880	383,228	233,017	172,433
June	437,044	386,134	193,810	168,614	558,826	475,002	73,562	54,436
July	109,948	93,455	....	....	302,567	257,182	62,792	46,466
August	....	....	50,000	37,500	155,566	136,898	74,730	53,300
September	1,711,578	1,559,219	639,507	540,002	450,069	396,061	75,416	54,104
October	1,821,050	1,646,700	1,119,655	1,032,600	262,425	230,934	124,284	105,642
November	701,071	619,208	1,135,821	1,020,032	202,969	188,761	167,710	142,554
December	*324,625	835,774	2,710,587	2,459,078	*275,000	255,750	174,508	148,332
Total	13,010,794	$11,728,128	9,226,454	$7,742,962	3,415,392	$2,968,532	1,196,683	$944,169

MONTH.	FLOUR—FOREIGN.				FLOUR—COASTWISE.			
	Barrels.	Value.	Barrels.	Value.	Barrels	Value	Barrels	Value
January	85,701	$ 321,938	85,913	$ 316,234	22,579	$ 95,961	7,664	$ 30,656
February	55,245	213,047	133,882	516,464	22,235	94,498	14,576	58,304
March	51,508	206,032	190,208	662,160	24,716	105,143	7,311	29,244
April	19,028	76,111	68,345	244,443	18,598	79,042	9,655	38,620
May	78,620	250,861	244,705	916,098	16,796	71,383	10,036	40,144
June	50,801	154,428	185,836	695,362	26,403	112,213	14,134	56,536
July	45,266	135,799	51,904	186,850	18,415	78,264	16,772	67,088
August	82,647	335,588	31,941	125,399	12,184	51,782	10,501	42,004
September	50,723	202,892	164,236	606,625	18,981	80,669	13,544	57,562
October	15,000	58,250	....	....	20,349	86,483	12,739	54,141
November	150,109	600,436	158,542	591,505	30,036	127,525	24,080	102,340
December	....	....	106,117	396,701	*25,000	112,500	23,474	99,764
Total	684,648	$ 2,548,382	1,421,629	$5,257,841	256,292	$1,095,363	164,486	$674,403

MONTH.	LUMBER—FOREIGN.				LUMBER—COASTWISE.			
	Feet.	Value.	Feet.	Value.	Feet	Value	Feet	Value
January	11,552,642	$ 142,995	3,373,662	$ 47,205	6,149,450	$ 73,793	9,141,572	$ 137,124
February	7,650,856	98,940	3,913,092	69,129	4,409,000	52,908	13,483,000	202,245
March	6,530,561	87,430	6,976,909	105,887	2,640,000	31,680	13,860,000	207,900
April	18,375,863	223,862	10,077,796	150,932	6,840,224	82,083	8,312,000	124,680
May	13,236,182	152,349	7,633,324	117,365	5,875,000	70,500	6,576,000	98,640
June	5,971,837	60,063	12,651,968	212,315	5,403,000	64,836	7,441,200	111,618
July	14,204,115	182,690	4,677,764	65,470	5,375,000	64,500	2,965,000	44,475
August	11,143,190	145,193	12,463,887	193,128	3,760,000	48,880	5,027,000	75,405
September	4,655,739	47,772	4,522,061	70,814	4,972,000	64,636	4,500,000	76,500
October	2,037,427	26,633	12,726,283	204,100	8,060,000	104,780	7,483,225	126,815
November	6,332,552	70,714	6,128,494	95,398	3,420,000	44,460	5,708,735	97,048
December	3,895,366	45,661	....	....	*4,300,000	58,500	5,120,000	61,440
Total	100,686,324	$ 1,284,202	86,225,245	$1,331,743	61,403,874	$ 761,556	89,617,732	$ 1,373,890

*Last half of month estimated