

# INDEPENDENCE LIVE TOWN IN HEART OF RICH COUNTRY

Fertile Soil, Ideal Climate and Ready Market Combine to Attract Homeseekers to Willamette Valley City.



Blood Stock Fair



A Hop Yard Scene In Training Time

**BY ADDISON BENNETT.**  
Up the Willamette River about 60 miles from Portland, where the valley spreads out to the west from the river to the Coast Range, taking in what might be called the Luckiamute Valley and reaching to the headwaters of the Siletz—there on the banks of the "beautiful Willamette" is situated the town of Independence.

To speak of the place as a town is true only in a sense, for while its population is not large enough perhaps to entitle it to be called a city, the census giving it last year an enumeration of 1160, still it is in ways and manners and appearance, in all and everything that goes to make a city, quite a metropolis. During the hop-picking season each year there is an adjacent floating population of about 5000.

**Rich Soil Unsurpassed.**  
Independence was a small hamlet as long ago as 1847, thus being one of the older settled places in the Valley. But for many years it was nothing more than a rather thickly settled farm section, for in the earliest days of the settlement of Oregon it was discovered that the site of the present town was the heart and center of one of the finest bodies of agricultural land in the world. In all the country there is no finer land than can be found in the Willamette Valley; and the very cream of the Valley lies contiguous to Independence.

In those early days the people were all busily engaged in making their farms, for most of the best land was covered with brush or timber. So not much attention was given to the building of trade centers, and the growth of Independence was so slow that still in 1890 there were not enough people there to give it a place in the census returns.

Hence, whatever Independence is in the way of a thriving young metropolis has taken place during the last 20 years or so. Being therefore in one sense an old town it is in reality one of the newer towns of the state.

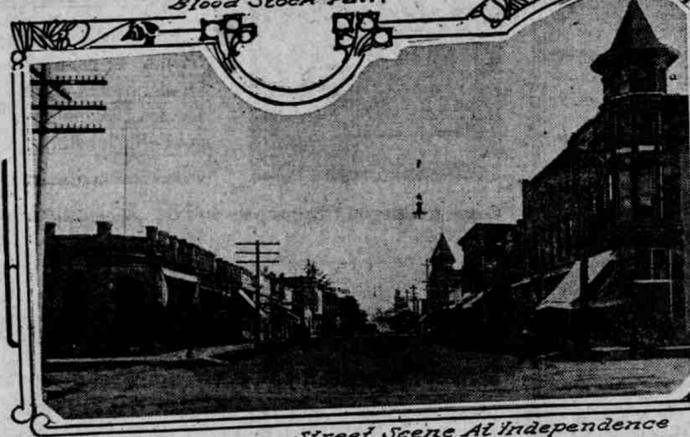
**Three Essentials Present.**  
There is no use in building or trying to build a town without there is something back of it to maintain it, and there is nothing to enduringly back up any town, any community or any country, save agriculture. In the finality we all live and thrive from the products of the soil. There is no other source of sustenance, no other fountain of wealth. We must all live or die, go up or down with the products of the soil—indeed, man himself may be called a product of the soil, so intimately is his life entwined with the other products.

For a thriving agriculture there must first be good soil; second, a sufficient amount of water, natural or artificial to produce crops; third, a climate suitable for sowing, cultivating and harvesting. And in these essentials there is in all the world no more favorable location than the Willamette Valley, the very cream of which is right at the street ends of Independence.

Jim Hill, that long-headed old empire-builder, one of the brainiest men who ever lived in this country, whose advice is as sure to be right as the sun is to shine—in speaking of the Willamette Valley, and having no doubt in his mind the beauty spot of that valley around Independence, said a few months ago: "The day of the large farm is past. What you want here is the man who will take ten acres and cultivate it thoroughly. The man who takes ten acres of your rich land and works it as it should be worked, can easily make \$5000 a year. Ten acres in the Willamette Valley should be as valuable from the standpoint of production and earning power as 160 acres in Minnesota, Illinois, Wisconsin and some other states in that section. I do not know of land anywhere that will compare with your land here."

**Advice Safe to Follow.**  
A note endorsed by Jim Hill, to any amount up to several million dollars, would be grabbed up exultingly by any money lender in the world who could handle it; any railroad enterprise endorsed by Jim Hill would command instant attention—the money needed for its construction—any man wanting a home on the land can safely take Jim Hill's endorsement of the Willamette Valley, and the best of it is adjacent to Independence.

The first question the intending homeseeker usually asks about is as to the products which do best and pay the best returns in a given locality. To answer that question about the Independence section would be difficult, for anything that grows in a similar latitude flourishes hereabouts. Wheat, barley, oats, vetch, kale, vegetables of all sorts always bring sure returns with



Street Scene At Independence



A Fine Dairy Herd.

bountiful harvests, but this section is principally known for its hop yards, and within sight of the town are the largest hop fields in the world.

The valley may be said to consist of two benches, the one being known as bottom land. This is adjacent to the Willamette River and overflows every season, each overflow depositing upon the land a sediment that is far better than any commercial fertilizer known. Upon these overflow lands the greatest hop yields ever known are taken, sometimes running as high as fifteen and even twenty bales to the acre, seldom falling below six bales, twelve bales being considered a fair yield, ten bales being the average of yards that are well cared for.

**Hopgrowers Fare Well.**  
Perhaps there is no crop taken from the soil that fluctuates more in price than hops. It is true that many hopgrowers have met with disaster caused by low prices. But the grower who conserves his resources, does not contract his output and takes good care of his yard as certain of large returns for a series of years as is the grower of any other product—far better than the grain grower in the best section.

Last year hops were worth around 40 cents a pound, this year the price will be perhaps well above the present quotation of 25 cents. As it costs about 8 cents a pound to produce a crop of, say, six bales to the acre, or say a hundred dollars an acre, it can be seen that 25-cent hops means fortune to the grower. In the Spring of 1911 a yard of 40 acres near Independence sold for \$10,200. The yield last season, the same year, netted, above all expenses, including interest on the investment, \$22,700—thus paying for the land and clearing \$12,500. Not so bad! And yet greater profits have been made than that on the rich Willamette bottom lands around Independence.

The shipment of hops from the Independence railway stations and boat landing some years amount to 30,000 bales. The average value per bale last year was \$80. Can one blame the Independence people—or dispute them—when they claim to be the center of the most prosperous hop fields of the world?

**Traffic Facilities Good.**

Mentioning the railway station and boat landing reminds me that Independence has as good transportation facilities as any town in the state—almost as good as the great city of Portland. It is on the line of the Southern Pacific which runs from Portland to Corvallis, which connects with the main Sunset Route. This road for many years was its only rail connection. Now there are three short roads running out from the town—one to Airlie, one to Dallas and one to Salem. The roads are called the Independence & Monmouth Railway Company, the owners being Independence people. Twenty-four trains a day arrive and depart over these various railways. Within a very short time the Hill electric road will have a branch from its Portland-Eugene line into the town and running to the timber belt to the west. But even now this

road means as much to Independence as it does to Salem or Albany, for it is just across the Willamette, and a station, North Independence, can be almost reached by a free ferry. And in addition there is the great water leveler—water transportation, for there is a boat plying constantly between Independence and Portland. At present this boat goes up one day and back the next, making three round trips a week; but as soon as the Oregon City locks are made free there will be a daily service.

Mentioning the free ferry, just to the east of town, reminds me that a portion of the Independence hop yards and successful farms are just across the river, in what is called the Missouri Bottom district. Here is the finest solid body of hop yards in the world—over a thousand acres. I had the pleasure of looking over these fields from a hop-drying house near the river, and it was a sight worth going miles to view.

**Angora Goats Famous.**  
Aside from being the center of the hop industry of Oregon, Independence is also well known as the place where the finest Angora goats and Shropshire, Cotswold and South-down sheep are marketed, the growers having their ranches mostly to the west of the town. Young buck lambs are in constant demand at \$20 to \$25 per head. Forty were shipped the day before I was there last week which brought a thousand dollars. And these little bucks were only 5 months old. The ewe lambs bring about half as much, and some of the best bucks 1 and 2 years old bring as high as \$500. No attention whatever is paid to the breeding or raising of common sheep. The breeders all go in for the very best, and their choice breeding stock is all imported. All of these breeders are making money, and the business may be said to be in its infancy.

The Angora goat is an animal of great value to the landowners about Independence, not only for what they bring in the way of mohair, as their clip is called, and for their increase, but for their work as brush banishers. If some way could be discovered to make the Angoras take the stumps, there would be nothing to the land-clearing question. But as it is they clean and clear the land of all but the stumps, thus turning it into fine pasturage.

The clip from an average Angora will bring about 80 cents a pound, and the yield will average better than three pounds. The kids sell for about \$2.50 each, and will clip something like two pounds. For the high-grade animals there is always a good demand at a large price, making the business very profitable.

**Fine Hogs Are Bred.**

There are also many breeders of fine hogs in the immediate vicinity of Independence, the favorite breeds being Berkshire, Poland-China and Durocs. The breeders have some of the finest animals to be found in the Northwest, and the choice specimens bring very fancy prices, buyers being plentiful. For just "hogs" there is no better place than near Independence. I saw a small "herd" of these porkers, well bred but not of fancy pedigree, grazing on a hundred-acre alfalfa field. The owner

said he started the bunch last fall with an investment of \$350 in brood sows. They have run on this alfalfa ever since. Have had but little attention and no other feed—they are now worth, of course, meaning the original stock and increase, \$3500. This is not guess work, for such an offer was made for the "herd" last week.

There are in the vicinity also a number of breeders of fine horses, the Percherons and Clydesdales predominating. Most of the work animals used by the landowners in their hop yards, gardens and other fields are fine animals, most of the teams being worth better than \$500. I saw five teams at work in one hop yard that the owner told me were worth over \$550 per span.

But I have left what I consider the most valuable asset any section can have until the last. (And you can punctuate that sentence to make it read any way you like; it is true in any sense.) And that is the dairy cow. Any man who knows the a, b, c's of agriculture knows that the dairy sections of any country are among the most prosperous of all, and there is no place in this country where the cow will do better for her owner than around Independence. The climate is peculiarly adapted to dairying and to the condition and milk-giving qualities of "bossie." The Winters are scarcely worth mentioning they are so mild. Just frost enough to keep the blood in good order. There are no great masses of flies, mosquitoes and other pests in the Summers, no sleet and blizzards in the Winters. There is green pasture almost the year 'round, always for at least eleven months of the year.

**Dairy Feed Varied.**

Vetch, kale, alfalfa and all sorts of root crops flourish as in but few places, while corn and other necessities for silage do as well as in any dairy section in the West, and grain, hay, clover and native and wild grasses give large yields of splendid forage.

And the dairymen have fine animals as a rule, with the standard being constantly raised. Only good sires are being used—the scrub cow is scarcely known around Independence. And that brings me to the creamery—for what would be the use in telling about the adaptability of the section for the cow unless there was a profitable market for her products? The largest creamery in Oregon, perhaps in the Northwest, is located in Independence. Its butter output is about \$1000 per day, and its product, called the "Gold Medal" butter, has a reputation second to none—its market covers the entire coast section. The sale of this butter alone was over \$350,000 last year, and the manufacture is slowly but surely increasing. Aside from the butter the Independence Creamery, as its owners call it, manufactures ice and ice cream, with both of which they supply all of the adjacent territory.

I had the pleasure of visiting and inspecting this creamery last week,

and for sanitary conditions it is unexcelled, while its machinery is of the very latest construction. The business has been running for twelve years, starting with a very small plant, but by fair dealing, good judgment in marketing and the excellence of its product it today stands at the very top of such plants on the Coast.

This creamery now buys from upwards of 1200 dairymen. They are not all in the immediate vicinity, it is true; but they distribute many thousands of dollars among the dairymen close to them. The cream is paid for in three ways—daily at each delivery, twice a month and monthly, and checks are mailed on the minute the account is payable, or handed to the deliveryman.

**Lending System Liberal.**

How has this immense business been built up? As said, largely by fair and liberal dealing. But there is and for several years has been another factor, and that is their system of loaning money to customers for the purchase of cows. Any man of good character and worthy of credit can get the money from this creamery for the purchase of cows, provided he will sell the creamery his output at the market price. On this money he is given sixteen months' time, payable at \$2.50 per month, and interest, the monthly sums being deducted from his check. The company now has about \$15,000 outstanding on these contracts.

"Oh, yes," the knocker will ejaculate, "they make a big profit on the sale of the cows." They do not. They have no cows for sale, never have any. The borrower locates the cows, the creamery managers see that he gets good value and then pays for them. In this way they have started hundreds of people on the road to prosperity and stand ready to start hundreds more.

It might be well to interpolate the remark that any person wanting to go into the dairy business but having insufficient capital will find the managers of the Independence creamery ready to render any assistance in their power. Many fine locations are nearby, the land is cheap, the roads are good for hauling in the cream, there is plenty of fuel and plenty of water, all conditions are ideal for the dairy business—and the creamery people will practically start you in business. Perhaps the latter statement is too broad, for like all who loan money they expect good security. But if the man who needs the cows is of good character the cows themselves will stand for the rest.

**Cow's Output Is \$100.**

It is said that the average output of a cow for the year is \$100. That would be over \$8 per month. One can thus see that the payment of \$2.50 per month would by no means be a hardship on the borrower. He could not expect easier terms from a bank where he had good credit.

There is another industry around Independence that is taking on large proportions, and that is the produc-

tion of poultry and eggs. There is no better location to be found in the West for the poultryman. A small tract suitable for this business can be had at a very low figure, for one does not want the bottom land for such purpose. The climate is practically ideal. There is green food for the fowls the year 'round, and poultry and eggs always bring a good price right at home, or shipments can be made to Portland, which is one of the best markets on the Coast.

To the poor man or woman, particularly where there is a dependent family, the poultry business points the way to independence. (I did not mean that as a pun. It was written with no such purpose. But it might be well for some of those wanting a home to put a capital I on independence and make of the sentence a slogan.)

Independence is in the extreme eastern edge of Polk County, in which county the Willamette Valley reaches its greatest width, running, as stated at the beginning, westward to the Coast Range of mountains. In the mountains of the county lies one of the finest belts of timber in the world, and much of this is tributary to Independence, much of it is owned by the capitalists of that town. In estimating timber it is usual to talk of it in the thousands or millions; one has to get away up into the billions in discussing the Polk forests. Another industry that is destined to make a large portion of the Willamette Valley famous is black walnut growing, and some of the very best walnut land in the valley is close around Independence. There are many bearing trees there now, and thousands of young trees set within the last few years. This will be a profitable business in that section, for the soil and climate are wonderfully well adapted to walnut culture.

**Fruit Also Important.**

"Don't they raise any fruit in the Independence section?" will perhaps be the query. Oh, dear, yes. As fine as is raised in the world. No better apples are raised anywhere than those of Polk, and there are many splendid bearing orchards, and many have been recently planted. And there are no better peaches on any market than those raised there, and they have many fine peach orchards. For loganberries, raspberries, blackberries and all the cane fruits there is no better location. And the Independence strawberries are as famous as they are luscious, and plentiful in season for both home consumption and shipment. Why, bless your soul, you can raise anything that does not require a tropical climate in that section, and raise it to perfection.

Potatoes! Gee! You never saw better potatoes than are raised right around there, and the yield is very large, often well up to 750 bushels per acre. All sorts of vegetables, as mentioned before, thrive in the Independence section.

But here is the point—and stick a pin in it; the Independence country is not a one-crop section by a jugful. They do not put all of their eggs in

one basket—then break the basket and go "broke." Even a total loss of their greatest money-making crop does not cause widespread disaster like a failure in a wheat section, a short fruit crop does not bring ruin. It is the diversity of interests that makes of it an ideal section for those now there and for the homeseeker to consider.

**People on Land Needed.**

How about the town of Independence? It is true that this page is published at the request of the business men of Independence, through their commercial club, the Independence Commercial Club. "But, Bennett," said the sponsors for the article, "we do not want to invite people to come to our town to make a home with us—we want you to tell them the truth about our lands and see if we cannot get a few hundred good families to come and make homes thereon and prosper with us. We do not need any more preachers, lawyers, doctors, or merchants, bankers, laborers or any other class to fill up the town. We want people on the land—and now is the time for them to come, for land is cheaper now than it will ever be again."

But I must say a few words about the town nevertheless, for there may be some who are looking for a town or city in which to pass the balance of their days or in which to live and educate their children. Or there may be some persons who read this article who would not care to go to a section where there were not good church, school, banking and business facilities close at hand. I can say to all such that Independence is a splendid, moral, decent, cleanly and beautiful little city.

First, there are four churches, a fine public school, two strong banks, one of the very best high schools in the state, wide paved streets, a good sewer system, cement curbs and walks, a beautiful city park, as good a water supply as any city can have, one of the best hotels in the West. I doubt if any town of its size in the country has a better hotel than the Hotel Lorena, the fine new hostelry lately opened there. It is large, modern in every way, and is splendidly conducted.

**Second Newspaper Comes.**

There is one good newspaper, the Independence Enterprise, and within the month there will be a second, the plant being now installed. This will be called the Independence Beacon Light, and it will be in able hands. There is one of the best and most modern bakeries to be found anywhere, also an up-to-date steam laundry, and the stores of all sorts carry very large and well-selected stocks. You can do about as well shopping there as in Portland. Of course there are garages, livery barns, blacksmith and machine shops and all such business establishments as one finds in all prosperous places. Monmouth, at the west, is almost a suburb of Independence. It is less than a mile between the corporate limits. And here the only normal school of the state is located, making educational advantages of the town still greater.

Independence is a city of delightful homes. The lawns and hedges are most beautiful, the roses and other flowers as fine as Portland can boast, which is the highest praise I know how to bestow. The streets are wide and level—and just on the west flows the beautiful Willamette! Oh, if you are looking for an ideal homestead, you must see Independence before you locate.

From Portland south through the wonderful Willamette Valley the trip is an enjoyable one, if you have a love for the beautiful as Nature creates her works. At the present time the best way to get there is via the Southern Pacific, by which you can reach Independence by two trains from the Union Depot each day, one in the morning and one in the evening. By the electric road the connections are not as yet perfected, but a return by that road is easily made by taking a boat at the Independence wharf for the station a mile or so north. The fare from Portland is \$1.75 each way, or something less by the round trip. And if you want to see as fine a section of country, and one of the most prosperous, that you ever rested your eyes upon, take a trip up through the valley to Independence—and stop there or near there for the balance of your life, if you are wise.

A letter addressed to the Independence Commercial Club, Independence, Oregon, will bring you by return mail any further information you may request, and anything this club reports can be relied upon.

It has no lands for sale, but can no doubt point you to various tracts, large and small, suitable for any business you wish to engage in.

The capitalist can get good bargains; the frugal, industrious, ambitious homeseeker, with but a few hundred dollars, can do likewise.