



# Washington Independent

VOL. II. HILLSBORO, WASHINGTON COUNTY, OREGON, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 1875. NO. 48.

## THE INDEPENDENT.

Published weekly, except on Sundays and public holidays.

Hillsboro, - - - - - M: 3 P.M.

**B. B. LUCH,**  
Editor and Proprietor.

TERMS OF SUBSCRIPTION:

One year, \$2 50  
Six months, 1 50  
Three months, 1 00  
Single copies, 10

RATES OF ADVERTISING:

TIME 1 sq. 2 sq. 3 sq. 4 sq. 5 sq. 6 sq. 7 sq. 8 sq. 9 sq. 10 sq.  
1 WEEK, 1 50 2 00 2 50 3 50 4 50 5 50 6 50 7 50 8 50 9 50  
2 WEEKS, 2 00 2 50 3 00 4 00 5 00 6 00 7 00 8 00 9 00 10 00  
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6 MOS., 6 00 7 00 8 00 9 00 10 00 11 00 12 00 13 00 14 00 15 00  
1 YEAR, 10 00 11 00 12 00 13 00 14 00 15 00 16 00 17 00 18 00 19 00

Local notices, 25 cents per line for the first insertion, and 20 cents a line for each subsequent insertion. No notice less than \$1.00.

Obituary notices, 10 cents per line.  
Summons, Sheriff's Sales, and all other legal notices, \$2.00 per square, 1st insertion; each additional insertion, \$1.00.

Transient advertisements, \$2.00 1st insertion; each additional insertion, \$1.00.

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Will be at the Oregon Livery Stables, Corner of Morrison and First Streets, Portland, every Friday.

## OREGON;

### Its Climate, Resources and Prospects.

[From the Dundee Advertiser Dec. 29, 1875]

The climate of Oregon is very mild and agreeable, having neither extremes of heat or cold. It is five months to-day since we arrived here, during which we have had entirely Summer weather, much more pleasant and enjoyable than the Summer in Scotland. Rain has fallen on twenty-five days during these five months, not consecutively, nor for a day, but lasting on an average two hours at a time. What agreeably surprises us in Summer are the soft afternoon breezes which blow every day, and the cool evenings and mornings. From 11 A. M. 3, and sometimes to 4 P. M., the heat will go up to 82 in the shade, with clear blue skies. Only one day all Summer did I feel it oppressive between these hours. There have been no winds as yet, and I am told that in Winter even strong winds are rare. Hot winds, as in Australia are unknown, and thunder and lightning are rare. Only once have we witnessed a thunderstorm, which lasted an hour—a small affair compared to those in Scotland. Yet the newspapers next day told the like of it had not been witnessed in Oregon for fifteen years. So far as our five months' experience goes, we say unhesitatingly that no better Summer climate can be had in Oregon. But as Winter has not made its appearance, nor given us yet any warnings of its approach, although this is the 20th of October, I cannot tell you what it is like. Only a relation of one of mine, a Scotchman, who spent last Winter in Oregon, tells me that there was no difference between the rainy season here and the Winters in Scotland, except that the Spring earlier here, and was much milder, with no east winds. Frost and snow came occasionally, but never lasted longer than a day or two at a time. So far as health goes, I and my family have been all very much healthier than in Scotland.

### Farming in the Willamette Valley.

Here is the paradise of the agriculturist. No experienced farmer could desire such a combination of advantages as he will find in this valley. Farming is no speculation; failure of crops is unknown; "as ye sow, so shall ye reap" here; soil is prolific in the extreme without manure; the land is flat and easily plowed; pastures nearly always green, hence suited for dairying. The yield with good cultivation is large—thirty to forty bushels per acre—which, however, through poor farming is not the average of the State. Such lands (improved farms) can be obtained (bought) from \$3 to \$6 an acre, with houses, barns, etc., included, all in wood, with fine scenery around. Grain, especially wheat, is beautiful, plump and large, and the yield of vegetables and fruits is something unparalleled. It is pain to ride along a country road and see the orchards going to waste, the trees overbearing themselves with profusion, and nobody to eat or make use of the fruit. I am satisfied that Western Oregon owes her extreme profusion and certainty of crop more to the evenness of her climate. Summer and Winter and to the annual rains than to the soil itself. Butter, milk and cheese command equally as high prices as at home. Wheat sells at 3s to 4s per bushel at Portland, the cost of raising it being (including labor, rent and interest on money) 2s a bushel inclusive of freight. Sheep farming is profitable; the average price obtained for wool this year is 1s 3d per pound; the cost of "growing wool," as it is technically called, is 6d per pound. But as very large flocks are unknown, and there are no farms here with from 5,000 to 8,000 acres on wheat alone, as in California, a splendid opening is open for some of our practical agriculturists of Scotland, with steam plows and modern farm machinery, to make money in the

Willamette Valley. The way farming is conducted here, compared to the "old country," is amusing. The first thing which strikes an experienced farmer from Great Britain is the poor manner in which the soil is cultivated. This reminds me of a Scotch New Zealand farmer from the colonies, who this Summer, on observing the bad cultivation of Oregon fields, said to me "Weel a weel, I had some chance here, whaur I had name in Otago. We've had to fight wi' each other there, as we were all guid farmers, rubbin' against the other, and seeing by thick competition it tak's us all our time to get a leevin' in New Zealand, we've prospects o' rubbin' out o' the worl the pair ploughing they ha'e here, and aakin' money, when they canna hand e canel tae us." This remark struck me as very true indeed. If a Scotch farmer applies himself to the soil here as he does to his well manured Scotch farm he will make money faster by farming here than in any other part of the world. All that is wanted here is industrious, preserving men from Europe, who will work with a will; and such men with a little capital—say £300 to £1,000—on their arrival here, will very readily in four or five years pay back the price of any farm they may purchase in Western Oregon. Let me however, correct one serious mistake which all travelers and newspaper correspondents have fallen into—namely, stating that good farm lands can be had in the Willamette Valley at 10s. per acre. This mistake has arisen from seeing only one-sixth of the agricultural lands of the valley in actual cultivation, and observing the virgin prairie in many places unutilized, although many of the early settlers, who got from 1850 to 1859, as a gift from the United States Government, a mile square of prairie land are still here, they do not cultivate one-fourth of their farms, and some, instead of being disposed to sell a part of what they do not cultivate, rather to prefer to purchase (if they can get it) their neighbors' lands whenever such a chance is open. As a rule Oregon farmers are well-to-do people and a few of them are wealthy, all seem contented and happy, except at wheat-selling times, when there is the farmers' old story—grumbling at not getting better prices. Of course, inferior and timbered lands (of which latter there is a large portion in the valley) can be had at 15s to 25s an acre, but except these are around villages I would not recommend Scotch settlers to purchase them. It will pay a man far better to purchase—portion in cash and on time—a good improved farm, fence, and buildings, than to go back upon the vast tracts of Government land in Eastern, Southern and Southeastern Oregon, which can be got at 5s an acre. These will, however, in course of time, be occupied, and railways will eventually pass through them, and as there are still a few of Eastern Oregon and Washington belonging to the Government, which could sustain 20,000 of people, now occupied by 12,000 to 13,000, you can imagine what a wide field there is on this North Pacific Coast for over-populated Europe to possess, having a climate, soil, scenery and products superior to any portion of the American Continent, where a man can select 160 acres and retain it as a gift from the United States, given him in return for actual settlement only. The Willamette Valley contains (including the small towns and Portland) four-fifths of the population of Oregon, or 80,000 people. The farming class proper, with their families, number 40,000 persons, who have produced this year in Western Oregon—5,000,000 bushels of wheat; 100,000 of Indian corn; 5,000 of rye; 2,100,000 of oats; 350,000 of barley; 5,000 of buckwheat; 40,000 of flax; 500,000 of potatoes; 50,000 of onions; 400,000 of apples; 200,000 of pears; 250,000 of other fruits; 125,000 tons of hay; 1,000,000 pounds of wool;

30,000 hides; 1,400,000 pounds of hog product; 340,000 barrels of flour. Not a bad showing for such a population, and yet only one-sixth of the Willamette Valley is cultivated. That valley is considered the agricultural portion of the State. Southern, Southeastern and Eastern Oregon are now used as stock and sheep ranges, unlimited in extent, which may now and will be occupied rent free for many years to come.

### Valleys in Oregon and Washington Suited for Agriculture.

One can scarcely imagine the numerous little valleys suited for agriculture scattered all over the North Pacific Coast which I have not mentioned (in area four or five times the valleys of Western Oregon,) over and beyond the sheep-farming lands of some importance:

Name of Valley	Length	Breadth	Population	Present Agriculture
Willamette Valley	175	45	68,000	
North Umpqua	40	15	3,000	
South Umpqua	25	10	2,000	
Rogue River	50	15	3,000	
Josephine	25	5	500	
Klamath	50	15	300	
John Day	50	10	300	
Willow Creek	30	8	100	
Birch Creek	25	6	100	
Columbia	30	35	40	
Pine Creek	10	10	50	
Walla Walla	20	8	1,200	
Granite Ronde	20	20	720	
Powder River	10	5	35	
Jordan River	25	5	150	
Willow Creek	10	5	35	
Burnt River	8	5	15	
Walla Walla (W. T.)	10	10	6,000	
Tonahut	30	5	1,000	
Tacamanon	30	5	200	
Alpina	15	4	35	
Palouse	100	25	2,700	
Patula	10	3	50	
Columbia Basin (W. T.)	30	30	5,000	
Do. (Oregon)	25	10	1,350	
Yacolt	10	10	500	
Spokane	30	10	380	
Chehalis	20	15	200	

It must be remembered that these are all prairie valleys, nearly destitute of timber, having at all events on an average not as much timber as will be requisite in above estimate.

### Timber.

It is surprising to see the immense quantity of beautiful timber—the tall trees, as straight as an arrow, shooting two or three hundred feet above free of limbs for nearly a hundred feet. Nothing so pleases the various sea Captains as the quality of the cedar and fir, free as they are from knots and other imperfections. One Dundee shipmaster told me the other day there was nothing like it in Canada. The timber trade is pretty large, but is at present confined to Sydney, Melbourne, and the Australian Colonies, China, Japan and the Pacific Islands. There are some fifteen sailing ships engaged in that trade, having their headquarters in Oregon and Washington. Of course San Francisco is the nearest, as it is the largest market at present. From that city it is shipped to various cities in the South Pacific Ocean. There are some thirty to thirty-five coasting schooners in the San Francisco lumber trade. At no distant day this Oregon timber trade is to advance to such an extent, in my opinion, that it will rival the present wheat trade of Oregon. For shipbuilding it is unsurpassed; and on the Sound and the coast of Oregon there are now building some thirteen to fifteen vessels, two of which are 1400 to 1500 tons register. Labor at ship-building is high—some where about 15s a day; but, on the other hand, material is astonishingly cheap. Spars, knees, rosin, tar, and everything necessary excepting sails are on the spot. What this State needs, and what there are lucrative openings for, are

### Manufactures.

A few gentlemen at Coos Bay the other day amalgamated to build a 1,000 ton ship. After examining the estimates they contracted to build at £12 per ton complete. A wooden ship, I mean. Near to, or rather at, Portland, there is a splendid natural site for a graving-dock and shipbuilding yard at Albina, belonging to Edwin Russell, manager Bank of British Columbia, Portland, near to which are now building a few river steamers. There are so

many foreign ships arriving and departing that a shipbuilding yard for graving and for repairs would pay well. The manufactories in Oregon at present are one smelting iron work, eight miles distant; three iron foundries; about 70 to 80 flour mills; five large woolen mills; a large paper mill, and several tanneries. Two things which will build up Portland are—first, its nearness to a large iron bed, found to be nearly twenty miles long and seven miles broad, and having timber unlimited and coal within a few miles of the Columbia River; and, second, an immense water-power, upwards of one million horse-power, at Oregon City, a small village twelve miles up the river above Portland. The success of manufactories is fully assured. Determined to have railways (the want of which is a serious drawback to this whole North Pacific Coast) and an Atlantic connection, the Legislature of Oregon is going to pass a law allowing all foreign corporations to build railroads in the State with the same powers as citizens, and also giving exemption for taxes for twenty years to all railroads commenced to be built within the next five years. This latter concession is valuable, and already two companies have acquired from the State and propose to make Atlantic connections. Warned by previous experience of the way in which one of its railways was built, the State of Oregon is taking great care of its financial reputation, and will pass severe laws for the protection of the interests of foreign bondholders as against the railroad companies in the State. Such a change is much needed, and your correspondent is helping now to get passed such laws, which are necessary for the protection of foreign capital. The State has incorporated the Oregon Central Pacific Railroad (330 miles long) under such laws, and has so guarded the interests of bondholders, and given them a voice in the management of the road, and secured its revenues for the bondholders' protection that it is impossible in future for any defalcation to arise, "corner", or watering of stock and such other practices as have been common in the Western States. The Legislature in 1872 passed a law entitling foreigners to invest in this State in any undertaking the same as citizens.

### Scenery.

So much has been written already upon the scenery of this coast that it is no use for me to describe it. I will only say that a sail up the Columbia River, from Portland to Walla Walla (for Walla Walla) a distance of 350 miles is something which cannot be sufficiently described. I feel satisfied we have nothing like it in Great Britain. This reminds me of a pleasant reminiscence. Sailing up the Columbia in July last in one of the handsome river steamers of the Oregon Steam Navigation Company, and while among the Cascade Mountains, who do you think I met there? Why, A. R. Gilroy, of Dundee, son of Mr. Geo. Gilroy, quietly sitting at one of the wharfs waiting for the steamer. He caught my eye on board before I saw him and we both were astonished to meet each other without previous notice among the wild scenery of the "Far West," away from civilization, and 7,000 miles from Dundee. Nothing brings one so near the "old country" as when he suddenly meets an old friend thousands of miles away from home. We came back to Portland together, and talked of home, and nothing else, and two days thereafter my young friend, Mr. A. R. Gilroy left me to cross the Pacific Ocean and visit China, Japan and India before returning to Bonnie Dundee, which he was to reach in November.

### Kindness of the People.

On arrival here in May we were gladly welcomed by all classes. Your correspondent did not think he was known in anticipation in the "Far West" until traveling through the different portions of the country.

### "Dundee" is a household word in Oregon.

I assure you; and if a man says he comes from that city he is welcomed. The Oregonians look upon that city as their friend, and is proud of what Scotland is doing for Oregon, and expect that more Scotchmen will come and rear up and develop its various undertakings. Strange to say that the large business houses are all British. All along the Valley you find Scotch farmers in large numbers, and scarcely a day passes but I meet with many of my countrymen, some of them here since 1847. They all unite in saying that Oregon is the likeliest place to Scotland in scenery, climate, etc. After my arrival here the various steam navigation companies and the Oregon and California, and Northern Pacific Railway Companies tendered me free passes to visit any portion of the country from British Columbia to Southern Oregon. When we waited on the Governor at the Capital we were there also welcomed, and spent a few hours talking over the subject of immigration with Governor Grover. Oregonians think much of their country, and well they may, and all that it needs to make it a live of industry for the Anglo-Saxon race is direct railway connection with the Atlantic States, which, when secured, will advance this country more than the Central Pacific Railway did California.

### Investments.

Money commands 10 to 12 per cent. at the banks and real estate securities. So high is the rate of interest that in Washington Territory 15 to 18 per cent. is obtained. But this high rate is unquestionably keeping back manufactories. If money could be had freely at 10 per cent. the country would progress much more rapidly than it is doing now. Those emigrants who have come and are coming do not bring with them much capital. There are hundreds of opportunities in Oregon for men with a few thousand pounds. Large financial undertakings which would yield 12 to 15 per cent. are suspended for want of capital. Judicious investments cannot fail to prove remunerative if well managed. The crops are heavy and always certain so that man need not fail to pay interest on money he borrows at moderate rates unless he is reckless or a spendthrift. The longer one lives here the more he notices the many ways to succeed by honest industry and with capital, but it is dangerous (except for farming) for a new comer to invest his means "right away," as the Americans say. He must be here a few months and acquire some experience before embarking on his own responsibility. For commerce a wide field is open to take advantage of the produce of the country, and export it to various portions of the world. Prospectively no country offers such encouragement for commerce as Oregon does to-day. It may be ten or twelve years before a large commercial trade is built up, but it is coming for certain some day, the State having everything which constitutes material success, and all that is wanting is capital, immigration and railroads. Already Oregon will have this year 100 ships visiting its ports to carry away the wheat and flour of the State; and last year there were 170 ship and steamer arrivals and departures in the coasting trade alone from the Columbia River to San Francisco. This has been the drawback of the whole State, its being subservient and paying tribute to San Francisco, nearly three-fourths of the State imports, and one-third of its exports going into and departing from Oregon through the golden gate of San Francisco, and being there re-shipped direct to foreign countries.

### I am very sorry my time will not permit me giving you a longer description of this State. Yours &c.,

WILLIAM RITCHIE,  
Portland, 22d October, 1874.