

The Madras Pioneer

MADRAS, CROOK COUNTY, OREGON, THURSDAY, JULY 19, 1906.

NO. 48

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Madras, Oregon

NO NEW COURT HOUSE

PLAINTIFF WINS IN INJUNCTION SUIT

Officials Permanently Enjoined From Creating More Than \$5000 Indebtedness For Building.

The motion filed by the county court asking for the dissolution of the injunction against them in the new court house case, was argued before Judge Bradshaw in chambers at The Dalles, last week, and the decision of the Judge sustains all the material points raised by the plaintiff, Charles S. Benson, of Bend, and other protesting taxpayers.

The decision was all that the plaintiff could ask, in that it emphasizes the limit of the county court's authority in incurring indebtedness in the construction of a new court house, the county court being perpetually enjoined from building or constructing a court house or from making or entering into any contract for the erection or construction of said court house or any part thereof, whereby an indebtedness will be incurred or created against said county exceeding the sum of five thousand dollars.

At the time the injunction suit was brought against the county court, it was apparent that they were about to let a contract for a new and expensive court house building, without consulting the taxpayers of the county as to the advisability of such a move, and in fact without giving any opportunity to get an expression from the people in the county on so important a matter. The call for bids was published in the classified ad department of a Portland daily, where it was only by accident that it was discovered by interested taxpayers in this county, and all mention of the purpose of the county court had been religiously kept out of the county papers. So quietly was the county court laying its plans for the construction of a new and expensive court house building at Prineville, that even in that town prominent business men knew nothing of the intention of the court. When this intention was discovered, the date upon which contracts were to be let was less than two weeks off, and as it was too late to get an expression from the taxpayers of the county sufficiently strong in its character to influence the county court, some prompt action and stringent measures were necessary. Under these conditions the injunction suit was brought by Charles S. Benson, of Bend, who represented the protesting taxpayers of the county in the suit.

At the hearing in The Dalles, it was shown that the county now has on hand less than \$7000 available for a new court house building, and that this amount of \$7000 is the only money available also for the payment of the county's general expenses for the remainder of the fiscal year. The expenses of the county for the same period last year amounted to \$11,000, and if they are as great this year, there would be a deficit in the county treasury of \$4000, even without any expenditure for a new court house or even a "foundation." Under these circumstances, it is diffi-

cult to discover a process by which the county court can let any contract for any portion of a new court house at this time, as they are enjoined from incurring any indebtedness to exceed \$5000.

The discovery of the purpose of the county court to build a new court house without consulting them has aroused the taxpayers all over the county, and hundreds of protests have been filed against the building of a new court house at this time. The injunction suit served to give publicity to the matter, and investigations made in gathering data in support of the suit have shown a condition of affairs under which it would be impossible to build a new court house without a violation of the constitutional inhibition. This investigation has also unearthed some tax methods employed by the county court which have set the people to thinking. Last year there was approximately \$3,000,000 of property on the tax list, and the tax levy was 21 mills. This year the amount of property has doubled, and with six millions of property on the list, it is now proposed to reduce the levy only one and a half mills. When it is known that the increase in property is due largely to the increased valuation placed upon it by the tax assessor, in many instances the valuation being nearly doubled, it can be seen that instead of growing less as they should, taxes in this county will be almost doubled should the plan outlined by County Judge Bell be carried out.

This is the state of affairs which made the injunction suit necessary, and against which a large majority of the taxpayers of the county were protesting. When Crook county is in a condition, financially, which will justify such an expenditure, there will be no objection raised to a reasonable expenditure for new buildings, but the taxpayers of the county are protesting against the piling up of taxes onto their shoulders for the purpose of gratifying Prineville's ambition for new buildings.

In the hearing at The Dalles the plaintiff was represented by W. H. Wilson, an attorney of The Dalles, while M. R. Elliott, of Prineville, was present to represent the county court.

LAST OF WOOL SALES

More than four million pounds of wool has been marketed at Shaniko, this season, all this amount being sold by the public sealed bid plan, which has again demonstrated its many advantages over the old manner of private sales. This wool brought in the neighborhood of 20 cents per pound on an average, and this means that about \$800,000 was put into circulation among the sheepmen of Crook and Wasco counties, as most of the wool marketed at Shaniko is produced in those two counties.

In addition to the wool marketed at Shaniko, the sheepmen of Wasco and Crook delivered in the neighborhood of 120,000 head of sheep at Shaniko, for shipment, these sheep having brought them an average of \$2.75 per head. The past year had been one of the best and most prosperous that the sheepmen of the state have ever enjoyed.

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