

Ellensburg and Kittitas County

BY QUINCY SCOTT

Chairman Publicity Committee, Ellensburg Chamber of Commerce.

"THE Valley of Content." That is one of the nicknames of the Kittitas Valley, in Central Washington. Of course there is no such place, in literal truth, as a "valley of content," nor will be while human nature continues to be restless and aspiring; but there are favored spots in the world, where natural conditions minimize discomforts and surround man with more than ordinary opportunities for wholesome living. The Kittitas Valley is one of these, and deserves its not altogether sentimental nickname.

The community surrounding Ellensburg, the seat of Kittitas County, is not a product of speculative exploitations, but has been blessed with comparative freedom from "booms." To a certain extent, of course, Ellensburg has been in and out of the limelight—as when, many years ago, she narrowly escaped becoming the capital of Washington—but you can neither greatly excite the speed, nor yet prevent the steady growth of a section of country built on so sure an industry as hay and grain farming, and supported in increasing measure by beefsteak, butter and wool.

The Stranger Enters.

A stranger's first impression of Ellensburg is of its scenic setting. After he becomes able to take his attention, by force of will, from contemplation of the mountains and the chromatic skies and distances, he looks at the pavings, the lighting system, the schools—and then, as a true Missourian should, he examines the County Auditor's report, and learns that nature can be productive as well as beautiful; that there is a reason for the comfortable look of the farm teams he has observed at the hitchracks.

The resources of Ellensburg are varied, although agriculture is most prominent. The county contains 743,107.14 acres of taxed land, of which approximately 60,000 acres are in irrigated farm lands, the remainder being range and mountain land, bearing timber and coal. The total tax valuation of the county is \$18,029,168, about 45 per cent of actual, which would make the per capita wealth of the county figure out at something over \$2000. Farm lands vary from \$40 to \$250 an acre, \$150 being a common price for fair hay land under irrigation.

He Visits the Mills.

The main transcontinental lines of two railroads serve the Kittitas Valley—the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul and the Northern Pacific. The Northern Pacific maintains at Ellensburg a division point, employing

about 425 men, with a payroll exceeding \$250,000.

Other activities in the city are the Ellensburg Woolen Mill, which runs 15 looms and employs 50 or more operatives; two 50-barrel flour mills, three creameries, four lumber yards, of which two operate sawmills; one glove factory and over 200 other enterprises, mostly mercantile or commercial as distinguished from manufacturing.

Mention of the creameries brings attention to one of the important growing industries of this section, dairying. Milk from about 3100 cows is now being made into butter in Ellensburg. Ellensburg butter is in such demand that produce dealers in the large cities of the state are required by their customers to handle it. Reference to the railroad statements of outbound hay shipments, totaling 63,704 tons for one year, indicate the large development possible in the dairying industry. The hay shipped out would be, at the most conservative estimate, sufficient to winter eight times as many cows as are now being used for dairy purposes.

Any farmer who understands statistics would be interested in calculating the significance of these figures, in terms of butter production, and its involved volume of labor employment, money circulation and soil fertilization. The peculiar advantages of this section for dairying, or the raising of any kind of farm stock, is the combination of climatic adaptability with the nourishing qualities of the local feeds. The cold nights of Summer—the altitude of the valley runs from 1500 to 2000 feet—impart a vigorous character to all forms of vegetation and the shortness and dryness of the Winter reduces housing expense to a minimum.

He Investigates Irrigation.

Irrigation is practiced on the main or central floor of the valley, in extent some 20 miles by 16 miles. A part of this irrigation is done under individually-owned creek systems, a part under partnership ditches and many thousand acres under large canals, of which the most important are the West Side, the Town Ditch and the Cascade. This last named canal offers interesting study as illustrating the practical working out, under state law, of the comparatively recent plan of organizing irrigation districts similar in character to a school district.

The Cascade Canal was formerly operated by a stock company, with the familiar advantages and disadvantages of that system. Two years ago, the land owners under this ditch organized an irrigation district comprising 12,800 acres. Bonds were is-

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sued and sold in an amount sufficient to take over the stock company in its entirety, leaving a surplus of \$275,000, which is being expended in replacing 24,700 feet of the old wooden fluming with steel fluming of the most modern type.

Six tunnels have been built or are being built, one of them nearly a half mile long, and all of them concrete lined. The ditch will deliver 150-second feet of water this year—the practical equivalent of 7500 miners' inches, or approximately 1-2 inch to the acre, gross average. This district is administered by a directorate elected by the land owners. Taxes for bond interest and maintenance are collected by the County Treasurer. The water rights inhere in the land titles, and are not subject to any form of sale or speculation independently of the land itself. The maintenance of the system, it is estimated, will compare favorably with that of other large systems, and investment expense is not calculated to exceed \$50 an acre.

Crop Averages Prove Absorbing.

Considerable publicity has been given in the last five years to the Kittitas High Line Canal. This ambitious project, when on the very eve of successful execution, was retarded by the general financial depression under which the country has suffered, and delay in the sale of its five million dollar issue of bonds is responsible for the fact that work has not yet started on the canal.

A contract has been signed with the United States Government, however, granting to the Kittitas Reclamation District the right to purchase from the Government sufficient water to irrigate 84,000 acres of land, from a supply already impounded at Lake Kachess, by a Government-built dam and storage plant. The territory to be benefited by this canal when built, surrounds the present irrigated lands of the valley, contains a large proportion of excellent land, and will increase the

(Concluded on Page 10.)

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