

Grays River, a Very Prosperous Community.

WHEN the great world was being created and the various natural formations were in process of arrangement, the Creator touched one portion of the earth with a loving hand and forthwith huge mountains arose cradling securely between them a long narrow valley. He smiled upon it and a river gushed forth, immense forests grew, the ground became exceeding fertile—Eden was re-incarnated.

Later, Captain Gray, the explorer, looked in upon it and was pleased with it, so he honored it with his own name, which it now bears—Gray's River.

The early settlers sailing from Astoria across Gray's Bay and paddling laboriously up the narrow crooked stream choked with fallen giants of the forest until it was almost impassable looked out upon a mass of trees, little and big, with underbrush so thick that daylight could scarcely peep through.

Truly, the pioneer spirit was theirs in no small measure when they set out to make a home which would support their wives and babies in this land where no spot, large enough to set a house upon, could be found.

In those days the forests abounded in game and berries and the river in fish, so their lot was not altogether deplorable but to make a home out of these depths upon depths of living green was enough to cause the stoutest heart to quail. It might truly be said of these early-day settlers:

"They took up a claim in the forest.
And set themselves down to hard toil;
For ten years they chopped and they niggered,
But never got down to the soil."

It was a Herculean task to rid the ground of the mazes and tangles of vine, maple, crab apple, salmon bushes, fallen and living timber, from the smallest size up to 10 or 12 feet in diameter. And then the work was but half completed. The entire area underground was a

mass of interlaced roots where a shovel could scarcely be inserted. The cost of removing these stumps and roots was enormous and involved great labor. But civilization moved slowly but surely onward. Little by little the country assumed a more habitable aspect. The sunlight of heaven crept down to the cold, damp earth. The ground began to yield to tillage and at last to add its little mite to the diet of fish, game and berries.

Each fall about Thanksgiving time a wraith of mist enveloped the little valley with a swirl of wind; low-lying, black clouds scudded across the sky and remorselessly, but gently, came a heavy rain which swelled the little river until it left its banks and flooded all the country to a varying depth of from six inches to three or four feet. When this receded it left the ground covered with a thick, black sediment.

Later on these autumn freshets proved themselves to be one of nature's most powerful aids in that it furnished a natural means of transporting to tidewater the millions of feet of fine timber which covered the hills and the sediment left upon the earth acted in every respect as a perfect fertilizer. The renewing of the ground every year by this means has ever been a great boon to this country.

The first house that was built on Gray's River was by a man in the employ of the Hudson Bay Company, St. Andrews, by name. He had an Indian wife.

Later a discharged soldier from the fort named John Brannon and hailing from Missouri, came; then a Dane named Ole Hanson; but the first permanent settlers with white families did not arrive until 1868. These were J. P. Miller and Sam H. Walker. The hale old sea captain, William Rehfeld, came soon after as also did T. S. Barr. In 1875, H. P. Ahlberg and the Sorensen brothers, Chris and Anton, settled here.

Until 1883 the postoffice was at Gray's River and there was no nearer basis of supplies. The only means of navigation was by small skiffs and many a thrilling tale can be told of rough water and stormy weather when emergencies rose, compelling a visit to Astoria, despite wind or sea.

But undismayed by hardships and undaunted by obstacles the little settlement struggled on, and in 1883 organized a company which owned and operated a small steamboat called the "Union" which came in once a week. Since then steady progress has been made until now Gray's River holds an enviable record among the farming communities of the state. Her people have made her a pleasant place in which to live. They have steadfastly kept in mind and catered to the upbuilding of the home. They have surrounded themselves with books, music and flowers. They have built beautiful homes and have furnished them luxuriously. Their lawns are carefully kept and tastefully arranged. That they have been enabled to do this in so large a measure has come from the abundant success attending their efforts in the line of dairying. This place is so admirably suited to this work that the farmers have concentrated all their attention on it until it has become the leading industry of the place.

From the first the bottom land proved to be wondrously fertile and the cultivation of grass or hay remarkably easy. Once the ground was plowed and seeded with timothy, clover, or alfalfa, the deed was done. Year after year splendid crops of hay could be garnered without reseeded and the stubble used for pasturage throughout the winter. Naturally, the attention of the farmers was turned toward the utilization of this wonderful natural resource, and as Astoria furnished a splendid

market for butter it was inevitable that dairy work should take the lead and probably nowhere in the world could be found a place where it is so easily carried on or with such splendid profit.

Could one but walk through the Gray's River pasture lands in the month of August—the last month of the driest season of the year—an almost unbelievable sight would meet the eye. Cattle grazing up to their knees in the greenest of green grass—so tall, because of their sheer inability to keep it eaten down. One acre of land will pasture two cows a year and keeps them in fine condition or it will produce tons of hay and furnish pasturage until spring.

The farmers of Gray's River have kept abreast of the times and in every way aided nature in her generous attempt to make the life of the farmer a pleasant one. They have paid great attention to the selection of their herds and are constantly adding blooded stock and weeding out those that have proved themselves inferior.

On Gray's River the Jersey stands first in the affection of the people and it is a pleasure to pass through the fields and see the delicate fawn-colored, or rich brown beauties lifting their dainty black-nosed heads to watch you curiously.

The farmers are as careful in the equipment of their farms as in the selection of their stock. All have the best makes of separators, butter workers and churns on the market. At "Swede Park Farm," and at "Pond Lily Dairy" and also on L. E. Oleson's dairy, all of the curdling and butter working and various other of the more laborious work connected with the farm is done by steam.

Scrupulously careful are they in regard to sanitation and an honest pride is taken in the work that guarantees the superiority of the finished product.

The financial returns from the making of butter or sale of butter-fat is large and will probably not be beaten in any part of the world.



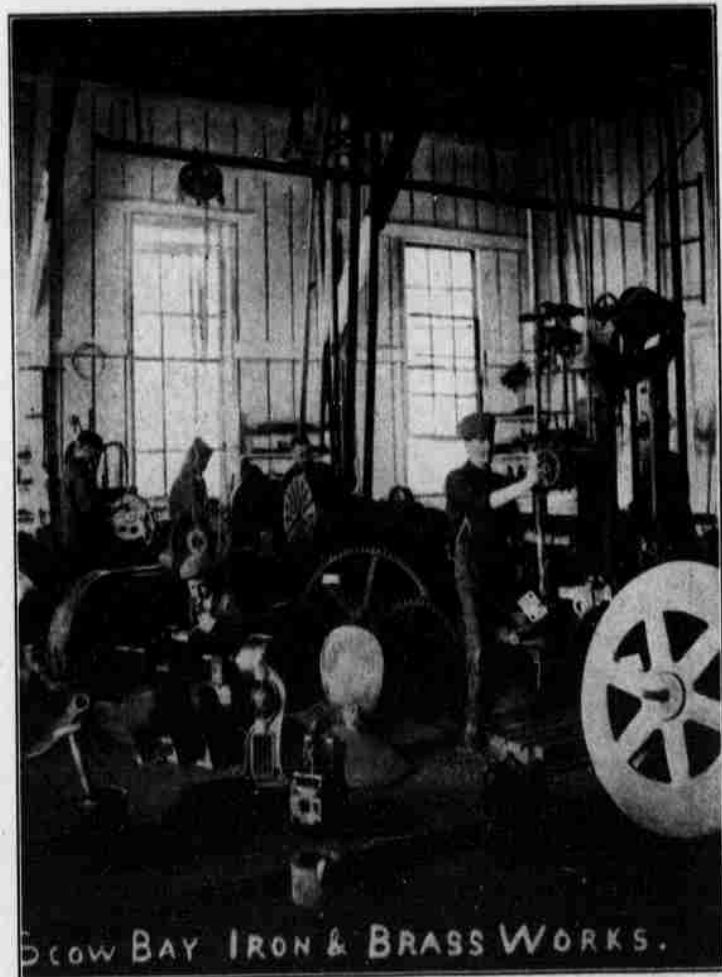
SOME OF THE PRODUCTS OF GRAYS RIVER.

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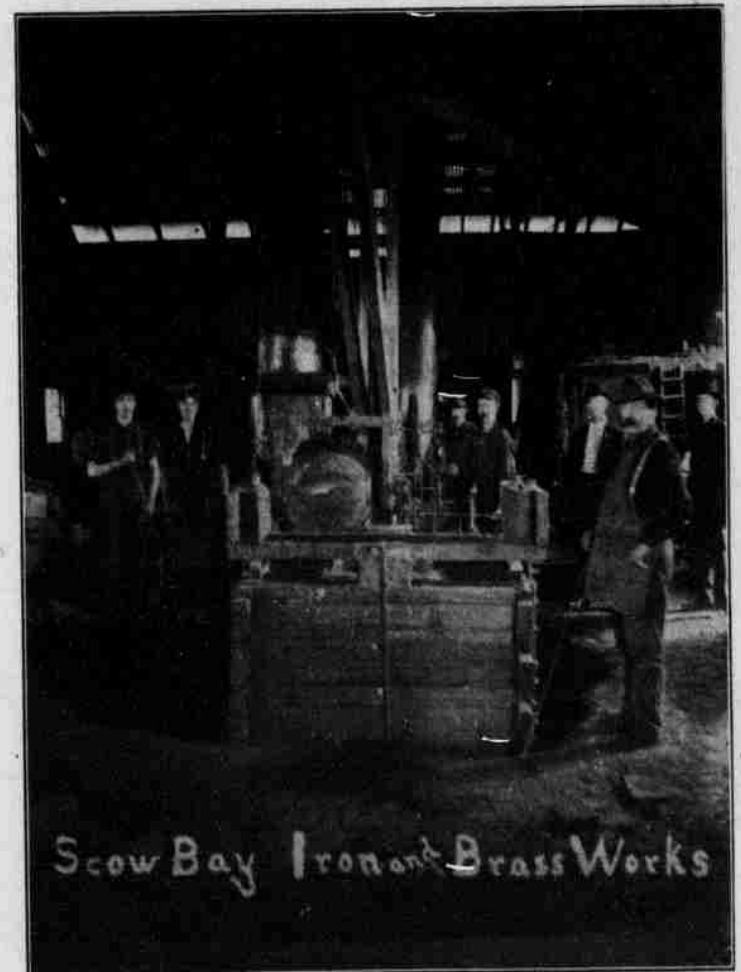
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