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IRRIGATION IS NEEDED EVERY YEAR IN EVERY PART OF SALEM DISTRICT

Some Years More Than Others, Of Course — Yields of Some Crops the Past Season Under Irrigation in the Santiam Country—Loganberries and Beans That Made Remarkable Yields—A Study of the Accompanying Table Will Show the Reader Why Irrigation Is Needed Every Year in the Summer Season.

What would it have meant to the loganberry grower of the Willamette valley who saw his berries drying up on the vines during the 90 days drought of 1922, to have at hand, ready for his shovel to direct it, an inexhaustible store of water for the thirsty plants?

It would have meant this: Three times as many berries, twice as fast and efficient picking for himself and his family because the fruit was so much larger and closer set, a longer season, instead of a feverish ripening of all at one time and not enough help to pick the stuff, and pick-

ers clamoring for jobs in his heavily laden fields because they could make real money where the crops were worth while.

It would have meant the possibility of turning loss into profit, discouragement and hate into joy and decent regard, the slavery of women and little children into self-respecting work that is paid for at a decent wage. It would have meant hope and satisfaction and better clothes and an honest appreciation of one's business as a farmer, instead of ragged, glowering or despondent drudgery.

The pitiful thing about irrigation possibilities in the Willamette valley is that assured crops have always been right within the reach of the valley farmer, and an almost perverse, willful ancestor-worship has kept the valley from realizing on its natural riches. Worshipping the ancestral pioneers who found the country without irrigation and still lived to good old age; worshipping the ancestral hunting dog and fishing rod and, the coast vacation; clinging to the habits of the long ago as to sacred fetiches; refusing to test the Lounties that lay around them, and trusting fatalistically that the drought demons would pass them by—western Oregon has certainly contributed to her own agricultural downfall whenever there is a real crash like that of 1922!

The Irishman's Pigs There is a story of an Irish townsman who transplanted himself to the country, and essayed to grow pigs. He knew what constituted good bacon; so he started to feed his pigs for this prize quality. "Sure an' it's a strake av lean an' a strake av fat that we want," he said, sagely; so he fed the pigs lavishly for one week, and then gave them nothing at all for the next week. When they up and died, during the lean week, he thought that Nature was treating him rough—like the Tank corps in No Man's Land.

If he had studied biology, he would have found that equalized feeding was the only way to grow pork of any kind. Life must have a continuing supply of the elements that make it. Take away any element—water, air, food—and life of every kind fails. Supply any one element in excess, or in a less quantity than is needed, and any kind of life grows morbid or fails utterly. Cut off the supply of bone-making foods from the child, and it will not help him a bit though he be hair-combed or battered over with bones or pieces of lime—he will have the rickets because the bone-making materials are not supplied continually, and in the right manner. Deprive the man of water for a week, and then shove him, fathoms deep, in the sweetest, coldest spring water—and he will drown like a fat, where a little to drink each day would have kept him in splendid health. A person is not clothed, wearing only an Artie fur cap, or a pair of impervious rubber or leather boots; one might freeze, or burn, or be mosquito-bitten to death, with this form of attire, even though there was enough material in cap or boots to fully and rationally clothe and protect and adorn the whole body.

Water When Needed A study of the accompanying precipitation chart ought to show to the most ardent stickler for "Nature as she stands," that the distribution of rainfall is the one big factor in raising crops. It will be noted that of all the localities represented, the coast, including Oregon, has the least precipitation during the crop grow-

ing season. Omaha, Nebraska, has more than six times as much as the points in the Willamette valley during July and August; Bismark, North Dakota has four times as much; Topeka, Kansas has six times as much. All of these other states have a considerably smaller total annual precipitation than does the Willamette valley; but where they have rain during the growing season, they can produce crops that make Oregon look like a piker.

This last statement, perhaps should be explained. The Oregon soil and climate make for tremendous crops of most kinds. It has never happened that the total annual precipitation was insufficient to produce world-record crops, if it had been carefully distributed. But crops are somewhat like living with a rope around one's neck, and the rope tied to a limb of the tree above. So long as one keeps his feet on the ground, he's all right; but if the rope would shrink and hoist him a quarter of an inch above the ground, the coroner and the undertaker would have certain jobs with him as the chief topic of conversation. "Average" precipitation means exactly nothing worth a nickel; it's the rain-when-it's-needed that counts.

The Crops Suffered This year, there was practically 90 days without a drop of rain. In this section of the Willamette valley. The gravelly soils, underlain by a permanent stratum of water, usually at very shallow depths, do not dry out too readily; plant roots grow a long way to find water, and good cultivation may even serve as a siphon to bring the water to the surface for plant use. But even the best cultivation can't always actually produce water where it isn't; and hundreds of thousands of acres of crops suffered. Some of the grain crops, especially the spring sown grain, were failures. Some of the berries produced only about a half crop; pastures have produced about a quarter crop.

Plenty of Water And yet there is water coming down from the great Cascade range, that would water most of the fields of the valley; water that can be had for small cost, can be instantly, always ready for service; water that will give the "strake av lean an' the strake av fat" on the ribs of every Oregon farmer, water that the Good Lord put there in the hills just as He put the "fat, fertile acres in the valley, intending mankind to use them together, water that will keep the farmer's feet always on the firm ground and not leave him dangling in the noose of drought.

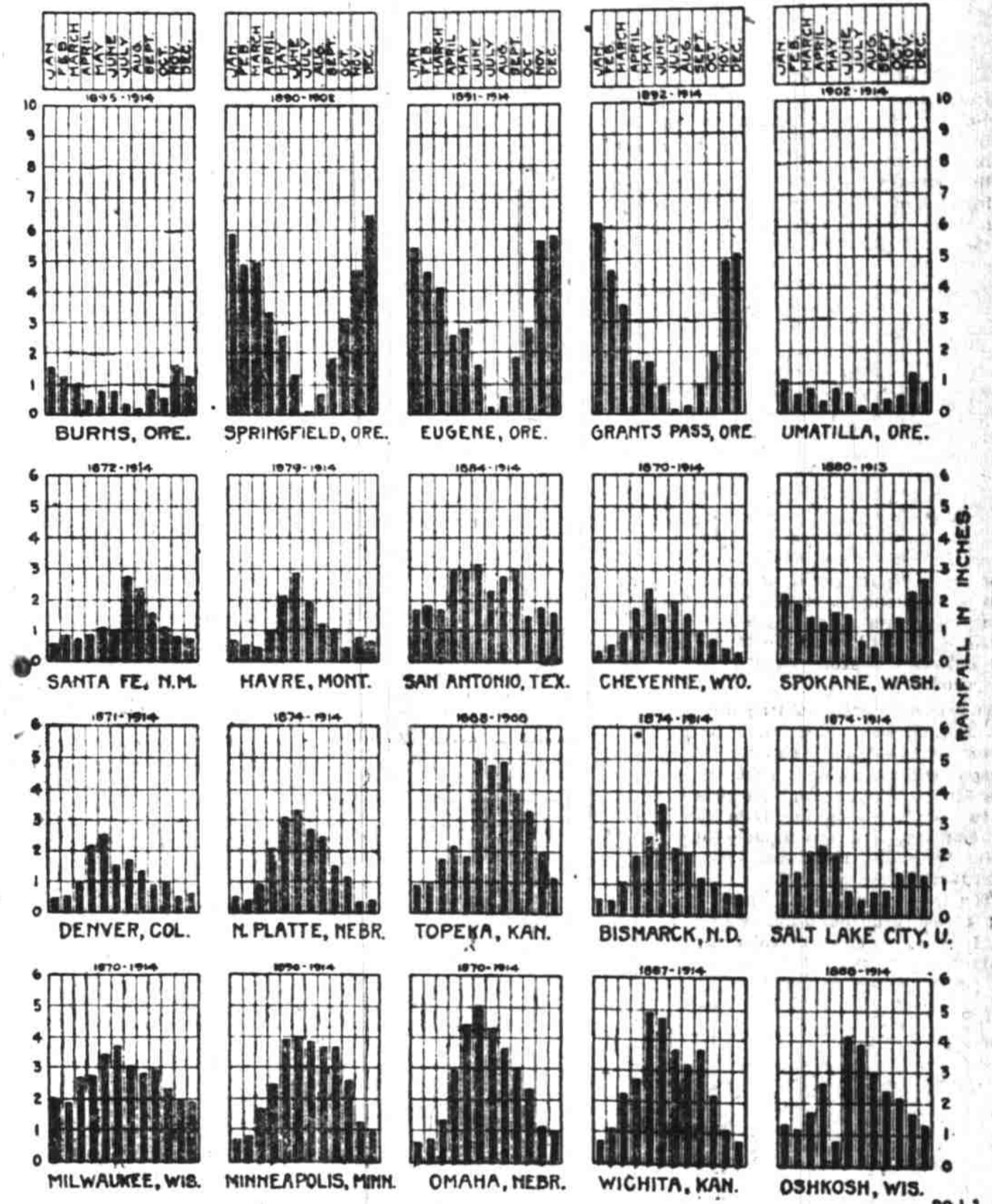
A Wonderful Crop The story of "three times as many loganberries to the acre," may sound anachronical. But it isn't. The Statesman reporter writing this article last week visited the only field of actually irrigated logans that he knows in Marion county—and they produced four tons of berries to the acre; the average yield was less than one and one-half tons. Had this one field been properly irrigated, and properly brought up to the present bearing season, one or even two more tons would have been almost certain.

The field belongs to Bruce Bowne, near West Stayton. The farm has been cultivated for almost 60 years; to wheat, a good deal of the time it was good soil, once, though it has become somewhat lopsided, like a grasshopper developing his legs and his appetite by using them most. It cannot now be called a "good" farm, any more than a man or a horse or a car is "good" after having lived 10 or 20 or 70 years on a starvation diet. But it produced four tons of logans to the acre, this year, and Mr. Bowne sold the berries to the Stayton cannery and has the checks to prove it.

The Statesman has written frequently, this year, of the great gain possible for the Willamette berry grower, if he could grow "larger, easier-picked berries. When others were anguishing about not getting enough pickers to harvest their famishin' berries for 2 cents a pound, the Bowne field was turning them away by the dozen—and still it paid only

DIAGRAM SHOWING DISTRIBUTION OF RAINFALL AVERAGE RAINFALL PER MONTH FOR PERIOD GIVEN.

COMPILED FROM U. S. WEATHER BUREAU DATA.



The accompanying chart, while not giving the figures for the precipitation at the points named, is accurately proportioned from the official precipitation figures. It shows that while the Willamette valley points have considerably the heaviest total precipitation

for the year, the rainfall here during the growing season is practically nothing. Wichita and Topeka, Kansas, for instance, with an annual precipitation of a little in excess of 30 inches, have respectively 12 and 15 inches of rainfall during June, July and

August, where there is less than two inches in the Willamette valley points. The diagram shows, graphically, the distribution that makes for regularly large crops; only by irrigation can the growing season deficiency be made up for such sections as the Willamette valley.

er this land. One of these, Willamette Valley Irrigation company project, usually known as "Fulacres," proposed and started by W. L. Benham of Portland, and designed to cover about 20,000 acres, fell into the hands of the Hartman & Thompson bank of Portland. The first glittering plan to make a great killing by its development failed, partly because of the war that tied up so much industrial money; the case is now in the courts, and the lands lie idle, though several miles of canal have been built and the water for this Bowne farm was taken from this company's ditches—Bowne paid \$19 for the water for 10 acres this year.

Another project, the Willamette Valley Irrigation company, also initiated by Mr. Benham, covers 6940 acres adjoining but further up the valley. Water for both projects is taken from the same diversion point on the Santiam river at Stayton. This diversion is below the Stayton power plant and is an inalienable right, as the writer understands it, under the Oregon laws. The water supply is adequate for watering both projects, a total of about 27,000 acres, without any storage in the river. However, it is planned that storage will be provided eventually at Marion lake, the headwaters of the Santiam, and at some other mountain lakes, where by building retaining dams at the lake outlets a great storage can be secured, for especially dry seasons.

Why Not? Why has not Oregon utilized

Why Not? Why has not Oregon utilized this water for raising crops? But why, indeed, didn't somebody write the Declaration of Independence a thousand years ago; and why didn't Napoleon have a fleet of steel tanks, to wipe out the British squares at Waterloo? If Washington had had a few regiments armed with the new Springfield rifles he'd have cleaned up the British in jig time! Perhaps the best answer is, that mankind wouldn't use the things laid so close to hand, for his own good. The water has always run down the hills of Oregon; the summers have always been dry, and the winters filled with rain; but man refused to co-ordinate the seasons, and he richly earned the disaster that the dry summer always brings.

Plenty of Fall There is a remarkably rapid fall in the alluvial Santiam valley; even in what looks like a dead-level plain, the grade being about 20 feet to the mile. This grade prevails over the three-quarters of a township that is under the two projects mentioned. Indeed, it is almost a troublesome grade; the water has to be "stepped down," because it would have too much current in straight ditches, and would seriously erode the banks. This treatment, however, is easy; the country will irrigate magnificently, and it has enough drainage to keep the soil sweet and clean. Only gross over-watering would ever "alkali" the soil. It would be a hard soil to damage in this way, because of its gravelly nature; with prudent

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