

# SELLING SALEM DISTRICT

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The Surest Way to Get More and Larger Industries Is to Support Those You Have

### Selling Salem District is a Continuation of the Salem Slogan and Pep and Progress Campaign

This campaign of publicity for community upbuilding has been made possible by the advertisements placed on these pages by our public-spirited business men --- men whose untiring efforts have builded our present recognized prosperity and who are ever striving for greater and yet greater progress as the years go by.

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**"Marion Butter"**  
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## FLAX INDUSTRY WILL BRING MANY MILLIONS ANNUALLY FOR ALL TIME

### It Will Become the Greatest Single Industry in Oregon, and Perhaps in a Short Time—A General Review of the History and Progress of Flax Growing and Manufacturing, Condensed Into Comparatively Short Space

(The following article was written by the Slogan editor of The Statesman for the issue of the Pacific Homestead (published from The Statesman building) of June 12. It contains a concise review of the history and development of the flax industry.)

Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." —2 Corinthians, 5:17.

In the flax industry, all old things are not passed away, and will not; but some old things have passed and others are passing, and more will pass. But the miracle plant that grows from the seed in 50 to 70 to 90 days and produces a fiber that last "forever," for all practical purposes, is the same as it was in ancient Egypt; excepting for improvements made by modern methods of selection and cultivation. After the manner of H. G. Wells, but very briefly, take the following "Outline of History," applied to the flax industry:

#### A Long History

Flax is the oldest known vegetable fiber used in the making of articles for wear and household use. It was grown in ancient Egypt. Fine linsens are found in the tombs in the "Valley of the Kings," where the mummified bodies of the great houses (pharaohs) were put away 6000 years or so ago—and samples of these fabrics, many of them preserved in the British museum, show weaves that our modern machinery and methods cannot imitate. The narrowness of these textures shows that the shuttle was not known to the ancient Egyptians; the width was limited to the length of the human reach. But the shuttle was known in the time of Job, told of in the Book of Job, supposed to be the oldest, book in the world, for Job is reported to have said "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope." (Job 7:6.)

Came the massacre of St. Bartholomew; came a time (around 1685) when persecutions sent colonies of Huguenot weavers from France to the north of Ireland; came the slow development of the new great linen industry of the Belfast district.

Belfast became the great linen city of the world, drawing her supplies of fiber from Holland, Belgium, France and other countries, including Russia; mostly Russia, where she got the bulk of it before the war, Ireland itself producing only some 13 per cent of it. And her hemp fiber from Italy.

All this made Belfast a very rich city; that part of Ireland a very rich section.

Then came cotton manufacturing on a large scale, and cotton was largely substituted for linen. This phase retarded the rapid growth of the linen industry, in England, Belgium, France, Austria and Germany, and in Scotland; and in the Belfast district, too—but Belfast has held her own and more, even in the face of this fierce competition, despite the fact that she has not succeeded in her many attempts to much enlarge the home growth of the raw materials in Ireland, depending on imported fiber.

So much for the "Outline of History."

#### The New Things

But little was done in all the long years towards discovering and adopting new processes; arriving at short-cuts.

But great changes have come in the past seven years; are coming every year now.

Seed selection and improved methods of cultivation have brought and are bringing higher production per acre of fiber, and a longer, better fiber. And more and better flaxseed.

Machine pulling of flax has come. One Vassot (Canadian) flax pulling machine operated suc-



A close-up picture of the same flax grown in 1923 on the A. E. Bradley farm near Turner; showing height of the flax. The men are six feet or over tall. They are, reading from left to right, Col. W. B. Bartram, Ottawa, Canada; A. E. Bradley, Aumsville, Oregon, and Robert Crawford, superintendent of the Oregon state flax industry.

cessfully in the Salem, Oregon, district last year. There will be 13 of these machines for the coming harvest in the Salem district. The pulling price has been and is now \$20 an acre, with additional costs in getting and maintaining the hand labor. Machines will reduce the cost, in time, to \$6 an acre, and less.

Short-cuts are being used in deseeding (threshing) the flax.

Retting used to require six weeks or more. Warm water (topid water) retting was discovered by British experts during the war. It reduces the time to four to five days—makes possible putting in and taking out of the tanks and retting the flax in a week. (There is an interesting story here, for which the writer has not room in this issue.)

Short-cuts have been invented in scutching the flax after retting and drying; separating the fiber from the straw.

(Still shorter cuts are known, eliminating retting and drying and scutching; taking the fiber directly from the flax straw, from the "green tow." Henry Ford is experimenting on this. He is raising 600 acres of flax on his own old home farm in Michigan, near Detroit, this year. He expects to manufacture linsens for his car coverings and seat coverings, etc. etc., and to produce it half the present cost of flax fabrics—making, too, articles that will outlast cotton articles in the ration of three to eight to one.)

There are short cuts and new methods in preparing the fiber for spinning.

There are new inventions in spinning the "yarns" for making twines and threads and linen cloth of all kinds.

There are new ways of weaving the cloth.

New ways of bleaching the cloth to make it white for napkins and table cloths and handkerchiefs and towels, etc. etc. This process formerly took a year, and required large acreages of "greens," for the bleaching had to be done by exposure to the weather; the rain and sunshine and snow and storm. Now it is done chemically in almost a twinkling—and done better.

There are new ways of making "damasks," or putting figures into the cloth; and pictures and names of railroads and hotels, etc. Wonderful new ways, vastly cheapening the processes.

And new ways of dyeing, in the yarn and in the cloth. And new ways of hemming and making laces, etc., etc.

#### The New Time

Nearly "all things are become new," or are becoming new, in the linen industry. New and cheaper. This is the age of machinery; the age of invention, of short-cuts.

What does this all mean? It means that linen articles will be cheaper in the markets than cotton articles.

There is no boll weevil in flax. None in hemp. No negro exodus will affect the flax pulling ma-

chines, drawn or pushed by tractors; running, if necessary, 24 hours a day.

It means that a \$100,000,000 annual industry will be transferred to western Oregon and Washington and northern California; with no telling what extensions into Idaho and other states. The \$100,000,000 a year is about the amount we are now sending out of the United States for the manufactures and by-products of flax.

The \$100,000,000 annual industry will mean a million new people employed, directly and indirectly, here at home. Hon. T. B. Kay, former state treasurer of Oregon and nominee for that office at the coming November election recently made that very prediction, as applied to western Oregon alone, adding that the Willamette valley will some day have a population of ten millions.

The \$100,000,000 annually will grow far beyond that figure, when the time comes that linsens will be cheaper than cottons in the markets—and it is coming, and is not very far away.

#### As to the Present

For the Slogan issue of the Oregon Statesman, Salem, of October 25 last, the present writer, in editorially summarizing the flax industry, wrote, in part, as follows:

"Salem is now the fiber flax center of the United States; the center of the only district in North America where the flax can be grown yielding a fiber suitable for manufacturing into fine linsens—such as is grown in parts of Ireland and Belgium, and in small sections of France, Holland and Russia, and goes to the linen mills of Ireland.

"The industry here is so far confined to the growing of flax for the state plant at the Oregon penitentiary, where it is made into the fibers of the different grades and into upholstering tow, with seed and dairy feed by-products. There is no waste, excepting the pithy part of the stalk. The plan is to install spinning machinery at the penitentiary plant, to make seine and sack sewing twines—

"And when that consummation comes about this institution will be made self supporting; and more. The industry will yield a profit that will admit of erecting better buildings and installing new machinery, besides paying a small wage to all the workers in the institution—

"Working within the walls, and giving a high rate of reformations, like that of the Minnesota penitentiary at Stillwater, where the rate, 85 per cent, is the highest in the world for such an institution.

"This is all coming about in regular order. Its consummation is in the near future; within two to four years; perhaps before the end of 1924. There is no doubt of its feasibility—the only question is good management and full cooperation by all concerned. The new revolving fund law of that institution gives full authority. "But the working of all the

available men in the Oregon penitentiary, a sufficient number to make the institution self supporting, will take care of the product of not more than 2500 to 3000 acres of land; not a great increase in acreage over the land that was in flax the present year; producing something above 2000 tons; yielding the growers about \$80,000.

"With the spinning operations going on at the penitentiary, and that institution made self supporting, there will be a good start towards the full development of the industry—

"But it will be only a start.

"Linen handkerchiefs are now selling in the Salem stores, and in the stores throughout the United States, at prices that mean \$24 a pound for flax fiber. That means \$24,000 an acre for the product of our flax land—for it will produce flax that will make 1000 pounds of fiber to the acre; in many cases it has produced more—did produce more this year.

"There is no other crop grown annually on the land that is capable, year after year, of producing such great values to the acre, with the aid of capital and machinery and skill and management carrying the raw material through all the processes of manufacturing up to the point where it may be placed on the shelves of the merchant—

"So that a comparatively small acreage of Salem district land may be made to supply the flax for an annual industry of \$100,000,000. The full use and proper rotation of crops on land in the Salem district that is now idle or fallow—the slacker acres—could be made to supply the raw materials for such an industry.

"We produce the flax that makes the fiber for the fine linsens and for the valuable by-products. We have the "soft" water that is necessary for the proper retting to get the strongest and best fibers. We have the air free from "electricity" necessary for the fine spinning. We have the climate that will admit of manufacturing the whole year through.

"In short, nature has done her full part in making this the fine fiber flax district, and the twine and thread and linen manufacturing district—the center—for the whole world. Everything is here.

"Nothing lacking—

"Everything but the organizing genius to bring about this consummation. And this will come; or it will be developed here, sooner or later. The stage is all set—was set in the beginning when the hills were heaved up and the valleys laid down, and the ocean currents directed.

"Ever since 1876, at the Philadelphia Centennial, when flax grown near Turner, Oregon, took first prize over the competitors from all countries, on all nine points considered, it has been known that the producing question was settled in our favor—

"And an Irish manufacturer said when that award was made that he could take a couple of

pounds of Oregon flax and spin a thread that would reach around the world!

"The rising price of cotton is working for our flax industry. The price of cotton is now close to the price of the best flax fiber; cotton is close to 30 cents a pound, and flax fiber around 33 cents a pound—

"And a linen towel or sheet will outlast a dozen cotton towels or sheets. In many ways, such as in the making of wings for airplanes, cotton cannot compete at all.

"Linen is the strongest woven fabric. It is the most enduring. It will last almost "forever." It is found in the Egyptian tombs, finer than our weavers can fashion it—done under a process that is a lost art. Nearly every old American family has samples of flax manufacture hundreds of years old.

"So the negro exodus from the south, and the boll weevil, are working for Salem as the capital of the world's flax and linen and hemp industries."

#### True of Big Territory

What was said in the editorial article in the Oregon Statesman, quoted above, is true of any part of western Oregon, western Washington or northern California, in the possible production of the fine flax fiber; and in the manufacturing of it; wherever there is the "soft" water to be found.

It is only that the state flax plant at the Oregon penitentiary has so far limited the industry to the Salem district.

Since that article was written, there has come a difference of \$120 a ton in the prices of cotton fiber and flax fiber, in the Irish market. The flax fiber sells there \$120 a ton cheaper than cotton fiber. The price at the Oregon penitentiary plant is now 42 cents a pound for long fiber; around \$100 a ton for upholstering tow; \$2.37½ a hundred pounds for flaxseed sold to the linseed oil mills; five and half cents a pound for whole flaxseed sold to the wholesale and manufacturing drug trade, and six and a half cents a pound for ground flaxseed sold to the drug trade for poultices. Short line spinning tow is worth around 20 cents a pound; for sack twine and the making of toweling. The bolls (chaff) from the threshing are now being burned at the state flax plant, making a saving of about \$15 a day for fuel. But they make good stock feed, especially dairy feed, and they will be sold and used for this purpose, and the shives will be blown to the boiler rooms and burned instead. The shives are the waste from the scutching; separating the fiber from the woody part.

#### Linen Mills Coming

Negotiations are now afoot for a linen mill in Salem. It will spin the yarn from the fiber and make linen goods of various grades for the general market. It will likely spin more than enough yarn for its own needs, and sell

it to another mill owner, a specialty manufacturer.

There is still another prospecting to do spinning of yarns only at first, and perhaps also spinning the yarns into twines for various trades, including the making of seine twines.

So much for all that. And once the mills begin to come, there will be many of them. But first the raw materials had to be guaranteed. That has been done. There are many peculiar things about flax, not the least being the fact that, kept in the dry, it gains in value with age; gains in fiber value about 10 per cent if kept one year. It may be kept indefinitely. This quality will help in conserving the supply of raw materials, once the industry gets to going strong.

#### As to the Grower

The state flax plant will pay the growers this year \$36.50 a ton for their long line fiber; \$21.50 for their short fiber suitable for upholstering tow. The grower can produce more than two tons to the acre of long line fiber.

But it would be well to let some of the growers themselves tell their stories. Writing for the October 25 last issue of the Oregon Statesman, the following are some of them—mostly abbreviated to save space here:

#### From a New Grower

S. B. Mills, Aumsville, Or., said, among other things:

"I am young in the flax growing business, having grown only two crops, and they have more than doubled any other crop in value that I have raised. I believe the flax growing industry is fast becoming the leading farm industry in this section of the country.

"I believe it is the most profitable rotation crop we have."

#### \$140 An Acre Clear

H. C. Porter of Aumsville wrote:

"Eureka! At last the farmers have found a profitable crop in the raising of flax. There was raised on my farm this season two miles southeast of Aumsville five acres of flax which brought a net profit of \$50 an acre. My neighbor joining me on the east planted 20 acres from which he realized a net profit of \$1000. My neighbor joining me on the west had eight acres on newer land which brought him a net profit of about \$80 an acre. Others of my neighbors did almost if not equally as well."

Mr. Porter sent an affidavit of D. F. Eastburn, testifying to the fact that on a little creek bottom land he raised a crop of flax last year that netted him about \$140 an acre clear of all expense. It was new land, being the sixth crop raised on it; but no fertilizer was used.

#### \$197.42 From One Acre

W. Jay Denham, Turner, Oregon, wrote:

"I took and measured off one

acre of ground which was in flax and after pulling the flax and leaving in the field for ten days (I thoroughly cured, I hauled it to the warehouse, and it weighed five tons, 975 pounds, which brought me \$45 a ton, or a total of \$244.52 off of the one acre."

The total cost of that acre, wrote Mr. Denham, was \$47.50, including \$4 for rent of the land and \$25 for pulling, leaving a net profit of \$197.42. That was a few years ago, when flax prices were higher than now; also expenses were higher.

Mr. Denham wrote that he netted above all expense last year about \$50 an acre for all his flax.

(The twelve new flax pulling machines, spoken of above, arrived in time for harvest, and six of them were taken out and worked throughout the season; the other six being still in the hands of the state flax plant at the penitentiary. The farmers who had contracted to buy them found that, on account of their short crops, due to the unseasonably dry weather, that they could not fulfill their agreements. These six of the state will no doubt be purchased by the growers next year and used in the harvest. The seven machines used gave good accounts of themselves. In some cases, they pulled flax at less than \$3 an acre, not counting overhead or capital investment in the machines. The machines were sold to the farmers at \$2250 each, actual cost to the state, and some of the machines more than earned their cost this year, to say nothing of the fact that without their use it would have been next to impossible to get the harvesting done at all by hand. This would have been more manifestly the case had there been a normal crop; and it will be evident in future years here. The Portland Chamber of Commerce assisted in paying for the machines by advancing \$12,000 in cash. Excepting for the spot cash payment, the cost of the machines to the growers would have been \$2600 each. Machine pulling will go further than any other one thing towards developing flax growing here on a large scale. It gets the industry away from the necessity of producing flax for the fiber in small tracts, in order that members of the families of the farmers and their neighbors may do the pulling. Also, as will be seen, machine pulling will be done at a fraction of the cost of pulling by hand. One machine may take the place of 80 hand pullers—more, in fact, in cases where, in some years, machines will be equipped with lights and run night and day. Something should be added to this article concerning the fact that the flaxseed oil is the linseed oil of commerce. It is the only "drying oil" that is produced or has ever been produced on a commercial scale, and

(Continued on page 9)



The Vassot flax puller, thirteen of which machines are owned in the Salem district. This shows his puller working on the farm of P. E. Thomason, near Turner, the past season. This machine pulled some flax at less than \$3 an acre, not counting overhead.

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