

WILLAMETTE FARMER.

VOL. XIX.

SALEM, OREGON, FRIDAY, AUGUST 12, 1887.

NO. 27.

THE COWLITZ COUNTRY.

Its Immense Timber Lands—Other Products and Accessibility by Railroads, Etc.

The following interesting article on the Cowlitz country is from the pen of Mr. Frank Owens and is republished from the Oregonian and we assure our readers will enjoy it and that it will be of substantial aid to intending locators:

The Cowlitz is the largest and most important river in Western Washington. Its source of supply in the everlasting snows of Mounts St. Helens and Rainier, and its entire course to the Columbia river is through a soil almost wonderful in its fertility and a region remarkably rich in timber, coal and minerals. The valley is not a narrow strip of bottom land along the water's edge, but is a high and broad plateau extending from the Cascade mountains westward and southward till it imperceptibly merges into the Chehalis valley or ends at the Columbia river. Its width is from ten to forty miles, and its length nearly one hundred, comprising over half of Lewis county, and a strip along the north and west sides of Cowlitz county from three to twenty miles in width. Immediately adjoining this is a strip of sandy loam and vegetable mold soil that is not only particularly adapted to all kinds of vegetable and root crops, but for all kinds of orchard, small fruits it has by actual test been proven to be the very best, while it is also just the land desired for the growth of hops, and is also first-class grain land. Skirting this, on both sides of the river, is a bluff or bank from forty to sixty feet high, from the top of which extends for miles an undulating plateau, which is for the most part covered with forests of fir, cedar, ash, oak, maple and alder, in about the ratio here given. The surface is not hilly or rough, but is broken here and there by swales and living streams of water. There are no marshes or stagnant ponds, but all water is cool and palatable.

THE SOIL.

As before stated the soil of the river bottom is a sandy loam or vegetable mold. It is never affected by drouth, and is as deep as the level of the river. Anything will grow to perfection in it that can be raised in this latitude, and for gardening and fruit-raising it is peculiarly fitted by nature. Early or late frosts seldom injure the tenderest growths, and the natural warmth and moisture of the soil forces everything forward to early maturity. On such land there is, in its natural state, a heavy growth of small underbrush, vine maple, alder, ash and cottonwood; while it is very thrifty and thick it is not hard to get rid of, as the brush and trees burn up clean after a good slashing, the small stumps are easily grubbed, while the larger ones soon rot out. When cleared such land is worth \$100 per acre, as its products will sell for a profit to more than represent that investment.

Of the bench and table lands there are two classes, the first and principal one being the clay loam of the prairies and fir timber lands, and the other a black muck. The latter is found in many of the swales and small bottoms, and is covered with maple, alder and ash timber and small brush. It is underlain with a blue clay subsoil which acts as a receptacle for water, keeping the soil moist through the driest seasons. It is never affected by drouth, and has by long use been proven to be of the strongest nature, retaining its fertility through long years of continued cropping. The many water courses in all parts of the country leading to the river afford ample fall for drainage, and no matter how wet these swales may be, they can soon be drained and prepared for cultivation. Such soil is unexcelled for all kinds of grasses and oats, is good wheat land, and produces fine root crops and vegetables when properly drained and cultivated; for orchards it is not so well adapted as the ridge lands

and river bottoms. The prairies and fir timber lands are principally a clay loam soil, rich and deep. Soil that produces forests of trees ten feet in diameter and 300 feet high bears its own evidence as to its fertility, as does the prairie land that has borne good crops of wheat for fifty years in succession. Both can be seen here. Cowlitz prairie was settled over fifty years ago by the Hudson Bay company, and fields are now shown that since 1839 have almost continuously been put in wheat, have had not a pound of manure, and this year produced a good crop of wheat. Some of the best orchards in the country are on soil where once giant fir trees stood so thick that they would cover the ground if chopped down and laid side by side. There is absolutely no poor or waste land in the country, even the gravel ridges that exist here and there produce fine pasture, and as good fruit lands as there is in this or any other country. So it is safe to say that any land here is worth the having, and the child is unborn that will live to see it worn out.

TIMBER.

Like all Western Washington, the large proportion of the Cowlitz valley is heavily timbered. The predominating growth is fir, after which is cedar, maple, ash, alder, oak, hemlock and pine, is the ratio given. To newcomers from prairie countries the immense growths of timber on most of the vacant land is disheartening, and the task of clearing it off looks formidable to be attempted. But what men have done others can do again, under similar conditions, and when situated near river or mill timber will more than pay for the clearing. For building purposes of all kinds the red and yellow fir is unexcelled on the continent, and it is in great favor with ship builders because of its strength, freedom from knots, and extreme length in which the lumber can be had. Cedar is quite abundant, and is much used in finishing on inside work, shingles, posts and piles. It is the best shingle timber in the world and the market is never glutted; for posts and piling it is in great favor because it practically never rots—many instances being known where fence posts and roofs are sound from surface to core after fifty years' exposure to the elements. The ash, maple and spruce is in demand and particularly adapted for the manufacture of furniture, and the alder is coming into favor for the same purpose. Maple attains to a large size, often reaching a height of seventy-five feet and a diameter of five feet; usually the butt is a huge butt from six to ten feet in diameter and almost as high, that is almost a complete mass of "bird's-eyes," and the finest wood in the world for veneers and trimmings. The oak is not found in many localities or in large quantities, but what there is is tall and straight and equal to the best eastern white. Pine is only found in the foot hills, and has not yet been put on the market.

COAL AND MINERAL.

Coal is found in many places in Cowlitz valley, but has never been mined enough to prove its value in the market. Several veins have been prospected enough to satisfy coal experts of its good qualities, but the capital is lacking to develop them. Almost beneath the town of Toledo is an immense vein of bituminous coal that is as good as any now in the market. The vein has been located, and over a mile of ground leased by an experienced miner; but with proverbial obtuseness the people refuse to put money into its development, and no effort has been made to secure outside help. The mine's location is excellent, being on a navigable stream where its products can be cheaply shipped, and in the midst of an agricultural region where supplies are convenient and cheap. This is an opportunity that will enrich he who is far-seeing enough to seize it. No doubt in many other

places in the valley the coal is just as good as well as the opportunity for a profitable investment.

Gold and silver are found in varying qualities the entire length of the valley, and there is no doubt but that in several places near the head-waters of the Cowlitz and its tributaries exists rich leads of the precious metals that must some day bring wealth to the fortunate prospector.

VACANT LAND.

There is considerable vacant land in Cowlitz valley, but there is no prairie, and but little on the river bottom open for settlement under government provisions, but there is considerable choice railroad land on the river that can be bought for \$3 50 to \$5 per acre that is as good as any yet taken. Back from the river, from three to six miles, in many localities, can be found choice government land that can be had under the homestead or pre-emption laws, at a small cost. These claims are just as good as any that are taken, and when roads are constructed the distance will be no objection. Let it be understood that all the vacant land on the Cowlitz is timbered more or less. A considerable portion of it is swale or brush land, but much of it is heavily timbered. There is about fifteen miles from Toledo, on the south side of the river, a large scope of unsurveyed land that has but little large timber on it, but is covered with alder, maple and small brush; it is easy clearing and can be prepared for cultivation at a cost of \$10 to \$20 per acre, but at trifling cost if the settler does it himself. There is also a great deal of similar land in various parts of the country, but in smaller bodies. The timber lands can be cleared at cost of \$20 to \$40, if the work is hired, and is fine soil when once put under cultivation. A favorite way with settlers to subdue such land is to have it well slashed, burned off, and then seeded down to grass. When pastured a few years the small stumps rot out and the larger ones can be removed at leisure. Many a man with a family has gone into the heaviest timber almost without a cent, and in two years had land enough in cultivation to keep them comfortably. This can be done again, in a thousand cases. If a claim can be secured in a mile or two of the river or a sawmill the timber will sell for enough to pay for clearing the land, and the day is at hand when a timber claim will be a desirable property for speculation.

HOW TO GET LAND.

There are three ways to gain title to the vacant land—by homestead, pre-emption, or purchasing timber land.

Any citizen of the United States, who is the head of a family, or an unmarried person over the age of 21 years, is entitled to a homestead of 160 acres. Persons of foreign birth may avail themselves of the benefit of this law by declaring their intention to become citizens; and this they can do immediately after their arrival in this country. The land office fees are from \$16 to \$22, which must be paid at the time of filing the application. Within six months after filing his application at the land office the settler must commence living upon and improving the land, thereafter for five years he must make this tract his actual home.

Any person qualified to take a homestead is also entitled to 160 acres under the pre-emption law—but not at the same time. Within ninety days after settlement on the land he must file his application in the district land office where the land is located, which will cost \$3, but he must commence settlement before making his application. At any time after six months residence, and up to thirty months after filing his application, the settler may pay for the land at the rate of \$1.25 or \$2.50 an acre according to location, and receive his patent from the United States. Railroad lands can be bought of the railroad company. They range in price from \$3 to \$6 per acre and can be had

on five or ten years' time, with interest at 7 per cent., or by paying cash.

PRODUCTS.

It is needless to specify what can be raised in this country. Almost every kind of vegetables of use to mankind is grown to perfection and in enormous quantity. Potatoes are a standard crop and often yield 300 bushels of an A1 article to the acre. Turnips, carrots and beets are much raised for stock and yield from eight to fifteen tons. Clover and timothy is the favorite grass for hay, and three tons to the acre is common. Oats, wheat and barley are successfully grown everywhere. Orchards and berries grow easily and in great abundance and perfection, and the yield is always as large as the trees or vines will stand. Fruit is especially a good profitable crop, and in this line the raising of prunes is beginning to receive a share of attention; the crop is a good one and highly profitable, while the market is never overstocked. One prune orchard that the writer knows of cost the owner \$40 four years ago to plant an acre; it bore the second year, and the third the profits on the one acre was over \$300, the crop being sold green; if dried, it would have cleared a profit of a hundred more. Hops grow in profusion and perfection in this soil, and is a crop that always pays.

TRANSPORTATION.

The matter of transportation is always of importance to the farmer, business man and manufacturer. The N. P. railroad follows the Cowlitz river as far as Olequa, thus giving to that point two trains a day each way to Portland, Or., and Tacoma, W. T., besides the advantage of water navigation. Joseph Kellogg & Co. own the line of steamers doing business on the river and from Portland a tri-weekly boat to Freeport and a semi-weekly boat to Toledo, and to higher points occasionally when freight offers. This company also expects to build a new light draft steamboat soon, to run entirely on the river, which will go as high as there is any business to be done year around. Kellogg & Co.'s steamers are a fine class of river boats and are controlled by competent officers, who never forget to be gentlemen, and who are always ready to comply with any reasonable request of their patrons. The company's freight and passenger rates are lower than any other similar line on the coast, and while, like other concerns, their steamers are run to make money, they never neglect or refuse to perform such service as will best accommodate the public when possible. In fact the development and prosperity of this valley is in a great measure due to their liberality and enterprise, and their policy has ever been hand in hand with the progress of the country. Here, at least is one locality in which is never heard curses on "the grinding heel of monopoly," and here is an instance where the people have no wish for an "opposition." No company could do the work better, cheaper or more to accommodate their patrons than does the Joseph Kellogg Company, and immigrants will not only find the steamboat officers ready to do their business courteously and promptly, but to furnish full and reliable information about the country and opportunities for work or business.

The Portland office of the Cowlitz river steamers is at the foot of Yamhill street, where immigrants should always apply for information as to ways of reaching any part of Lewis or Cowlitz counties.

TOLEDO.

The town of Toledo is situated on the west bank of the Cowlitz river, about forty miles from its mouth, and in the heart of the richest and best settled portions of the fertile Cowlitz valley. It is about eighty miles from Portland, Or., and seventy from Tacoma, W. T. The steamer Toledo makes two round trips per week from Portland to Toledo, leaving Portland Monday and Thursday, and returning leaves Toledo Tuesday and Friday. The Northern Pacific railroad is seven miles distant, the nearest

stations being Winlock and Olequa, about the same distance from the town. There is a daily mail and stage line to Winlock, which is the best point for railroad travelers to stop to reach here, unless coming on steamer days, when they should get off at Olequa, getting here at less expense and trouble.

Business lots in Toledo are twenty-five feet front; residence lots fifty feet. Prices are \$30 to \$60, according to location. The site is principally on gravelly soil, high enough above the river to preclude danger from overflow, never gets muddy in the wettest weather, and is well watered and drained. A portion of the town is on a deep rich soil, which is being sold for residence lots, and on which splendid gardens are grown.

The business houses include three large general merchandise stores, three hotels, tin store, blacksmith shop, drug store, furniture store and factory, barber shop, newspaper and job printing office, marble cutter, several carpenters and two saloons.

The Grand Army of the Republic will soon erect a hall 22x50 feet for their own use, or for other organizations; the Baptist church is preparing to put up a house of worship, and a splendid schoolhouse is being built on a handsome site donated by the town-site company.

The townsite proprietors are awake to the importance of encouraging manufacturing industries to locate here; and to those whose attentions are good and whose business will justify it, will give building sites free. This generous offer has already been taken advantage of by a flouring mill company and a sash and door manufacturer, both of which will commence business this fall. There is no better point on the coast for a shingle mill, or a large furniture factory. The latter especially would be a profitable industry, on account of the abundance of excellent timber near at hand, rivaling in beauty and usefulness the finest woods of the East; the maple and alder grow to immense size, and the wood is susceptible of the highest finish, the latter being equally as handsome as Spanish walnut; with the ash, oak, white and red cedar right at hand at a nominal cost. In this business alone are fortunes to be made easier and quicker than mining some new Eldorado. Toledo is also an excellent location for a creamery or a cheese factory, the products of which are always in demand at profitable rates, and no country in the world can furnish better material, water or climate. A tannery would also do a paying business here, there being good bark for tanning near at hand and hides plentiful.

Besides the industries here mentioned almost any enterprise which would pay anywhere would be profitable here. There would be no high rents, taxes or insurance, fuel cheap and abundant and freights very low. Of course with the advent of such institutions would come other industries and business enterprises, for which there is ample room and opportunities.

To parties East contemplating a change of location, Toledo offers as many advantages as can be found on the coast. Its situation is all that can be desired in an inland town; the summer air is tempered by the cool breezes from Puget Sound, and in winter warmed by the great Japan current, while the Olympic range of mountains on the west and the Cascades on the east shelter it completely from strong winds or cold blasts. Abundance of pure water is obtained by digging fifteen or twenty feet, a fine little stream from living streams flows through the town, while the Cowlitz river, having its head but sixty miles away in the eternal snows of St. Helens and Rainier, and flowing swiftly through evergreen forests and shady banks, is all the year round the purest and best of water. And so, besides being a good business point, Toledo offers manifold attractions as a place of residence, for which it already has many advantages of older towns. A year ago the resident population of Toledo was about 150; at present it is over 300. The private dwellings would be creditable to any town, and the inhabitants are public spirited, while their morality is uncommonly good.