

UMATILLA RESERVATION HAS VALUABLE LAND MOST OF WHICH IS LEASED TO WHITE MEN; SOME FARM ALLOTMENTS

40,000 Acres on Reservation; Rentals Run as High as \$20 Per Acre; New Allotments Now Being Made to Indians.

PRACTICALLY one-fourth of the total area of the Umatilla Indian reservation is leased out to white men for farming purposes. The Indians have now leased out 40,000 acres and in return receive approximately \$125,000 a year in rentals. From these moneys the landed proprietors manage to eke out a very comfortable existence.

On Jan. 26, 1910, the end of the last fiscal year, there were 483 distinct leases in effect between Indians and whites. Some persons held more than one lease, as is evidenced by the fact that there are but 122 lessors. Of this number 126 are whites, 6 are Indians and 1 is a Chinese.

Land within the Umatilla reservation are probably among the most productive of any reservation land in the United States. Nearly all of the 40,000 acres under lease produce wheat or other grain crops and many tracts command an annual rental of as high as \$20 an acre. The average rental for the whole 40,000 acres is, however, but \$3.20 an acre, due to the fact that some grazing land is included. The grain produced from reservation wheat land will likely average \$60 per acre per crop, which makes the yield worth \$1,000,000 or more annually from this part of the county alone.

Two hundred additional leases are to be signed October 1 and will be at more attractive figures than those now in effect. The average of the new leases will be considerably above \$5 an acre, it is stated at the agency.

with some lands bid as high as \$25 an acre.

The leasing of reservation lands is handled through the Indian agency and approved by the department of Indian affairs. The superintendent of the reservation appraises the rental value of various plots of land and advertises for bids to be opened at a stated time. Persons who wish to farm the land may place their bid with the superintendent at a figure equal to or in excess of the assessed rental valuation. His figure is placed as the minimum.

Building Plan Used

In cases where there is competition for a piece of land within the reservation, the tenant is allowed to meet the higher bid before the lease is transferred. The principle of good tenantry is followed in making and renewing leases and the price the tenant must pay for his land depends often upon the value placed upon it by a would-be tenant.

It was formerly the case that the Indian owners could make their own bargains for the lease of their lands and it has been but two years since the leasing of the land was taken out of their hands and placed in those of the superintendent. The natives remonstrated against the change when it was first made in 1917, but when they began to see their rentals increasing they were relieved of the responsibility of dickering, they were better satisfied. It is also more satisfactory to tenants to deal with the agent than with the Indians, for he

is assured of a chance to retain his lease as long as he will meet the price offered for the land and proven an acceptable tenant.

Get Rents Semi-Annually

Rentals on Indian lands are collected by the superintendent semi-annually and the moneys accruing are deposited to the accounts of the various Indian owners. These accounts are all carefully kept in the agency and Indians may check against them upon request of the superintendent. Accounts of minors are kept in like manner and a certain amount allowed for their support and maintenance, to be paid to their parents. In some cases an Indian who shows that he is competent to manage his own affairs is allowed to handle his bank account, but lands are leased through the agency.

Approximately 10,000 acres of land within the reservation have been sold to outsiders. Sale of land is made possible by two methods, either of which is a slow process. One is by sale direct, following the issuance of a fee patent to the Indian owner, and the other is by sale through the agent.

When land is allotted an Indian, the government issues a trust patent, holding the land in trust for him for a period of 25 years. If the owner can show before an examining board that he is competent to administer the affairs of his property, he is passed by the board and he can then apply to Washington for a fee patent. When this is issued, he may do as he

pleases with his land. Since 1906 25,000 acres of land have been patented to competent Indians and some of this has passed out of their hands by sale.

May Sell Some Land

Lands may be sold through the agency at public sale by bids. Should the owner decide he wants to sell, he may make application through the agent for a sale and the agent will appraise the land at its market value, post notices of the sale and call for sealed bids. The bids are passed on by the headquarters in the national capital and if acceptable a patent in fee is issued to the purchaser direct. The money is paid in to the agency and is apportioned to the various owners or heirs as they are entitled to a share of the proceeds.

Probably less than one-tenth of the reservation area has passed from Indian ownership and the majority of the natives hold to their possessions zealously. The rentals from their lands furnish them a comfortable living and preclude the necessity of their working. The heritage of their fathers buys for them automobiles, good clothes, plenty of food, provides travel and plenty of time for leisure, something the red skin has never objected to. Why should an Indian work when the income from his allotment will keep him in comfort for the rest of his days?

Indians make their homes on their holdings in some cases, but not all

dwelt upon their own lands. A few of them engage in wheat raising besides being renters and some have become very wealthy. The Indians recently organized and purchased harvesting machinery with which to harvest their grain crops. The machinery is community property and handles much of the crop which they themselves grow.

Allotted in 1891. First allotments of land under the allotment act were made in 1891 and at that time about 75,000 acres of the best lands on the reservation were apportioned out to the tribal members. Other allotments have been made from time to time since and about 25,000 acres under the original grants have passed from government control selections were made in that year, for one reason or another. Some of the lands have been sold and others granted patents to the owners.

Prior to 1891 when about 1000 Indians were given 50 acres each, the reservation was a community proposition. It was agreed between the Indians and the government that they should have individual tracts and the Since that time about 450 allotments have been made, mostly to children born following the first distribution of land. There are still about 115 Indians to be allotted lands, these will be given their 50 acres this fall. There are only about 22,000 acres of land remaining within the reservation to

(Continued on page 3)

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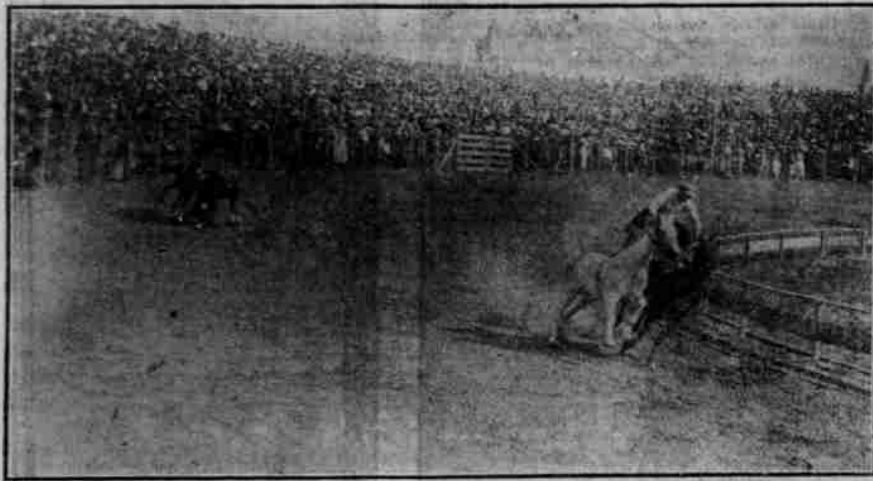
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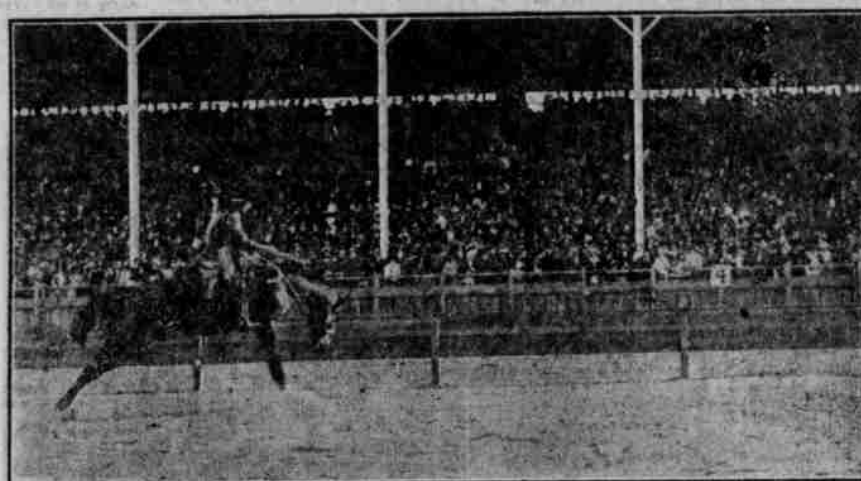
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