

## READ AND REFLECT

### County Judge Goodall Expresses His Views.

The People of Union to be Believed When They Certify That They Would Oppose the Building of a New Court House.

### CONDITION OF THE COURT HOUSE

### Cost of the County Jail--Its Excellent Condition.

### COUNTY INDEBTEDNESS \$80,000

New Bridges and Improved Roads Needed More than a Court House at La Grande.

### Importance of the South Part of the County.

### THE INCOMING COUNTY COURT.

Taxpayers, Read This Article Carefully and Think About It.

### EDITOR SCOUT--

The Gazette of the 23d inst. seems to take exceptions to my circulating county seat matter, and says that I must take a deep personal interest in the county seat fight, and says the only inference is that I own a handsome lot in Union, in all of which the Gazette is correct. But he failed to say that which is a fact, that I own a farm in La Grande precinct worth several times the value of all the property I own in Union. I expect that my home in the future for many years past will be in La Grande precinct, and while my financial interests are but small anywhere, I would be more largely benefited pecuniarily by the prosperity of La Grande, than that of any other town, and if the removal of the county seat would only affect the town of Union I should make no effort to prevent it.

Now the facts stated above ought to satisfy any unprejudiced mind that I entertain no malice or prejudice for La Grande. I entertain none but the very kindest feelings of friendship for most of her citizens, and I wish to say here now that I am not responsible in any sense of the word for anything contained in any circular on the county seat question, and will say further that the particular circular that I left in La Grande last week makes some statements concerning the people of La Grande that are untrue and unjust, and not calculated to help Union in this contest, and should in reality have no weight either way. I think the writer of said circular (and I know not who he is) has fallen into some errors, perhaps unintentionally.

The matter of relocating the county seat is of great and vital importance to every taxpayer and permanent resident of the county, and should be weighed without prejudice and decided by every voter for himself, according to his best judgment, for the best interests of the whole county and not in the interest of any particular locality. I presume that I am better acquainted with the territory and people of the county than any one else, and I entertain a warm friendship for every section of the county, and earnestly desire that we should remain as one county, and improve our wonderful natural advantages and become a prosperous, happy and united people, in sympathy, friendship and love as well as in fact.

Union county is blessed with as great and varied natural advantages as any other county, and it is entirely within the power of her citizens by making good and wise use of the beauties lavished upon her by nature, to make her one of the most prosperous and desirable counties in the northwest. And it is not at all impossible. On the other hand, I fear that there is danger, that in the very near future we will in a great measure, at least, destroy all our fine prospects and opportunities.

I wish to give my reasons as briefly as I can for opposing the removal of the county seat at this time: First, the town of Union is much nearer the center of the county than any other available point. It is ninety miles from Union to the county line in a southeasterly direction to Snake river

and thirty miles further than it is from Union to the county line in any other direction, and manifestly it would be an injustice amounting to an outrage to force the county seat fifteen miles further away from them, and the inevitable result of such action would be that we would lose that portion of the county, which will reduce the amount of our taxable property very materially for all time to come, which will increase the burden of taxation correspondingly.

This we cannot well afford to do, I think, for we all find our taxes heavy as it is, and never pay them without something of a grunt, and I think we should certainly oppose any course calculated to increase them.

The sentiment of the people of the southeastern portion of the county is almost unanimously in favor of remaining in Union county, at least a few years yet, provided they are treated justly and fairly by their fellow citizens of the rest of the county, but they say, almost to a man, that if a majority of the voters of the county care so little for their interest and welfare, as to take the county seat still fifteen miles further away from them, when they are already so much further away than other portions, they will secede, and certainly no one could reasonably blame them.

I have known our present court house since before its completion, having been about the building a great deal for the last nine years, and have visited it almost daily during the past four years. I saw it just after it was damaged by the wind storm, so much talked of, of late, that was caused by one of those sudden squalls, which every old settler of Grande Ronde valley is familiar with. Most of us have had to rebuild many a haystack after them. That wind caught under the gable end of the roof which projects over the wall considerably, and lifted a considerable portion of the roof off of the building, and knocked down a small portion of the wall of the gable end on to the court room floor, jarring off some of the plastering under the floor. This damage was caused solely by the wind and not in any sense of the word by reason of any defects in the wall, but would in all probability have been equally as great to any other building with a similar roof, encountered by a like wind. Several other buildings in Union were almost as greatly damaged by the same wind though none of them were so high as the court house or had roofs projecting so far. The walls of the court house cracked slightly very soon after being finished, but those cracks have never become any larger since the first year, or less time, after its completion, and I honestly believe that it is as little liable to fall down as any brick building of equal height. I have often seen the court house full to overflowing until there was no longer standing room, and the wind blowing fiercely too. Last winter is generally conceded to have been one of the very windiest of winters, and I was in it almost every day, and some of these same parties who are striving so hard to make the voters of the county believe that the court house is in a dangerous condition, were in the building quite frequently, and I never noticed any signs of fear or nervousness on their part, notwithstanding the fact that the wind was raging on the outside. Nor have I at any time noticed any sign of the walls giving away, or any portion of the building, or any sign, whatever of danger. Consequently, I say candidly, that the court house is just as safe now as it was at the time it was finished, thirteen years ago, or at any other time.

And, now, taking into consideration the condition and boundaries of the county, and the fact that Union is the most centrally located of any town in the county, and that the court house is amply sufficient for all purposes for the next twelve or fifteen years, certainly as good for the next thirteen years as for the last thirteen years, and that we have as good a county jail (not so large as some) as there is in the state, the county seat should be let alone. Here I wish to say what has not been published before, I believe, in these discussions, that the jail, cells, and all complete, cost the county more money than the court house, as shown by the records, and the fact that the county is considerably in debt, even putting the indebtedness, as the Gazette has it, taken from the county clerk's financial report, which is correct but needs an explanation to be correctly understood by most persons. You will notice that that statement makes the total liabilities of the county \$122,613 05, and he gives as assets, or means with which to pay this indebtedness the estimated unpaid cur-

rent taxes, in hands of sheriff, \$76,838 07. Now of this uncollected taxes in the hands of the sheriff, a large portion of which will remain unpaid, about four thousand dollars of it is delinquent taxes prior to 1889, some of it running back three or four years and as the sheriff has failed to collect it in that time, there is little hope that he ever will, and of the taxes on the assessment for 1889, at least \$100,000 will have to be cancelled by the county court, being illegal and erroneous assessments. On this the County will lose \$2,700 and yet will be compelled to pay to the State \$600 on assessments, on which not a dollar is collected, then on the remainder of this uncollected taxes, a large portion will never be collected. That has always been the case, and furthermore while the portion of this uncollected taxes that will be collected, is being collected, the indebtedness of the County is accumulating at the rate of some \$40,000 or \$50,000 per year. If the county court meets the demands on it in paying for criminal prosecutions, officer's fees, building and repairing bridges and roads and other current and incidental expenses, and in all probability when the county clerk publishes his financial statement of the county next April 1st, it will show outstanding county warrants and accrued interest, or, in other words, a county indebtedness of some \$70,000 or \$80,000, and that, too, without any extraordinary expenditures.

The necessary expenditures of this county for a number of years to come, for the improvement of roads and in building and maintaining bridges, will be very heavy. I can call to mind now some 25 or 30 bridges that will need to be built in the next two years, which will cost from \$1000 to \$3000 each, and quite a number of them are demanded immediately. Large expenditures on the county roads will be demanded to meet the necessities of the county. Nearly every portion of the county requires help to improve the roads, and will demand it and should have it. I think that they need roads more and would prefer to have them better than a new court house and jail that is not needed, and I certainly believe that they will so decide next Monday.

From my standpoint I can see no reason why the county seat should go to La Grande, but every good reason why it should not. Why should all the taxpayers of the county be burdened with an unnecessary tax to build up La Grande? Granting that the securing of the county seat, with the result that is sure to follow, will add to her prosperity, which I very much doubt, believing as I do, if I lived in La Grande and all my property was there, I should oppose it.

The eastern or southeastern portion of our county is already quite important and is destined, not long in the future, to be a very rich country. Her mineral resources of gold, silver, copper, etc., are immense, as well as her timber, her agricultural and pastoral lands are extensive and of the very best quality. It is my candid opinion that one among the richest mining camps in the world will be developed in that end of the county, and in consideration of these facts I do not think that we can afford to lose that section if we can hold it by fair and just dealing. The county seat movers of La Grande speak of that portion of the county with a sneer and as not being of sufficient importance to warrant making any effort to retain, and that they would rather get rid of it, as a sort of an excuse to get the county seat.

Now, with regard to the portion of the county west of La Grande. That can never maintain but a sparse population. It is chiefly valuable for its timber and is only sparsely timbered. One of the principal sawmill men of that section remarked to me, only a few days since, that in two years at most there would not be employment for one-third the men in the timber that are there now; and that in five years about all the timber in reach of the railroad would be cut out. The area of agricultural land is very inconsiderable and generally of a poor character.

The county seat movers keep reiterating the charge that the people of Union, if they can retain the county seat, design proceeding immediately to condemn the present court house and build a new and costly one, as they are not limited by statute as to cost, etc. Well, now, the people of Union and vicinity, only a few days since, every legal voter, save about half a dozen who could not be seen just then, signed a statement, which was published in the papers of Union, to the effect that they believed the court house perfectly safe and secure and amply sufficient for all necessary county seat purposes, and that they

were opposed and would oppose the building of another for many years to come; and I fully believe that every person who signed that statement, meant it just as much, and were as honest and sincere in doing so, and are entitled to just as much credence as any person (not excepting the Honorable James H. Slater) who makes those groundless charges against the people of Union. I believe they meant just what that statement said and are entitled to believe; and, besides, Union will be entirely powerless to do anything of the kind. Just take a sensible view of the situation, Mr. McDonald will hold the office of county commissioner for the next two years, and I will vouch for his opposing the building of a new court house at Union. Then there is Mr. Lang, of Pine Valley. Does anyone believe that he will favor building a new court house at Union, if elected? I do not believe that the county seat movers of La Grande think so. If they do, I will guarantee he will not. Then there is Mr. Arnold, of Hilgard precinct. I guess the county seat movers of La Grande will pledge him against building a new court house at Union, if elected. If they hesitate to make that pledge for him I will make it. The commissioner elected next Monday will hold the office for four years. Then the candidates for county judge, Mr. Rinehart, of Summerville, and Mr. Sanders, of North Powder, neither of whom have any property interest in Union, and no one, not excepting the county seat movers of La Grande, believe either of them will favor the building of a new court house at Union. I can safely assert they will not, and that disposes of that bugbear for four years. I have no sort of doubt that any move to build a new court house at Union, if the county seat is retained there, will appear as far in the dim future at the end of four years as now.

No one envies La Grande her prosperity, but let her not strive to force all the taxpayers of the county to contribute to her greatness. She has her advantages and they are considerable and important, if she will make good use of them. We will rejoice to note her progress, and the greater she becomes, the greater will be our pride in our county town, but let us not wreck the future prospects of the whole county to secure a very questionable advantage to La Grande. Undoubtedly great changes will take place in this county in the next few years. No one is wise enough to say now where the county seat should be ten years hence. The southeastern portion of the county will undoubtedly be connected with this valley in the very near future by railroad. That will very greatly assist in developing the mines and open up large lumber interests, and add largely to the population and wealth of that end of the county. Probably other railroads will be built and other towns will spring up, and the center of population is liable to change very much in the near future, and as our present county buildings are all sufficient for awhile yet at least, and there is no necessity for any change now and the county is considerably in debt, and there will be other large demands on the taxpayers to build and maintain bridges, roads and other legitimate and unavoidable expenses of the county, I think we had better let well enough alone awhile yet and leave the county seat where it is a few years longer, and I am sure that a majority of the legal voters of the county think so too, and will so express themselves at the ballot box next Monday.

O. P. GOODALL.

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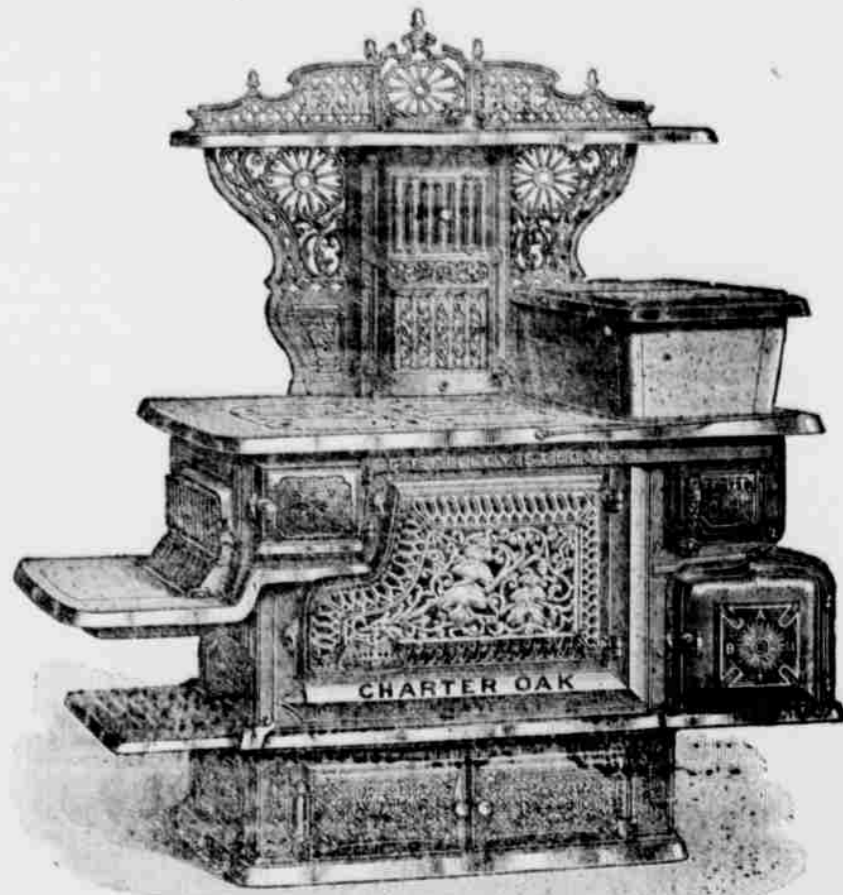
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Before purchasing your mower this year, don't fail to call on us and see our new Whitney "solid steel" mower. We claim it to be the most perfect grass cutter ever produced. Those visiting the exposition in Portland last fall will remember seeing it in operation. It speaks for itself. Don't fail to call and examine it.--HALL BROS., Union, Oregon. 5-12-11

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