

SAID ALL OREGON WAS WORTHLESS

WHAT DAN'L WEBSTER THOUGHT OF IT

Hard Words From Former Days on Whole North West Country—The Early Prophets Were Quite Sure Their Pessimism Was Just

In a recent magazine article Professor D. L. Sharp describes a trip he took last summer from Bend to Burns in company with Game Warden Finley, who was bringing a shipment of trout to the interior town. The journey seems to have impressed the professor, although not always favorably, and he takes occasion to speak somewhat derogatively of the homestead country. In this he has support from earlier authorities whose views of the whole Oregon country were decidedly pessimistic.

The two opinions are of considerable interest, not only in comparison with the real facts, but in their bearing on each other. Extracts from them are given herewith.

In Professor Sharp's article the most critical paragraph is the following:

"I have seen many sorts of desperation, but none like that of the men who attempted to make a home out of three hundred and fifty acres of High Desert sage. For this is so much more than they need. Three feet by six in the sage is land enough—and then there were the need of wire for a fence or a well for water. Going down to sea in ships or into mines by a lift, are none too high prices to pay for life; but going out on the desert with a government claim and the necessary plow, the necessary wire fence, the necessary years of residence, and other things made necessary by law, to say nothing of those required by nature and perhaps by marriage, is to pay all too dearly for death, and to make of one's funeral a needlessly desolate thing. A man ploughing the sage! a woman keeping the shack—a patch of dirt against the dust; a shadow within a shadow, and nothing then but sage and sand and space."

The other and earlier opinions on Oregon were expressed in the United States Senate many years ago. Delegate Wickersham of Alaska resurrected them in the course of the debate on the Alaska railroad bill, opponents of which had attempted to belittle the northern country. At the time, Oregon, it should be remembered, was the name applied to the whole northwestern country which included the present state of Oregon. The quotations, with Mr. Wickersham's comment are as follows:

Like the poor, the pessimists are always with us, and other pessimists have occupied seats in Congress. Senator Benton in a speech in 1825, said of the great West, with which he was subsequently acquainted:

"The ridge of the Rocky Mountains may be named as the convenient, natural, and everlasting boundary. Along this ridge the western limits of the Republic should be drawn and the statue of the fabled god Terminus should be erected on its highest peak, never to be thrown down."

The Oregon controversy from 1825 to 1846 brought out a new crop of congenial unbelievers, Senator Dickerson, of New Jersey, was thus afflicted, as all Oregonians will agree. He said of Oregon in the period when national legislators knew as little of that region as some of them now do of Alaska:

"Oregon can never be one of the United States. If we extend our laws to it we must consider it as a colony."

"But is this territory of Oregon to become a State, a member of this Union? Never. The Union is already too extensive and we must make two or three new States from the Territories already formed. * * * Yet a young able bodied Senator might travel from Oregon to Washington and back once a year, but he could do nothing else. It would be more expeditious, however, to come by water around Cape Horn or to pass through Berings Straits, around the north coast of this continent to Baffins Bay, thence through Davis Strait to the Atlantic and on to Washington. It is true, this passage has not yet been discovered, except upon our maps, but it will be as soon as Oregon shall be a State."

There are gentlemen from Oregon here who know whether the Senator's statement is correct or not.

Pessimism never dies, and even some great men are of this mournful type. Daniel Webster was a great man, but listen to this:

"What do we want with the vast, worthless area, this region of savages and whirlwinds of dust, of cactus, and prairie dogs? To what use could we ever hope to put these great deserts, or these endless mountain ranges, impenetrable, and covered to their base with eternal snow? What can we ever hope to do with the western coast, a coast of 2,000 miles, rock-bound, cheerless, and uninviting and not a harbor on it. Mr. President, I will never vote one cent from the Public Treasury to place the Pacific coast one inch nearer to Boston than it is now."

And that from Boston, too! Just think of it! And at that time that coast which he said was rock-bound and did not have a harbor on it, had the most beautiful harbor in the world—Puget Sound.

Daniel was here speaking of what is now known as Oregon, Washington, and Idaho, and of a coast which has the greatest harbor in the United States proper—Puget Sound.

Another Senator was equally as doubtful as the Senator from Massa-

chusetts or my friend from Oklahoma.

Senator McDuffie, of South Carolina, characterizes the Oregon country in the following way, and incidentally damns the agricultural resources of the States between the Mississippi and the Rocky Mountains with faint praise:

"What is the character of this country? As I understand it, there are 700 miles this side of the Rocky Mountains which is uninhabitable, where the rain never falls, mountains wholly impassable except through gaps and depressions to be reached only by going hundreds of miles out of the direct course. Well, what are you going to do in such a case? How are you going to apply steam? Have you made an estimate of the cost of a railroad to the mouth of the Columbia? Why, the weight of the Indies would be insufficient. Of what use would it be for agricultural purposes? I would not, for that purpose give a pinch of snuff for the whole territory. I wish the Rocky Mountains were an impassable barrier. If there was an embankment 5 feet high to be removed I would not consent to spend \$5 to remove it and enable our population to go there."

And on another occasion, when his digestion must have been worse than usual, the same Senator declared:

"And if there ever was a country upon the face of the earth in which I should consider it a great misfortune for the poorest man to settle—if there be any country in the world which has been blasted by God, which is utterly destitute of all conceivable attraction, in so much as to be scarcely capable of sustaining the life of human beings, it is this very Territory of Oregon."

And Senator Dayton, of New Jersey, declared:

"That with the exception of land along the Willamette and strips along other water courses the whole country is as irreclaimable and barren a waste as the desert of Sahara; nor is that the worst, the climate is so unfriendly to human life that the native population is dwindling away under the ravages of malaria."

This region was alleged to be utterly worthless only when it was unknown to the members of this House as Alaska seems to be now.

And therefore, in answer to the nugacious opinion so freely announced by my friend from Oklahoma, that Alaska is not and can never become an agricultural country, permit me to make a further quotation from Senator Dickerson, by way of giving his then generally accepted opinion of the value of the Great American Desert, and particularly of that part of it which is now occupied by the truly agricultural State of Oklahoma, for the purpose of demonstrating what such opinions are worth:

"From the meridian of Council Bluffs there is an immense region, extending to the Rocky Mountains, containing about 160,000 square miles, which from the sterility of the soil, the want of wood and water, can never be cultivated, and, of course, never admit of civilized population. An accurate description of this region may be found in Maj. Long's Expedition (vol. 2, p. 250).

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After describing this country, he says on page 261:

"In regard to this extensive country, I do not hesitate in giving the opinion that it is almost wholly unfit for cultivation and, of course, uninhabitable by a people depending upon agriculture for subsistence. Although tracts of fertile land considerably extensive are occasionally to be met with, yet the scarcity of wood and water almost uniformly prevalent will prove an insuperable obstacle in the way of settling the country. This objection rests not only against the immediate section under consideration, but applies with equal propriety to a much larger portion of the country. Agreeably to the best intelligence that can be had concerning the country both northward and southward of the section, and especially to the inference deducible from the account given by Lewis and Clarke of the country situated between the Missouri and the Rocky Mountains above the River Platte, the vast region commencing near the source of the Sabine, Trinity, Brazos and Colorado, and extending northwardly to the forty-ninth degree of north latitude, by which the United States territory is limited in that direction, is throughout of a similar character. The whole of this region seems peculiarly adapted as a range for buffaloes, wild goats, and other wild game, incalculable multitudes of which find ample pasturage and subsistence upon it."

SHANIKO ROAD REPAIRS.

Perry Munroe, road supervisor in the Cross Keys district was in town on business on Monday. He is about to begin on repair work on the old Shaniko road near Bolters where the road approaches Cow Canyon. To those who first came into Central Oregon over this route the news of the repairs will come as an interesting fact. They only wish it had been done years ago.

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NOTICE OF CONTEST.

Department of the Interior, United States Land Office, The Dalles, Oregon, April 1, 1914.
To Jon Wock of 165 1/2 Pine street, Spokane, Wash., contestee:
You are hereby notified that Eugene Hall, who gives P. O. Box 147, Bend, Oregon, as his post-office address, did on February 13, 1914, file in this office his duly corroborated application to contest and secure the

cancellation of your homestead, entry No. 23, Serial No. 08433, made March 23, 1911, for N 1/4 Sec. 13, Township 20, S., Range 18 E. Willamette Meridian, and as grounds for his contest he alleges that Jon Wock has failed to establish his residence on said tract; that he has failed to cultivate said tract or any part thereof; that said entryman has abandoned said tract for upwards of six months last past and that such failure was not due to his employment in the army, navy or marine corps of the United States in time of war or otherwise.

You are, therefore, further notified that the said allegations will be taken by this office as having been confessed by you, and your said entry will be canceled thereafter without your further right to be heard therein, either before this office or on appeal, if you fail to file in this office within twenty days after the FOURTH publication of this notice, as shown below, your answer, under oath, specifically meeting and responding to these allegations of contest, or if you fail within that time to file in this office due proof that you have served a copy of your answer on the said contestant either in person or by registered mail. If this service is made by the delivery of a copy of your answer to the contestant in person, proof of such service must be either the said contestant's written acknowledgment of his receipt of the copy, showing the date of its receipt, or the affidavit of the person by whom the delivery was made stating when and where the copy was delivered; if made by regis-

tered mail, proof of such service must consist of the affidavit of the person by whom the copy was mailed stating when and the postoffice to which it was mailed, and this affidavit must be accompanied by the postmaster's receipt for the letter.

You should state in your answer the name of the postoffice to which you desire further notices to be sent to you.

H. FRANK WOODCOCK, Register.

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