

Resources of Sherman County Are Soil, Water, and Power

The native, original, basic resource of Sherman county is land. The excellent soil that produced the tall grass was produced from disintegration of volcanic outpourings from the rising Cascades with some additions from glacial movement. Hundreds of years of grass with its moisture-holding abilities made a soil rich in humus, retentive of water. It was deep and fertile except where eroded by wind and storm.

It was soil that attracted settlers to this county. Nearly all of those who stayed were farmers—and they liked and appreciated the soil they homesteaded.

There are 830 square miles of land surface in Sherman county and six square miles of water surface. There should be 531,200 acres in the county but, as federal state and local surveys are seldom in agreement, the county is normally credited with 525,000 acres.

Of this amount 464,004 acres are called taxable by the county assessor. Some is still owned by the federal government, a little by the state, a few acres are tax exempt.

More than half of Sherman county is tillable and tilled, a percentage greater than that of any other Oregon county. Only Umatilla, and in late years, Morrow, has more acres under plow than Sherman county. There is no timber, few big canyons to reduce the usable acreage. On a topographical map Sherman county shows as an almost white space between the more hilly and steeper surfaces of Wasco and Gilliam counties on either side.

We have done well with the land, have apparently found the best crop through good times and bad, dry years and wet. In 80 years of practice and of learning our farmers have become experts

in this particular county.

Despite the scare stories put out by the soil conservation service, more particularly in the days when it was guided by opinion instead of information, Sherman county soil is still good soil. Eighty years of farming mostly under the summerfallow system that lays the land bare to the elements every other year has reduced the nitrogen content to a rather low mark. But it is a purchasable commodity. Loss of humus thru stubble burning has caused the physical properties of the soil to change and it is not so friable as in the days when the roots of the grass were first plowed. It does not take water as easily. More livestock would help the soil.

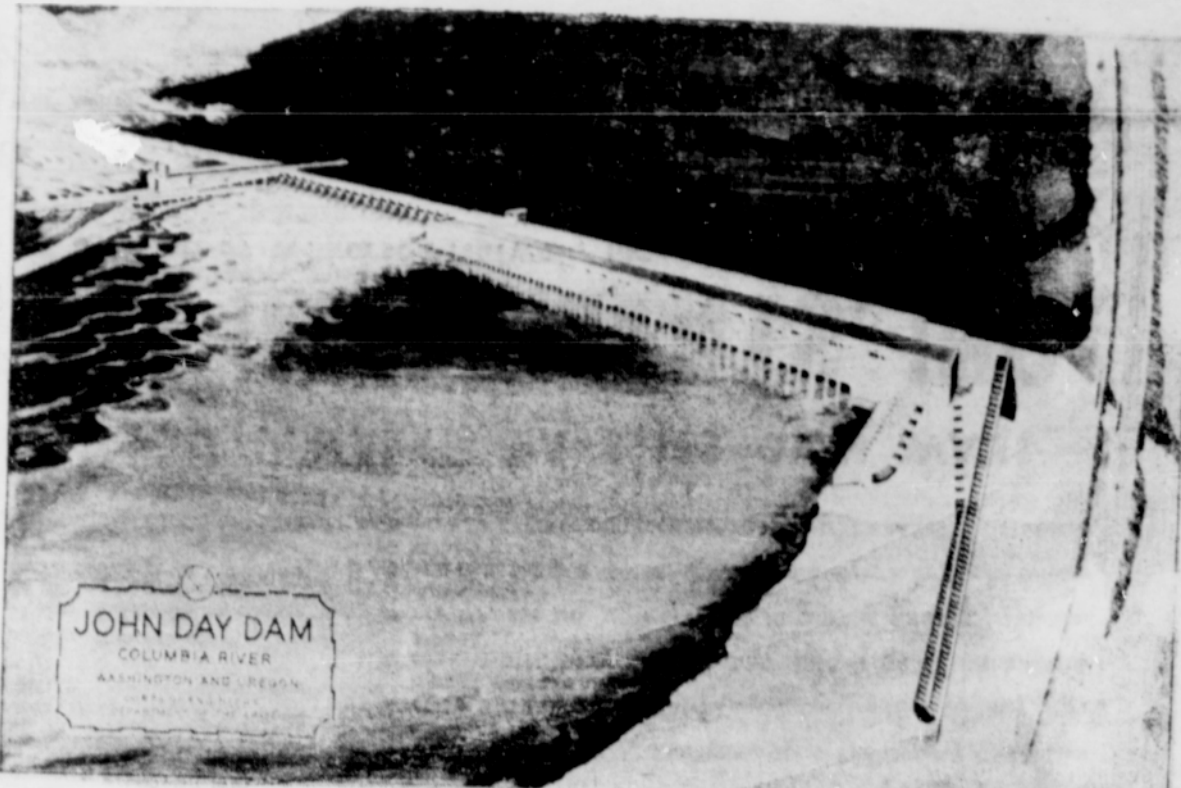
Nevertheless, it is good soil with all the elements needed to produce wheat for generations and with normal care will do so. Because of the quantity of it, borders,

because it lays well, because it is adapted to large scale farming, it is and will be a resource of great value to the county and to the state.

Development of electric energy by falling water is a fairly modern invention. It has given Sherman county another resource that will be important as long as electricity can be produced cheaper by that method than by any other. Along the west side of the county runs the swift and steady Deschutes on which power could be produced every few miles and perhaps would be if engineers were not presently obsessed with big flows on big rivers. On the east side is the John Day, also swift, neither very large nor very steady, its flow having great variation.

Along the north end of the county is the Columbia where the federal government is building John Day dam that may eventually be developed into the biggest producer of power in the world—some 3,000,000 kw.

Despite big John Day the electric potential of Sherman county is not developed. It could some day have forty dams along its



The United States Engineers of units on the Oregon side of concept of the finished John Day the river near the fish ladder dam now being built a short shown curving to the top of the distance above Rufus. Additional dam 165 feet above sea level power will be made by addition under new plans.

Another resource is water. We have done little with irrigation except for a few acres along the Columbia and recently some permanent grass pastures on farms where water has been found. More farm dams would make more pastures possible and make more irrigation wells feasible. If the bordering streams are fully developed cheap electricity could make irrigation possible over thousands of acres.

Recreations is a modern type resource that does not depend on nature but on the desire of humans for a change from office environment. There the salmon runs up the Columbia, steelhead runs in the Deschutes and John Day and the Deschutes has an environment suitable to trout and higher up that stream is famous for its fishing. The muddier John Day is suitable for bass and warmer water fish. The big lakes formed by the John Day and The Dalles dams are already used for boating and this will continue to increase.

Sherman county has another resource: the quality of its citizens. They are serious, sober, conservative, with a large percentage of them stemming from pioneer stock that knew how to withstand hardship.

Twenty years of prosperity may have diluted the native resolution but certainly has not removed it and we feel certain that come what may (and something different is almost a certainty) they will continue to till their fields, harvest their crops and go on with a way of life that is productive of good grain and good citizens.

Farm Financing Long A Problem

Financing has always been a problem in Sherman county. First comers often had a little money which was soon spent. In order to buy out their neighbors they borrowed from the numerous loan companies paying a good full ten percent. There were no loans available for production of crops. Notes were given for small amounts and neighbors and merchants gave credit for limited times.

When banks were started they took over the burden of loaning and soon expanded it to unreasonable limits. It was not until the 1930 depression when local banks went broke that Sherman county farmers were released from the round and round process of borrowing and debt.

Most of them were not conservative in their financial affairs. They would borrow for almost any reason and sign a note for any future date. Perhaps that is not exceptional but it is the exceptional man who gets ahead very far by following the practice.



Bird's eye view of Rufus before changed, the railroad will move incoming businesses changed that and John Day dam will rise to village to a busy site for a change the life along the Columbia construction camp. Highways will be bta.

Oregon In History

April 20, 1863—The passenger cars of the Dalles & Cello railroad left the depot of O.S.N. Co. at The Dalles this morning for Cello, there to connect with the steamer Tenino for Wallula, Lewiston and all intermediate points for the first time. The road, six miles long, was begun March 17, 1862

and cost approximately \$50,000 a mile exclusive of rolling stock, a modest investment considering saving in time in the transport of goods and passengers around the falls.

The Sherman County Journal can be sent each week for a year for \$3.00

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