

## Oil Well Attempts Made on Project.

In 1920, when the oil well business was going strong in Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas and Montana, efforts were made to drill a well here. The first man to make the attempt was James Leonard of Walla Walla who had been several years in the big fields and believed a structure existed in this vicinity. He leased a large acreage east of the Stanfield project, but his geologist advised against the location and suggested he make the attempt near Hermiston. He then secured a few leases but soon after became ill and died. He had secured stock subscriptions in Pendleton for \$17,000 for drilling, but his death caused the funds to revert to the subscribers.

Two years later, C. O. Bacheller, brother of the author of Eben Holden, came here and revived the interest. A company was formed and a campaign was carried on for drilling funds. A hole was put down just west of the new park grounds to a depth of 500 feet. An artesian flow was found at 425 feet.

During the same period W. J. Logan, who lives north of Hermiston, believed his well had oil indications. He and his friends drilled to a depth of 245 feet. They found lava for the first 100 feet, then 20 feet of soft shale or royalite porous red rock that contained much evidence of gas deposit. His well still carries some oil particles in the water.

It was claimed that the structure through this region is the same as that where the gas wells are found 40 miles north in Benton county. During the time Leonard Wood, Jr., son of General Wood, sent men into this territory and leased south of here some 250,000 acres. They spent \$50,000 in operations and were preparing to drill when the oil troubles over the Teapot Dome scandal put an end to active oil work throughout the west.

An original history indicates that Umatilla was a winter camping ground for Indians. Hundreds of arrow heads, muscle shells and other relics were found there by the first white man.

## HISTORY BUTTER CREEK 75 YEARS

### BUTTER LEFT IN SPRING

Alfalfa and Bunch Grass for Beef Cattle; Great Fortunes Made.

Butter Creek has an active history of 75 years, and more years of tradition.

The first wagon train crossed it on the old Oregon Trail at what is now Allen Thomson's place. It was there it got its name. A small company of soldiers scouting Indians camped there over night at a spring. In the morning they moved on and left all the butter they had in the spring. When this happened is not definite, but soldiers gave the place the name of Butter Creek and passed the name along the Oregon Trail. This was perhaps 80 years ago.

This is the most common tradition and if any one has a better, or more certain one, the Herald will give it publicity.

The name might also be attributed to the productivity of the soil since Butter Creek valley has buttered more bread for its size and history than any other part of Oregon, from alfalfa, beef cattle and sheep, and other agricultural profits.

The mouth of Butter Creek is three miles south of Hermiston. From that point it is a wide valley to Pine City where it divides into Big and Little Butter Creeks. Big Butter Creek leads 50 miles through the Vey, Cunha and other large holdings, and to Vinson and Gurdane, and the divide of Camas creek. Little Butter Creek leads to Lena and thence to Arbuckle to the John Day divide, a distance of 75 miles. Along all parts of the creek are large ranches devoted mainly to stock raising. On the head branches of the creek are large bodies of timber in forest reserve, which is used for fuel and fencing below. Much of this is now trucked to the irrigated districts 60 to 75 miles.

An oiled highway will soon be completed along 20 miles of the main stream with a branch leading to Echo and the main line extending to Lexington. Butter Creek residents will soon urge extensions of this highway up the branches with better grading, graveling and oiling.

#### Butter Creek Cattle.

With Butter Creek growing hay and the ranges growing bunch grass vast cattle herds grazed in the region between the John Day river on the west and Birch Creek on the east; the Blue Mountain foot hills and higher elevations on the south and the Columbia on the north. The Boardman flats were known as the Big Bottoms and Cottonwood Bend, three miles south of Hermiston was a great watering place for both cattle and horses, which ranged in every direction.

Roundups were held during April and May by cattle men. Calves were branded and the herds were drifted southward toward the mountains. In the late fall the riders would whoop them down from the high hills to the winter ranges along the Columbia. Until about thirty years ago winter feeding was seldom necessary. Gradually the weaker members of the herds were taken to the home ranches and feed lots. Older cows and young heifers and late calves were fed through the winter months. Beef cattle were gathered in the fall and shipped to market or fed for Spring market on the big alfalfa ranches on Butter Creek.

The first alfalfa was grown by W. H. Babb on the old Pete Sheridan place now owned by Ralph Richards. This demonstration soon convinced the farmers of Butter Creek and nearby that alfalfa had found a soil and climatic condition for very heavy production. Seeding of it spread like forest fire. This was about 1885. Butter Creek soon became a great beef feeding ground. Not only were the cattle produced locally fattened on the home ranches, but large numbers were bought elsewhere and fed for beef. Banks soon depended on this industry for placing its loans in winter when the wheat farmers did not need it, and responsible feeders were given a check book to go and buy, and settle afterwards. Seattle and Portland came to depend on Butter Creek for its winter and spring beef, and the industry assumed large proportions.

Among the old timers who operated in this manner were the following: Cass Rogers, Jesse Moore, O. F. Thomson, David McCarty, R. N. Stanfield, Matt McCullough, Elisha Sloan, Sam George, W. Babb, Anton Vey, Joseph Cunha, Price Florence, J. H. Koontz, Joe Vey and Ben Swagart. Many of these men had from 400 to 1000 cattle on the ranges, and Babb and Perkins, builders of Hotel Perkins in Portland, had 2000 cattle, and Price Florence had

## HERMISTON DISTRICT BUILDING



Large office building constructed by the U. S. Reclamation Bureau in 1915. Office quarters for district manager and chief clerk, and now occupied by assistant county agent. It was used by U. S. Army Engineers while the Umatilla rapids survey was being made in 1933-34.

1500. They also owned some range horses from which they drew their saddle horses.

As years passed the ranges were depleted by over pasturing and the invasion of sheep. In those days more moisture fell in winter and spring, and often lakes lasting into early summer were created. As late as May many spots were miry many miles inland. There was very little sage brush 40 years ago, but as the bunch grass disappeared the sage encroached on the range land.

These were the days before big sheep enterprises such as Smythe Brothers, the Boylens, Falconers and others, took over the ranges and developed a big industry which is another story.

### 20,000 Horses Shipped From Switzler's Early Range Bands.

Horses, horses, horses, and the name of Switzler and Umatilla, and the horse heaven and the Umatilla ferry, and Switzler's island, are linked together in the early and continuous history of this section.

William Switzler of Umatilla, who operates several ferries, and is a judge and fan of the Pendleton Roundup, is the only remaining Switzler of the several families once identified with pioneer activities.

His father, J. B. Switzler, located Switzler's Island in the Columbia in 1865, and lived there until 1901 when he moved his family to Umatilla. Three brothers, J. B. Switzler, Jade Switzler and William Switzler, owned about 35 years ago over 15,000 head of horses which ranged on both sides of the Columbia. They each owned large bands and all three were in partnership on a joint herd which carried the brand S on right flank. Other brands were a circle and a cross. They never sold a horse of any of these brands in the northwest, but shipped all animals east. One fall they shipped three train loads to New York which were sold for use on horse cars, where the life of the usual horse was not over 90 days. Another year they sold \$100,000 worth of horses. These were of the proper weight and action for horse cars but when the electric trolley came in, the market was lost. Prices then ranged from \$50 to \$100 a head. After the prices of horses went down they sold 7000 head for \$1.50 per animal which were shipped to canneries.

During these years the Switzlers operated the ferry at Umatilla most of the period. At one time heavy traffic came from the Old Oregon Trail covered wagons seeking homesteads in the Horse Heaven which was a bunch grass region 30 miles wide and 100 miles long. During those days the plains on this side of the river were covered with bunch grass. Other owners of horses were Anderson Bros., Boyd and Parker, the Berrians, and also a good many Indians owned ponies.

Wm. Switzler was married in

#### First Grist Mill.

Part of the foundation of the first flour mill built east of the Cascades remains on the Umatilla river bank a mile east of Umatilla. The four stone burrs used for grinding are placed on the Umatilla school grounds. They were brought around the Horn. The mill used water for power.

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