

# IRRIGATION IN ROGUE RIVER VALLEY

Some of the Big Enterprises that will Water Thousands of Acres of Orchards

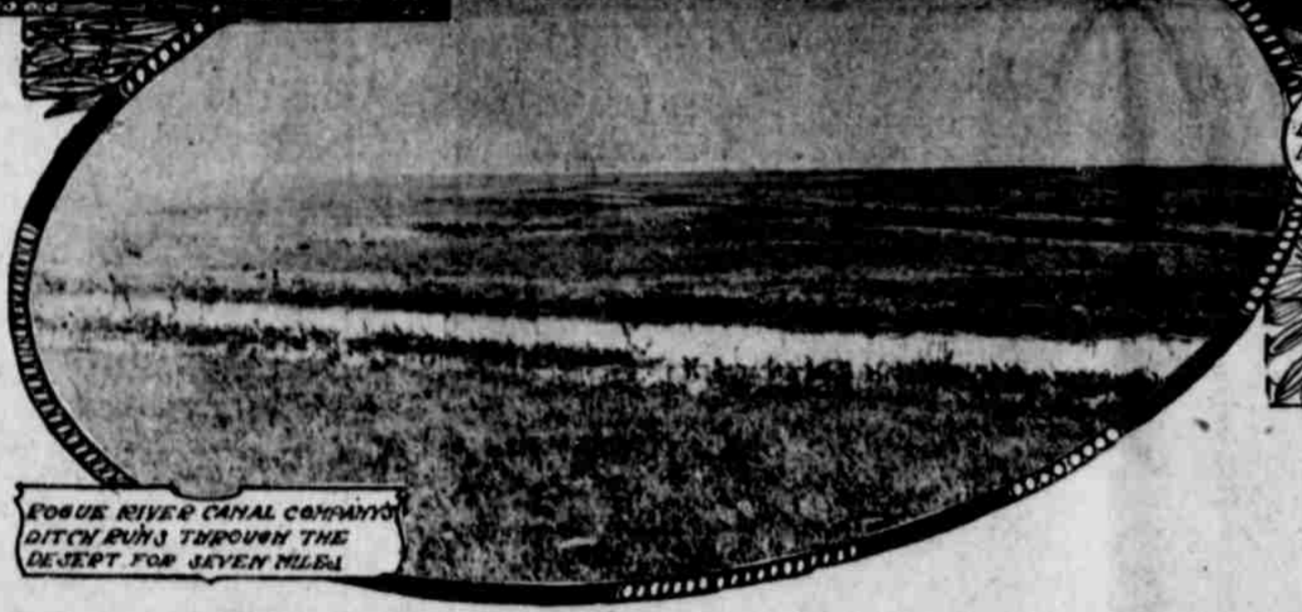


FIVE YEAR OLD PEACH TREE WHICH YIELDED TEN TONS OF PEACHES



COMPLETED SECTION OF ROGUE RIVER VALLEY CANAL CO'S IRRIGATION CANAL TWELVE MILES EAST OF MEDFORD

ROGUE RIVER AT DAY DARK WHERE THE WATER IS PUMPED ON TO THE LAND BY ELECTRICITY



ROGUE RIVER CANAL COMPANY'S DITCH RUNS THROUGH THE DESERT FOR SEVEN MILES



FOUR YEAR OLD NEW TOWN PIPPIN TREE RAISED ON IRRIGATING LAKE

The entire area has been laid off in 40-acre tracts with a publicly dedicated road around each tract. This land is being sold with a water right both in its raw state, the purchaser doing his own development work, and in developed tracts, contracts for the sale of the latter, including an obligation on the part of the company to plow, level, lay out the irrigation system, and plant to standard varieties of trees, and at the purchaser's option to maintain it for a period of five years. Enough has been done on this desert land, in the way of development and in the growth of trees, that are now in their fifth and sixth year, to indicate that this land can be made most productive. The soil, because of its light gravelly nature, is extremely warm and the vines and trees start their growth very early in the season and, with an adequate moisture supply, they grow vigorously throughout the entire season and mature their crop long before the fall rains set in.

The expenditure of approximately two and a half millions of dollars in developing these large projects means much to the Rogue River valley. Not only will every industry and business enterprise benefit directly from the putting into local circulation of the larger part of this great amount of money, but the assurance of our fruit crop and the great addition to our population resulting from the thick settlement of our idle lands means a great increase in the general volume of business in the future.

The men who are behind these enterprises have had long experience in irrigation development having been connected with the irrigation development of Spokane valley in Washington, where conditions were much the same as they are here. They have absolute faith in the future of Rogue River valley and are backing up this faith by the actual investment of their money. The hearty and substantial support they are receiving in carrying out their enterprises speaks much for the "got together spirit" of the valley—that spirit that has made the great fame we now enjoy. It is only through united effort that any great work can be carried out and the fact that every worldly project receives the instant and unanimous support of the men of Rogue River valley, is the one main factor that insures our future greatness.

(By A. P. Stover.)  
Irrigation is destined to play a most important part in the development of Rogue River valley, supplying as it does the one deficiency that now prevents intensive production. Its benefit to the orchard industry has in the past been more or less of a debatable question. Much good fruit has been and is now being raised without irrigation and young orchards are being grown without its aid, but such production and growth on unirrigated land is at the mercy of the summer rains which may or may not occur in proper season and the bearing orchard or young orchard just set out, unless most favorably located is forced to suffer during average seasons because of insufficient moisture in the soil. It is coming to be generally conceded that irrigation in the bearing orchard is valuable insurance against crop failure and that through its use a heavy set of fruit may be secured each year and the common practice of thinning extensively in order to secure size and color is wholly unnecessary. That the young orchard may be brought into much earlier bearing and at less expense where irrigation is used is also being fully demonstrated. Without irrigation the young orchard requires eight or nine years to come into commercial bearing. This is from three to four years longer than is required in such sections as Yakima valley, Wenatchee or Bitter Root valley where the growing season is from 20 to 30 days shorter than in Rogue River valley. The orchardist therefore is debiting his account with his orchard by just that amount of non-production, and what is more, he is continually forced to meet heavy maintenance expense out of his cash reserve that, with irrigation, would be offset by the products of intensive inter-tillage between the rows of young orchard trees. An orchardist in Hood River valley with the aid of his small irrigation stream raised strawberries in his young orchard during its five or six years of early growth, thereby maintaining himself and family, developing his property and in many cases paying for his land by the time his trees come into bearing.

Although irrigation is destined to be of incalculable value to the large commercial orchard, its greatest value will result from the important part it will play in making possible the small diversified fruit farm of five, ten and twenty acres on which a family may make a comfortable living while their young orchard is coming into bearing, or from which they may secure a comfortable in-

come simply from the production of small fruits and general farm products. The one great need of the Rogue River valley is the man and his family who own and care for their small tract. Four-fifths of the valley's area lies dormant and unproductive because the dry summers preclude profitable cultivation in small areas. This undeveloped area settled in small tracts with a family on each making a comfortable living will solve the problem of our idle lands. The question of labor during the rush seasons in the larger orchards would be taken care of and the abnormal high cost of living in the towns and in the country would be reduced by the local production of commodities that can now be had only at high cost—with freight added. The money that now flows out of the valley for butter, eggs, bacon, ham, vegetables and countless other commodities should be kept in local circulation. Through the medium of the small irrigated farm this will be accomplished.

In some sections of the valley irrigation has been employed for years. "Stringtown," near Phoenix, is a splendid illustration of what water will do in the development of the highly cultivated farm of a few acres. This area has for years depended upon the night flow of the Phoenix mill ditch, which the users were given in exchange for labor spent in cleaning out the ditch and keeping it in repair. Many are the stories of fabulous production that come from this locality. The ranches along Little Butte creek have been irrigated for years, and so highly is water in that section valued that only through the medium of the state board of control was serious litigation over water rights prevented. Many of the noted orchards of the valley have been irrigated for a long period, among which may be mentioned the Gore orchard, south of Medford; the Randall orchard, near Talent; the A. D. Helms orchard, south of Ashland; the Tronson & Guthrie orchard, near Eagle Point, and many others.

The Rogue River Electric company is developing an orchard tract of about 300 acres near Tolo with water, secured from an electrically driven pumping plant, located at its power house at Gold Ray. The water is forced through an underground pipe for a distance of one mile and conveyed to the highest points of the lands being irrigated.

Wherever a small source of water supply is available, it is being put to use. The larger part of the valley, however, because of the difficult and expensive construction involved, has been without a water supply, and such development as has taken place has been accomplished without irrigation.

The first effort to provide a water supply for the valley as a whole was inaugurated about eight years ago by the Fish Lake Water company. Their plans embraced the diversion of water from Little Butte creek and the storage of the run-off of Mount McLaughlin in Fish and Four Mile lakes. This company constructed 16 miles of main canal and succeeded in bringing water into the north end of the valley, but difficult construction and apathy on the part of landowners in the matter of purchasing water rights prevented the further development of the project that held the key to the irrigation of the entire valley. After lying practically dormant for six years, the possibilities of this project, through the efforts of Fred N. Cummings, were brought to the attention of Patrick Welsh, the millionaire contractor, and R. K. Neil,

mining and irrigation operator, both of Spokane, whose experiences with the irrigation development of the Spokane valley, fitted them to foresee the irrigation possibilities of the Rogue River valley.

After making an exhaustive examination of the old Fish Lake Water company's properties, these men with their associates organized the Rogue River Valley Canal company, and on July 1, 1910, for a consideration of \$500,000, purchased the entire interests of that company.

By this purchase this new company secured 5000 acres of land, the old Fish Lake ditch system and extensive water rights in Little Butte creek. In addition, the new company purchased 2000 acres of land adjoining the old company's tract of 5000, purchased the Eagle Point mill and its water rights, and has since secured direct from the department of the interior the exclusive right to use Fish lake and Four-Mile lake as storage reservoirs.

The irrigation system to be built by the Rogue River Valley Canal company will cost \$2,000,000. It will consist of Fish lake and Four-Mile lake reservoirs, having a combined storage capacity of 35,000 acres feet of water; a connecting canal between the two lakes, a diversion canal 16 miles in length to bring the water from Little Butte creek into the valley; three main lines of distributing canals aggregating 100 miles in length, and 400 miles of laterals to convey the water to the land.

The construction and maintenance of the canal system involves an extraordinarily heavy expense, because of the fact that, unlike most irrigation projects, practically all of the channels have to be constructed over land that is either partially or completely developed, and great care

must be exercised in the location of all ditches, laterals and conduits so as to do the least possible damage. Many miles of cement-lined canal and underground pipe will be necessary and all structures are to be of the most permanent character.

Notwithstanding the exacting conditions that on every hand involve heavy expense, the company, realizing that irrigation is practically new to the Rogue River valley, has placed a very low price on the first block of water rights to be sold. Perpetual water rights are now being sold to the consumer at a price of \$50 per acre, which is far below that being paid in such sections as the Spokane valley, where a price of \$175 and \$200 per acre is quite common. The cost of the water right is payable in five annual installments, which makes it possible for the land, if properly handled, to more than pay for the water right in the additional crop that can be raised, thereby burdening the consumer very lightly. The company assumes all responsibility of maintaining the system and delivers the water to each man's headgate at such times and in such quantity as

he may desire. For this service an annual charge of \$2.50 per acre is made. The amount of water which the company contracts to deliver during the irrigation season, April 1 to October 1, is sufficient to cover the land to a depth of one and one-half feet, which amount will prove more than sufficient for the needs of any crop and which is but little less than the total annual rainfall of the Rogue River valley.

The company has already enlarged the main section of the Hopkins lateral and constructed a number of the main laterals on the desert. It is now perfecting its plans for the entire system and as fast as there is a demand for water, the system, already partially constructed, will be extended.

Roguelands, Incorporated, organized by the same capitalists and associated with the Rogue River Valley Canal company, has assumed the development and sale of the 7000 acres of land on the "desert." This area is now supplied with water for irrigation and the work of developing this choice body of land that has lain idle so long, is being pushed rapidly forward.