

Agriculture in County Dates From 1852



Commercial Fruit Production Starts In Valley in 1888

(Editor's note: This is another in the series of articles on history of Jackson county. Today's article deals with the fruit industry in the Rogue valley.)

(Information in the article was taken from "History of Southern Oregon," A. G. Walling, 1884; "History of Medford," Jane Snedecor, 1935; "Fruit Growing in the Rogue River Valley," bulletin 2, published 1911 by Medford Commercial club; "Report on the Jackson County Agricultural Conference," published by the county agent's office in 1923; "A Twelve Million City," editorial in the Portland Journal, June 12, 1930; and "Agricultural Information on Jackson County," compiled by Jackson County Chamber of Commerce, 1954.)

Settlement of Jackson county dates from 1851, but the real beginning of agriculture dates from 1852, the gold discovery at Jacksonville. By mid-year a thousand miners were in the valley, and by fall demands for provisions exceeded the supply.

Wheat became the main crop because flour was the miners' chief article of subsistence. Vegetables, livestock and fruit were also grown, but wheat outranked all others combined.

By the fall of 1855, Jackson county held first rank in the list of Oregon counties, being the most populated and the wealthiest. (Jackson county of that day included the areas of Josephine and Curry

counties as well.)

Livestock Increases

The output of the mines began to fall off in the early sixties. This had its effect on agriculture. When mining began to wane, wool, bacon and beef became staples as wheat growing absorbed less and less and less of the united efforts of the farmers.



Rich, almost untouched grasslands permitted the easy transition from wheat growing to livestock production. This was further hastened by the fact that wheat raising in competition with California and the Willamette valley was less expedient.

In 1859 and 1860, Governor Briggs was the first man to sell fruit in the valley. Apples and peaches were brought in wagons from his ranch at Fort Briggs and sold at a dollar each. With no railroad in the area, the shipment of fruit to the outside world was unknown.

Commercial Fruit

The coming of the railroad in 1888 created a further change in the agriculture of the county. Commercial fruit production dates from that time. J. H. Stewart was the first pioneer orchardist who in February, 1885, came to the valley and purchased what was later known as the Gordon Voorhies ranch, south of Medford.

In 1890, he shipped the first carload of fruit and by 1893 he had a hundred acres planted to apples and pears. That fall he shipped 15 cars of pears and 14 cars of apples, realizing \$4,000 from his 60 acres of Bartlett's. By 1897, the Weeks and Orr Fruit Ranch, the finest in the valley, had 15,000 trees in production on 150 acres.

Fruit Industry Booms

In 1900, Jackson county's population ranked 11th in the state at 13,698. By 1910, it was in fifth place on the list of Oregon counties with 28,756. A bulletin published in 1911 declared that 65,000 acres of apples and pears were under cultivation and that 10,000 to 15,000 acres had been planted annually for the previous three years.



The bulletin went on to suggest that of the 65,000 acres, 1,500 were actually producing annual crops but it predicted that by 1916 the valley would see 32,000 acres of producing orchards. (A rather optimistic view.)

This publication pointed out that the Rogue valley is one of the few proven apple and pear growing districts on the Pacific Coast. In four years (1906-1910) the estimated total fruit production increased from 230,000 to 460,000 boxes. The latter figure was the 1910 crop, largest on record at that time.

About spring frosts, the bulletin suggested these were not only unusual, but almost entirely unknown. The few which did occur were exceptions and in the lower parts of the valley this condition could be totally overcome by smudging. (The bulletin was published to attract eastern investment capital in land development.)

Fruit Varieties

During this period pears were not the dominating crop. Sixty per cent of the acreage was planted to apples, the principal varieties being Newtown, Spitzenberg and Jonathan. These were favorites due to their great shipping and keeping qualities and the

fancy prices they commanded. Little quality competition from other fruit producing centers in the nation existed at that time.

Principal pear varieties were Bartlett, Bosc, Comice, Anjou, Howell and Winter Nellis. The highest prices ever paid for deciduous fruits in commercial history were for Rogue Valley Comice Pears in London during the year 1911.

Cost of Orchard Development

There is considerable difference between today's cost of developing and maintaining an orchard and the costs required back in 1911. The comparative costs for the development of one acre of pears are shown below:

	1911	1954
Cost of trees	\$ 100	
Cost of trees & planting	\$ 25	
Preparation of ground, staking and planting	200	
Cultivation, preparation of ground, prune and spray for 7 years	90	
Cultivation, prune and spray for 7 years	700	
Totals	\$115	\$1,000

In spite of increased development costs, prices in our time are not much greater than those of 1911.

	1911	1954
Pears		
Anjou—		
Fancy per box	\$2.24	\$3.60
Bosc—		
Fancy per box	2.56	2.70
Bartlett—		
Fancy per box	1.12	3.50

A 1923 publication reflects much concern over the unsatisfactory increase in yield per acre. There is evidence that absentee ownership of land in the valley was not proving to be a satisfactory method of developing highly productive acreages.

The report blamed absentee ownership for a number of failures in fruit producing ventures. Trends in yield per acre as recorded in the pamphlet were: 1921, 87 boxes; 1922, 151 boxes; 1923, 187 boxes.

By comparison, the average per acre yield on a good producing orchard today is five to six hundred boxes. An exceptional orchard today may produce over a thousand boxes per acre.

Continued Growth Recognized

Fruit production achieved importance as a community

economic base and stimulant in 1930. Medford's population had increased from 5,756 in 1920 to 11,095 in 1930—a gain of over 92 per cent. The increase in fruit production during that period jumped from around 780,000 boxes shipped in 1919 to approximately 3,400,000 shipped in 1929.

Other developments occurring in the community during the 10-year period were: A new high school; three new churches; two theaters; two hotels; a city hall; several fruit packing and cold storage plants and an assortment of other business structures. Much of this growth was directly attributable to the phenomenal increase in fruit production in the Rogue valley.



Highlights Today

Today approximately three million boxes of pears are shipped annually from the Rogue valley. These are produced on about 10,000 acres, nearly all of which is irrigated land. Of all acreage devoted to horticulture in Jackson county, pear production occupies roughly 84 per cent.

Total annual income to the county for all horticultural crops is around fifteen million dollars which represents better than half the total agricultural income for the county.

It is estimated that 40 per cent of the 10,000 pear producing acres are artificially heated to prevent frost damage. From this 40 per cent (4,000 acres) of artificially heated orchards comes nearly three-fourths (2,250,000 boxes) of the valley's total pear production.

The Rogue valley is continually faced with increased competition from fruit grown in other areas having adequate supplies of irrigation water. The Talent Irrigation project will aid in correcting the problem of insufficient water. Ingenuity, climate and further strides in technical improvements will serve to keep Rogue valley pears the

Local Man Sentenced On Check Charge

Elbert Lionel Hawks, Medford, was sentenced to 60 days in the county jail Friday by District Court Judge E. Roy Bashaw for obtaining money under false pretenses. Hawks pleaded guilty to the charges. He was accused of passing a false check for \$10 in a Medford store.

Three Injured in Truck-Car Crash

Three persons were injured when a lumber truck and automobile were involved in an accident about a mile north of the Butte Falls junction on Highway 62 about 8:15 p.m. Friday, according to state police.

Clara Lecesa Bergman, 64, of star route box 87, Eagle Point, driver of the car, and Gerald Bergman, 7, and Rocky Clifford Bergman, 5, suffered head and body injuries and were taken to Rogue Valley hospital by Medford Ambulance service, police said. Another passenger, Wayman Bergman, 64, was not injured.

Driver of the truck was Jerry B. Morton, 28, of 2941 Crater Lake highway, Medford.

Police said both vehicles were traveling north on Crater Lake highway when the truck attempted to pass the car. The car started making a left turn into a driveway. The impact spun the car around, and the wheel of the truck came to rest on the automobile's grill, police said.

top quality fruit in the market places of the nation.

Jackson County Chamber of Commerce 1959

Visual Stress Causes Headache

Dr. Ralph Barstow, director of ethics and economics, Optometric Extension program, Duncan, Okla., told the Southern Oregon Optometric Society last week that "visual stress can cause the 4 o'clock headache that is experienced in so many business men and women."

Speaking at the Rogue River club near Rogue River, he said the late afternoon headache "results from the tensions imposed by the speeded demands of our present culture."

He pointed out that stresses of modern day living tend to center themselves in the visual mechanism. The headaches or weariness at the end of the day are natural results. Dr. Barstow said research by the department of psychology at Purdue university has shown that difficult reading assignments in school cause nervous tension and other reactions among children. Youngsters who fail to receive help in meeting the stress may sustain damage that will affect both school and later careers, he said.

"Vision specialists," Dr. Barstow said, "have found the way to help the harassed business man and woman, and the school child as well. Lens prescriptions are given in accordance with the visual demands of the individual in his everyday life and for the future protection of his vision."

Dr. Barstow left for Roseburg Saturday to continue his lecture tour for postgraduate education of optometrists.

There are at least 13 different varieties of maple trees in the U.S.

Berlin (UPI)—Conductor Leopold Stokowski arrived in Leipzig, East Germany, Thursday to conduct the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra Sunday and Monday, the East German news agency ADN reported today. Stokowski came from Warsaw, ADN said.

Istanbul is included as a major stop in the flight schedules of 16 international airlines, making it only 26 flying hours from New York and eight hours from Paris.

Try and Stop Me

By BENNETT CERF

AN AMERICAN PUBLISHER, motoring through Britain, stopped for the night at a pleasant little place that bore the encouraging name of "Writer's Motel." He liked it, too, and while checking out the next morning, he asked the clerk, "Where are all the writers? I didn't spot one the whole time I was here." "Oh," was the answer, "Mr. Writer has gone to London and Mrs. Writer is visiting a sick aunt."



A tourist in New Mexico spotted an earthenware jar in an Indian souvenir depot and asked, "How much?" "Hundred dollars," answered the proprietor. "Nonsense!" exclaimed the tourist. "I'll give you 24 bucks for it." "Listen, wise guy," growled the Indian, "bargains like Manhattan island you're not going to get any more!"

Sabrina, 17, is going steady with a neighborhood lad named Jeff. She says he has his mother's eyes and disposition, but more important—his father's car keys, too.

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