

GREAT DEVELOPMENT CONGRESS

Held at Ontario, the Gateway to Central Oregon and Southern Idaho



Five Hundred Delegates and Citizens Entertained at Development Congress Held at Ontario March 26-27

OPENING CONGRESS SESSION.

Mayor Pogue delivered the address of welcome on behalf of the city of Ontario. The opera house was packed with delegates from pit to gallery—the solid, progressive citizens of the valleys of two states. He spoke of the great undeveloped resources and territory of the Inland Empire, and extended the cordial hospitality of the city to all the visitors. The doors of their houses and the keys of their hearts were handed over.

Mrs. J. W. McCulloch of Ontario sang a beautiful solo, "The Life of Love is But a Day," and it was a highly finished product. The next speaker was Hon. Frank Davey of Burns, Harney county, who told of the undeveloped conditions of that section.

The opera house was a seething mass of people. Ontario shone with great lustre in entertaining powers by producing a band with about 30 trained players, who executed a classic overture. A chorus of about thirty voices, mostly splendid singers, led by Professor Conklin, next rendered one of Sousa's great popular patriotic songs. Next came the masterly address of Col. E. S. Wood, who was introduced by Col. Hofer, who presided, as not only one of the ablest lawyers on the Pacific coast, but the representative of some of the largest property interests in the state. He was received with tremendous applause. He drew remarkable pictures of parallels between the highly developed railroad systems of eastern Washington com-

BOOST FOR COOS BAY.

A ladies' orchestra of fifteen instruments under a magnificent band leader, Professor Rhyner, played several fine selections. The Burns male quartet sang two delightful songs and then Addison Bennett gave the audience a taste of Coos Bay and his experiences crossing the bar. He described the glories of Coos Bay, its cities, its harbor, its wonderful hotels, one of the finest hotels in the state. It cost \$75,000 and was named after Mr. Chanler, who put \$15,000 into it and furnished the ground. He told of the Twin Cities on Coos Bay with 8000 people and payrolls of \$3500 a day. There were 28 creameries around the bay. There were the largest sawmills in the country, with 600 men on the payroll, with nearly 1200 on the double shift. Coos Bay was a wonderful asset for a railroad into central Oregon and Boise. The people over there did things on a large scale. The offices of the Smith mill cost \$100,000. The whole country is underlaid with coal.

The second session closed with a great wave of enthusiasm to see the Coos Bay country opened to the world.

the land productive and the people will be here, was his prediction.

Settlers were needed. People were gregarious. Irrigated tracts of five acres would support a family. With larger population money rates of interest would constantly decline. As lands went up interest went down.

Geo. H. Shellenburg of Boise spoke next of the possibilities of railroad development. People who wondered a few years ago how they could pay \$10 an acre for water now paid \$40 an acre for water cheerfully. Five years hence they would make more money paying \$100 an acre for water. He told how school house meetings were held in counties in Iowa to vote five per cent taxes on their lands for a railroad from Fort Dodge to Humboldt, and gave \$75,000 in cash and 22,000 acres of swamp land to get a railroad. Lands there had gone to \$100 an acre for corn and dairying. In the Boise Valley they grew 64,000 bushels of apples off 160 acres orchard eight years old. No one could estimate the possibilities of such production. The Payette-Boise project would produce enough apples in one year to keep a railroad working 500 days at 10 trainloads a day to market them. In 1907 the world's crop of apples was short 27,000,000 barrels. There was no such thing as overproduction in this line. He talked hopefully on the railroad situation.

CUT OUT HARRIMAN.

In opening the second day's session Col. Hofer said he wanted this congress to go on with an affirmative program and cut out all reference to Mr. Harriman. The Oregon-Idaho Development Congress had a great task before it—of welding the various elements of the citizenship of two great states into a harmonious co-operative effort to secure for themselves the benefits of modern transportation facilities. This congress was not formed to lay a straw in the way of Mr. Harriman, or any other great railway magnate, or any combination of capitalists or syndicate that might want to build railroads. They had only good will for all such enterprises and for all such men.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON.

Carl Payne, chairman of the Idaho committee that drafted the district railroad bill, was introduced and declared that there was nothing in the Oregon constitution to prohibit district building of railroads. An enabling aid had been passed in Idaho to permit the people to do this. He showed that the Idaho law created a railroad district, provided for hearing of the land owners, for making estimates, for electing directors, and proceeding exactly as do the land owners of an irrigation district. He showed that as the land benefited by the proposed railroad was to be taxed, and no other lands will be taxed. He predicted that within 30 days work would be started on district railroads north toward Butte and south toward Ontario. The spirit of co-operation entered into this campaign.

IRRIGATION AT ONTARIO.

Picards posted all over the town announced that reviving the Malheur reclamation project, with an expenditure of \$6,000,000 was one of the objects of this congress. The new water code enacted by the Oregon legislature was expounded at one of the sessions by Hon. F. M. Saxton of Baker City. The great possibilities of irrigated lands cropped out all through the proceedings and the combined power of districts covered with ditches, and the same districts served with a railroad, both ditches and railroad owned by the owners of the lands, as assets of creating wealth are simply incalculable.

Ontario has two newspapers, The Argus and the Optimist. The latter paper published a daily edition during the sessions of the congress.

The Malheur project was presented by Walter Griffith of Caldwell, who recited all the steps that had been taken to secure this great government expenditure for this section, which now seems very likely to be taken up and completed. Petitions had been signed up by owners of all the lands in the district—about 165,000 acres in all to be supplied with water. No project ever before the interior department had ever made a better showing or was more promising as an engineering project. About 20,000 acres was already under irrigation and the results were going to be great. The construction of this project would be the cause of building many miles of railroad and many new towns and larger cities. The two influences combined would result in rapid transformation of the whole country into modern interurban conditions.

Pen Picture of Ontario and Its Hospitable People— Orchard Conditions a Duplicate of Medford and Hood River.

ONTARIO RICHLY DOWNER.

The city of Ontario lies in the heart of the richest section of the Snake River Valley. The Malheur and Payette rivers enter the great southern confluent of the Columbia a mile apart at Ontario. The Boise, and the Owyhee enter 20 miles on the south, and the Weyler twenty miles north. This network of rivers spreads like the fingers of a hand into the rich, alluvial plains and prairies, that are rapidly being irrigated and rendered from two to five times as productive as the richest lands in the great prairie states of Iowa and Illinois.

Ontario, electric lighted, well watered, with graded streets and spreading suburbs, with high schools and churches, sits like a little queen in the center of a territory that in resources is as rich as a placer mine. The city has a complete sewer system.

For two days of the Oregon and Idaho Development Congress Ontario was rhythmic with band music, explosive with bombs, and radiant with bunting, and fluttering with flags. The business men had bought every last yard of decorative material and sent to nearby towns for more. Hotels were crowded to the limit, and every home in Ontario that had a spare room threw it open to delegates and visitors. At the head of the principal business street at night two giant flames of natural gas ascended to heaven. The splendid hospitality of the people of Ontario concluded with a free banquet to all the hundreds of guests, and the banquet was a spread of unusual splendor.

LAND GOING LIKE MEDFORD.

This heart of the Snake River Valley is going like land around Medford, where the whole Rogue River Valley is worth from \$300 to \$1500 an acre in orchards. The valley is not subject to floods, the soil is rich, the high color and flavor and keeping quality make the big yields turn out money like the pockets of a placer mine. Here is a sample of the way lands in orchards go up in price: Wood & Tool put out 100 acres in apples six miles from Ontario; it was sagebrush land worth \$50 an acre two years ago. Last fall they were offered \$310 an acre for it.

Ontario is surrounded by rich plains, running up to foothills and to the north flanked by ranges of snow peaks. The air is crisp and clear by day and by night the flare of gas wells illumines the sky. It is the brightest of bright little cities by day or by night.

The climate is dry, exhilarating and stimulating, and the great products are stock, alfalfa and fruit of every description. The fruit shipments within 25 miles of Ontario amount to three or four hundred carloads. The orchards produce immensely, and the full crop of apples on 160 acres of irrigated land is placed at one hundred carloads. The crop of one carload to the acre is very common at 12 years old.

REAL ESTATE ACTIVE.

Six real estate firms are handling dirt and doing a business that grows by leaps and bounds. Two banks have aggregate deposits reaching into six figures each. The First National paid out its money all through the panic. There are about ten large

mercantile establishments. One does a business of nearly a million dollars a year.

There are three large livery stables with rigs suitable to take people hundreds of miles in any direction. The city has a good water supply. It is pumped from an artesian well and has a sulphur tinge that makes it very healthful. It is impregnated with a gas that is fatal to all germs. The principal irrigation systems are the Nevada and Owyhee ditches. The two call for about ten to sixteen thousand inches, or 8000 acres.

SOCIAL CONDITIONS EXCELLENT

Ontario has about 2000 people, with 440 children in the public schools, with a well equipped high school. There are Methodist, Congregational, Presbyterian, Catholic, Baptist, Adventists, and Episcopalian congregations well attended. The Catholic sisters conduct a parochial school. There are all the fraternal orders, and a public library supported by the Work and Win Ladies' Club.

A GREAT SHIPPING POINT.

Ontario is on the main line of the Oregon Short Line railroad, a Harriman transcontinental line, and sends out hundreds of carloads of cattle, horses, sheep and hogs—the greatest livestock shipping station on the line. There have been as high as 1200 cars of cattle sent out of here in one month. There have been as high as 25,000 head of stock waiting shipment at one time.

Sheep and wool shipments are enormous, these products coming as far as 170 miles. Fruit shipments are rapidly increasing and inside of five years will be as heavy as livestock.

Ontario has the finest passenger depot between Pocatello and Portland. Hotel facilities are good, but the rapid growth of the city requires another large modern hotel.

NATURAL TRADE CENTER.

The contract for a steel bridge across the Snake River at Ontario, to cost \$30,000, is let. The bridge will connect Ontario with Plymouth county, a very prosperous irrigated section of Idaho, where orchard lands are already selling at \$1000 an acre. The bridge will bring to Ontario the trade of about two thousand people that formerly went elsewhere.

Ontario is the terminus of the Malheur Valley railroad, that connects the city with the thriving county seat, and is the great distributing line to interior Oregon. When extended this will be the Snake River terminus of the Boise, Central Oregon and Coos Bay railroad. The future of Ontario as a railroad crossing of east and west and north and south lines was fixed by nature.

LIGHT AND POWER INDUSTRIES.

Electric light and power is supplied from eighty miles away by what is known as the great Ox Bow power plant on Snake River. There is a substation at Ontario that supplies nearby towns. The plant operates electric car line at Boise and Caldwell, and is preparing to connect Ontario with Boise, by way of Plymouth. Electric lines are being extended over all this part of Snake River Valley. A line is building to Weiser, with a branch to Payette.



Five-year-old irrigated Orchard in Snake River Valley, near Ontario, in full bearing.

Committees on resolutions were appointed as follows:

Local resolutions—Frank Davey of Burns, Miss Estelle Riddle of Ontario, Addison Bennett of Irrigon, Wm. Plughoff, Ontario; G. A. Hurley, Vale.

Interstate resolutions—Reilly Atkinson, Boise; E. M. Heigho, Weiser; Frank M. Northrup, Eugene; A. W. Frow, Ontario; Geo. H. Shellenburg, Boise; Jacob Brinsing, Ontario; Julian Byrd, Burns.

Reilly Atkinson, secretary of the Boise Commercial Club, spoke for a large delegation present from that city. They were alive for railroads. He said they are a manufacturing payroll of \$1300 a day. One jobbing house did a business of over a million last year. He made a splendid presentation of the commercial possibilities of his city as the great future distributing center of the Snake River territory.

E. M. Heigho of Weiser spoke for the local railroads, whose greatest interest was in upbuilding local territory and serving the people immediately benefited. A transcontinental line frequently subordinated local interests. Not so in constructing local railroads. They created local values and community-built railroads enriches the whole community. A strip of land of 100,000 acres worth \$500,000, which by putting a railroad through it that cost a million dollars to build, which would make that land worth \$100 an acre, meant a net profit, after paying for the railroad out of the land, would net the land owners \$5,000,000. As a railroad man he could not see how any district aided railroad through a productive region could make any mistake.

Col. Drake of Weiser spoke of conditions in West Virginia in having built railroads to help their industrial conditions. Their lands were increased from almost nothing to \$300 to \$300 an acre.

PROGRAM FRIDAY EVENING.

The second session of the congress was a greater success than the first.

pared to undeveloped portions of eastern Oregon without railroads. Climate, soil, moisture and people were the same. The difference was in the absence of railroads in the one and their presence in the other. Three railroads were dividing business in the Yakima Valley and all were doing a profitable business. Here were larger, richer and more productive valleys that would become just as populous and sustain just as many railroads. The speaker reviewed the objections to the state-controlled railroads and the evils connected therewith. He showed that in spite of all charges of misappropriation and grafting, states had helped railroads and prospered thereby. He showed that state or district owned railroads was aimed at under the Oregon amendment. It did not propose to give a dollar of bonds or subsidy to any man or body of men. It did not propose to guarantee interest on bonds, as was demanded by one great magnate of the Coos Bay people. It was not necessary to give the people the power to build railroads, or buy out and condemn the railroads now in existence. The constitution of Oregon did not contain a word to prohibit building railroads by the state. The people had all the power now if they wanted to use it. They were determined to invade central Oregon. A great highway of steel must be forced across central Oregon, and will make Ontario a great distributing point. With its gas wells manufacturing will be established here, and with electric lines connected all over southern Idaho, will build a city here equal to any city in eastern Washington.

Col. Wood said in his great speech to the congress that four great roads were heading for Ontario as the natural gateway to the great Inland Empire of central Oregon. It would make Ontario a great city for any railroad to cross this state to the great seaport on Coos Bay that alone had enough business to support a road.

SATURDAY PROGRAMS.

With the ban dreading and parading the streets, a bright sun shining, the second day of the Development Congress opened auspiciously. The opera house was filled for the third time amid great enthusiasm.

There were large delegations from all the towns in the Snake River Valley. The sessions of the congress were attended by scores of brightly dressed ladies and stalwart ranchers and progressive fruit growers and active real estate men.

A. W. Gowen of Burns read a paper on the Inland Empire, showing that Harney county had room for 250,000 people, and that it was capable of sustaining general agriculture and fruit growing with 16 inches of rainfall. He referred to the discovery of gas at Ontario and in Harney county, as supplying power and material for manufacturing. Lands that five years ago in some districts sold for \$2 to \$5 per acre, now brought \$50 to \$100 an acre, showing irrigation possibilities.

F. M. Northrop of Eugene spoke as an investor in 160 acres on Dead Ox Flat, which he believed would be changed to live men and live women flat. He told of the development through railroads and irrigation in the country east of the Rocky Mountains. He told of Wayne county, Nebraska, where lands sold for \$1000 per quarter section 12 years ago, that was now worth \$40 to \$50 per acre. In the last three years the attention of the entire middle west was being attracted to the Snake River Valley. The stream of population that was coming west would grow year by year until there was a family on every ten to twenty acres. Hogs sold at Portland 50 cents a hundred higher than at Omaha. This country could grow corn and hogs equal to any state in the Union. He showed that the territory tributary to Ontario when developed would sustain 1200 people to the square mile, or 400,000 people, in the not distant future. Make



Residence of J. R. Blackaby, built in Ontario the past year.