

## Impressions and Observations of The Journal Man <sup>2/25/39</sup>

By Fred Lockley 2-25-39

Malheur county was created more than 50 years ago, cut off from the southern part of Baker county, February 17, 1887. Vale was the first county seat. At Vale I met Thomas Jones, secretary of the Owyhee Ditch company, who was appointed deputy county clerk October 6, 1887. He gave me interesting facts about Vale, Ontario and other communities of Malheur county. Malheur county takes its name from Malheur river. Peter Skene Ogden, an official of the Hudson's Bay company stationed at Fort Vancouver, wrote in his journal, February 14, 1826: "We encamped on River au Malheur—the unfortunate river—so called on account of goods and furs hid here, discovered and stolen by the natives." "Malheur" in French means "evil hour," or "misfortune."

"The first public school in what is now Malheur county," said Mr. Jones, "was at Eldorado City, where Henry Tuttle opened a school in 1869. Eldorado came into existence in 1865 with the discovery of placer gold in Mormon Basin and at Auburn. In 1870 Malheur City, a mile from Eldorado, was founded. Tuttle later became first superintendent of schools of Union county. He taught one term at Eldorado and was succeeded by Professor Ison. Mattie Smith and Belle Small also taught there. Eldorado school was later transferred to Malheur City.

"The second public school was taught where the town of Jamieson was later located. The teacher was William G. Thompson, later the first superintendent of schools of Malheur county. He taught four months at \$60 a month.


"The first flour mill in the

county was built by William Morfitt, born in Yorkshire, England, in 1838. His father started the first foundry in Chicago, in the early '40s. The Morfitts crossed the plains to Oregon in 1847. Morfitt opened a foundry at Oregon City, the first in Oregon. William Morfitt went to the California gold fields with his father in 1849. He served in the Indian war in 1855. He came east of the mountains in 1867, and located on Upper Willow Creek in 1868. He moved to what is now Ontario in 1883, and surveyed the land and located the town. He was a scout for General O. O. Howard in the Bannock Indian war.

"The first manufactory in Malheur county was a fence factory, started at Ontario in 1887. The first commercial orchard was put out by J. L. Cole near Brogan. William Morfitt put in the first irrigation ditch, taking water from Willow creek, near Malheur City. The first bank in the county was the Bank of Ontario, organized in the fall of 1898. Stephen Carver was president and C. W. Platt cashier.

"A famous criminal trial occurred in November, 1887, before Circuit Judge G. W. Walker of Pendleton. John Strode, a wealthy cattleman of Jordan Valley, and John J. Thurman were charged with murdering Sarnuel Rich, a sheepherder employed by Bob Aikman and E. P. Junor, wealthy sheepmen. The grand jury indictment charged first degree murder. A bitterly contested trial resulted in their acquittal, December 3, 1887.

"W. J. Cuddy was the second editor and owner of the New Atlas, Vale's first newspaper. He moved his plant to Ontario, but after a few months took it back to Vale. Later he became editor of the Weekly Oregonian, Portland."

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PORTLAND, ORE., JOURNAL

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*the Mormon Basin Baker Co*

## Eastern Oregon Volcanos May Become Active Again

Vale, July 6.—People now living may see volcanoes again active in the vicinity of Succor creek and Jordan Valley, spewing molten lava over Southern Idaho and Eastern Oregon, according to Dean O. J. Smith, acting president of the College of Idaho, who recently lectured here before the Caldwell Gem club, on the geology of this part of the West.

"Some of the volcanoes in Succor creek and Jordan Valley are still more or less active," he said, "having erupted only a few hundred years ago, and there is no reason why these active volcanoes may not at some time, perhaps during the life of people present, send lava once more about the site of Caldwell."

Succor creek, which cuts through some of the rugged country between Vale and Jordan Valley, flows through one of the most picturesque canyons in Eastern Oregon. Smith continued:

"We are living in one of the regions of greatest geologic interest in the world. In this region is perhaps the greatest lava flow in the world, comparable to none other unless it be the 'Deccan flow' in Northern India. If all the lava in this 'Columbian flow' were in one stream, it would make a

river one mile high and one mile wide, running 24,000 miles long, or almost around the globe."

Canyon hill, at the outskirts of Caldwell, marks the westernmost edge of the comparatively recent "Idaho flow" of lava. "This section," said Smith, "is a great warp-down or trough in the earth's surface, evidenced by the outcroppings of Columbia flow lava on the mountain in this section, and the more recent Idaho flow has run into the warp and filled the trough to its present level."

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BURNS, ORE., TIMES-HERALD

JUN 9 - 1939

## Rock Formations Gave Name to Rome Community

Rome, Malheur county community now in the news as eastern junction point for the new road that will connect the I. O. N. and Central Oregon highways via Follyfarm, Crane and Burns, was named because rock formations suggested the ruined temples of the older Rome of ancient history.

Namorf, siding on the Burns-Ontario line of the Union Pacific, was named for a local resident, Froman, the name being the man's spelled backward.

Owyhee came into use in lower Snake river valley because Peter Skene Ogden on an 1819 exploration trip had with him two Hawaiians who were killed on the river now known as Owyhee. A century ago, Owyhee was the name for Hawaii in general use.