

## **Discover Historic Umatilla County, Oregon**

Maxwell was the first name suggested for what is now Hermiston. However, the U.S. Post Office denied that idea because there was already a post office named "Maxwell." Colonel J.F. McNaught, a pioneer settler, suggested the name "Hermiston" instead, and it was accepted. The name came from an unfinished book written by Robert Louis Stevenson entitled "Weir of Hermiston." McNaught's wife, Jennie, had just read the novel and suggested the name. And since it didn't duplicate any name in the United States, it was acceptable. So A.L. Maxwell, who worked for the railroad, missed out on his place in local history because his surname was already in use somewhere else.

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### **MOOREHOUSE IN 1882**

This is the name of a town laid out as a terminus of the Prospect Hill Railroad. It is to be the shipping point for products of Prospect Farm and this whole region when it is brought under cultivation. These upland plans, lying back from the Columbia about fifteen miles, have always been considered valueless by reason of the small quantity of rain. A number of gentlemen entertaining a different opinion on this point organized the Prospect Hill Co., in 1879, took up and fenced 4,160 acres of land, and began cultivating it in 1880. The large crop harvested in 1881 settled the question of fertility of soil, and demonstrated that thousands of acres formerly considered valueless for agriculture are exceedingly fine grain land. The members of this company are J.R. Foster, C.H. Lewis, T.A. Davis, H.W. Corbett, and J.H. Kunzie. The superintendent is T.L. Moorehouse, after who the town and post office are named. A residence, boarding house, stables, tool house, blacksmith shop, granaries and store house are now here, and upon completion of the road quite a town will no doubt spring up.

From "Historic Sketches of Walla Walla, Whitman, Columbia, and Garfield Counties, Washington Territory and Umatilla County, Oregon," by Frank T. Gilbert, Portland, Oregon 1882

### **Umatilla County, Oregon 1922**

#### **HERMISTON**

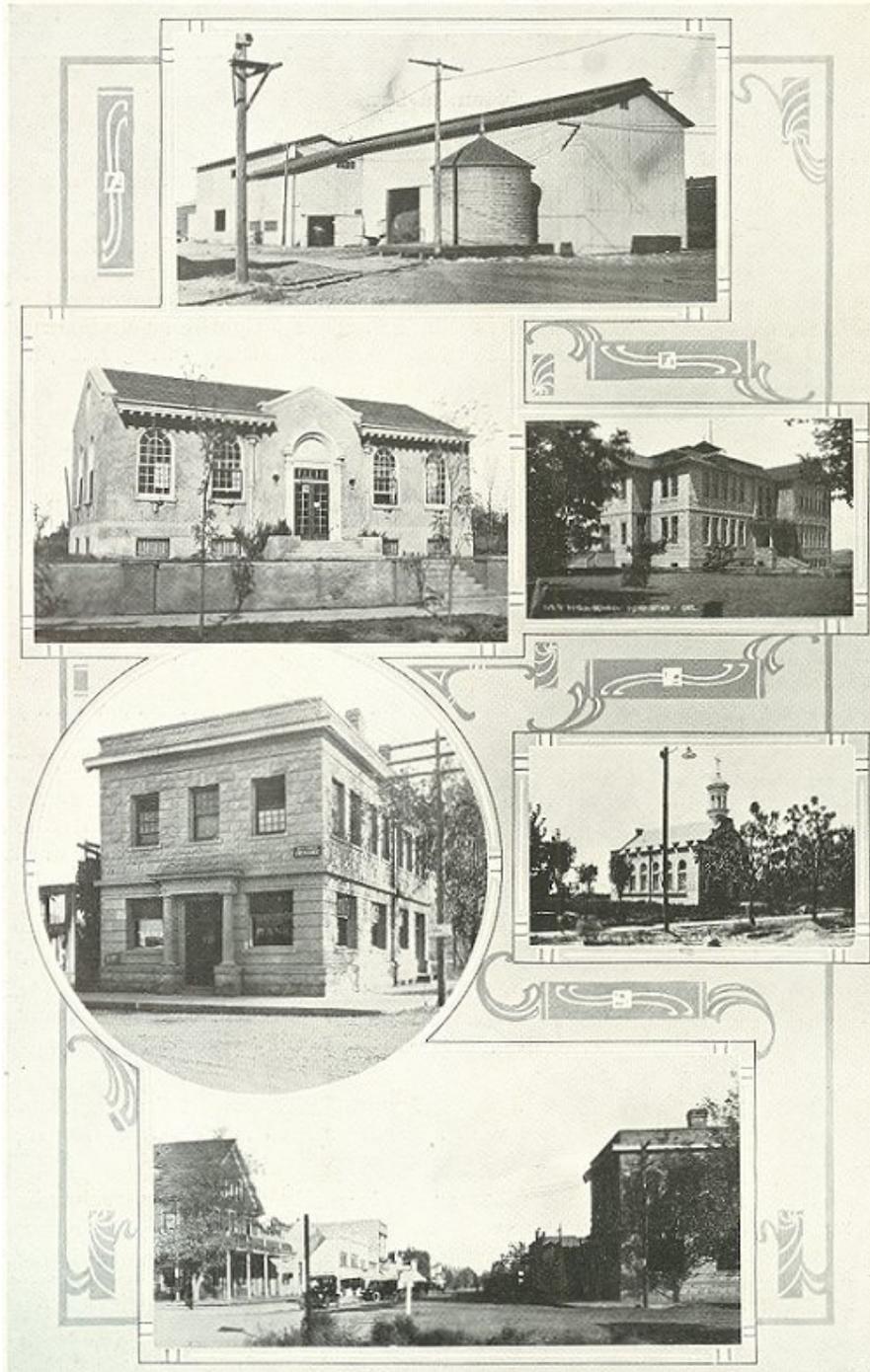
Hermiston is located in the west end, of Umatilla County and is on the Union Pacific Railroad and the Columbia Highway. It is 35 miles west of Pendleton, 190 miles east of Portland and six miles from the Columbia River. Its population in 1920 was 655, according to the official census. It is the trading center of the Umatilla Irrigation Project and is the location of the government's project headquarters. It is supported by the 20,000 acres of irrigated land in its vicinity.

As farms in this district are small, population is comparatively dense. About 1,800 people live on the irrigated farms in the vicinity of Hermiston and others who live on the farms in the north end of Morrow County do a part of their trading here. Four hundred farms are on the rural mail route out of Hermiston. Most of these have telephones. This combination of resources makes Hermiston one of the strongest business towns of its size in the state.

The town's history dates back about sixteen years, when the United States government founded the Umatilla Irrigation Project here. Previous to this time the land had supported nothing but sagebrush, but

the application of an abundance of water fulfilled the Biblical prophecy and "Made the desert to blossom like the rose." The town sprung up as fast as the lands were put under water.

Hermiston has within its city limits all the institutions that make up the life of a prosperous country town. There are three churches, Baptist, Catholic and Methodist, and five lodges, Masons, I. O. O. F., K. of P., Eastern Star and Rebekahs. The city has a 24-hour electric lighting system, a gravity water system publicly owned, a good fire department, a good network of cement sidewalks and well kept streets and lawns. Hermiston is the smallest town in the United States to have a Carnegie Library, and it is a good one.



All kinds of business is represented. There is a strong national bank with a capital and surplus of \$40,000, two hardware stores, several garages, two meat markets, three large general merchandise stores, two confectioneries a stationery store, a jewelry store, a weekly newspaper, a fine fireproof theater, two shoe stores, two hotels, two big lumber yards, and several other establishments. New business houses are going in all the time and Hermiston has the reputation of being a high-rent town, as the demand for both business and residence buildings far exceeds the supply.

### **Hermiston**

C.S. McNaught Chop Mill  
Public Library  
First National Bank High School  
Catholic Church  
Street Scene

Educational facilities here are the very best. An excellent grade school is supported. A union high school has just been formed by uniting for high school purposes the school districts of Hermiston,

Westland, Columbia, Minnehaha and Cold Springs. There are 115 pupils registered in the high school and six teachers are employed. All the surrounding rural districts maintain excellent schools and employ busses to bring the children to them. The city has a live aggressive Commercial Club of fifty members. Meetings are held during the lunch hour every Tuesday to discuss community problems. The women have a similar organization called the Community Club.

Irrigation has made Hermiston the good town it is today and more irrigation will make it the better town it will be tomorrow.