



Milton-Freewater, Oregon

In the 1800's, the towns of Milton and Freewater incorporated; Milton in 1889 and Freewater in 1892. Lying in the southern part of the Walla Walla River Valley, hearty pioneer families found an ideal climate and plenty of 'elbow room.' Milton and Freewater merged in 1950 as the town that today bears the name Milton-Freewater, Oregon. Located on Oregon Highway 11 in the northeastern part of Umatilla County, it is 27 miles northeast of Pendleton, Oregon and 10 miles south of Walla Walla, Washington.

Discover Historic

Umatilla County, Oregon

Looking back at Milton (now Milton-Freewater) in 1882

The town of Milton is situated on Walla Walla River, in the extreme northeast corner of Umatilla County, and but a few miles south from the line of Washington Territory. It lies just within the southern edge of the great Walla Walla Valley, and on the line of road now being constructed from Walla Walla by the O.R. & N. Co.. The narrow gauge branch from Whitman Junction, built two years ago, passes within a mile of the town. By it all freight is now received, and large quantities of grain are forwarded. In its life of ten years Milton has become a town of considerable prominence, and the next decade will probably witness a still more substantial growth than the last. Two good general stores indicate the amount of trade that now seeks this place from surrounding farms and the mountains. When a new county is created in this region, Milton expects to press its claims to the county seat with prospect of success. A "V" flume belonging to the Oregon Improvement Co. runs through the town and dumps at the Railroad station. It is twenty-one miles in length, with a branch in the mountains seven miles long, and was built in 1881. Large quantities of wool and lumber are sent down it daily.

W.S. Frazier settled here

W.S. Frazier settled on a portion of the town site in the fall of 1868, buying the land claim of Thomas Eldridge who had taken it up about four years previously. William McCoy located on the river just below him in 1869. In 1872 Mr. Frazier laid off a town site and gave a man named Woodward one and one-half acres of land to come with his wife and keep hotel. He also sold John Miller fifteen acres of land and water power for \$Q125, and that gentleman began the erection of a mill which was completed in 1873. It has three run of stones and is still owned by Mr. Miller. The same year H.L. Frazier put up a barn to accommodate the traveling public. The hotel built by Woodward now forms part of the residence of Ulysses Jarred, who settled in the county in 1860. Woodward sold it to I.W. Quinn in the fall of 1872, who pretended to keep hotel and had a small stock of goods. SP. Whitley, an old settler of 1860, is now proprietor of the only hotel worthy the name that Milton has ever possessed.

The town becomes Milton

In the spring of 1873 M.V. Wormington came to town and erected the first residence on the town plat. The same year William McCoy laid off a portion of his land as an addition. A petition was prepared in 1873 for the purpose of obtaining a post office, and by general consent the name Milton was inserted, and thus the infant village was christened.

In 1874 Riley Koontz opened a store, and with a blacksmith shop, a number of residences and a school house, the village began to present quite a thrifty appearance. From that time on Milton has grown slow and steadily. A planing shingle and chop mill has been added to its industries, built by Tolbert & Brown, and now owned by W.S. Brown. A fine two story frame school house, 45x55 feet, stands at the extreme lower end of town, built in 1879, and costing as it now stands, about \$6,000. The small schoolhouse erected on the same ground in 1872, has been remodeled and converted into a church. It belongs to the Methodists and United Brethren, and had previously been used by all denominations for church purposes. The Seventh Day Adventists built a church two years ago. In addition to these the Campbellites, or Christians, Baptists and Southern Methodists hold occasional services.

Milton may be briefly summed up as follows: two general stores, two drug stores, one variety store, one millinery store, three saloons, one hotel, one restaurant, three livery and feed stables, one meat market, one shoe shop, one barber shop, four blacksmith shops, one undertaker's shop, a picture gallery, flour mill, planing, chop, and shingle mill, a hall, flume, railroad station, schoolhouse, two churches, post office, express office and a population of about 400. Stages pass through the place daily each way, between Pendleton and Walla Walla.

Milton Fraternal Organization

Milton Lodge, No. 61, I.O.O.F. Dispensation granted November 13, 1877. Instituted December 1, 1877. Charter granted May 22, 1878. Charter members: Jonathon Tolbert, N.G.; Nathan Pierce, V.G.; William Tolbert, R.S.; Andrew Spence, T.; and I.W. Quinn. Hall built in 1882, cost \$2,200; size, 26x50 feet, frame. Membership forty. Meets every Saturday night. Present officers: J.H. Wright, N.G.; E.S. Weston, V.G.; J.H. McCoy, R.S.; George Church, T.

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



McLaughlin Union High School, Milton-Freewater

MILTON-FREEWATER

Nestling beneath the protecting shelter of the lofty Blue Mountains in the eastern part of Umatilla County lie the twin cities, Milton and Freewater, the most populous urban settlement in the county outside of Pendleton and the trading center for a population of some six thousand people. The 1920 census gives Milton a population of 1,760, and, according to the same authority, there are 680 inhabitants in Freewater.

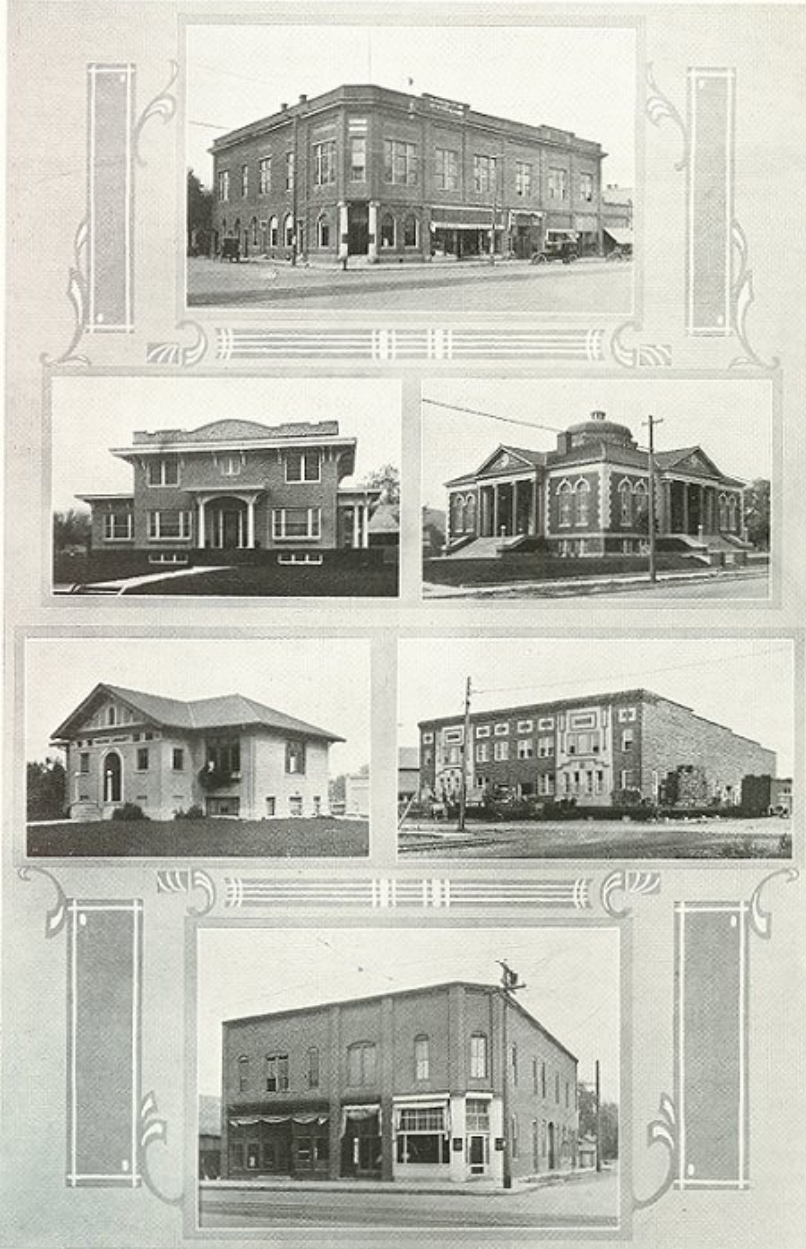
The two towns are distinctly one community and whatever affects one affects both. Their municipal limits overlap each other to such an extent that there is in effect no division line between the two.

This district is rapidly increasing its present heavy population. Some of the perfectly logical reasons why people are led to come here and then to stay and make homes is the fact that the altitude is 1,010 feet and the rainfall is eighteen inches, both just right to make it correct to say "High and dry" that combination which is popular with an ever increasing number of people.

Facilities for educating children are always required where happy homes are the rule, and to prove that this particular section of Umatilla County is amply provided for in this respect, and also to show how densely populated the valley is, it is of interest to note that within a radius of six miles from either town there are thirteen schools, employing fifty-nine teachers. The school enumeration of this same district is 1,909, with an actual daily attendance of more than 1,400 children. Besides the excellent public school facilities, Columbia College, located in the heart of Milton, offers a continuation of the high school course. The college was established in 1900. It owns equipment valued at \$100,000, and the annual enrollment will average about two hundred students.

The towns of Milton and Freewater are in the Walla Walla Valley. The Walla Walla River, which takes its source in the Blue Mountains, comes out of the canyon and runs in a generally northerly direction into the state of Washington. Along its east bank rises the bench of land that is almost entirely devoted to wheat raising as far as the foothills, some fifteen miles distant. On the other side of the river, where it leaves the canyon, the edge of the bench land runs almost due west. This, bench land is also devoted to

wheat raising. These two edges of bench, land leave a V-shaped valley, which runs in a northwesterly direction. This is the fruit section of the valley, terminating in alfalfa fields on the west and more wheat on the north. The town of Milton is just at the head of the canyon, and Freewater lies a little below Milton. At some places this valley has sub-irrigated sections, where springs and brooks are formed. The greater part of the valley is irrigated for fruit, vegetables, alfalfa and other crops. The wheat grown is not irrigated and is mostly sown in the fall, the land being summer fallowed every other year.



Milton

- First National Bank
- One of the finest homes in Umatilla County
- Public Library Christian Church
- Growers' Storage and Supply Co., plant
- Farmers Security Bank

In addition to the excellent school facilities which have always prevailed here, a new union high school has just been completed at a cost of about a quarter of a million dollars, and it offers an unexcelled opportunity for the education of children. The assessed valuation of the district is more than \$7,000,000, one of the biggest of any union district in the state.

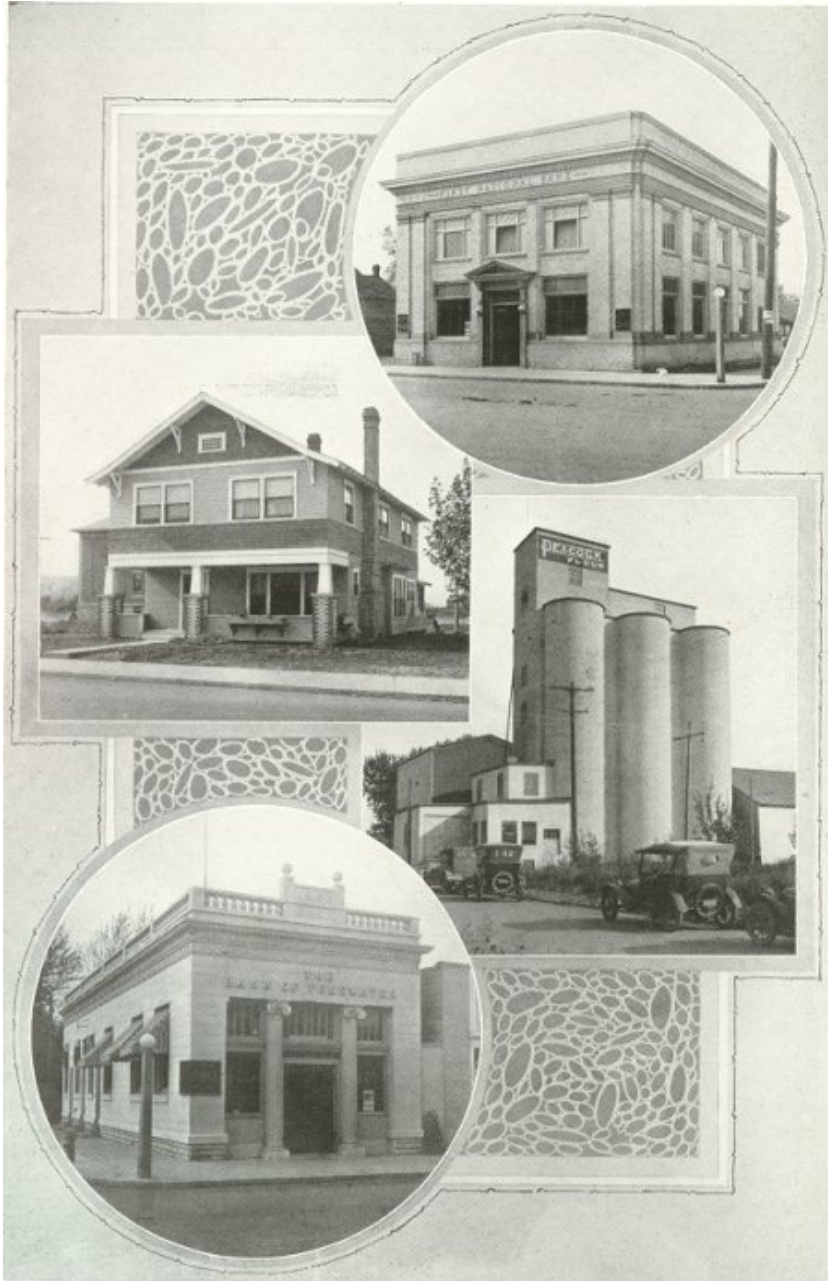
The library needs of the two towns are well cared for in a branch of the county library, which is established here, and efforts are being made to see that the scope of this -work is widened even beyond its present limits.

There are four banks here, whose deposits range from slightly more than one million dollars to about two million dollars in the season when fruit and wheat crops are sold. They are well housed and in strength they are second to none

in the county.

The religious life of the community is reflected in the number of churches found in the two towns. A departure from the usual plan of organization is found in the federated church, which is a combination of ten denominations. There are both Protestant and Catholic churches in the community besides the federated church.

An exceptionally large number of beautiful homes adorn both towns. They are surrounded by well-kept lawns on streets which in a large measure are paved. They are concrete examples of the vision and industry and faith of the men and women who live in Milton-Freewater and have been living here, some of them for many years.



Both Milton and Freewater have vigorous, energetic commercial organizations, which are constantly doing work for the good of the community as a whole. Each town has an up-to-date weekly newspaper. The usual quota of lodges and social organizations are found here in abundance to provide for the hours of pleasure and recreation.

Industries of the twin cities comprise one flour mill, \$75,000 ice and cold storage plant, a \$60,000 fruit packing and storage plant, beside three other large co-operative and commission fruit houses, two large box manufacturing plants and a sash and door factory.

Milton owns its own municipal light and power plant, valued at \$125,000, and beside furnishing light and power for inhabitants within the city, supplies many country homes.

Freewater

- A modern home
- Bank of Freewater
- First National Bank
- Peacock Mill