

HON. W. H. HOBSON. The family of which Hon. W. H. Hobson of Stayton is a representative was established on the Pacific coast in 1847, and since 1848 has been closely identified with Oregon. His father, Hadley Hobson, was born in the state of North Carolina September 6, 1811, and was the son of a brick manufacturer. In his youth he learned the brick making business under the direction of his father, and was also apprenticed to a mason. Until he reached the age of twenty-four years he remained at home and worked at his trades with his father. Fortified with an abundance of practical experience, he then went to Missouri, locating in Jackson county, where he worked at his trade of brick making with his brother, who had preceded him there. Eventually they entered into a partnership for the purpose of conducting a contracting business, in which their efforts met with success. They erected some of the important buildings of that county and vicinity, including the historic Chapel Hill Seminary, located in Lafayette county, Mo. While a resident of Missouri he married Emily S. Speinhauer, a native of South Carolina, whose parents came to the United States from Germany about 1812.

With his wife and children, and his brothers, George and Alfred, Mr. Hobson crossed the plains in 1847, with an outfit of ox-teams and wagons, bound for Oregon. During the journey they encountered many experiences of an interesting and not always agreeable nature. At times they were subjected to many hardships. It had been their original intention to go to Oregon, but they lost their way and entered California by mistake. Determined to make the best of the situation, Mr. Hobson at once engaged in gold-mining in that state, to which work he applied himself until the fall of 1848, when, with his family, he started for Oregon by way of the Pacific, arriving at the mouth of the Columbia river after a journey of five weeks. Coming to Marion county he took up a donation claim of six hundred and forty acres a mile north of the site of Stayton, all of which was wild land, densely covered with timber for the greater part, and the home of game hitherto undisturbed, except by the roving Indian. In a little clearing this hardy and determined pioneer erected a round-log house containing one room. It will surprise people unaccustomed to the hardships of the early days to know that there was not a nail in the entire house. There were puncheon floors, and all the finishings were of the most crude nature ; but the place was a paradise to the little family so far from their old home and so pitiable in their utter loneliness. Their neighbors were remote and their resources most meagre, but they managed to make themselves comfortable and to transform their wilderness home into a semblance of order, peace and comfort.

Soon after seeing his family well established in their home, accompanied by William Waldo, Henry Smith, Rufus Smith and Frederick Taylor, Mr. Hobson returned to the mining district of California, succeeded in gathering enough gold to pay a goodly percentage of the cost of his claim, and returned home. Soon he was free from debt, and from that time forward his possessions increased. From time to time he added to his original claim until he owned about fifteen hundred acres of land, most of which was very fertile and easily cultivated after the removal of the timber. He engaged in cattle and sheep raising and general farming on a large scale, and he took an active part in the general improvement of his county, aiding in the building of good roads, the erection of schools and the promotion of all worthy enterprises. He was a man of sterling traits of character, inherited principally from Quaker ancestry, in the principles of whose religion he was thoroughly and conscientiously schooled in his youth. The ten children in his family were as follows: Mary Ann, the widow of John Barker, of Heppner, Ore. ; W. H. ; George and Francis M., deceased ; Lemuel, a rancher near Mehama; Amanda, wife of Dr. John Parker, of Salinas, Cal. ; Emily and Amelia, twins, the former of whom is deceased, and the latter the wife of Eugene Warner, of Ukiah, Cal. ; Jeanette, of San Jose, Cal. ; and Hadley, a rancher residing near Mill City, Ore. The noble mother of this large family of children lived to the age of eighty and one half years, her death occurring at San Jose, Cal., in February, 1894.

Hon. W. H. Hobson, lawyer, merchant and distinguished public citizen, was barely two years of age

when his parents brought him to Oregon, and he grew to early manhood on the claim upon which he spent many years in hard labor. When the duties of home permitted he attended the school conducted in the little log cabin in the neighborhood, his first and best remembered teacher being Samuel Denny. By the time he had reached his twentieth year the town of Sublimity had been founded. Thither he repaired as the nearest and most promising center of activity, and conducted the store owned by his father for a time. Subsequently, in Aumsville, he managed the business of Simpson, Hunt & Co., and then went to Sublimity and started a small grocery store. Upon the expiration of a year he located in Stayton, where he engaged in the grocery business until 1871. From that time until 1874 he enjoyed a general trade at Stayton in partnership with Uriah Whitney. After disposing of this store he and his former partner bought another in Aumsville. After disposing of this in 1876 the partners built the Gardner grist-mill at Stayton, and in connection therewith operated a general store. Mr. Whitney withdrew from the association in 1883, after many years of amicable and satisfactory business, and thereafter Mr. Hobson took as his partners Messrs. Shaw and Simms. The building was afterward enlarged to meet the demands of an increasing trade. In 1888 the partners and Lee Brown went to Mill City and organized the Santiam Lumber Company, in connection with which they built a large saw-mill and engaged in a flourishing business. In keeping with the demands of that somewhat isolated section they started a general store and logging railway, and their combined energies resulted in the establishment of a very remunerative industry. In 1898 these combined interests were disposed of to the Curtis Lumber Company, after which Mr. Hobson returned to Stayton and resumed the conduct of his merchandising business. In 1897 he sold out and established a dry goods business at Salem, continuing the same for four years. Subsequently he started a similar enterprise at Stayton, which concern he still owns and manages.

Mr. Hobson's first marriage united him with Ella Gibson, who was a native of Marion county, Ore., and a daughter of Hon. Guyan Gibson. She died January 10, 1878, leaving a daughter, Pearl, now the wife of E. C. Peery, of Scto, Ore. December 12, 1880, he married Annie Thomas, who was born in East Portland, the daughter of Mrs. Arminda Thomas, of Stayton, Ore. She is the mother of two children, Alta and Everett.

A staunch supporter of Republican principles, Mr. Hobson has been prominently before the public for several years as a promoter of his party's interests, and has held important offices within the gift of his fellow-townsmen and the citizens of the county. In 1894 he was the nominee of his party for the state senate, was elected, and upon the expiration of his term was re-elected joint senator for Linn and Marion counties, both terms of service giving the greatest satisfaction to all interested. During the first session he was a member of the committees on claims, commerce, navigation and federal relations.

Fraternally Mr. Hobson is a member of Santiam Lodge No. 25, A. F. & A. M., of Stayton, of which he is past master. In the Grand Lodge he has filled nearly all the offices, including that of Grand Master in 1897-98. He is a member of Multnomah Chapter No. i, R. A. M., and De Molay Conimandery. No. 5. He is also a member of Stayton Lodge No. 64, I. O. O. F., and has passed all the chairs in the grand lodge.

Mr. Hobson has well interpreted and acted upon the possibilities at hand in the great northwest, and his various commercial enterprises have contributed, beyond the possibility of estimating, to the general upbuilding of the localities in which he has operated. He is a man of strict integrity. No question as to the motives which have actuated him in any of his undertakings has ever arisen. In his public life he has always aimed to conserve the best interests of his constituents and the state at large. Probity,, broad-mindedness, liberality of views, good fellowship, and a sincere and unselfish desire to assist in the promotion of all enterprises looking to the betterment of the public welfare, are the most pronounced traits in his character, as understood by those who know him best. The record of his life, both public and private, has been above reproach. The outline of the principal events in his career presented here shows how closely he has been identified with the rise and progress of the state of Oregon, and forms, in itself, an interesting chapter in the annals of the northwest.