

Heppner Early History Interwoven With Industry

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FOR the first time in twenty years, the Oregon Woolgrowers association is holding its annual convention in Heppner, the county seat of Morrow county. Heppner is one of the early pioneer towns of eastern Oregon and its history is interwoven with the early history of stock raising. When the early settlers came into this territory all of the land which is now in wheat was in bunchgrass. Early cattle outfits ranged all the way from the Umatilla Forest Reserve to the Columbia River in the winter season and during the summer would trail thru Umatilla and Union counties and even into Malheur. There were no fences, there were no wheat fields, there was nothing in all this open country but bunchgrass. Supplies for the ranchers were brought up the river on boats and for the whole territory now comprising Morrow, Grant and Wheeler counties, were unloaded at Umatilla Landing.

GOD FATHER EARLY DAY PEDDLER

Henry Heppner was first known in this eastern Oregon country as an itinerant peddler. At first his stock of goods was carried in a pack on his own back. Business was good and he bought a mule. Soon he was running a pack train. All supplies that were not handled by water were handled by pack train in those days and Henry Heppner became one of the large pack train owners that hauled supplies all the way from the present state of Washington down into California. At the height of his prosperity as a freighter, almost his entire outfit was stolen and destroyed by Indians. Following this loss he started in a small way packing from Umatilla Landing to a small cabin at Stansbury's Flat at the junction of Willow and Hinton creeks. Consignments of goods would be taken off at Umatilla Landing and sent to Henry Heppner's. Shortly a settlement grew up around this trading post and the town of Heppner was formed. A young man by the name of Jack Morrow went into partnership with Heppner in the trading post and when, in 1885, Umatilla county was divided and the west portion made a separate county, its name became Morrow.

Gradually the sheepmen began to come into this bunchgrass country and with the sheep came the early cattle and sheep wars. It would be difficult to say how many men were killed and how many hundreds of cattle and sheep were

A SHEPHERDESS?



Mrs. Luke Bibby, then Miss Reita Neel, as queen of Heppner Rodeo. Her parents, Mr. and Mrs. R. A. Thompson, are among Morrow County's leading sheep operators.

slaughtered before this war was ended by the Federal Government when it established its Forest Reserves and allotted each livestockman his own territory on which to run his stock undisturbed. Many of these old pioneer stockmen are still living in this county and the tales they tell read like a book.

INDIAN SCARE RECALLED

The early history of Heppner was far from being a smooth, even development. In 1878 the Indians in the Snake River country left their river territory to join the Umatilla Indians with the express purpose of going over into Washington to combine with tribes there. The purpose was to sweep down into western Oregon to wipe out all of the whites. Special information gained from one of the Indians showed that Heppner was directly in the path of the proposed punitive expedition. Fortifications were built, guns were shipped in by the Federal Government and distributed to the citizens. One day while forty of our men had gone over to Long Creek to help defend that settlement, a small group of Indians did come to Heppner. However, they proved to be friendly. In a few days these Indians departed and later on the same day word was received that three men on Butter creek had been found dead, killed by Indians.

Perhaps the most important single factor in the development of Morrow county and Heppner was the establishment of the branch railroad into Heppner in 1888. Prior to that time some wheat had been grown but only for local consumption. The price of wheat was so low that it would not stand the cost of freighting as was done with wool. This railroad made Heppner the shipping point for a vast interior country. Freighters hauled wool from Long Creek, John Day and even parts of Wheeler county. In one year there were three million pounds of wool shipped from Heppner. All kinds of supplies came to Heppner to be freighted to this interior country. So truly was Heppner the outlet for several parts of Umatilla, Grant and Wheeler counties that a bill was introduced into the legislature enlarging Morrow county to include all of the country south to the John Day river. This bill passed the lower house but was too late to be considered by the senate. At the present time, in Morrow county, sheep have very largely replaced cattle until now there are about 3000 beef cattle in the county and upwards of 150,000 ewes.

SHEEP RAISING TODAY

Sheep are ordinarily handled in units of 1200 ewes, commonly called a band, although any one operator may have all the way from one to six or more bands of sheep. Most of the Morrow county sheepmen lamb all the way from February into April on their home ranges here in Morrow county. Sheep and lambs are grazed on the home range until the latter part of May or into June and are then moved into the mountains. As more and more sheep have come into this western country, ranges have become crowded and our sheep men have been forced to go farther and farther afield for summer range. Some of our men trail their sheep 150 to 200 miles into Wallowa county—others range in Grant, Umatilla, Union and Baker counties, in addition to the thousands of acres of Government grazing land in the southern part of Morrow county. Of late years we have been sending many carloads of ewes and lambs to Montana

HENRY HEPPNER



Heppner's God-father, early day merchant prince. From a wood engraving of his time.

for summer grazing. This movement has assumed such proportions that already Morrow county sheepmen own thousands of acres of summer range land in Montana. With this deeded land, of course, go many thousand more acres of forest reserve land. In the fall the sheep are trailed back to the home ranch, this movement taking place anywhere from the middle to the last part of September, to the middle of November, depending on the season and the condition of the grass on the range. These conditions, of course, vary considerably from year to year and from one locality to another. Ordinarily sheep grazed in Montana will be able to stay on the range until November. Most of the wether lambs and some of the ewe lambs in these Montana outfits are shipped direct from the range to the eastern markets as fat or feeder lambs. The balance, of course, are brought back by train to the home ranch here in Morrow county.

Morrow county sheepmen ordinarily sell from one and one-quarter to one and three-quarters millions pounds of wool each year, making us the third highest wool producing county in the state. Heppner, the host for the 38th annual Oregon Woolgrowers convention, is the center of all this vast sheep industry.

U. S. D. A. yearbook for 1934 gives Oregon sheep and lamb population of 2,391,000, valued at \$3.90 per head, a total investment of \$9,310,000.

The United States in 1932 had the second largest sheep population of any country in the world, 53,155,000. Australia led with 110,619,000.

The five-year average price for lambs in Oregon, 1929-1933, was \$6.02 a hundred pounds. The average price in December, 1934, was \$4.60.

The U. S. D. A. reports the five year average price for lambs,

1908-1914 (the pre-war period) at \$5.87 a hundred pounds; average price for sheep for the same period was \$4.53. This was compared with \$5.01 for lambs and \$2.66 for sheep in December, 1934. The figures represent weighted averages for all the United States.

The five-year average price for sheep in Oregon, 1929-1933, was \$4.20 a hundred pounds. The average price in December, 1934, was \$2.70.

Heppner is permitting ewe turns during the convention.

Many old-time cattlemen are now running sheep. There's Dillard French, for instance.



FRIENDS OF WOOLMEN SINCE '90

We are proud to have been able to serve the sheep industry within Heppner's large trading territory these many years, and we are proud of the large, modern establishment their friendship has helped make possible.

May You Enjoy Your Stay in Heppner!

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Hardware & Sheepmen's Supplies

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We appreciate the support you have given the PACIFIC WOOL GROWERS for the past fifteen years, and are doing our level best to discharge this responsibility in a manner satisfactory to you.

Wool growers marketing their wools through the PACIFIC—their own marketing organization—have the seasoned, experienced service of an agency which has specialized in Northwest wools for FIFTEEN YEARS.

The PACIFIC does not buy or speculate in wool for its own account. It is purely a growers' agency, strictly cooperative, where

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