

Farm Living Here is Among State's Best

It's no accident that the level of farm living in Morrow county ranks among the highest of any county in the Pacific Northwest.

Farming is the major industry in Morrow county, balanced by income from the county's timber resources. Wheat is the major cash crop, balanced by income from livestock. Diversification of agricultural programs with irrigated crops in the northern end of the county and along county streams, has helped progressive farmers insure stable incomes.

Modern farming methods making use of improved varieties, more rigid selection of livestock breeding stock, and better farming practices have helped Morrow county farmers emphasize their slogan of living in "the county of balanced advantages."

This rich farming area is located in the north central part of Eastern Oregon, about 270 miles inland from the Pacific Ocean. The county is bounded on the north by over 30 miles of the Columbia River. To the east lies Umatilla county, Grant and Wheeler are south, and the county is bounded on the west by Gilliam county.

A gently rolling plain lies next to the Columbia River in the northern part of the county. As one moves south, this plain leads up to broad plateaus and rounded ridges that make up the central section of the county, and further south, they merge with the more rugged terrain of the Blue Mountains.

This rising slope of the county from north to south is shown by the elevations of the towns. Low point, 250 feet above sea level, is at Boardman in the north. Irigan lies at 297 feet, Cecil at 619, Morgan at 791, Ione at 1080, Lexington at 1454, Heppner at 1955, and Hardman at 3590 feet above sea level. The highest point is Madison Butte. It is 6000 feet above the sea.

Precipitation in the county follows the land contour, increasing from north to south. Average annual precipitation is 8.6 inches in the northern end of the county, increasing to 18 inches in the forests to the south. Heppner has 13.05 inches.

Temperatures here are considered moderate, and the growing season averages 168 days a year. At Heppner, average temperatures range from a high in the 90's in the summer, to lows of around zero in the winter.

Drainage is supplied by Willow and Butter creeks, that head in the Blue Mountains in the south and flow through the county into the Columbia River on the north. These streams, together with Rhea, Hinton and other streams, provide water for livestock and for irrigation in meadows and valleys along the way.

Soils in the county vary from coarse-textured sands and sandy loams in the north to medium-textured silt loams and silty clay loams in the south. Reflecting the heavier rainfall and higher elevation in the south, the soils become progressively darker with well-developed subsoils.

Alluvial bottomland soils occur in the stream valleys and vary from light to medium texture. Alkali, the plague of the irrigated west, is formed where drainage is poor, but there isn't much of it.

Named for J. L. Morrow, an early resident, Morrow county, with 2059 square miles, was split off from Umatilla county by the Oregon legislature February 16, 1885. First industry in the new county was cattle raising, but a few settlers also operated supply stores for early travelers coming over the Oregon Trail. The trail crossed Willow Creek at Cecil, and its ruts can still be seen at many points.

The city of Heppner was named for Henry Heppner, who owned the first store on the site. It was incorporated in 1887, and later became the county seat.

Lexington and Ione were both incorporated in 1903. Lexington was named by the Penland family in memory of their home town of Lexington, Ky. Ione was named for Ione Wilson, baby daughter of an early settler whose home was part of the townsite. Boardman, incorporated in 1927, was named for Samuel H. Boardman, whose original homestead became the townsite.

Nearly 75 per cent of the 1,337,769 acres of land in Morrow county is in farms, according to the 1959 U. S. census of agriculture. Of this land, 372,306 is in cropland, 590,497 in pasture land, 15, 327 in other farm land, and 339,630 in land not in farms.

The number of farms in 1959 was listed at 386 by the census, down 77 farms from the 1954 census. Average size of farm in

the county in 1959 was 2,875.4 acres.

Irrigated farms averaging around 40 acres are found in the extreme northern end. A large desert used for spring and fall sheep range lies between this irrigated section and the wheat area in the central part. Cattle ranches are found mainly in the southern part of the county, with the Blue Mountains in the south-east furnishing considerable range for livestock as well as timber for the lumber industry.

Wheat, alternated with summer fallow, is the predominant type of agriculture. About 90 per cent of the wheat is fall planted. In 1959, winter wheat was planted on over 115,000 acres, spring wheat on about 2500 acres, and barley on over 45,000 acres. Income to the county from grain crops in 1960 was estimated at around \$6,779,275.

Livestock make up the second largest source of farm income, amounting to \$1,901,700 in 1960.

In the last 10 years, sheep numbers have decreased, although this has been offset by more cattle. During the same period, cattle numbers rose from 20,500 to over 30,000 in 1960.

Other important sources of agricultural income, according to 1960 estimates made by the county extension agent, were hay and silage, \$1,036,500; farm timber products, \$150,000; potatoes and truck crops, 164,000; dairy, \$500,000; eggs and poultry, \$96,450; and fruit, \$2500.

All told, agricultural income in Morrow county in 1960 was estimated at \$10,637,775.

A growing total of irrigated land in the county is helping to diversify agriculture. In 1959, 283 farms listed 14,011 acres under 1959 irrigation.

Largest irrigated areas are around Boardman and Irigan in the north. An abundance of water, coupled with a large reserve, allow farmers to raise potatoes, melons, fruits, and other truck crops. Hay, however, remains the chief crop of the irrigated farms in the north, and in the creek bottoms of Rhea, Willow, Butter and Hinton creeks.

Timber resources also play a big part in the economic structure of Morrow county. Timber lands cover about 233,500 acres. The Umatilla National Forest, lying in the Blue Mountains in the southeast corner, contains 202,000 acres.

Morrow county forests provide much more than just income from timber. They protect the watersheds that provide irrigation and domestic water for the lands and towns below. And, equally important, all parts of the forest suitable for grazing—about 200,000 acres—are under permit to stockmen who have grazing rights established by ownership of land and prior use.

Its rangelands and rolling forests also help turn Morrow county into a sportsman's delight, and the tourist trade has become another source of income. There is excellent deer and elk hunting in the Blue Mountains. Pheasants are plentiful, and ducks and geese by the thousands swarm from the Columbia to feed on the irrigated areas and stubble fields. Hunters from all over Oregon visit the county each year. We, who live here, live right in the middle of a big vacation land.

The mountain streams and valley creeks are also noted for their supply of fighting rainbow trout, and fishermen regularly catch their limit. The Morrow

County Hunters and Anglers Club has been active in promoting game preservation areas and activities to insure future hunting and fishing. The Columbia River State Game Refuge, covering 28,200 acres, is also in the county.

State and county highways crisscross the county and facilitate motor travel and transportation of goods. We have 180 miles of state highways on state highways 74, 206, and 207. U. S. Highway 30 skirts the Columbia River on the north, and a network of county roads link the county together.

Several truck lines provide freight transportation. A branch line of the Union Pacific Railroad reaches 77 miles from Arlington on the Columbia River to Heppner. This branch line ties in the county with the main line of the Union Pacific and with barge and other navigation facilities on the Columbia River. Barge lines have carried an increasing amount of freight out of Morrow County in recent years. There is a good airport at Lexington.

Heppner, in the south-central part, is the principal town and trading center and the county seat. A town of about 1700 citizens, Heppner has fine schools, churches, lodges, civic groups, a riding club, golf course and young peoples' organizations that make it an alert and active community.

The four other principal towns are Boardman and Irigan on the Columbia River, and Ione and Lexington on the Willow Creek highway.

All five towns have standard elementary and high schools. School buses provide transportation for children thruout the county.

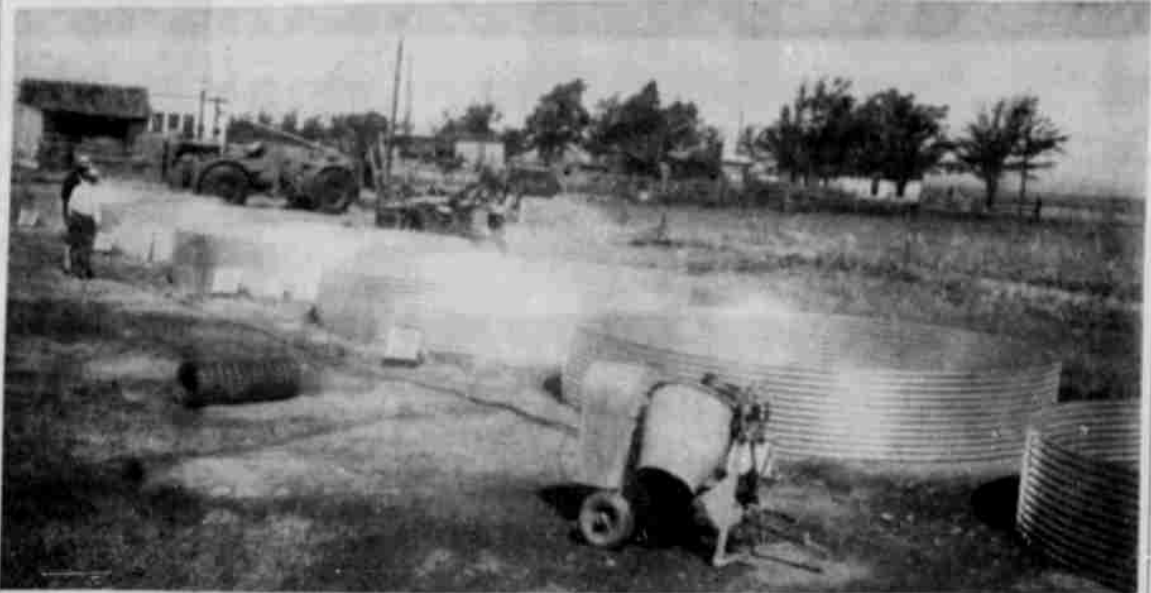
Population of Morrow county was estimated by the Oregon State Board of Health, to be about 4870 in 1955. This is a gain of 500 in 15 years.

Morrow County boasts the only hospital in the state with a private airstrip at its back door. This allows emergency cases to be brought in from all over the county. The ultra-modern, 49-bed hospital is fully equipped with modern X-ray facilities, surgery, obstetrics room, and a completely equipped laboratory.

The Morrow County Rodeo has attracted visitors from far and wide for over a quarter of a century. This event held the first part of September, now includes the Morrow County Fair.



ONE of the fine ranches in the east central part of Morrow county is the H. G. Campbell place. This is the home where son Larry Campbell and family live on the ranch. (G-T Photo)



THIS PHOTO shows one of the modern trends in agriculture on Morrow county wheat ranches. Six new grain bins are in construction on the ranch of H. G. Campbell and son Larry Campbell. Grain is removed from the large bins by inserting an auger through pipes that go to the bottom of inverted cones underground. Sides are just starting to be formed on the bins in this photo. (G-T Photo)

Gun Club Popular Pastime

One of the several popular sports clubs is the Morrow County Gun Club for the clay target sportsmen.

It was organized in 1949 and grounds are located a mile south of Heppner just off highway 207, where they have a good background, roomy clubhouse and two electric traps.

Much time, labor and planning by the members has made it a very successful gun club.

Several amateurs have risen to top shooters through their participation in the events here during the past years.

Each spring they enter the Oregon Journal Telegraphic Shoot where most of the gun clubs in Oregon participate. The club here combined with the Hermiston and Arlington clubs won the Journal plaque in 1957 and again in 1959.

Another yearly event is an annual spring shoot with perpetual purses that have been running for seven years. This shoot brings many trapshooters from the neighboring gun clubs which this year was held May 14.

Also the proceeds from the shoot a year is donated to a charitable organization.

Pity the grouch—he's a guy who has sized himself up and got sore about it.

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