

Significant

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some of the leading citizens of the town formed a joint stock company and came to his relief, thus insuring the success of the venture.

On Dec. 2, 1891 the S.P. Garrigues' planing mill was destroyed by fire. The citizens, by forming a bucket brigade, saved the lumber yard and surrounding buildings. The city council, in Jan. 1892, determined to construct three cisterns on Main street to give protection to the business district—but this project was never carried out.

PROSPERITY REIGNS

The Gazette reported many indications of great prosperity in Morrow County in 1891. "Some 2,325,000 pounds of wool were received by the Morrow County Loan and Trust Co.'s warehouse alone, 600,000 pounds of which were graded and packed for direct eastern shipment. It was estimated that 65,000 head of sheep were driven out of the county and sold, but that the total number of sheep in the county was not thereby diminished as the exported an-

imals were replaced numerically by the increase. The cattle raising industry was extended considerably, encouraged by the prevailing high prices, but the rearing of horses was allowed to pass into comparative neglect owing to the depressed condition of the horse market. Fifteen thousand acres of homestead land were added to the taxable domain of the county by the making of final proofs, and the indebtedness was reduced some \$90,000." Many other statistics were given such as a long listing of those who paid taxes on one thousand dollars or over for the year.

Of course the agricultural prosperity was reflected in the businesses in the towns; merchants built up their stocks, citizens improved their properties.

Crops of 1892 were rather light, owing no doubt partly to the fact that the land needed rest after the heavy yields of the two previous, but more especially to a drouth. A heavy rain came to Heppner Sept. 6th which flooded the town as water poured in from the hills. 1893 was also very dry through most of the

growing season, and on July 3rd citizens around Heppner and at Eight Mile tried to induce rain by heavy firing—however, their efforts failed.

THE 1893 DEPRESSION
There was a general financial panic throughout the country that year. Business went to a cash basis. Mr. Schiach writes, "It may be confidently asserted that the burden of financial stringency did not weigh as heavily upon the people of Eastern Oregon as in many of the older communities, and failures in business were few, but here as elsewhere, an effectual check was put upon almost all progress and retrogression became the order of the day." Citizens of Liberty and Hardman assembled and passed resolutions asking that their creditors be as lenient as possible. This depression lasted for four difficult years. Four Portland banks had to suspend payments that year.

HEPPNER SCHOOL FIRE
Heppner's fine five-room school held 244 pupils in its ten grades in the year 1890-91. In 1892 that building on Gale Street was destroyed by fire and a new school was built on the hill east of town—an imposing structure with eight class rooms. (The first high school graduation was the class of 1893 with five

members: Ben Patterson, Effie (Fields) Rhea, Frank Jones, Jay W. Shipley and Roy Glasscock.)

In the early spring of 1892 Heppner purchased a great deal of fire-fighting equipment for freight prepaid, about \$1000. This equipment in the hands of an enthusiastic volunteer fire company was valuable, but a better water system was urgently needed. The town contracted with H.V. Gates of Hillsboro for a water system and electric light plant. He successfully utilized the old well which had been bored years back and at last Heppner got "The best, most effective, permanent and satisfactory light and water plant of all cities of like size in the Northwest." (Schiach, Pg. 299). A corporation known as the Heppner Light and Water Company took over from Mr. Gates and operated the new systems.

SEVERAL POLITICAL MANEUVERINGS

Morrow County's political leadership was eager to promote growth. Back in 1889 there was an almost successful attempt to extend the southern boundary of the county to the John Day River and take in fifteen of the northern townships of Grant County. Hon. T.E. Fell introduced the bill in the state legislature and it passed in the house but failed to reach the senate in time to be considered before adjournment. The people in the territory involved were greatly in favor of the change.

In 1893 the state decided to locate a branch asylum for the insane in Eastern Oregon. Heppner's leaders felt they could get it for their town as the new water and light system favored expansion. In Jan. 1894 the decision was reached after careful inspection of Baker, North Powder, La Grande, Union, Echo, Pendleton, Milton, Heppner, and The Dalles, to award the hospital to Union, presumably on

account of the hot lake and spring in its vicinity. (Schiach, Pg. 300).

PROSPERITY RETURNS

The years 1893-4-5-6 were weary and discouraging. Most of the products of the county had to be sold for less than the cost of their production. Wheat in 1894 sold as low as 15 cents per bushel, lambs for 75 cents per head and wool and cattle for prices proportionately low. In 1897 prosperity returned in earnest. The fall crops brought good prices; wages rose in proportion; debts were paid; mortgages cleared; confidence and credit re-established. Judge A.G. Bartholemew succeeded in clearing up a school lands purchase mess making considerable land salable which did much to brighten Morrow financially.

OREGON'S MOST PROSPEROUS YEAR

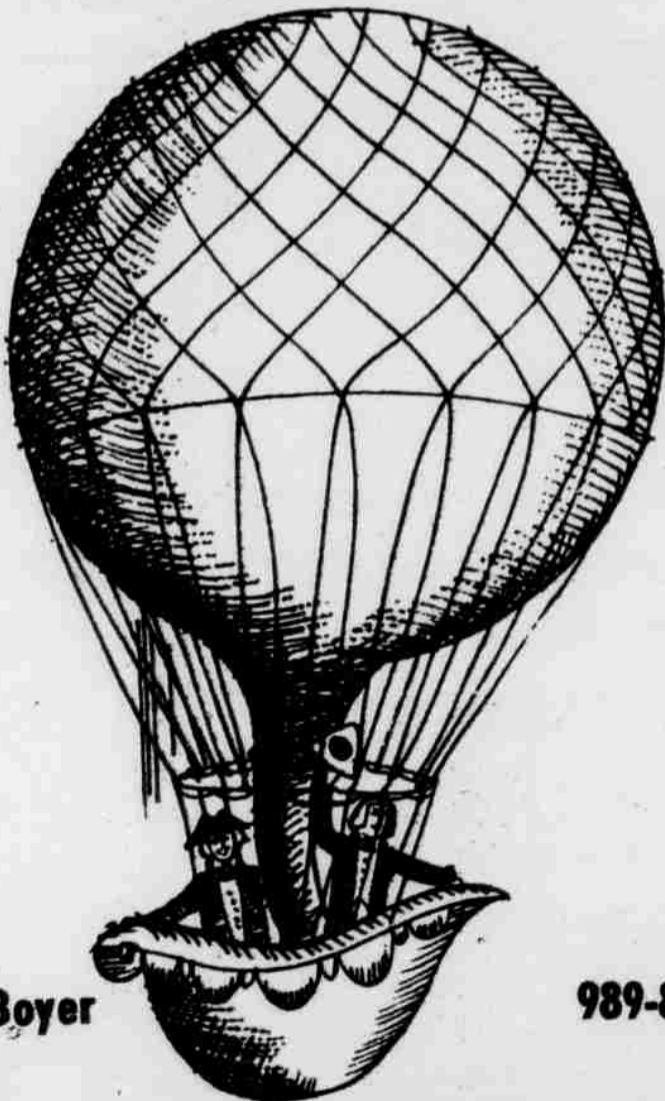
The Oregonian summarized the year of 1898 thus: "The year ending Dec. 31, 1898, was the most prosperous year Oregon has ever known. Every line of trade reports a large increase in business, except for a few lines, such as soap, coffee, tea and spices. Some lines, notably agricultural implements and certain kinds of building material, increased from 50 to 75 per cent. Most of the increase was cash business."

The year 1899 did not seem quite as good, but 1900 brought better crops. It was unusually favorable for the production of mutton, the average increase being over 100 per cent, or about 20 per cent higher than that of any former year. This must have brought great joy to the Irish shepherds who had come into Morrow in considerable numbers in the years from 1870 through the 1890's.

A Gazette supplement states that the shipments over the O.R. & N. from Heppner during 1900 were: Wheat and

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