

ETHNIC BACK GROUNDS

Unusual Irishman

Continued from Page 11

to America from County Clare, Ireland, of which country they were natives. They first settled in Illinois, where our subject grew to manhood. On account of the poverty of his parents and the poor school facilities in their place, he attended school only one day. He left home at an early age and took up a seafaring life, which he followed for many years. During this time he saw the need of a better educational training and set himself to the task of gaining the same, which he did to a fine degree, being aided much by his travels. He has learned to speak the German and Spanish languages in addition to his mother tongue and is a well-read man, manifesting fine capabilities. During his travels he visited all the ports of any size in the entire world. He crossed the plains in 1871 to California, and in 1878 was employed as scout by the government in the Indian War. Since quitting the seas he has devoted his attention to farming and stock raising, in which occupation he enjoys a very gratifying financial remuneration."

Then, after two paragraphs about Mr. Johnson's marriages and children and fraternal memberships, the sketch concludes with this appraisal, "He is a man of sterling integrity and upright principles, ever demeaning himself in a praiseworthy and commendable manner."

EARLY FARMERS

By the time Morrow County farmers were getting well

established and wheat was becoming a major crop, their tools had advanced through many stages of horse-powered machines—headers, threshers, separators. Walking plows pulled by two or three horses were replaced by gang plows made up of a 3-bottom 12" or 16" share and were pulled by six or eight horses. Farmers needed to be blacksmiths to care for this equipment. Because few farmers could own threshing machines large custom threshing crews moved through the area from about 1890 for about 35 years building piles of sacked wheat and cones of straw. Giles French covers this period from pages 30 through 30 in *Homesteads and Heritages*. Heppner was a popular Saturday night spot for the men traveling with these crews, and its bars saw great activity during harvest.

After harvest, farmers hauled the sacked grain to warehouses in their wagons. Sacks weighed 140 pounds. Before the railroad came into the county (1888) hauling was so expensive and time consuming that not nearly as much wheat was sold as soon after the R.R. came. The flouring mill at Heppner handled small amounts of local wheat.



(An excellent look at early-day wheat farming is given in *This Was Wheat Farming*, a good-sized, full-of-pictures book written by Mr. Kirby Brumfield an Oregon "farm boy" who is presently with KATU television. The Brumfield book was an award winning publication of 1968.)

There were many publications just before and just after 1900 which pictured life at that important date. Many gave projections of future developments. One of these small "Brag Books" was published by the Morrow County Booster Club. It paints this word picture:

"It should be constantly born in mind that Morrow County is largely in an undeveloped, or, at least, a transitional stage. The era of unlimited stock raising has been followed by wheat farming on a scale of similar magnitude. Land is still held in immense areas. The stock man thinks nothing of it that he counts his holdings not by the acres, but by the sec-



Small fortune in wheat from one Morrow farm

as the Century Changes

tions. The wheat farmer, likewise, owns several "quarters," aggregating, commonly, some thousands of acres of land. But a new day is dawning—a day of smaller farms and better farming; a day of diversified agriculture, with utilization of the by-products. In all likelihood wheat will remain the staple product, and stock raising will continue to receive a great deal of attention. But other products—fruit, vegetables, etc., are being grown. The dairy cow is beginning to find her place, and stock are being fed on

the farm as well as on the range. This means, of course, the reduction of the size of the ranches and an increasing population. It means, too, greater prosperity both for the farmers and for the communities. The population of Morrow County is not much above 5,000, half of which is represented by the various towns and villages. To say that the county could—and should—support a population ten times that number is putting the matter mildly."

Continued on page 13

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