

AS CENTURY CHANGES

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first meeting of this kind took place on the 11th and 13th of October and was attended by about 250 of the old veterans of the county. Heppner's citizens covered themselves with glory and won the gratitude of the pioneers by the munificence and thoroughness of their preparations. They proved that they were not insensible of the debt due those sturdy winners of the west. The homes of the city were thrown open to the visitors and feelings of welcome found expression in many beautiful acts of kindly hospitality. A dinner was served at the opera house such as would satisfy the most exacting epicure, and when all the old folks, the band, the school teachers and others had partaken of the viands to full satisfaction an interesting program was rendered, one important feature of which was the eloquent address of Judge S.A. Lowell. In the evening an amateur play was presented, the characters being sustained by local talent. About 9:30 o'clock the next day the old folks again assembled at the opera house and amused each other and the younger people by the relation of interesting reminiscences of early times and personal experiences in the brave days gone by.

Prizes were awarded as follows: That for the oldest man in attendance to Mr. A. Mallory, 82 last January (1900); that for the oldest lady to Mrs. Clarke, mother of Mrs. George Swaggart, aged 91; that for the couple who have been married the longest to Mr. and Mrs. A. Mallory, wedded 58 years last July; for the resident who had lived in Morrow County the longest to William Ayers, Sr. who settled here in 1863.

"The joyousness of the occasion was somewhat marred by a disgraceful street brawl for which the citizens of Heppner were in no way responsible, and which all of them heartily deprecate, but notwithstanding this misfortune the reunion was a most felicitous and profitable one. It is quite evident that the younger citizens of Morrow County will not be among those who will never achieve anything worthy of remembrance by a remote posterity because they take no interest in the achievements of the fathers and founders of their section." (Shiach, Pg. 282)

THE NEW GENERATION

A founder, Jackson Lee Morrow died on September 22, 1899, leaving one son J. W. "Billy" Morrow. William Penland died at Lexington early in the spring of 1901. Henry Heppner ended his labors Feb. 16, 1905. Ellis Minor died that same year at the age of 73. A new generation assumed command and a great deal of expansion and building took place. The impressive "new" stone courthouse cost-

ing just a little under \$22,000 was erected in 1902. In 1902 the first class from Heppner's four-year high school graduated and included: Bessie B. Edwards, president; W.H. Dutton, vice-president; Grace Hager, secretary; Sadie McCarty, treasurer, and Birdie Gilliam, Edna Mallory, Gus Mallory, and Ona Gilliam—who is still a Heppner resident.

THE 1903 FLOOD

Sunday evening June 14, 1903 Heppner's worst flood took over 250 lives and de-

stroyed a great part of the town. It resulted from heavy rain and large hail which is said to have piled up two feet deep. Tremendous walls of water roared down Balm Fork, and Willow Creek rolling along huge rocks, sweeping down houses and barns and fences and the early hay crop, and pushing all this with tremendous force through the town. Heppner's 1146 citizens were caught in many ways—some families and parts of some families made it to the hills. Many wonderful rescues took place, and many very sad mistakes which developed into great tragedies. In per cent of life lost and of property damage the Heppner Flood is still one of America's greatest community disasters. A comprehensive accounting is given by Mr. French in Homesteads and Heritages from pages 60-75.

This awful flood struck Heppner at its height—when it was as complete and as independent as possible. Although its population has gained since this early century period the community has not been able to regain many advantages it offered before 1903.

POST-FLOOD ACTIVITY

Because there are many still with us whose memories are strong, we will only at-



HEPPNER'S BIG FLOOD OF 1903. (Courtesy L. Winchester)

tempt to mention some of the historic highlights between 1903 and the present. There were good times and bad times. Bankers had problems. Farming machinery changed very much. Automobiles arrived. Roads were improved. A Gazette-Times story in 1914 announced that there was one car for each 64 people in the country—the highest average in the whole state. The World War which began in 1914 raised wheat prices to \$2 a bu. and consequently land prices went from \$11 to around \$40 per acre. The Morrow County Creamery organized and thrived under manager W. Claude Cox. The Farmers' Union bought the Heppner Mill and enlarged the production of White Star flour. Poultry production grew important at one and Lexington. Women's suffrage passed and the newspapers urged women to register to vote. By 1919 Heppner High School had 22 graduates. County agents arrived and farm advise helped build up agriculture. Banks prospered.

A VERY HOT YEAR

Summer 1918 was Heppner's hottest—in fact the town really went to blazes. On May 27, a fire started near the Star Theater which the fire department was unable to squelch being low on water, equipment and training. It spread to the Reid rooming house across Gale St. then crossed Willow St. to the south where it burned the city hall, the library, and the fire department's hose carts. It swept on south leveling Robert's skating rink, Well's garage, several storage buildings behind Main St. stores. It then recrossed Gale St. and burned several homes along the hill.

On July 4, the really big fireworks came. A fire started in Patterson & Elder's barber shop, ran through Louis Pearson's trailer shop consumed the great Palace Hotel, shot across May street to destroy the Star rooms, the Herald news office, Vic Groshen's Frogpond saloon, and some office buildings. It also spread east to burn Gilliam & Bisbee's warehouse and G.W. Verliott's second-

hand store. Then the new First National Bank building lost its windows but stood. It jumped Main St. and cleaned out everything in the block south taking lawyer's offices, blacksmith shops and minor buildings on one side and then hopped across Main again to destroy all of the buildings between August and Cannon streets except Dr. McMurdo's new home. Heppner's last livery stable, Willis Stewart's Red Front went—and the day of horse transportation ended.

Rebuilding was very difficult as labor was scarce—the U.S. was at war, men were away fighting or working in war industries; folks at home had the flu. These fires finally led to a better water system and a greatly improved fire department.

THE NINETEEN TWENTIES

The war ended, prices were high, but many citizens were discontented. The curtain was falling on the sheep business and the wheat growers were hoping for many changes. An early winter freeze in 1924-25 took nearly all the wheat in the mid-Columbia

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