

## Luck of the Irish — continued from p.9

first to make 'home brew' during Prohibition days, and one of the first to drink it. One of the first to install central furnace heating in the ranch house.

Asked what he thought of Prohibition, the elder Kilkenny said, "It's better than no whiskey at all."

### The Heppner Irish

About 85% of the Irish who settled in the county were men, and many who stayed in America died bachelors. Others, who made and saved enough money, went back to Ireland and married. The Heppner High School athletic teams for over a quarter of a century were known as the "Irish." A once powerful influence in the county was the Ancient Order of Hibernians, with Heppner at one time the home of the second largest lodge in Oregon.

When Judge Killenny was young, "it was a mark of cowardice to carry a six shooter. All controversy was settled by fists."

Giles French, a native of Sherman County, for more than 40 years wrote the editorials for the *Sherman County Journal* and served 17 years as a state representative, also wrote *Homesteads and Heritages; A History of Morrow County*.

In a chapter called "Irish and Swedes" he says, "The influx of Irish came about 1890 and they almost took over the county for a decade or two."

"Some of the Irish of Morrow County built up considerable fortunes in the sheep business. The Irish influence was strong in Morrow County at the turn of the century and a decade or two afterward. It helped

give Heppner the reputation of a wild Western town, which it hardly deserved, although there were Saturday nights when the sheep were home from the hills and the cattle in the feed lots, when it was wild enough to suit the dreams of a movie producer.

### Grazing gets Scarce

Being single made it easier for the Irish to be sheepherders, since they went into the hills for six months at a time, moving sheep from hill to hill in search of good grazing, which was scarce. Records indicate four acres of land were needed to support one animal. By 1908 the winter feed supply began to collapse.

Herds moved farther and farther south, into the mountains, as the near grasslands were destroyed. Grazing the two-foot tall grass to the ground slowed, then destroyed reseeding. The centuries-old mat of dried grass was destroyed by the grazing animals' hooves at the same time, turning the dead grass to dust and exposing bare ground, allowing soil erosion to begin.

Farming with plows—digging up and burying the protective vegetative cover—had similar effects, but fertilizer and irrigation kept it alive after most herding had moved elsewhere. From a high of 323,000 sheep in 1900, the number declined to 11,000 in 1970.

However, French notes, "It was not (especially in early days) expected that a stockman have a perfect memory or an exact count when talking to an assessor and it is likely that in its heyday Morrow County had around a half million sheep." To-

day, the number is increasing again and stands at 15,000 sheep and lambs and 12,000 ewes.

When the sheep ranching business became uneconomic, the Irish turned to other pursuits. Some moved, taking their portable wealth with them. Others stayed and changed their focus, taking up farming, cattle ranching, logging, or other work.

The population of Morrow County has hardly changed in 90 years, though the ethnic mix of the inhabitants and the nature of economic activity has. Even so, the Irish still influence Morrow County's political, cultural, and economic life.

A number of descendants of the early pioneers are serving on councils and boards in the county. And the annual St. Patrick's Day blowout is a big celebration for the county seat. This year 2,000 revelers attended.

## Annual Events

St. Patrick's Day Celebration—Held the weekend closest to March 17. Heppner is transformed into a "Wee Bit O'Ireland" as Irish descendants of early Morrow County settlers (and other later arrivals) join visitors from far and wide to celebrate their Irish heritage. Activities include a radio talk show, a parade, dancing, sheep dog trials, an antique/curiosity auction, music, food, fun, and other "Erin Go Braugh" events.

Pioneer Memorial Picnic—Held on the closest Sunday to May 30. A different pioneer family hosts the gathering each year. It is a potluck lunch with the host family providing the meat and beverages. Many families use the occasion as a time for reunions. It is also a time for Heppnerites to return and renew old acquaintances. The public is welcome.

## Events

Morrow County Fair and Rodeo—Held in August of each year. The residents of Morrow County host a combined 4-H, FFA and open class fair for residents and non-residents. The three day rodeo, which is preceded by a parade on Saturday, features a one-day show open to Morrow County residents only and two days provided for open competition.

Heppner Golf Tournaments—Willow Creek Country Club holds the annual men's open golf tournament on the last weekend in June and the club hosts an open tournament for couples on the first weekend in August.

The Soroptimist Club annual "Ar-

tifactory" crafts fair is held the first Saturday of December. The fair features handmade crafts, homebaked goodies, and a Christmas green's workshop.

**WELCOME CYCLISTS**  
FRUIT LEATHER  
DRIED FRUIT  
TEA, COFFEE, POP  
Heppner Neighborhood Center  
(across from the city park)

**Kinzua Corporation**  
**Welcomes Cycle Oregon III to Heppner**

**Miller's Mini Mart & Chevron**  
Welcomes  
**Cycle Oregon III**  
BEVERAGES, SANDWICHES,  
GATORADE, CANDY  
294 N. Main Heppner, Ore. 676-5556

**Heppner Bowl and Our Place Restaurant**  
Welcomes Cycle Oregon III  
**SPECIALS**

Turkey Croissant .....	4.25
¼ lb. Sliced Turkey Breast and Swiss Cheese w/Lettuce, Tomato, Sprouts & Cream Cheese Served on a Fresh Baked Croissant.	
Stuffed Tomato .....	3.95
Large Ripe Tomato Filled with a Zesty Tuna Salad Surrounded by Assorted Raw Vegetables.	
Chef's Salad .....	4.95
Crisp Tossed Salad, Topped with Ham, Turkey, Cheese, Boiled Egg & Tomato, Carrot Sticks and Pickles. Choice of Dressing.	
SOUP .....	CUP 1.10 BOWL 1.50
Home Made Cream of Broccoli	
<b>We Also Have 16 Flavors of Hard Ice Cream</b>	
"Try Our Famous Hamburgers"	
All Burgers are ¼ lb. Pure, Lean, Beef	
Ground Fresh Daily	
180 S. Chase	676-5125

**Welcome Cyclists**  
Special Hours 12-5 p.m. Sept. 9th  
Flowers-silk & fresh Women's Apparel Gifts  
*The Country Rose*  
676-9429 233 N. Main Heppner

**Welcome to Heppner CYCLE OREGON III**

**Nike Avia LA Gear Asic Laredo Durango Soft Spot**

Custom and souvenir T-shirts, sweatshirts and caps

Handmade Barbie clothes and other consignments. Back-to-school fabrics.

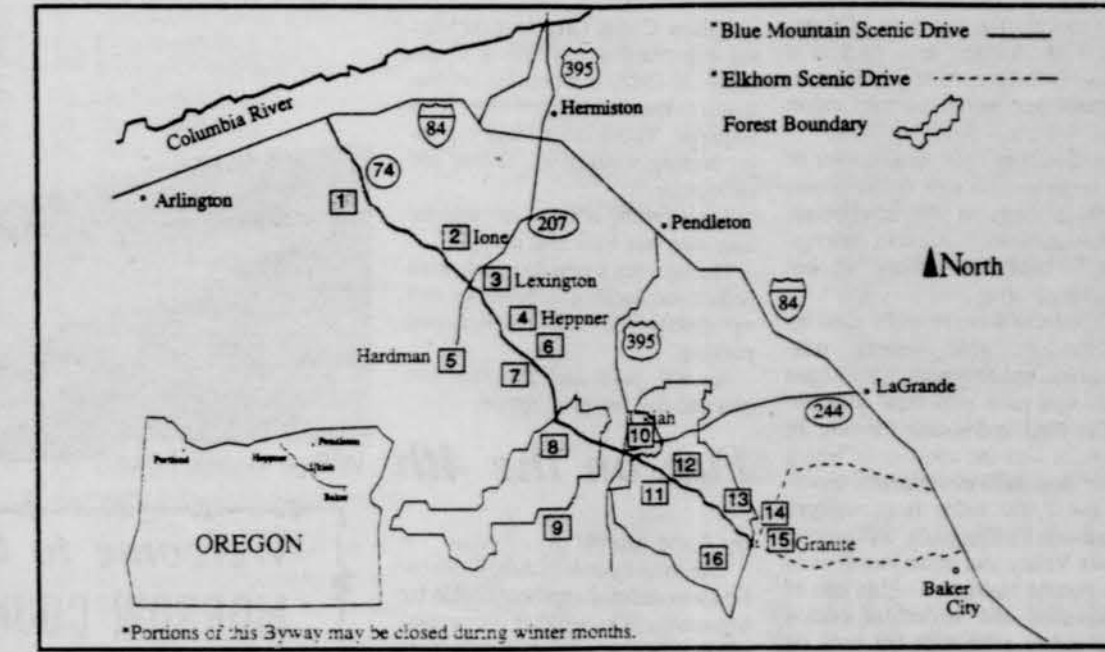
SHOE BOX  
HEPPNER  
143 N. MAIN  
676-5241

TALK-N-TOPS  
676-5241

## Blue Mountain Scenic Byway beautiful, off the beaten path

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The Blue Mountain Scenic Byway, designated in 1989 under the National Scenic Byway Program, allows east-west travelers an alternate route between the Columbia River near Arlington and Baker City, Oregon. This scenic byway covers 130 miles of paved, two-lane road, crossing Morrow and Umatilla counties in northeast Oregon, with a long segment of the byway traversing the Umatilla National Forest. The Blue Mountain Scenic Byway offers a variety of scenery along with historical sites and numerous recreational opportunities. Several sites are of national or state significance and include a National Historic District, a crossing of the Oregon Trail, the Wild and Scenic John Day River, and the North Fork of the John Day Wilderness. Also located along this route is a state-managed wildlife area and remnants of historic mining activities and settlements. The area surrounding this scenic route supports a portion of one of the largest Rocky Mountain elk herds in the nation.



Blue Mountain Scenic Byway

it was at the beginning of the century.

WILLOW CREEK DAM AND LAKE (47 miles)—The construction of this dam put Heppner on the map. You will pass by it as you travel on toward the Blue Mountains. This roller-compacted structure, built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 1983, creates a 125-acre lake with year-round fishing, swimming, and boating. The lake includes a day park, boat launch, docking facilities and handicapped parking and restrooms.

CUTSFORTH PARK (66 miles)—Cutsforth Park, 16 miles southeast of Heppner on the Willow Creek Road, was donated to Morrow County by Orville and Barbara Cutsforth. The park offers 15 trailer pads with full hook-ups and 7 trailer/tent sites without hook-ups but with water available. There's a picnic area for large and small groups, a children's playground with play equipment, restroom facilities with showers, trails for hiking, and both a pont and a stream for fishing.

PENLAND LAKE (73 miles)—Penland Lake, located 27 miles southeast of Heppner, is owned by both the Forest Service and private landowners. Picnic and restroom facilities are available though camping spaces are limited to 5 tent sites. The lake provides recreationists with access to fishing, swimming, and boating. Only electric motors are allowed. Access: Right on Forest Road 21, left on 2103, dirt road, follow signs.

POTAMUS POINT (94 miles)—A panoramic view of Potamus Canyon highlights scenery of the Wild and Scenic North Fork John Day River drainage from Potamus Point. From this point, herds of wintering deer and elk can be seen along with mountain lakes, wet and dry meadows, and interesting and unusual rock formations. Access: Take a right on Forest Road 5327, then right on 5316.

UKIAH (91 miles)—Geologists tell us the Ukiah area was once covered by a large lake. The Indians speak of a "great rumbling" that happen-

ed "many moons ago", and the lake vanished as though it had never been there. The Indians have been coming to the area for many years to gather wild blue camas root early in the summer, relying on the root as a food source. Originally called Camas Prairie, the name was changed to Ukiah by E.B. Gamba (the first postmaster) who had lived in Ukiah, California.

BRIDGE CREEK WILDLIFE AREA (95 miles)—The Bridge Creek area began as a way-stop on the first stagecoach route in northeastern Oregon from Pendleton to the John Day mines. During the mining excitement of the early 1860s, the packers made such improvements on the trail as constructing pole bridges over the creek, hence the name. In 1962, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife began buying land as it became available in order to provide a wintering area for elk.

NORTH FORK JOHN DAY OVERLOOK (104 miles)—Along the byway is a spectacular scenic overlook. The pull-off allows you to get out, stretch, and enjoy the view of the area. Looking to the southeast, you can view the North Fork John Day Wilderness and the North Fork John Day River drainage. If the sky is clear, you may be able to spot the Strawberry Mountains on the Malheur National Forest. To the southwest, you will see the Bridge Creek Flats where elk are frequently sighted.

NORTH FORK JOHN DAY CAMPGROUND (130 miles)—The North Fork John Day Campground provides a wide variety of recreational opportunities for the forest visitor. The Wild and Scenic North Fork John Day River supports a trout population for the avid fisherman and is a popular camping site for hunters during the fall. The North Fork John Day Wilderness borders on this campground, which provides access to the hunters, hikers, and horseback riders. There are 7 tent/trailer sites and 2 tent sites. Drinking water and garga facilities are not provided.

CHINESE WALLS (137 miles)—

As you travel south to Granite, you can see rock walls along the stream bottom. The walls were constructed by Chinese miners nearly 100 years ago. The walls were built by hand as the Chinese moved the large boulders in order to work the finer gravel and sand underneath for gold. The walls remain today as a monument to an industrious people in a foreign land far from their home.

GRANITE (140 miles)—Granite, named for the granite rocks throughout the area, has an extensive mining history. Following the decline of the mining activity in the California gold fields, miners headed north in their search for gold in Granite Creek on July 4, 1862, and appropriately named his claim the Independence. Some historians claim the town was then Independence, but when applying for a post office, the residents discovered a town by this name already existed in Oregon. The name was changed to Granite.

FREMONT POWERHOUSE AND OLIVE LAKE (145 miles)—The Fremont Powerhouse was constructed in 1908 and after 59 years of continuous service, generated its last electrical power in October 1967. In 1968, the California-Pacific Utilities Company donated the entire complex to the U.S. Forest Service. The need for economic power surfaced in 1903 when the earnings of some local mines began to decrease. In an effort to operate the mines more economically, local water-power from nearby Olive Lake was used to generate the much-needed electrical power.

The water from Olive Lake reached the powerhouse through a wood and steel pipeline which was approximately 8 miles long and dropped 1,068 feet in elevation. Since its original construction, the pipe has been replaced twice and can still be seen at various points along the road between the powerhouse and Olive Lake. Access: Eight miles west on Forest Road 10, dirt road.

CONTINUE ON THE

ELKHORN SCENIC BYWAY—From Granite, your journey continues on the Elkhorn Scenic Byway. This route will take you east to Baker City, Oregon through country rich in scenery, history, geology, and natural resources. Many recreational opportunities are available along the way, including camping, hiking, water skiing, fishing, and much more. Special points of interest are the various gold mining operations and the historical narrow-gauge railroad grade. For more information on the Elkhorn Scenic Byway, please write to the Wallawa-Whitman National Forest at P. O. Box 907, Baker City, Oregon 97814, or call (503) 523-6391.

YOU'RE INVITED TO EXPERIENCE RURAL EASTERN OREGON AND SOME OF ITS HISTORY, EVENTS, AND ACTIVITIES.

The Morrow County Museum, located in downtown Heppner, brings the rolling hills of Heppner to life. You will see five re-created rooms of the early settlers (kitchen, parlor, dining room, bedroom, and music room). Memorabilia of Morrow County includes a collection of photographs and newspaper clippings of the 1903 Heppner flood which killed 247 people and destroyed most of the town.

Many Irish and Swedes settled in Heppner and the surrounding area. The Irish celebrate their heritage by holding an annual Wee Bit O'Ireland in Oregon, a St. Patrick's Day celebration on the weekend closest to March 17. Sheep dog trials, bed races, an auction, and a parade are just a few of the offerings making this a weekend you won't want to miss. The Swedes are proud to show you the 100 year-old Valby Church located in the midst of rolling wheat fields.

Ione holds an annual June 3 Auction and Barbecue, as well as an old-time Fourth of July celebration. Heppner has the annual Morrow County Fair and Rodeo and new this year PRCA Rodeo, golf tournaments, and the Pioneer Memorial Picnic.

Ukiah, population, 220, is situated in Camas Creek valley 90 miles southeast of Arlington along the Blue Mountain Scenic Byway. The year 1990 marks its centennial, a reminder of the bygone days of a community once boasting churches, mercantile stores, telephone office, creamery, baker, blacksmith, livery stable, hotels, dance hall, dress shop, and a yearly rodeo and carnival. Today, this small, incorporated city has a kindergarten through twelfth grade school, two stores, restaurant, cafe/bar, hotel, and a park with tennis courts.

Outdoor enthusiasts will enjoy a variety of recreational opportunities such as hiking, fishing, hunting, snowmobiling, camping, rafting, motorcycle riding, cross-country skiing, and horseback riding. Among attractions in the area are Olive Lake, ghost town Albee, and Battle Ground Mountain State Park.