

Mollahan family to reign over St. Patrick's Day festivities

The Mollahan family has been selected the honored family for the 1993 St. Patrick's weekend. The descendants of Pat and Elsie will represent the family during the festivities. Following is a history of the Mollahan family.

The immigration of Irish into Morrow County did not find Pat Mollahan and his brothers and sisters in the earliest vanguard. They traveled to this area over a period of about 10 years beginning shortly after the turn of the century. There were other Mollahans, possibly unrelated, who came and left.

Eight boys and two girls were born to the union of John and Anne McNamee Mollahan, a farming family of Leganomer, County Leitrim. They attended church at Aghavas and school at Corduf.

All of the seven who immigrated to this country resided in Morrow or Umatilla County for at least a short while. The three youngest, Joe, Frank and Pete, remained in Ireland. A story related now in Ireland is that Joe wanted to emigrate to the United States, also. But, his mother saw things differently and intercepted the envelope containing his traveling money sent by an older brother who had already emigrated. She felt completely justified in perpetrating the larceny because of the loss of too many of her children to emigration already. Emigration, though considered necessary, was thought by those left at home, who sadly bid farewell, as being something of a "living death." Many of the emigrants were not heard from again, possibly because they found life in their adopted country far from easy.

Pat and his siblings who did emigrate followed their relatives, friends and others from County Leitrim in small groups. The eldest, Jim, tall and athletic-looking like his brothers, returned to this country to work on ranches after serving in the US Army in Europe during World War I, later married Loretta Modrell and they had one child, Colleen.

Mathew returned to his Leganomer home where he died at the age of 19 from an illness which followed an injury incurred in Oregon.

Next was Pat who came to Morrow County and stayed.

Bridget, or Bea, married John Kenny and they parented seven children on their Sandhollow-area ranch that son Bill presently farms.

Her sister, Mary Ann, married John Keegan. They raised nine children in the Ontario area.

Their brother John returned to Oregon after marrying Katherine Fitzpatrick in New York. After leaving Heppner they raised seven handsome children also near Ontario. Their eldest,



Wedding photo of Pat and Elsie Mollahan taken in 1929

Patrick Joseph, is a member of the Ontario city council.

Bernard, the youngest to make the trek to this country, decided that the environs of New York City were preferable to eastern Oregon. He married a Sligo girl, Anna Kenny, worked for Con Edison, and reared three children who are also proud of their Irish heritage.

Pat and all of his brothers and sisters are now deceased. Pete married Kitty Kilkenny and they paid a visit to this country in 1978. Joseph married Bridget Reynolds and remained in Leitrim. Their eldest son, John, of Balbriggan is a respected member of the Irish police, the Garda. Last to pass away was Frank in 1989. He farmed the homeplace at Leganomer. His son, John, and wife, Sheila, are dairy farmers at nearby Gertermone.

Pat Mollahan arrived in Heppner about 1910, when he was 17 or 18 years old. Like what his brothers and many others did after arriving in Morrow County, he found work on area ranches. These ranches included those of the Kenny's, John Kilkenny and Dillard French.

Pat gladly renounced his allegiance and fidelity to any foreign rulers, particularly "the King of Great Britain and Ireland," in 1916. On November 11, 1918, he became a proud citizen of the United States of America. Coincidentally, another Pat Mollahan, possibly his cousin, also became a citizen the same day. The confusion led our Pat in later days to use the initials P.A. even though he had no middle name.

Pat's main aim in life was to be an American--if possible, a good one. He worked diligently at trying to leave his Irish brogue and ways behind, but fortunately, he didn't completely succeed at either. To him this country meant real freedom and the closest thing to Utopia that there was.

In 1926, while recuperating

from a broken leg at St. Anthony's Hospital in Pendleton, he met his bride-to-be She was Elsie Owen, a registered nurse and one of nine children born to Fred and Ella Owen. Her mother's father was Thomas Connor, a Roscommon County man, who had been conscripted into the British Navy and had jumped ship while it lay in New York harbor.

Born in South Dakota, Elsie's family wended its way from there to other farms in Saskatchewan, Alberta, to near Spokane--enduring some difficult times with many hardships.

About 1927, Pat decided that his future was probably in railroading. While awaiting his transportation to LaGrande, he was approached by a Heppner garage owner, Henry Cohn, who offered Pat a job, an offer he accepted.

Pat and Elsie were married in the old St. Patrick's Church in Heppner on April 27, 1929, by Father Thomas Brady. Bill and Cecilia Bucknum were their witnesses.

One of the family jokes later was the haziness Pat displayed when it came to giving his age or year of birth. It is possible to come up with a variety of years of birth from the ages shown on his naturalization and marriage certificates. His baptismal information in Ireland showed that he was baptized a year before the date he had led his family here to believe he was born. It might have been the case that birthdays were not considered very important by at least one Irishman.

Pat purchased a service station on the northwest corner of Main and Baltimore where Farra's Shoe Repair shop was later located. He and Elsie set up housekeeping next door, across from the present Heppner museum and library.

This little house became a much busier place than it was even for raising their four children. Bob, Mary, John and Larry were born and raised within its slightly enlarged walls. As Pat operated his service sta-



Pat and Elsie Mollahan's four children (L-R): Larry, John, Mary and Bob

tion next door, Elsie found many patients to nurse in Heppner. A compassionate and energetic person she began taking maternity patients into her home. Of course, this was before the Pioneer Memorial hospital came into existence.

Elsie had one minor shortcoming though, and that was in not being able to say no to any prospective mother, regardless of their financial straits. Sometimes there were as many as three patients sharing the small house with Pat, Elsie, and their four children.

In those days a maternity patient took more care and spent 10 days to two weeks mostly in bed. A few times Pat and son Bob suddenly found themselves spending a night or two in a local hotel. Elsie's efforts along this line continued for a decade, or so, before she turned more to nursing at St. Anthony's Hospital and later at Pioneer Memorial in Heppner, as well as for numerous private patients.

Pat continued in the service station business in Heppner. However, he did manage a long awaited trip to Ireland in 1933, to visit his parents. His father, it is told, did not recognize him. John thought that Pat was a tax collector. Pat was a young lad when his father had last seen him 22 years earlier.

Development of a skin malady believed to be a reaction to his being around gasoline too much of the time resulted in Pat looking around for another way to make a living. Around 1938, he purchased the grocery delivery business for the north-end of Heppner. Ralph Beamer delivered in the south-end of town. Pat was also at the railroad depot early each morning to pick up American Express parcels for delivery.

An opening on the Heppner police force prompted Pat to apply for it. He was accepted and became the night policeman in 1940. His working day began at 6 a.m. and didn't end until about 1 a.m. From 1942 until about the end of the war, he served as deputy sheriff. He gave up the delivery business and decided in 1943, to purchase the Henry Blahm place down Willow Creek

1965. Dean Gilman, Heppner's chief of police at the time of Pat's retirement, said of this respected man, "He is just one of the very finest. After Pat was born, I think they broke the mold."

Pat passed away in 1965 and Elsie in 1979. Both are interred in Olney Cemetery, Pendleton.

Their eldest son, Bob, is presently retired from the US Air Force and the Oregon Dept. of Motor Vehicles, and lives with his wife Barbara, in Roseburg. They have three sons, Pat, Mike, and Chris, and four grandchildren.

Mary and her husband, Don McClure, are retired from teaching and reside in Seattle. They have four children, Kathy, Teri, David and Doug, and five grandchildren.

John works for B & C Repair in Ione and has two children Jackie and Joe, and four grandchildren. He and his wife, Chris live in Lexington.

Larry continues to serve as a deputy on the Multnomah Sheriff's Department, Portland, and was the parent of four children, Patricia, Mary, John, and Brent who is deceased. Larry and his wife, Sue, reside near Estacada.

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Meeting on wildflowers set

"Wildflowers of Eastern Oregon", a slide by Oregon State University Extension agent Don Rydrych, will be a highlight of the OAFCE District VII meeting on Thursday, March 11 in Pendleton. The meeting for members of Morrow, Umatilla, Wallowa and Union county study group members will be held at the King's Table restaurant on SW 17th Street beginning with coffee at 10 a.m.

Isabelle Jones of Irrigon,

District VII director will welcome the participants. Lois Enstrom, Hillsboro, state president of OAFCE will address the members on local responsibilities for hosting the October '93 state meeting in Umatilla.

Meeting participants will be able to purchase lunch from the restaurant buffet prior to the noontime wildflower presentation. For additional information contact Isabelle Jones 922-4934.

Woman narrowly escapes fire

Brenda Ratcliff, Molalla, narrowly escaped her burning home in the early morning hours of Feb. 26.

Ratcliff is the daughter of George and AnnaMae Steagall, Heppner.

Ratcliff was burned on her back when debris from the ceiling of her mobile home fell on

her. She had awakened to check on her puppies when she discovered the fire. Her husband, John, was burned on his face and hand.

The fire, caused by electrical wiring, burned the mobile home to the ground. The Ratcliffs, who didn't hear their smoke alarm, lost everything in the fire.

Zeta Nu Chapter has new member

Cheryl Costello, Boardman, has been accepted as a new member of Zeta Nu, Boardman chapter of Beta Sigma Phi. Costello has lived in Boardman

since 1985 with her husband Clair. They have two children Carly and Caitlin. Costello works in the lunch program for Riverside High and Sam Boardman Elementary.

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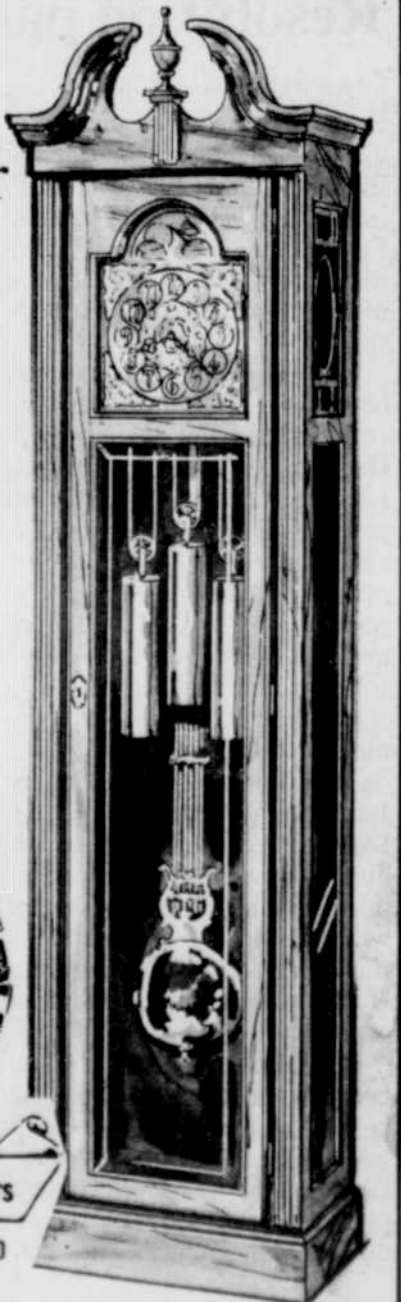
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