

## County fair is a cultural tradition

The Morrow County Fair is a celebration of the old fair tradition. Although competition has always been part of the annual event, it is not the primary reason for a

county fair. Attendance and exhibits at the fair are actually about community, culture and inspiration.

Participation in the fair is the culture of Morrow

County, Oregon. Be a part of this event. The county "fair" has been a crowd pleasing event since the days of the Roman Empire. European cultures stressed the meeting, sharing,

competing and inspiring benefits of coming together during the days of the fair. The Irish and the English, in particular, enjoyed the joyful friendly times of gathering for this annual event. These same European descendants became the immigrants coming to America and later the settlers moving to Oregon Territory.

Traveling the long and arduous route into Oregon territory, Pioneers managed to bring few precious possessions in the wagons containing their 'life'. Precious possessions were defined as anything vital to life in Oregon. A big iron cook pot was a necessity, occasionally a breeding animal pair, blankets in the form of handmade quilts, dried and preserved food and, most important of all, seeds to grow the sustaining crop.

Starvation was one of the primary enemies to pioneers. Learning the

plants, trading seeds and sharing knowledge about crop development kept the hunger from becoming a fatal enemy. The secret and blessed knowledge about medical herbs and treatment of disease was the most valued. After the deadly enemies were conquered, life enhancement in the form of beauty and comfort became important. Appreciating community through art forms was the pleasurable part of the fair attendance.

Any thoughts of competition at the county fair came about after basic needs of life were satisfied. Earliest forms of competition were simply displays of excellence for the benefit of the community. Hence, biggest bulls, fattest pigs and most prolific chickens received awards for their benefits to the community. Utility and beauty in the form of quilts created from scraps were inspiring in a life with few possessions. As you make plans to attend and participate in the 2011 Morrow County Fair, retain the spirit of history brought to Oregon by your forefathers.

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The parade will be held at 10:00 am on Saturday, August 20