

A community of sheep ranchers and wheat farmers emerges



Ione, Oregon, fell on hard times during the Great Depression. COURTESY PHOTO: Bowman Museum

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attracted early settlers to raise sheep and cattle. John Jordan arrived to settle along Willow Creek in 1859. He built a log cabin not far from present-day Ione. Columbus Rhea built the first home on what is now known as Rhea Creek in 1864. A number of Irish settlers came to the region. Edward Cluff was among the first to settle at the present site of Ione in 1872. Nearby, Elisha Sperry acquired land that had earlier been homesteaded by George Emerick. Sperry recognized the need for a trading center and decided to establish one on his property. He hired a surveyor and prepared a town plat of four blocks. Sperry named the town Ione for a young girl, Ione Arthur, whose fa-

ther was working for him at the time. Sperry persuaded Aaron Royce to establish a merchandise store in the newly platted site. A post office was established with the name of Ione on May 26, 1884, with Royce being the first postmaster. The office was located inside his store. Other businesses soon followed, including a saloon and a blacksmith shop. These did not last long. About 1885, Robert Wills homesteaded near the Sperry plots and established his own plats. Soon, farmers were attracted to the area to grow winter wheat, barley and other grains. Most of the harvested grains had to be hauled over rugged roads to Arlington for shipment. A branch line of the Oregon Railroad and Nav-

igation Company was completed from Heppner Junction up Willow Creek through Ione and on to Heppner in 1888. The railroad opened up rapid development and wheat became a major cash crop and Ione prospered. The small community expanded with more homes and businesses. It was incorporated in 1903. It became a bustling community. Ordinances were passed that banned sheep, goats and hogs from the town. A bank was established, but the onset of the Great Depression led to failure of the bank and the community fell on hard times like the rest of the nation. Today, it remains an active community and the 2020 census listed a population of 337.

LaRue honored as grand marshal

-Continued from PAGE ONE she says.

She hasn't limited her involvement to the Independence Day celebration, though. She carried her love of horses—along with three family horses—to Ione and led a horse 4-H club at one time. She says her former members are grandparents themselves now.

She served nearly 20 years on the county budget committee, this year being the first she hasn't been on the committee in a long time. She also has insight into current county events, having served on the Pioneer Memorial Hospital Board and the Ione City Council—with five stints as Ione Mayor.

When she first joined the city council, she was the only female on the board. She also joined at a time when Ione was already attempting to resolve its sewer problems. While the city council managed to get space for the Ione school to have a septic tank and drain field, they never gained much traction getting city sewer.

"We'd only get so far because of high cost, or it wasn't in the right spot," she says.

She's happy about the current progress and hopes it will open space for more building in the city.

"In order for us to grow and be healthy, we need to use all of our property," she

says. "This sewer is a huge, huge thing for Ione."

Now, she's happy to step back and let someone else take the reins.

"I kind of like being able to go and just give my opinion," she says.

She also remembers serving with the late Larry Mills on several boards, including the hospital board.

"We had some of the same thought processes... which maybe wasn't always good," she jokes.

The hospital board had issues of its own back then, though she says it was not quite as contentious as the recent health district uproar. The hospital was in danger of shutting down due to lack of money, and North End communities weren't very supportive of something they didn't see as benefiting them.

That was when the county-wide taxing district was formed. The new taxes weren't very popular, especially in Boardman.

"It was a really difficult time," says LaRue. "That one was very challenging, but I felt good about the outcome, and so did Larry."

LaRue says she is gradually weeding out boards and committees with heavy commitment, but she still likes to stay involved.

"I still have things to do," she says. "I need to be active mentally and physically."

"I stay very active on

several committees," she adds. "I try to have my fingers in most of the pies."

With fingers in all those pies, LaRue says she doesn't have time to pursue the hobbies she used to have. For instance, she doesn't find time to quilt or sew, although she used to.

"I made my husband a red leisure suit to wear to basketball games," she remembers.

Now, her top priority is her family, which is scattered from Ione to Hermiston and as far away as the Oregon Coast. She makes a point of traveling to visit her grandkids and great-grandchildren often. Sophie, who she says is a good traveler, is her companion on her trips.

When speaking about Ione's Fourth of July celebrations, LaRue says she is impressed by the unspoken cooperation of the communities on the south side of the county.

"We honor each other's special celebrations," she says. "That's one of the things I feel so good about. That's what it should be about."

"I appreciate the honor," she concludes. "I love it here and I love the people. This is home, for sure."

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SOLD!

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SOLD!

375 W Union Ave, Heppner
This single family home, spanning 1641 square feet, boasts a spacious dining room and living room along with a family room 3 bedrooms,MLS#: 2322420375 375 W Union Heppner



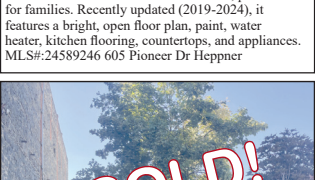
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SOLD!

Three bedroom, one bath home on quiet street in Heppner. Real wood floors and knotty pine walls give a warm and comfortable feeling when you walk inside. 335 W Union Ave, Heppner ML#: 23228066



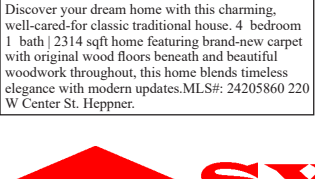
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Approx 20 Acres
SOLD!



SOLD!

Beautiful 20-acre property in Eastern Oregon, zoned Exclusive Farm Use (EFU). Along Willow Creek Rd. MLS#: 24056686



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