



HARVEST DINNERS

We hear the expression "there is a feel of fall in the air now" very often these cool mornings - and the posters for the fall harvest dinners prepared by the different church groups are beginning to appear in the store windows.

These dinners are anticipated and looked forward to by many. Each parish will serve its specialty and the women bring their best cooking efforts.

At Jordan it is a chicken dinner, at Shaw there is barbecued beef, while Stayton has turkey and dressing, and the dressing always draws special praise and many guesses as to the "secret ingredient" that Minnie (Mrs. Louis) Gisler and her aides use to get that special touch.

With the full knowledge that we may get in trouble we are going to reveal the "secret" - homemade bread - good, rich and full-bodied has always been used in making the dressing for this outstanding dinner item.

THE HARVEST dinners or basket dinners of the pioneer days were no different - we found an article telling of the basket dinners held at McAlpin school in the Silverton Hills in the 1870's, and these dinners of 90 and more ago could be our dinners of today.

Here for your reading pleasure is a dinner at McAlpin school.

"In the good old pioneer days before the advent of the automobile, folks went to 'meetin' either on horseback, by buggy, the hack or lumber wagon and were happy in doing so. Very few of the young men possessed a buggy, but usually took their sweethearts to church on horseback. The young men were just as handsome and the girls just as pretty as those of today. I can see the girls yet, in their tight basques, long tight sleeves, high necked dresses, with their long black riding skirts sweeping in the wind, as they perch-ed upon the side saddles of those days.

"To have ridden to church, or any other public place, astride would have shocked the whole community beyond recovery. Buggies were considered quite a luxury and usually the farmers took their families abroad in a hack. These were two or three seated conveyances according to the size of a man's family or pocketbook, built very high, with not less than two iron steps to climb. A good shiny black oilcloth top kept out the rain or the hot sunshine, as was the case.

THERE WAS the lumber wagon for men of lesser means. It was no mean thing to own a lumber wagon, with its bright green paint and spring seat. Usually the father and mother sat on the spring seat, while the rest of the family sat about on chairs at the back sideboards. Men took pride in their horses in those days and seldom did we see a poor team. Those were democratic times and a man's worth was not measured by the family

conveyance.

"In those days an all-day Sunday church service was quite the vogue. Sometimes one pioneer preacher would discourse for two hours in the forenoon and another equally gifted preacher would hold forth for two hours after dinner.

"The 'meetin' I have in mind was one of many held at McAlpin schoolhouse. The most popular preacher in that part of the country was 'Father' Small, a good Presbyterian farmer-preacher, who lived on his very fine farm near Silverton.

We children liked Rev. Small because of his short sermons. He was often heard to remark that a preacher could say all that was necessary in half an hour and he held himself to that limit. It was no hardship to listen to him twice on Sundays.

"Much friendly visiting took place after we found our seats in the schoolhouse and waited the arrival of Rev. Small. He was a tall lean man with white hair and a long white beard. He had a genial countenance and was considered quite a scholar for those days.

After his plain, earnest half hour sermon there was much gospel singing from the congregation, led by Jim Darby. Then the dinner was spread out under the trees or on long boards laid across the tops of the benches, according to the weather.

"The table was covered with snowy linen table cloths, and there were the golden brown roast chickens prepared by Mrs. Tom Patton, the prize winning butter, marked with a sheaf of wheat of Mrs. Lizzie Hunt and her delicious mince pies. Grandma Short was famous for her peach preserves. Mrs. Mary Hunt always brought a big crock of boiled beans, while Mrs. John Downing had pies of different sorts and other dainties.

"Mrs. Henry Carter who was considered the best housekeeper in all the country, was the champion bread maker and her snowy loaves and sugar cured ham were in evidence. Mrs. Philip Glover always brought a few cold biscuits for Philip as he did not like bread.

"WHILE ALL this setting out of pickles, cake, honey-in-the-comb and other delicacies was in progress, the men stood about in the offing, talking politics and religion, with an eye on the table, while the younger folks acted and talked about as the the young folks of today human nature does not change very much as the years go by. These pioneer folks did not have many diversions.

"The basket dinner itself took a lot of preparation. There were no handy prepared foods. Everything had to be cooked at home. For days before, the preparations began. All of our best dresses and father's and the boys' shirts had to be done up. It was an art to do up father's 'biled' shirt with its stiff bosom. Sometimes, if folks had been to Sublimity or Stayton, we girls had new ribbons of either pink or blue satin, not over an inch wide, to wear in our hair. We thought them beautiful.

"Our shoes all had to be blackened with 'Carter's Jet Blacking,' while the back porch would be turned into a barber shop by the men folks, with mother's generous kitchen apron doing the part of the barber's towel.

"ASIDE from their weekly shave the men had to grease the harness with melted tallow to give it a new appearance, oil up the carriage wheels and give the horses an extra

currying.

"Cooking for the basket dinner was the biggest item of all. Each housewife wanted her contribution to look its best when laid along side her neighbor's cooking.

"When Sunday morning came, we had to get up bright and early to get all the chores done up and to get into our Sunday clothes and drive 5 or 6 miles before the church service at 11 o'clock.

"IT WAS HARDLY considered moral to use face powder and to have done so publicly would have been scandalous. The women and girls did not carry their mirrors and powder puffs, but after the horses were tied to the oak grubs about the schoolhouse, the women folks got behind the hack and dusted each other's faces with their clean handkerchiefs, set their hats straight, shook out their skirts and trusted to luck for the rest.

"Transportation was slow and tedious, but they were happy in what they had. There were no movies or night-clubs, there was no TV, but crime was almost unknown and they had a few of us have today, peace of mind and contentment.