

THE FELIX DEBAST FAMILY

By CHESTER GIRT

Felix DeBast and Juliette Anrys were born near Brussels, Belgium. They attended the same school in Brussels and again went to the same finishing school in Paris but because the boys and girls were separated according to the prevailing Roman Catholic belief they never met there.

Felix came to America in 1867 and Juliette in 1868 under what was then called the Lincoln settlement program. They left Belgium because of the unhealthy condition following the Napolionic wars. It seems the dead were not buried deep enough and two seiges of Black or Bubonic plague followed. During the second plague, Felix lost the remainder of

his family and although the Anrys family were spared they were frightened of the future and so came to America. Felix and Juliette met and were married in 1869 and made their first home in Kansas. After several years of drought and a hail storm that destroyed crops, chickens and sod house, they gave up and joined a wagon train coming as far as Omaha, from where they took a train to San Francisco and then by boat to Portland, and then on to Salem for a few months. They had lost two small daughters while in Kansas and the family now consisted of three small daughters: Eva, Henrietta, and Jane and shortly another daughter Maggie was born.



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The green timber around Rainier looked so good to Felix DeBast that he took up a homestead south of Rainier and moved his family here in 1877. He made his living at first by riveing and shaving shingles by hand and later cutting cord wood for the river boats. Mr. J. B. Doan was the first Justice of the Peace in Rainier and Felix DeBast became the second to serve. Things were hard to get in those days and the family remembers pruchasing a 14 foot sturgeon for 50 cents. A son, who took his father's name was born in 1879.

Jane Rich was 88 years old on Jan. 6, 1963 and maintains her own home and is spry and alert. Maggie Girt will be 87 years old on April 12, 1963 and keeps the home

for her son Chester who remained a bachelor. Mrs. Henrietta Kamesh passed away Jan. 4, 1963 in a Portland nursing home, she was past 90 years old. Felix Jr. will be 84 years old March 22, 1963. Jane Rich, Maggie Girt and Felix DeBast Jr. have the distinction of having lived longer in Rainier than any other citizen today, and Felix DeBast Jr. is our oldest living native of Rainier.

The Felix DeBast Jr. family in late years moved from town back to the DeBast property on the DeBast road and his daughter moved into the original DeBast home after modernizing it.

Felix DeBast has passed away since this was written. He died Jan 13, 1964.