

King Tut Wheat, 'Corn' of Egypt's Ancients

4,000-Year-Old Seed Taken From Tomb Got Variety Started in This State

By CLYDE REICHELT
Staff Writer

FORT BENTON — Wheat which the ancients of Egypt knew as "corn" is growing fine stands of grain in Montana as well as many other states in the nation.

The seed that was brought to this country was taken from an excavated Egyptian tomb. The tomb was near the Nile River at Dahshur, Egypt, five miles south of the pyramids of Saqqara. It is estimated the seed was at least 4,000 years old but was kept so dry in the tomb that it did not lose its vitality.

The seed got to Montana through the hands of Earl Dedman, local florist. He's forgotten the name of the man who gave him the original kernels.

'CORN' OF THE ANCIENTS—The wheat to the right originated from seed found in an ancient Egyptian tomb. That to the left is a common variety of spring wheat grown in Montana. Protein test of the Egyptian grain is about 18.6, compared to 16 for most common local wheat. The Egyptian wheat kernels have a crescent shape. When cut crosswise, kernels have an amber color; other varieties appear white. Tribune photo.

the seed in a plastic sack in his duffel bag.

36-Kernel Start

He offered Dedman 36 of the kernels and Dedman put them in an envelope and sent them to his father, Rube Dedman, who was farming north of Fort Benton then.

Rube Dedman planted the grain in his grove of shelter-belt trees. Thirty-two of the 36 kernels germinated and grew, and six years later the elder Dedman had 1,500 bushels of the Egyptian wheat in his granaries.

Rube Dedman assumes the grain is a variety of spring wheat of the durum type. Each kernel is at least 2½ times larger than common No. 1 spring wheat. The protein test of the Egyptian grain is 18.6, compared to 16 for common spring wheat. Dedman found the yield somewhat greater than other varieties. The wheat is drought-resistant.

1,500 Bushels

Rube Dedman has quit farming now, but before he retired

the 1,500 bushels of Egyptian wheat were acquired by Montant Elevator Co., Bozeman, which used it as a cattle feed.

Dedman had had a chance to sell more wheat to the Pillsbury Flour Milling Co., which wanted to make it into a breakfast cereal. The Pillsbury company wanted 3,000 bushels to start with, but Dedman didn't wish to gamble with the acres it would have taken from his wheat allotment.

Bernard Cooper, a farmer near Fort Benton, raised the Egyptian wheat about three years. He got some seed from Rube Dedman about 1956.

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HAND PLANTING — Clinton Stranahan, a farmer along the Missouri River bottoms north of Loma, plants a row of King Tut wheat by hand. He is going to use the wheat for display this fall at the Chouteau County Fair. It takes about 100 days for the wheat to mature. It is seeded about 100 pounds per acre instead of the usual 55 pounds when planted by drill. The heads of the



grain. The heads of the grain are about normal length but are twice the diameter of common spring wheat. Tribune photo.

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THEY STARTED IT—Earl Dedman, left, Fort Benton florist, obtained the ancient Egyptian wheat from a chance acquaintance he met in Portugal about 15 years ago. Earl's father, R. E. Dedman, right, planted 36 grains of the wheat, sent him by his son, on his farm north of Fort Benton in about 1950. Six years later, he had 1,500 bushels of King Tut wheat. Tribune photos.

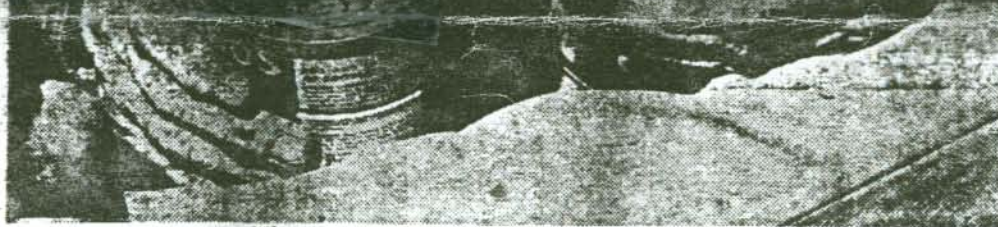
Fort Benton Man Sent King Tut Wheat to State

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The first year the stand was beautiful and the big heads and tall stalks attracted much attention. The next year the stand was not quite so good and the year after that the dry weather got the better of it and he hasn't planted any since.

a florist in Key West, Fla., and also gave some to people he met in Kansas, Missouri, Iowa, South Dakota, Texas, Florida, Alabama and other states he went through.

Archer also gave some seed to Orville Molas, Ferrdale, Wash., and Webster Gerling,



NEAL ARCHER—Neal Archer, retired Fort Benton mailman, shows two coffee cans of Egyptian wheat he has yet to give away. He has been giving the wheat to many farmers, ranchers, gardeners and hobbyists. He named the grain King Tut wheat. Tribune photo.

Treasure State Calendar of Events

Today, Belt	Annual Rodeo
Today, Harlem	Chuckwagon Days, O-Mok-See
Today, Culbertson	Frontier Days and Rodeo
Today, Polson	High School Rodeo
Today, Forsyth	Horse Show and Rodeo
Today, Billings	District O-Mok-See
Today, Helena	Trail Riders' O-Mok-See
Today, Fort Benton	Missouri River Cruise
June 9-14, Billings	Centennial Spectacular, "The Montana Story"
June 9-14, Missoula	Old Time Fiddlers' Contest
June 11-13, Sidney	Fort Union Days
June 11-13, Kalispell	National AAU Track Meet
June 12, Butte	Saddle Club O-Mok-See
June 12-14, Glasgow	High School Rodeo
June 13, Butte	Miners' Union Day
June 13, Harlowton	Centennial Pageant, Ball
June 13-14, Butte	Sheriff's Posse Polo Tourney
June 13-14, Billings	Saddle Club Horse Show
June 13-14, Boulder	High School Rodeo
June 13-14, Deer Lodge	Invitational Golf Tourney
June 13-14, Glendive	High School Rodeo
June 13-14, Hot Springs	Homesteaders' Days
June 14, Big Timber	Annual Rodeo
June 14, Eureka	Saddle Club O-Mok-See
June 14, Wolf Creek	Saddle Club O-Mok-See

State Travel Book, by Helena Man, Published

HELENA—John Willard, whose travel and historical column appears each month in the Montana Motorist, publication of the Montana Automobile Association, has had these columns revised and correlated into a book published recently by State Publishing Co., Helena.

The book, "Adventure Trails in Montana," takes the reader to many obscure places of interest in the Treasure State. It details the historic significance and scenic attractions of each locality and the origins of many place names.

Illustrations include works of 14 past and present Montana artists, including Irwin (Shorty) Shope of Helena, the late C. M. Russell and O. C. Seltzer of Great Falls, Fanny Y. Cory, Edgar Paxson and J. K. Ralston of Billings.

Also reproduced is a frontier and pioneer map of Montana, prepared in 1937 for the State Highway Department by Bob Fletcher.

Cooper found the wheat made wonderful feed for cattle and hogs, especially when mixed with other wheat and barley.

The ancient grain is symbolic to the Masonic fraternity and lodges which have been dedicated with this grain are Benton Lodge No. 25, Fairfield Lodge No. 127 and Chinook Lodge No. 50. After dedication, members of each lodge obtained a few kernels to plant.

Other farmers, hobbyists and gardeners have grown or are growing the wheat, too. Many of them got the samples of grain from Neal Archer, former mailman.

He got six bushels from Rube Dedman and proceeded to spread it, a little at a time, throughout Montana and other states.

Archer calls it "King Tut" wheat and he believes he's given the grain to 1,000 or more people. He made a trip of 8,000 miles or more one summer and spread kernels all the way down to Florida and back.

He left some of the grain with

4 Richland 4-H Members on Exchange Plan

By Tribune Correspondent

SIDNEY — Four Richland County Four-H members have been selected to participate in a two-week member exchange with Marshall County, Minn., according to LeRoy Luft, extension agent. While on the exchange, the members will live with Four-H families.

Selected were Donna Bradley, Kathy Mercer, Terry Panasuk, and John Scheetz. They will leave Sidney June 16.

Galesbury, Ill. They both raise the grain as livestock feed.

Archer was a mail carrier here 22 years and he gave some of the wheat to everyone he knew on his route. He doesn't know how many people actually planted the grain with success.

Other Areas

He says farmers near Helena received the grain about five years ago to try out for feed. Dillon area ranchers have acquired some of the wheat and so have people around Hamilton, Missoula, Havre, Chinook and Kalispell as well as Fort Benton.

Archer said a woman in the Kalispell area grows the grain for its decorative qualities. She gilds the large bearded heads and sells them for use in dry bouquets.

Jaycees Plan Centennial Trail Ride

LAME DEER — The Tongue River Jaycees are sponsoring a Centennial Trail Ride June 24-25, following the route that Gen. George Custer and his Seventh Cavalry took to the Battle of the Little Big Horn.

The ride across the Northern Cheyenne and Crow Indian Reservations will begin at 8 a.m. June 24, at the junction of Rosebud and Muddy Creeks, five miles southwest of Lame Deer. It will end at the Custer Battlefield National Monument the next afternoon.

Reservations are due June 15. Riders may rent horses or furnish their own. Further information is available from the Tongue River Jaycees, Box 246, Lame Deer.