

# Horse Racing Comes to Oregon

Westward Migration of Kentuckians, Tennesseans Brought Fever for Fine Horses With It; Rigors of Settlement Retarded Sports; State Fair Was Center of Earliest Contests

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Governor of Oregon, 1911-1915

THE early settlers of Kentucky and Tennessee came largely from Virginia and the Carolinas. Most of them were horse lovers and crossed the mountains and the pathless wilderness mounted on stock that carried in their veins some of the best racing blood of Old Virginia.

For years these pioneers lived in a state of isolation. Their amusements were largely of their own creation and consisted principally of making whiskey, racing horses and shooting. In these lines they excelled and, in time, Kentucky whiskey, Kentucky horses and Kentucky rifles—to say nothing of its women—became famous throughout the Union.

As trade follows the flag, so did the "race hoss" follow the Kentuckians and Tennesseans as they moved westward into Missouri and the Ohio valley and when, in the 40's and 50's, the movement across the great American desert to Oregon took place, a sprinkling of blooded sires and dams were to be found in practically every wagon train.

Upon arrival in Oregon, of course, these wagon trains were broken up and families scattered to all points and made settlement in localities offering some particular attraction. The task of building a home and providing food and clothing during the first few years, so completely took their time that they had but little, if any, to devote to horse racing and kindred sports. So the "Sport of Kings" remained only a memory—kept green, however, by the presence of a few scattering thoroughbreds and their get.

## State Fair Started at Oregon City

In time there grew up among the settlers a demand for an annual meeting place where livestock and farm products could be exhibited and acquaintances renewed. As a result the Oregon state fair was organized. The first meeting place was near Oregon City in 1861. The reported receipts were \$1,444.17 and the disbursements, including premiums, \$1,200.67. A little later the fair was permanently located at Salem, and in time was given state aid.

Along in the '60's and '70's a number of the counties organized fair associations and as a result, in addition to Salem, race meets were held at Albany, Hillsboro and Portland. The early races were all running—the trotters and pacers were to come later.

These early race meets at the state fair saw a gathering of the clans. The horses enjoyed but little training, the jockeys were inexperienced and the track little better than a county road. Time, however, cured all this.

## Horses Bred on Farms and Brought to Fair

In these early times the horses were bred and raised on farms and stock ranches throughout the state and often in remote sections. A trip to the fair, which was held in the fall, often called for a journey of several hundred miles over mountains and deserts on abominable roads. As fair time approached, the old camp wagon was brought into service and loaded with food, equipments and the family. The boys brought up the rear astride or leading the race horses. Every county and every section, sent its caravans and when fair week arrived the camp ground was dotted into tents and hundreds of camp fires illuminated the night. Around these camp fires would gather the sturdy pioneers who found Oregon in the rough, pushed back the brow of the wilderness, built homes, schools and churches

and established a stable government. They now renewed acquaintances, discussed past experiences and planned for the future.

Those old days are now gone, and with them the pioneers and the camp fires, but the memory of it all is cherished by those now living who were fortunate enough to have witnessed such scenes as the old gathering place.

Not all those who met at the fair grounds were owners of race horses. Many were there as exhibitors of livestock and products of the farm and home. It is safe to say, however, that practically all men and women were fond of horse racing and honored the race track with their presence when the hour for the races arrived.

## Famous Names of Owners in Early '70's

The old records show that during the '70's there were around 100 Oregonians actively engaged in breeding and racing horses. Among the more prominent participants in the running races were: U. S. Senator J. W. Nesmith and C. J. Bassett of Polk county; General John F. Miller and James T. and William Bybee of Marion; William Bigham of Wasco; J. C. Tolman of Jackson; William Gird of Linn; James Cozart of Grant; W. H. Musgrove, William Tennant and J. A. Crabb of Multnomah; also Daniel Young, W. A. Scroggin, M. L. and William White, Christian Buckley, George Coggin, William Tompkins, Sank Owens, Brick Pomeroy, George Whitmore, A. D. Platner and as many others.

When harness races came in vogue new faces appeared at the meets. Among them Congressman Thomas H. Tongue, S. G. Reed, M. O. Lowndale, J. J. Trelet, J. A. Porter, John Taylor, Joseph Taylor, J. Misner, C. P. Bacon, Lute Lindsey, John Watson, E. Whitfield, James Clarke, J. J. Westbrook, N. W. Fisk, B. B. Aker, J. Proebstel and John Young.

While there were crooks and gamblers following the races then, as now, the old horsemen were, as a rule, in the game for the love of the sport and made every effort to protect it. The races were few and the purses small. The opportunity for financial gains was not great, yet these old horsemen remained true to the sport until poverty, old age or death lifted the bridle from their hands.

## LOW PRICES IN '95

Portland markets 1895: Valley wheat, 53c; hay, clover, \$6; oats 27c; poultry, broilers, 1.50 and 3.50 dozen; eggs 12 1/4c dozen; wool, valley, 9 and 11c; hops, 3 and 5c lb.; hogs, choice, 3.50-3.75; mutton 2.00-2.25; beef, top \$3 and 3.50.

## FATHER OF WRIGHTS

Milton Wright, United Brethren preacher, was principal of Sublimity institute in 1857; returned to Indiana; married; had two sons, Wilbur and Orville Wright, inventors of airplane.

## AN EARLY "STYLE SHOW"



GROUP IN FRONT OF "THE PALACE LEADER" ON COMMERCIAL STREET, IN 1880'S.

## Fathers' Donation Claims are Farmed

WALDO HILLS, March 27. There are today in this community five farms which were donation land claims taken in 1847 and now operated by descendants of the man who saw the possibilities of this fertile land. Let us visit these modern farms. We shall leave the city of Silverton, taking the Stayton road about a mile and a half south, then taking the road to our left which winds over the hill south and east. Here we are at the Mascher farm. This farm of 640 acres was taken in 1844 by Christ F. Mascher, father of the man, L. Frederick Mascher, who now owns and operates it. The elder Mascher had come from Germany. It was he who assisted in the organization of the Bethany church on the Salem road. He passed away in 1909. This farm is noted for its wealth of fruit, especially grapes, the cultivation of which is a hobby with Mr. Mascher, who celebrated his 80th birthday December 6, 1930.

## Riches Farm Taken In Days of '51

Now back to the highway and south about five miles. A mile east from the highway lies the farm now owned and operated by Charles R. Riches. The land was taken as a donation land claim in 1851 by George Riches, father of the present owner. An attractive, modern home stands close to the road. Grain fields are on all sides. Back to the main highway and south a mile or so to the claim taken by Mrs. J. S. Hunt. Her husband had one across the road but it has passed into other hands but hers is in the capable hands of her granddaughter, Mrs. Elizabeth Hunt Albaugh, who with the help of Theodore Riches, is running the farm. Mrs. Hunt's daughter, Mary, was the first wife of George Riches and it was in an early issue of The Statesman that her death was chronicled.

Let us now turn back on the highway toward Silverton to the road leading to Salem, past the lovely new club house recently built by the Waldo Hills community club. Tucked away from the road to your left lies the farm taken in 1847 by Ralph Gees, as a donation claim. The rambling farm house is still there though modernized by the grandson and present owner, A. A. Geer. Now west and north to the old Hibbard claim. Taken in 1847 by King Hibbard, grand-

father of the present owners, Mrs. Helen Paget, Mrs. Gertrude Currie and Mrs. Josephine Hall. Both Mrs. Paget and Mrs. Currie live on the farm in modern homes. This claim has the distinction of having land patent No. 1 issued to it.

## Boys, Separated on Trail, Are Joined Again

A charming story of pioneer days came to light when this information was being secured. The Geer family coming west from Ohio and the Hibbards westward bound from Illinois met at the Mississippi river. Calvin Geer and King L. Hibbard, boys of about 10 years had some delightful days and besought their fathers to join the same train. But Mr. Hibbard, fearing grass would not be plentiful if the train became too large, pushed on. The boys bade each other farewell, never expecting to meet again. One day young King hearing a new neighbor and his son had come to buy poles ran out to look over the newcomer and beheld his much mourned friend, Cal Geer. They not only lived neighbors but on adjoining homesteads.

## THE KEELEY CURE

In 1894 the Keeley Institute for Oregon located in Salem and The Statesman said the institute "will be a welcome adjunct to the business and social life of Salem."

## THERE ARE 18 NOW

Trunk telephone line between Salem and Portland completed and opened for business, Nov. 7, 1890.

## Breyman Whist Party Was Jolly Affair, Report

"On Tuesday evening Miss Anna Breyman gave a delightful whist party at the elegant residence of her father, Werner Breyman, corner State and Cottage streets. Whist, dancing, games, music, etc., caused the evening to pass hastily and pleasantly. There were present Miss Anna Breyman, Mrs. W. Breyman, Mr. and Mrs. A. E. Strang, Miss Lena Breyman, Miss Maggie S. Cosper, Miss Alice Hatch, Miss Carpenter and Messrs. Dearborn, Willis, Piper, Holgate and Manning."—The Statesman, Apr. 14, 1887.

## GOLF



PLAY on the SALEM GOLF CLUB COURSE

Located on Riverside drive 2 1/2 miles south of Salem.

An 18 hole course with green watered fairways and beautiful large greens. Each hole different.

(Formerly the old Hughes donation land claim.)

The Salem Golf club course was opened for play in the fall of 1928 and has proven very popular. It was laid out under the personal supervision of Ercel Kay, president, and Graham Sharkey, secretary of the club.

Mr. Sharkey and Mr. Kay are professional players, each being par golfers. Both men give their entire time to the management and upkeep of the course, thereby assuring the club members the best possible service. The course is open also to the public at nominal green fees.

A new club house was erected about a year ago and is at the disposal of members and their friends. Constant improvements are being made on the fairways, and every consideration is given to the golfer's pleasure.

the man's shop . . .

congratulates the statesman on this, its 80th anniversary

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