

Bangtails First Sport In Klamath

Horse Racing Began Here In 1879; First Track Where Postoffice Stands

By BOB LEONARD

In 1870 Abner Doubleday's epic idea of 40 years before had just flowered into the formation of baseball's first league — the National, the Rugby "scrum" was about to be abandoned in favor of a crude football scrimmage line, and Dr. James A. Naismith had 12 years to go before setting up his first peach basket in a Springfield, Mass., YMCA and originating the game of basketball.

Rutherford Birchard Hayes, republican, had two years previously succeeded Ulysses S. Grant and was in the midst of serving his one, and only, term as president of the United States. It was the year after Bulgaria, Montenegro, Serbia and Rumania were made independent — two years before Alexander II, Czar of Russia, was assassinated by nihilists in St. Petersburg, and three years before France began construction on the Panama canal.

In 1870, 500 souls were slowly building the town of Linkville and on July 4, 1870, they held their first horse race — in a snowstorm.

RYESTRAW FAMED EARLY DAY HORSE

It snowed so hard on that inaugural day the horses were barely visible on the far side of the track. One lad, a painter named Henry Webber, donned his overcoat, hung it on a post for a brief minute and walked across the track. When he returned it was gone. (Ed. note—He found it seven years later in the Walters Hotel in Bonanza, "whereupon he took it away from the fellow wearing it.")

History is reticent about the field in that first race but probably Ryestraw was somewhere close by. That great-hearted gray stallion, so revered he was buried in a pine box near the county farm, was the basin's first race horse.

Bred and raised at Oakland, Ore., he was owned by Mark Bybye and stabled at the J. T. Miller ranch on Miller Island. Records refer to him as a champion but are meager about details. He was ridden once in a match race by Judge A. L. Leavitt, went from here to Salem, and in his last race, at Yreka, fell and killed his rider.

ALL-NIGHT DANCING UNDER KILLOWS

Will-o'-the-wisp memory, reaching back over 62 years, puts the first Klamath race track in several different places. The preponderance of evidence, however, leads to the present site of the U. S. postoffice with a half-mile strip running crossing Oak to Walnut and Spring streets.

There were no grandstands in those days, but bleachers with awnings made of river willows lined one side of the track. After racing, attended by settlers from miles around, dancing went on all night under the willow roofs.

Thus were the beginnings of horse racing in the Klamath district. From there the turf trail has gone forward in spasmodic but persistent strides culminating in what appears to be the start of an annual thoroughbred venture by the Klamath Jockey club.

The next track to appear in the Klamath area was an oval paralleling the present Southern Pacific tracks with the judges' stand placed where the S. P. roundhouse now is. It was a "regulation" mile strip with a high board fence running completely around. With the advent of the railroad, the track and surrounding property sold to the S. P.

Another was soon built, in an early day real estate move to throw the fairgrounds south, where the Shaw-Bertram mill now stands. This, Klamath's third track, was reported to be dangerous on one turn. Special trains were shunted to the field on race days.

CHASTAIN, SHOOK PIONEER JOCKEYS

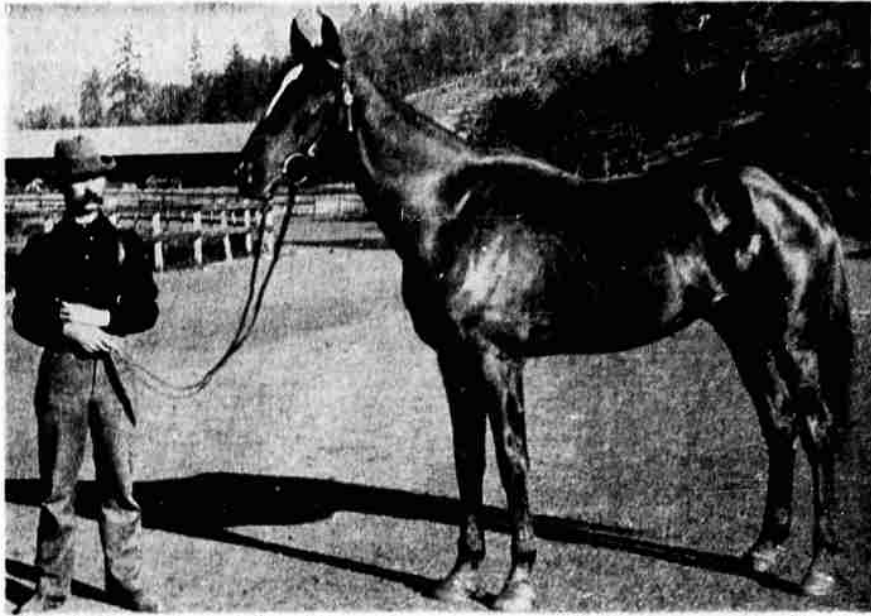
After a comparatively brief existence, this one folded and another, according to one account, sprang up where the Tower theatre recently did the same. The present County fairgrounds eventually superseded that one.

Stories of races, riders and horses jibe with but little disparity as pioneer memories interlock to give a historical bang-tail jigsaw picture.

Of the old time jockeys, the names of George Chastain, later and still a local attorney, and Billy Shook, early Klamath rancher who died a few years ago, appear most frequently.

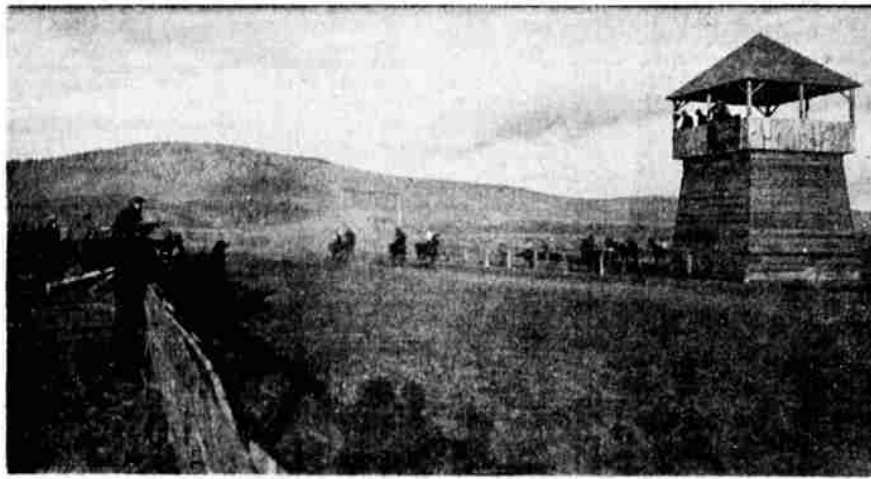
In 1885 Chastain, a youth of

That Strawberry Roan



One of the greatest of Klamath's early race horses was Dick Rusher, owned by Billy Shook, one of the most noted of pioneer horsemen. Sired by Shirley, who was owned by former Sheriff Al Fitch, and out of Langell-owned mare, Dick Rusher ran his last race at the advanced age of 23. Attorney George Chastain, another early-day jockey, still has the Rusher's training saddle and shoes.

Klamath's Second Track



Here's a view of four horses toward the wire on the track which stood on the present Southern Pacific grounds. The judges' stand, shown at right, was located on the site of the S. P. roundhouse.

As He Was Then



Attorney George Chastain was a young 120-pound jockey in the late 1880's when Klamath Falls racing was in its infancy. Co-owner of Tenbrook, a mighty horse of his day, the pair became the scourge of southern Oregon racing by whipping all competition in sight. Here's a rare and ancient picture of horse and owner. Note old fashioned long stirrups, used until Tod Sloan first introduced the shorter type which are used today.

mount's head, landed on the buggy tongue which broke the team loose. On the dead run down the track he tried to climb aboard one of the runaways but fell under the flying hoofs, suffering a broken nose and a badly battered face.

But for a series of three match races against Billy Shook, a year later which Chastain won, this was his last ride.

EARLY DAY "FIX" RECOUNTED

High in the memory of the veteran attorney is the story of an early day "fix."

It seemed Arthur Nichols, a pioneer breeder, owned a colt which he thought was better than exceptional and scheduled two match races against a better horse.

In the first, Nichols' colt handily whipped the other and a \$200 bet was placed by both parties on the second heat which the older horse won with surprising ease.

It later developed the winning gentlemen had weighted the left forefoot and right rear hoof of his camel for the first heat and replaced the lead shoes for the second race.

Chastain, tossed over his

ers to have been undefeated in Klamath racing, was the center-piece in another controversy which almost started a Bonanza feud.

NEWS OF "FIX" LEAKS OUT

The big bay gelding was owned by Henry Jackson, a prominent Indian of his time, and was the odds-on favorite in a purse race at Bonanza against several other locally-owned horses.

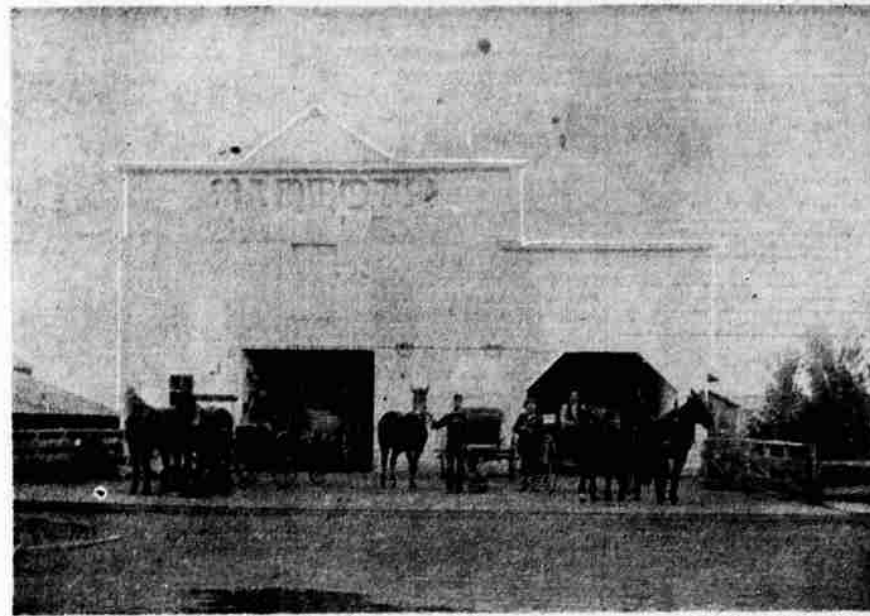
With Chief money begging for a call, an opportunist of the period had contrived to get close enough, what with firewater and greenbacks, to the Chief's native rider to assure the favorite's defeat in the first heat. With this in mind, he snapped up the waiting change.

News of the "fix" leaked out however, and just before race time Judges Gerber and J. O. Hamaker substituted another rider, the Chief won, and the opportunist and the informer entered into a year of absolute silence which, happily, ended without gunplay.

The reputations of other early bangtails, heightened with the mellowing of 60 years, come down to the present.

There was Leora, owned by

Early Day Stables



An old picture of the Mammoth stables, owned by a horseman named McLaughlin. It was located on Main street near Link river across from where the Baldwin hotel now stands.

And The Ladies Rode, Too



Coming around the near, and dangerous, turn at the Klamath's third race track are four women in an early ladies' day competition. One of the riders is Mrs. Vera L. Rose, then Miss Vera Crisler, who is still a resident of Klamath Falls. The track was on the present site of the Shaw-Bertram mill on the shores of Lake Ewauna.

Sam Walker, a gray mare which "wheezed as she breathed." Distemper had made her short-winded so a silver tube was forced down her throat. She once ran a mile in 34 seconds carrying 128 pounds.

ALAMONT NAMED AFTER STALLION

There was Klamath, a trotter half-owned by Hamaker, which set an early record of 2:07. He was called "Eat 'em up Cookie" for the way in which he rallied in the last quarter, once trotted a final quarter in 29 seconds.

There was Altamont, a black stallion for whom the Altamont district was named — and Della Walker and Lulu Riggs, owned by Marion Barnes and the foundation of many present strains — Dolly V who always ran on a straight track — Dun Doc, a buckskin raised by Bob Anderson of Merrill. He always came in second — Moose, a full brother of Altamont — Hot Stuff Bessie and Philip Fair. Romantic names in every pioneer's memory.

Owners, breeders and followers crop up with every early recollection.

GERBER WINS OWN MONEY

Lou Gerber, who brought Oakwood from Salem, put up a purse for his first race, and won his own money back when Oakwood whipped the field — Seldon Ogle, breeder-trainer of the horse Klamath, and Billy Clark, his trainer — Jim Glick, owner of Ryestraw — Oregon Representative Binger Herman, G. V. Vanriper, McKinney and J. T. Miller, all of whom brought horses in from Oakland, Ore., when Linkville racing opened.

John Simmons, pawed to death by his horse Harry Gwynn — Ale Vinson, still living in Langell valley, who inherited Harry Gwynn — Jim Dodd, Silas Obenchain, W. O. Smith, Alva Lewis, C. P. DeLap, Sam Walker — noted as the owner of Tenbrook, one of Linkville's first deputy sheriffs.

Names and more names. Some have lived and grown. Others have faded with the years.

But intact still in Klamath Falls is the horse tradition they established in Linkville in 1879.

GRADE A GIRLS BATAVIA, Ill., (AP) — When school authorities began checking on the senior class personnel for selection of a valedictorian, they were stumped — momentarily. They discovered that six girls had received straight "A" grades in their four years so they compromised and announced there would be no valedictorian.

BUTTERFLIES

A 40-mile-wide flight of butterflies streamed through California for three days in 1924. Their number was estimated at 3,000,000,000.

Writer Recalls Impressions Of 'Woodchopper of Doorn'

By LOUIS P. LOCHNER

BERLIN, June 6 (AP) — My personal contacts with Wilhelm II date back to 1928 when the former German ruler was in his 69th year.

From all I'd heard and read about the Kaiser, I expected to find an austere, unapproachable, self-willed, opinionated, haughty, fire-eating, merciless individual.

Instead I encountered a mellowed, affable, sociable old gentleman — a man who captivated me by the charm of personality, who listened eagerly to what anybody coming from the outside brought into the quietude and uneventfulness of his exile, who accepted his lot in humility, whose concern for others was often touching.

Time and tribulation evidently had changed greatly this erstwhile self-reliant autocrat.

Never once while I was at Doorn did I hear one bitter word said about America nor about England, who in the last analysis was responsible for his de-thronement. On the contrary, he seemed genuinely happy when on the occasion of his 75th birthday anniversary the late King George V and Queen Mary for the first time sent him congratulatory messages familiarly signed "George and Mary," thereby indicating bygone were bygone. One day during the Italian-Ethiopian war he said to me with great concern, "I don't understand the English. They're otherwise always so clever about winning other peoples over to their cause. Why don't they rouse the Mohammedan world against Italy?"

Noting my surprised look he continued, "The trouble is he doesn't remember history. Why, when some of Mohammed's followers in 622 sought refuge from persecution, the then Ethiopian king took sides with Mohammed and gave the prophet's followers shelter. Mohammed never forgot this and enjoined upon Moslems everywhere not to harm any Ethiopian. You see how easily England could have reminded the Moslem world of this historic episode and stirred it up against Italy as the country making war upon the great prophet's followers."

As regards the United States,

Wilhelm followed its progress and development with the greatest interest. I was a luncheon guest one day at a time when the midwestern dust bowl was causing great concern to the administration.

"I've seen this coming for some time," Wilhelm observed. "In Germany we've always paid the greatest attention to reforestation. In your country I fear the forests were ruthlessly cut down with no concern for the future. The dust bowl was inevitable. We should gladly have loaned you some of our experienced foresters."

I reminded him that a quarter-century ago President C. R. Vanhise of the University of Wisconsin had written a sensational volume on "the conservation of our natural resources," for which he was denounced as a radical. His warnings, I said, then went unheeded but presently America was engaged in great public reforestation, river regulation and amelioration projects such as the TVA.

Wilhelm nodded, "You're on the right track now," he observed, adding he was familiar with Vanhise's work.

The aged monarch spoke German and English interchangeably, now accented me in his, now in my language. His accent was Oxonian.

One day we were talking about reforestation when there was a big national congress of German divining rod specialists at Wiesbaden. The aged emperor observed, "Of course I don't believe in many claims of the divining rod people such as their being able to discern diseases with their rods and so on. But there is one thing about divining rods; they indicate where there are subterranean springs about whose existence we might otherwise not know. Now, it's very important in planting trees to know whether or not such springs are underneath."

"Some trees die of too much water while others need more than is yielded by ordinary rains. Hence before starting out on a new forest project I often had divining rod experts summoned to search for subterranean springs."

STUBBORN UNTO DEATH

PHILLIPS, Wis., (AP) — Streamlined automobiles have their disadvantages. Willard Maderich, 26, of Phillips, discovered to his sorrow.

When his car crashed into a mule roaming a nearby highway, the animal rolled up the front of his car, smashed through the roof, and landed in the back seat.

Maderich then was confronted with the weighty problem of removing his dead passenger.

Klamath Lad Radio Man On Clipper

Morris Slusser Writes Of Experiences Aboard Trans-Atlantic Plane

"Time went so fast during the week I was away it didn't seem as if I'd been to Europe and back," Morris Slusser, radio operator on the Atlantic Clipper, wrote to his parents in Klamath Falls, June 1, after his first crossing in the giant flying boat.

Slusser, who graduated from Klamath Union high school in 1931, has been employed by Pan-American for three years at New York and has flown about 14,000 miles in Clippers, including three Bermuda flights.

"The flight from here (New York) to Lisbon and back took 58 hours," Slusser wrote. "It took longer than usual on the trip back because of Morris Slusser headwinds. Ambassador Winant was aboard on the return trip. Once I was sitting in a seat beside him reading an article about him in Reader's Digest which told how well he was known for sloppy appearance and it was certainly correct. His suit didn't look as if it had been pressed for months."

Slusser said in his letter that the Portuguese people in Lisbon have plenty of food, which other nearby countries lack, but that it couldn't compare with American food. "The people don't act as if they expect to have their country invaded at any minute. The British, Germans and Italians still have airlines to Lisbon."

Flying the Atlantic doesn't seem any different than flying any place else, he said, "except that we stay up longer at a time." The longest stretch was 181 hours from Horta to Bermuda. The flight was the 326th for Pan-American across the Atlantic. The round trip covers about 7000 miles.

When the Clippers stop over at Bermuda, the crew stays at the best hotel with all expenses paid, Slusser says, including allowance for tips. The flight is usually at 8000 feet, but once on the trans-Atlantic trip the plane flew at 10,500 to keep above the clouds.

'Chutists' Heart Action Studied By Scientist

PORTLAND, June 7 (AP) — A famed University of Chicago scientist isn't going to tell what happens to a parachutist's heart when he falls through space — it's a national defense "secret."

Dr. Anton Julius Carlson, physiologist known to hundreds of Chicago students as "Ajax," arrived in Portland today to give the commencement address tomorrow night at the University of Oregon medical school.

"We've come to a conclusion about what happens to a parachutist's heart before the chute is pulled open, but it's not for publication. We've agreed with the army and navy to keep it secret for the present," he said.

Dr. Carlson told how experiments with a veteran army parachute jumper had been made over a series of months at the Chicago airport in conjunction with Dr. A. C. Ivy of North-western university.

A technique for chute jumpers to fall feet down and not head first has been perfected by Dr. Carlson, but he said that also is a military secret.

The physiologist said he has been studying diets "as they affect the process of growing old."

"We have no conclusions but indications to date," he said. "But the evidence is that over-eating shortens life and modest eating lengthens it."

COSTLY CAPRICE

NEW ROCHELLE, N. Y., (AP) While Frank Viscio restrained firemen from smashing a glass door to get into his blazing drug store, flames did \$8000 worth of damage.

Arrested on a disorderly conduct charge, Viscio explained: "I just didn't want my door broken, fire or no fire."

BURBOT ALIASES

In New England and the Great Lakes region waters, the burbot, fresh-water member of the cod family, also is known as the ling, the eelpout and the losh.