

ORIGINS OF THE LAKE OSWEGO HUNT

PART II: FOX HUNTING

Contributed by Adrienne Brockman



Origins of the Lake Oswego Hunt, Part I, explained that the members of Forest Hills Hunt and Multnomah Hunt, each desiring a member-owned facility, joined forces to become Lake Oswego Hunt in 1935 or 1936. These facts raise two questions: (1) Did they really fox hunt, and (2) How many Hunt Clubs existed?

Yes, they fox hunted. The history of Lake Oswego Hunt, written by Jack Lynch, tells us that the Multnomah Hunt members did fox hunt as early as the 1920's in the Troutdale area. With one exception, they did not hunt live fox -- they "drag hunted". A pillow filled with fox, bear or other type of manure was dragged across the countryside to lay a scent. Mr. Lynch tells that they owned a live bear and used it to lay the scent. On one occasion, the hounds caught up to the bear and attacked the bear. Mr. Lynch writes: "In retaliation, he (the bear) cuffed his way through the entire pack. Then, as an afterthought, Sir Bruin retraced his steps, to the end that several poodles looked as if they were fighting a buzz saw."

Shortly after the scent was laid, the hounds followed the scent and the riders followed the hounds. The scent trail went through fields and over jumps. Mr. Lynch writes about the hounds as follows: "The inscrutable so and so's had both a good nose and voice. Noses for ground squirrels, pheasant, cats, cows, chickens goats, etc. You name 'em and they trailed them. After one hour of alleged hunting, they became 'pooped' and had to be carried back to their pens a la horseback to the chagrin of the regaled huntsmen."

They had a kennel at the riding facility which was located where Wizer's Grocery is now located in Lake Oswego on First St. above the Lake. Mr. Lynch writes: "The hounds' grand finale took place on Mt. Sylvanis (Mountain Park). A couple of live fox were released and disappeared into the brush less than 25 yards from where they were released. The hounds sniffed around the brush until one of them was bitten on the nose and his bloody nose caused him and his ilk to take refuge under the feet of the assembled mounts---. The January 29, 1934 Oregonian's humorously illustrated news story reported that one horse propelled his rider into a tree which knocked him out cold for several minutes. However, a saddle flask (containing whiskey) was handy and the rider was finally revived."

Fox hunting was not limited to LOH members. There were also members from: Portland Hunt which was formed about 1897 and owned a large parcel of land with a track, jumps, an outdoor arena, and Club House; West Highlands Hunt located at Highlands Riding Academy; Columbia Hunt located at Columbia Riding Academy; Eugene Hunt with its home at the Fairgrounds in Eugene, and Woodbrook Hunt in Tacoma which was formed about 1930. There were also riders from Portland and Nicols Riding Academies. In Oregon, the Hunts were held at Columbia Riding Academy, which was on the west end of Hayden Island. Columbia Hunt had a pack of hounds. LOH is the only remaining facility. There is presently no fox hunting in Oregon. In Washington, the hunts continue to be held at Woodbrook Hunt. Oregonians regularly hunted at Woodbrook Hunt. They hunted and continue to hunt on the Fort Lewis Army Reservation. See www.woodbrookhunt.com for beautiful photographs of fox hunting. Note: their facility is on the National Register of Historic Places. Also note, they have a Hunt Ball and Hunt breakfasts.

In the heyday of Hunt Clubs, a large field of fox hunters included a Master of Fox Hounds (MFH) who was in overall control of the hunt, the Huntsman who controlled the hounds, and the Whipper's In who assisted the Huntsman in controlling the hounds. The men wore velvet helmets and black coats, red coats called "pinks" with a helmet or top hat, white breeches, black boots with brown tops. The "pinks" were reserved for the MFH and staff and honored gentlemen guests. The women wore velvet helmets or derbies, black jackets, canary yellow or tan breeches, and black boots with patent leather tops. All participants wore a "rat catcher shirt", stock tie and stock tiepin, boot garters, and gloves. Each participant had a leather sandwich case and leather encased whiskey flask affixed to the saddle. The MFH and staff carried whips.

Horse shows included a Hunter Appointment's class which was a class over jumps starting at 3 feet 6 inches in height and going to 4 feet 6 inches. Factored into the score and awards was whether the rider had all of the correct hunt appointments. The judge even checked to see if the rider had a sandwich in the case and whiskey in the flask!



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[Lake Oswego Hunt]