



ORIGINS OF THE LAKE OSWEGO HUNT

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PART V: LOH UNDER CONSTRUCTION

A. THE FINANCING STRATEGIES

“**Riding Arena in Lake Oswego District is Assured**”, read the one-half inch high headlines in the Sunday Oregonian, on December 6, 1936. On the same date, an article in the Oregon Journal was titled, “**Lake Oswego Hunt to Erect a New Riding Arena; Polo Field Improved**”. Both articles exclaimed that it would be the largest privately-owned riding arena on the Pacific Coast. This announcement followed strategy sessions held over an approximately three-year period about how to finance the facility.

C.R. Miller, in a letter dated August 25, 1936, to Dr. Foskett (both Multnomah Hunt Board members) stated:

“As I understand, the Ladd Estate agrees to deed us the Polo Field and sufficient surrounding property to allow for the immediate proposed buildings, half mile track and future improvements.”⁽¹⁾

They will in turn, following certain performances on our part, loan us as first mortgage \$6000 and accept \$6000 in notes from the Hunt members, providing we accompany the \$6000 in notes with \$3000 in cash.

I cannot resist calling attention to the fact that we accepted the invitation of the Ladd Estate some three years ago, upon the promise that we would bring out in the neighborhood of 12 horses. We actually moved out 20 horses and since that time our stable has gone to in excess of 40. Every indication is that by September 15 (1936) we will have more horses than we can house.”

(Author’s Note: They must be referring to “bringing out horses” to the downtown LO facility, as there were no stalls at the polo field site.)

In a letter dated October 22, 1936, C.R. Miller advised Dr. H.H. Foskett that the architectural plans were complete and tentative construction bids amounted to about \$15,000. In addition, the architectural fees would be \$500, and there would be added costs for the electrical wiring.

According to the meeting minutes of October 28, 1936, the Board of Directors of the Multnomah Hunt approved the agreement between the Oregon Iron and Steel Co. (The Ladd Estate) and Multnomah Hunt. At that meeting the Board approved the deed, operating agreement, trail easements, and plans for construction. The minutes do not state the actual financial agreement. Jack Lynch, in the “History of LOH”, writes that “the Hunt borrowed \$10,500 from the Oregon Iron and Steel Co.”. Further, Jack Lynch quoted from a bulletin to the members, dated December 1936, in which it was stated “that the below thirty proprietary members, through their purchases of Lake Oswego Hunt corporate memberships, have made the building project possible.”^{(2) (3)}

Roberta (Bobby) Saunders (wife of proprietary member George Saunders) in an interview in July 2000 said, “We had a big meeting one night and everyone agreed we would give up something to build a hunt club at the polo field. We all chipped in our last nickel. We were broke after the Great Depression, but we loved horses and wanted to build the Club.”

Jack Lynch, then a Board member, was in a position to know the facts. He stated that, “although the original budget covering the anticipated cost of constructing the above facilities exclusive of paving the parking lot, rocking the area back of the barn, grading the track, etc., was \$17,156.63, the completed aggregated cost was approximately \$25,000.00.”

Author’s Note: The parking lot was not paved until the late 1950’s or early 1960’s. Meanwhile, over the years, tons of rock have been dumped into the area in back of the barn.

Jack Lynch wrote that, “the mortgage given to secure the loan, which incidentally was paid in full on January 10, 1945 provided for annual installment payments of not less than \$1,000 at 6% interest.” This, however, is the beginning of the story, as LOH has had a very rocky financial history.

The exact financing arrangement is unknown, as is the final cost, but we do know that LOH was not built by a group of affluent people. Thirty members at \$1,000 each could have easily built the facility without financing. Rather, it appears that it was 30 people at \$100 each that made the \$3,000 cash payment up front possible. What we do know is what Bobby Saunders said, “we all loved horses and wanted to build the Club.” She said that each person paid the “grand sum of \$127.00”.⁽⁴⁾

Footnotes:

(1) *There is voluminous correspondence and old records regarding the trails. The amount of work that was put into securing easements for the trails was staggering. The Ladd Estate granted fifteen foot wide horse trail easements through Forest Hills, Lake View Villas, Terwilliger Blvd, Oswego Heights, Glen Eagles, Knaus Road, Market Road, Tualatin River Canal, South Shore, and Tryon Creek Districts. See Clackamas County Records Deed Book No. 234 beginning on page 630. One could ride for days and not take the same trail. The above- cited newspaper articles say there were 50 miles of trails, but this is an underestimate. Many of the trails were built by the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Unfortunately, LOH did not enforce the easements.*

(2) *Jack Lynch, History of Lake Oswego Hunt 1929-1971, at pgs.6-9*

(3) *The original proprietary members were: Lewis R Banks, Mrs. L.S. Besson, Harvey Dick, Rey B. Early, E.R. Errion, J.L. Eason. H.H. Foskett, Kenneth S. Hall, William H. Hedlund, Walter H. Hilbruner, Gus Huthman, Isaac D. Hunt, Elston Ireland, Mrs. Carl Jantzen, E.J. Keller, Henryetta Lawrence,, Jack Lynch, Ellis A. McCrea, Paul A. McKee, C.R. Miller, Robert M. Mount, Paul C. Murphy, Lillian Nesbet, Frank W. O’Connor, James B. Richardson, George Saunders, Marguerite Sheehy, Roy A. Ward, S.H. Williston, and Theodore B. Wilcox.*

(4) *Bobby was about ninety-five years old at the time of the interview and mentally very sharp, but the \$127.00 amount did not seem accurate at the time. It was, however, probably accurate.*

B. THE PLANS, SUBSEQUENT ADDITIONS AND CHANGES

HISTORY

The property (originally 19.2 acres) was deeded to Lake Oswego Hunt on November 30, 1936. The deed was subject to a condition that the property be used for the Lake Oswego Hunt for at least 20 years. During that time, the property could not be sold or otherwise encumbered. The architect, John D. (Jack) Annand had completed the plans by October 1936, and the tentative bids were about \$15,000. The construction contract was awarded to the Schrag Construction Company. According to the newspaper articles cited in Part V, the contract with the Schrag Co. had a 60 working day completion schedule. Construction ground breaking was on December 1, 1936, and formal dedication was September 26, 1937. The exact date the facility was occupied is unknown.

THE PLANS

The plans called for: a 100’ x 120’ barn having, 1) 50 stalls (10 12’ x 12’ stalls and 40 10’ x 10’ stalls); 2) an arena 220’ x 90’ plus seating for 750 people (head room to trusses is 20’ and to top of arena is 35’); 3) a clubroom (20’ x 50’); 4) an office (12’ x 22’); 5) a men’s and women’s locker room; 6) a western and English tack room; 7) buggy shed behind the tack rooms; 8) a grain room,; 9) groom’s quarters (the groom’s quarters were above the tack rooms. There were two rooms and a bathroom.); 10) the track was to be 50 feet wide, and; 11) the polo field, 900’ x 450’.

The Oregonian and the Journal newspapers stated that the arena would be large enough for indoor polo, training and exhibition of five gaited horses, horseshows, and massed drills. The ribbed arch trusses which span the arena were constructed by Timber Structures.

Author's Note: It should be noted that the trusses are very unique and are part of the reason LOH was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

BUILDINGS WHICH MAY HAVE PRE-DATED LOH

There were two buildings that, by their condition in 1948, may have predated LOH. There was a garage and workshop-type structure about 20' x 20' in size that was located on the west end of the parking lot between the horse entrance to the barn and the Creek. It was called the "Blacksmith Shop", but it was used for storage and as a workshop. Adjacent to it, and behind it, was a turnout paddock.

There was a row of six stalls in a barn which was located along the Creek on the most westerly edge of the property, just south of the Brookside entrance to the polo field. It was used as an overflow barn and was removed in the 1960's.

SUBSEQUENT ADDITIONS

In 1948, there was also a row of stalls in a barn that extended from the third aisle and paralleled the track. At this time it was not connected to the main barn. It was used as an overflow barn and to store the straw for bedding. It can be seen in photographs of LOH taken in the 1940's. Later, it was enclosed. In the late 1950's and 1960's it housed the school horses.

In 1947, the minutes show a discussion proposing to extend the arena to the east and to add tie stalls for school horses. It obviously was never implemented. During the late 1940's, three stalls on the north and west end of the middle aisle were converted to tie stalls for six of the nine school horses; "Has Been", "Sergeant", "Rusty", "Sheba", "Tilley" and "Sherry".

The main barn was enlarged in the 1950's. Twelve stalls were added. One can look to the barn ceiling and see where the addition began. This addition connected the third aisle to the row of stalls that paralleled the track.

In April of 1964, ten stalls were added for polo ponies which resulted in an extension of the first aisle. The cost was \$6,224.00. It now houses the school horses.

In 1948, a small house was designed by an architect and was built at the entrance to LOH on the north side of the driveway. It was to house some of the grooms (Source: LOH Board Minutes 1/7/1948). In the early 1950's, it was converted to house the LOH manager, his wife and two small children. It had a living room, kitchen, dining area and two small bedrooms. When the Manager resigned in late 1955, the house reverted to grooms quarters. Several of the grooms had families and needed larger quarters than provided above the tackroom. It was removed in the 1970's. In about 1972, a mobile home was placed in the area at the west end of the driveway between the creek and the barn.

CHANGES

1. In the 1990's, the original men's locker room became the women's locker room. In other words, they switched locker rooms as polo players and the posse members were no longer using LOH facilities -- hence more women were riding at LOH than men, so they needed the larger locker room.

There were stairs from the original ladies locker room going to a coat room (now the manager's office) and then into the room before the clubroom. There were slot machines placed in the coat room in 1947, according to the Board minutes. The problem was that someone kept robbing the slot machines. They were removed in the early 1950's.

The coat room was converted to an office in the 1990's.

2. At the pedestrian entrance to LOH, on the right there was a four foot high wall parallel to the walkway, between the door and aisle leading into the arena. At the door, there were stairs about 3 feet wide that went into the bleachers. Where the wide stairs are now located, there was an area for a concession stand used during events. The concession stand consistently blew the fuses.
3. The horse washing stall replaced a stall. This change was made in the 1970's or 1980's.

4. The western tack room is now a trainer's tack room and has been upgraded in its décor. Originally there were natural wood walls and a cement floor. The furnace to heat the tack rooms was located in the small north tack room.
5. The grain room between the first and middle aisles has been converted to trainer's tack rooms.
6. The groom's quarters were above the tack rooms. There were two rooms and a bathroom. They were used as grooms quarters as late as the 1970's. Everyone could smell the grooms cooking. It was, at times, interesting. Now the grooms are housed in a trailer located where the outdoor exercise paddock was located.
7. There was a box for grooming equipment on the front of most stalls, as well as blanket racks. These were removed to allow for the bigger tractors. The few tack trunks that people had were kept in the buggy shed area. There were no tack trunks in the aisles or tack rooms. The Coke machine was in the anti-Clubroom area.
8. The polo field was enlarged in the 1960's. It was both widened and lengthened.
9. The aisles were paved in the 1960's. Previous to that time they were dirt with big pot holes and one had to watch their step.
10. The Clubroom has not been changed substantially. The kitchen and small room before the Clubroom had red linoleum floors. The kitchen cabinets were solid wood and had the same wood stain as they have now. The Posse redecorated the kitchen in the 1960's. The porch on the polo field side was added in the late 1980's or early 1990's.
11. The original barn and arena roof was hot tar. In 1997, the arena was re-roofed using shingles. Later, the barn was also re-roofed with shingles.
12. All of the windows, except for the Clubroom windows, were wood-pane windows.
13. The cupolas were added to the barn roof for ventilation purposes in 2004.
14. There were some boondoggles along the way, such as the vacuum cleaning system that never worked and the fire alarm system that was set off very frequently by the dust particles. It gave the LO Fire Department plenty of exercise.

THE ARENA

The arena was quite spectacular in the 1940's. Hanging from the rafters were many, many flags. Each family or individual member had a flag. In an interview with Drs. Jack and Jerry Giesy, they recalled initially hanging the flags when they were children. Each flag was about 2 1/2' x 4'. The Giesy's remembered their family flag was a yellow and brown chess board with a king and queen and two pawns. The LOH flag was green on the left and red on the right and had the letters LOH in the middle. The flags show the commitment that the members had to LOH. The flags were removed in the 1950's, as it was said that they interfered with the lighting on the jumps and probably the polo balls.

[In Memory of Frank O'Connor]



Frank O'Connor was an original charter member of the Lake Oswego Hunt when it first incorporated in 1936. He served as LOH Board President in 1949.

Frank rode hunters and jumpers and played polo. He rode at the Lake Oswego Hunt every day until he was 86 years old, passing away in the Spring of 1998.

Frank is survived by his wife, Marion O'Connor.