



"ORIGINS OF THE LAKE OSWEGO HUNT"

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PART VI: THE EQUESTRIAN COMMUNITY IN OREGON **Lake Oswego in the Context of the Larger Equestrian Community**

The Other Riding Facilities

There were a number of Hunt Clubs and riding facilities in the Portland area until the 1960's, at which time the riding facilities gave way to the pressures of urbanization. In Portland, there was the **Portland Hunt** which was a member-owned facility, but did not have a barn or arena. They owned a clubhouse, one mile track, steeple chase course and infield arena. It was located adjacent to Portland Riding Academy on Hunt Club Road in Garden Home. **West Highlands Hunt** and **Columbia Hunt** members did not own their own facilities. West Highlands Hunt members rode at Highlands Riding Academy on Canyon Lane. Columbia Hunt members rode at Columbia Riding Academy, located on the western end of Hayden Island. Columbia Hunt was the only facility with hounds, and who hosted "drag hunts" on Hayden Island. Members from other facilities who enjoyed hunting also belonged to Columbia Hunt. In addition, there was **Nicol Riding Academy** (now Oregon Episcopal School), **Portland Riding Academy**, **Highlands Riding Academy** and **Columbia Riding Academy**. These facilities each had a barn and an arena. There was also the **Eugene Hunt** and the **Astoria Hunt**.

In the 1960's Portland Hunt moved into the country further from the urban area. Also during that period, Ridgecrest and Sunwood (large privately owned stables) were built on Scholls Ferry Road in what was then the country. Many displaced riders from Highlands, Nicols and Portland as well as LOH members went to these new facilities. In 2006, except for LOH, all of the facilities are gone as a result of the pressures of urban development.

Connections

In the early days, the equestrian community was one big family. Many of the riders from different facilities had gone to high school and college together. For example, Rosemary Freeman, Marian O'Connor and Elaine Osborn were all sorority sisters at the University of Oregon. Elaine, who was from Portland, married John Osborn who rode at Oregon State and was a member of the Astoria Hunt. Marian married Frank O'Connor who rode at Oregon State and was a member of LOH. Rosemary Freeman married Short Freeman who rode at a different stable. This was also true of later generations. Adrienne Brockman, Donald Kerron and Sue Ann Barkley McMullen were at college at the same time and often met for coffee. Donald rode at Portland, Sue Ann at

Highlands and Adrienne at LOH. These are but two examples of the strong social connections that existed in the equestrian community between the different riding facilities of the time.

Socialization among the Oregon equestrians was also fostered through horseshows, invitational events and parties. Exhibitors always looked forward to the exhibitor's party following a horseshow. These were lavish parties with food and drink, where every aspect of the show was discussed. Often the exhibitor's party was the platform for daring activities. Some of us recall Liz Dixon riding a horse through the LOH clubroom. The parties were as much fun as the show, and everyone enjoyed the friendship of each other.

An annual event that brought everyone together was the New Years Eve party at the old Gearhart Hotel, owned by John and Elaine Osborn. It was a large, grand, old, three-story, weathered shake sided hotel on the ocean front. One writer stated that it was the first destination resort in Oregon. Two to three hundred guests from the equestrian community were invited to the formal evening of dining and dancing. It was a spirited evening especially for those who were spirited by nature. Following the dance, guests met at the pool at 1 or 2 a.m. for a swim. Others were up to pranks. Those in attendance one year still recall that it was Short Freeman's birthday, and Short and Rose Freeman heard their third hotel floor room door open and looked to see a pony, Dixie Cup, walk into their room to wish Short a special happy birthday. Dixie Cup was a fourteen hand pony belonging to the Osborn's daughter, Kate. It seems that Elaine Osborn, who was full of the devil, had taken Dixie Cup through the hotel kitchen and up the uncarpeted back stairs to the room. (Kevin Freeman says that the family has photographs of this event.) But then what? Well, they had to take the horse down the front carpeted grand staircase. Guests were checking into the hotel, and it was quite a scene. Can you imagine seeing a horse coming down the stairs? One was never surprised by what the equestrians in Oregon did. They had spirit, energy and imagination. Speaking of energy, the next day, many of the guests turned out for a paper chase. There was stabling and many riders took their horses to the beach for the annual New Years Day paper chase. This weekend event continued to draw several hundred riders each year until 1972, when the hotel was demolished. And each year the event was followed by wonderfully funny stories. As a side note, there was also a summer Gearhart horseshow which again brought everyone together, and a pony was brought into the bar on more than one occasion. This writer witnessed it. Others say they saw a pony in the elevator.

Another annual social event which brought the community of equestrians together was the "Poison Hill Hunter Trials" at the Menefee's farm. Riders competed for the "Poison Hill Perpetual Pot", a comic trophy. "Portland's serious equestrians took time off from their summer schedule of horse shows to participate in one of their favorite yearly outings, the L.B. Menefees' 'Poison Hill' hunter trials. Although they exhibited top form as they skimmed their mounts over massive log and stone jumps, all participants were able to relax later for an afternoon of picnicking and visiting at the sprawling Menefee ranch, Green Pastures, located a few miles south of Wilsonville". (Source: Oregonian, July 18, 1954). Some riders from each of the riding facilities were invited to the farm each summer for the Trials, a swim and a picnic. There were individual competitions, as well as Hunt Pairs, Hunt Teams and the Trials. Apparently, there was not enough jumping for one rider, as Gerry Pearson recalls that during the picnic portion of the event a guest jumped her horse over the tables riding bareback with a halter and rope on the horse.

The equestrian community was in some ways a big family. Riders seriously competed against one another and then socialized at exhibitor parties and other events with members of other clubs. Many recall those days with such fondness.

Fox Hunting

Riders from all of the facilities joined together to hunt fox at Columbia Hunt and at Woodbrook Hunt in Tacoma, Washington. The hunts were “drag hunts”, meaning that a scent was laid on the trail by dragging a bag of fox, bear or other kind of manure behind a horse. Hence it is called a “drag hunt”. The hounds followed the scent. LOH members George Saunders, Don Wilson, Rudy Gross, Gerry Pearson and many of the juniors hunted on a regular basis. This brought everyone together for a joyous day of serious riding and socialization.

Note: Fox hunting still continues at Woodbrook Hunt, near Tacoma, Washington. The Woodbrook Hunt is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. See their website, www.woodbrookhunt.com.

Horseshows and the Associated Hunt Clubs of Oregon

The Associated Hunt Clubs of Oregon was founded, as near as can be ascertained, in 1940. This is based on an article in the Oregonian in March 1941, about the “second annual Hunt Ball”. Initially, the member organizations were: Lake Oswego Hunt, Portland Hunt, West Highlands Hunt, Columbia Hunt, Oregon Saddle Club in the Portland area, and the Astoria Hunt, Eugene Hunt and Salem Riding Club from further away. (Source: Oregon Journal 2/16/41). Over time, the number of member clubs dwindled. By 1948, the Associated Hunts letterhead shows the number of participating organizations was down to five: Lake Oswego Hunt, Portland Hunt, West Highlands Hunt, Columbia Hunt and the Eugene Hunt. The Associated Hunt Clubs of Oregon now no longer exists -- as the Lake Oswego Hunt is the only remaining facility. The Portland Hunt, Columbia Hunt and West Highlands Hunt properties have been sold and developed with housing or businesses.

The Associated Hunt Clubs’ function was to approve any calendar dates for horseshows, thereby giving an event planner assurance that they were not going to be faced with a competing horse show event. In addition, most shows wanted the Association’s recognition. The term was “Associated Hunt Clubs of Oregon recognized show”, which meant that riders winning an award(s) won points towards the high point trophy of the year in their respective divisions.

There was an Associated Hunt Clubs high point trophy for Hunters, Jumpers, Western Pleasure and several other divisions. The number of points for a first place, second place, third place, etc., was dependant upon the classification of the show. In the typical “C” class show, a first place was 5 points, second place 3 points, third place 2 points, and fourth place 1 point. The Pacific International Livestock (PI) show, for example, was an “A” class show. It was a 10 day show, and there was considerable prize money for each class. This type of show resulted in a higher number of points for each award (generally triple points) and points were given for fifth place, sixth place, etc. Riders “chased points”, wanting to win the high point trophy at the end of the show season, and it resulted in more interest in showing horses, and also stiffer competition.

Annual Horse Shows

Each of the riding facilities had at least one horseshow each year. The following is not a complete list, but rather a snapshot in time of the horse shows in the 1950’s. These were shows recognized by the Associated Hunt Clubs.

Annual Horse Shows in the 1950's

Spring:	LOH Show
May:	Columbia Hunt Show
June:	Portland Hunt Race Meet
July:	Highlands Junior Show
August:	Portland Hunt Civic Show
September:	The Oregon State Fair LOH Hunter Trials
October:	The Pacific International Livestock Show (PI)

On April 17, 1955, the Associated Hunt Clubs and the individual member Hunts sponsored an Olympic Benefit Horseshow. Members from the various Hunts worked together to produce the show. All expenses and services were donated and the proceeds from the show were given to the Olympic Team. This show came about because "In the past the U.S. Army has provided horses, at government expense, for the Olympic Equestrian Team. Horses are now gone from the Army, and this is no longer possible. The Olympic Team must now be supported privately---." (Source: Show Program). To provide something for everyone, the show included Hunters and Jumpers, Roadsters, Arabians, Pole Bending, and Pleasure Horse Classes. As subsequent articles will show, the horseshows had classes for everyone.

There were many other shows such as the "All Arabian Horse Show" and other special bred shows which were sponsored by the breeders' associations. In addition, the County Fairs had shows and shows were sponsored by Chambers of Commerce to raise money. These shows included Hunter and Jumpers and a large variety of classes. Many of these shows were also Associated Hunt Club recognized shows.

The Hunt Ball

At the end of the horseshow season, there was a very elegant and formal Hunt Ball at one of the downtown clubs or hotels. Again, members from various riding facilities joined forces to plan and work on the Ball. An article in the Oregonian, dated February 15, 1954 was entitled, "Horses, Too, Have Hearts Theme of Hunt Club Ball". The captions under the photographs read, "Associated Hunt Clubs of Oregon gathered Saturday night for their annual Ball at the Portland Meadows. Large cut-outs of romantically inclined horses decorated walls and carried out a Valentines Day theme." The photographs show members of the Columbia Hunt, Portland Hunt and the Lake Oswego Hunt working together. A February 22, 1957, Oregonian article states, "Hunt Clubs in the area have named chairmen for the annual Associated Hunts ball to be held Saturday night in the Florentine room of the Columbia Athletic Club. They are: Mrs. Roger Haker, Columbia Hunt, Mrs. John Elving, Portland; Mrs. William Martin, West Highland; and Mrs. Donald Thorsen, Lake Oswego". A lot of time and energy went into the theme and decorations. The dinner was usually memorable, and there was a dance band and an awards ceremony. Everyone dressed elegantly. It was another event that resulted in wonderful and joyous memories. It was a beautiful evening with friends. *(Note: This writer wanted to include the photographs of the Hunt Ball from the Oregonian articles, but the Oregonian charges \$150 per photograph for permission to publish one of their photographs. Anyone who is interested can go to the newspaper archives and look at the photographs.)*