

People and Events from the Bicentennial Celebration

Enjoying the music



Playing with hula hoops



Beverly Animal Shelter

Dunking Booth



Trying paint ball, with a little help from George Hunt.



200 Years of Saddles

Sally Hubbard

The Covert Bicentennial Committee and Interlaken Historical Society program, 200 Years of Transportation, will exhibit a variety of riding saddles, as well as wooden wheeled and runner vehicles from various eras and disciplines at the Hunt's Brook Farm barn.

The early settlers of the Town of Covert likely used a variation of today's English hunt seat saddle. We will exhibit an early 1900s saddle which was originally used in England for fox hunting, but mimics the features of the basic early equipment. This particular saddle was used by a rider who followed a pack of foxhounds cross country, usually at a fast pace, jumping fences of stone, brush and wood of various heights and widths. Unlike our modern hunt seat saddles, the side flaps had no knee rolls in the front to secure the rider's seat, nor safety break-away bars to release the stirrup leathers from the saddle if a rider took a fall with his foot caught in the stirrup and was dragged. The riders would post, rising out of the saddle every other beat at a trot, to eliminate the constant pounding of the gait. The basic saddle, snaffle bridle and girth have changed little in the last 200 years.

As riding styles changed and horses were bred for beauty and stamina, the up-headed breeds such as Morgans, Saddlebreds, and Tennessee Walkers required a saddle with a cutback portion in the front of

the saddle (pommel) to enable the horse to carry its head high and raise its forelegs to a horizontal position for showiness. These elegant horses' riders sat more to the rear of the horse on saddles known as saddle seat or plantation saddles, similar to the mid twentieth century piece exhibited.

Fine ladies never rode a horse astride. The ladies side saddle required the rider to place her foot in one stirrup with her leg resting under a curved bar, and wrap her other leg around another



more vertical bar. She was seemingly off balance, but was able to ride and jump as well as the men. During WWI when the men were not available to show horses at Madison Square Garden and other venues, women were finally allowed to show and jump horses astride.

The Cavalry developed their own variation of the English saddle. Designed for rider and horse comfort and the ability to secure bedrolls, firearms, water and other needed equipment, the McClellan saddle was used by American soldiers for close to one hundred years. Our exhibited saddle was restored by a member of the Reynolds Battery Civil War re-enactment group.

For centuries men rode to war on well trained cavalry horses which were able to side-pass, pivot, jump and stop simply by the rider's rein, leg and seat cues. Today, these moves are known as dressage. Ridden in a special English style saddle with a deep seat, this equestrian discipline has become a large part of the horseshow world. Olympic three-day event riders must complete a dressage program as well as the cross country and stadium jumping. The International Equestrian Federation defines dressage as "the highest expression of horse training where horse and rider are expected to perform from memory a series of predetermined movements." We have included in our exhibit an older dressage saddle which is stained the traditional black rather than the normal brown of the hunt seat saddle.

With the advent of western migration, saddles became larger, more comfortable, and versatile. We will have on exhibit an



early twentieth century western or stock saddle which has updated conches and latigo ties, as well as a mid-century version. Used today for various disciplines of western riding, there are many different saddle

varieties used for working cattle, gaming, pleasure, and reining to name a few. The



The movies and TV shows of the 1950s and 1960s brought about a generation of kids who dressed as cowboys and cowgirls and wanted to ride a beautiful horse with a hand-tooled western saddle. The American Quarter Horse, used primarily for all styles of western riding, including western dressage, now has the biggest breed registry in the United States, thus indicating the popularity of the western discipline of riding.

Please drop by and take a look at the exhibits, explore the beautiful free span John Wells built Hunt barn, and feel free to ask questions of all the exhibitors.

Thank you for photographs

As you enjoy looking at the many photographs from the July 29th event we would like to thank all those who posted pictures to the TOC200 Facebook page.

Grace Hunt, Gary Hunt, Rachell Kopsa, Karen Nelson. If you have pictures to share, please email them to museum@interlakenhistory.org