

Town of Blowing Rock

Request for Council Action

FROM: Town Manager
SUBJECT: Blowing Rock Charity Horse Show - Presentation
TO: Town Council
DATE: March 14, 2017
REQUESTED BY: Maurice Ewing

Public Hearing Yes No Not required
Properly Advertised Yes No Not required

BACKGROUND:

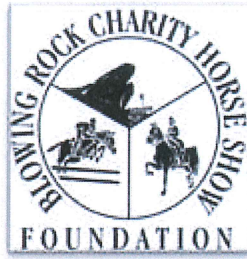
Mr. Maurice Ewing contacted the town manager about providing the Mayor, Council and the public with a short presentation about the Blowing Rock Charity Horse Show. The presentation will consist of a video, attachments and dialogue from Mr. Ewing. The purpose is to emphasize the importance of the horse show to the economy of Blowing Rock. Recently there have been other locations that have expressed interest in having the horse show move to their locations, which would be a significant negative impact on Blowing Rock should that occur.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Blowing Rock Charity Horse Show – History
2. Economic Outlook Study

COUNCIL ACTION:

None required



Blowing Rock Charity Horse Show— A Brief History

By Maurice D. Ewing

In just a few short years, the Blowing Rock Charity Horse Show will celebrate a century of horse showing in this revered mountain town. That day will be a thrilling time for the Horse Show, but it will also celebrate 126 years of Horse Sports in the High Country.

The Blowing Rock Charity Horse Show has enjoyed a checkered history. The Lenoir News Topic carried an article on September 8, 1897 which referred to the “Tournament at Green Park”.

“You ought to have seen it! It was decidedly the most picturesque pageant of the season. From the Hotel piazzas to the white Green Park letters on the opposing hillside it was one bright flutter of gayety”. Green Park’s porches were lined with people eager for the beginning of the tournament which was to take place on the road immediately before them.”

This event was a gymkhana consisting largely of games on horseback which can best be described as an equine fashion show for the amusement of the Green Park Hotel guests.

In “the old days” there were two communities that made up what is now Blowing Rock. One was the Village of Blowing Rock. But there was also the Village of Green Park which unlike today had its own community identity centered around the Green Park Hotel. There was an official post office in the lobby of the hotel. In the early 1920’s there was a fierce rivalry between the two villages.

In celebration of that rivalry there was an organized horse race from Green Park to Blowing Rock and back. It was an exciting, intense and well attended event which was held for several years in the early 1920’s.

A more civilized history of horse sports in Blowing Rock can also be traced to the turn of the century when Moses Cone, the successful merchant and textile pioneer, built his grand home not far from Main Street in Blowing Rock. His passion for engineering and construction led to the building of 25 miles of Carriage Roads and horse trails throughout his lush 3,000 acre estate.

When Mrs. Cone invited the public to enjoy her property, the only way to explore all the “haints and hollers” of the Cone Estate was on foot, on horse back, or in a horse drawn carriage. That is still true today.

As Blowing Rock continued to grow as a tourist destination, a horseback ride in the Cone Estate became a must do activity for summer visitors. This of course meant that more livery stables and horse rental operations sprang up to accommodate the tourists. Lloyd M. Tate a horseman from Pinehurst was one of those seasonal livery stable operators.

In 1923 Mr. Tate, held his first Blowing Rock Horse Show on Green Hill Road just up the mountain behind the Green Park Hotel. This was a much tamer event than that early gymkhana or the rowdy horse race.

Under the headline "BLOWING ROCK HORSE SHOW AND RIDING CONTEST", another *Lenoir News Topic* article dated August 12, 1926 suggests the show continued on Green Hill for several years.

. . . "The site chosen for the horse show is Green Hill, which rises just behind the [G]reen Park Hotel. It is a perfect spot for an outdoor gathering. The track for the contestants circles the crown of the hill; within it is space for the judges' stand and spectators, while all around the outer rim is ample parking ground for automobiles."

During these early years, the show took on a more formal atmosphere with rules and decorum better fitting an official sporting event, but it was clearly a "fun show" as it was often referred to by Mr. Tate. After decades of expansion and improvements to both the facility and the competition, the show has never lost its "fun show" appeal.

By the mid-1920's Mr. Thomas. A. Broyhill had purchased much of what we know today as the Mayview section of Blowing Rock. That was around 1,000 acres at the time. The horse show moved to a small, little used golf course on land owned by Mr. Broyhill. The intention being to make the horse show an attraction for guests of the nearby Mayview Manor Hotel. In 1934 Mr. Broyhill sold the "horse show grounds" to the Blowing Rock Charity Horse Show Association for the tidy sum of \$1.00. While over the years, additional land has been added to the original tract, the show is still held on that site today. The current main arena rests on the same Mayview site as the original show ring.

The Blowing Rock Charity Horse Show has been held un-interrupted by recessions, depressions, foul weather or even World War II with the gas rationing that severely limited vacation travel. It has survived one national and regional crisis after another, and the show is stronger today in every respect than it has ever been before.

The Blowing Rock Horse Show has also survived long enough to be among the oldest continuously operating horse shows in the country. This annual event is respected and revered by hundreds of riders and trainers, both amateur and professional some of whom have been competing in Blowing Rock for decades.

In 2014 the United States Equestrian Federation awarded Blowing Rock the coveted Heritage Competition designation. Of the 2,500 horse shows recognized by the

Federation, The Blowing Rock Horse Show is one of only 20 other iconic American horse shows to hold this designation.

In 2015, the US Hunter and Jumper Association in Lexington, KY featured Blowing Rock in an exhibit of two dozen historic American Horse Shows. The museum space in the Association's headquarters is named for Sally and Kenny Wheeler, longtime exhibitors, supports and friends of the Blowing Rock show.

The show is not only about horses and the traditions of riding in the Highlands; it's also about supporting many worthy causes in and around Blowing Rock. Over the years, proceeds from the show have been used to support local organizations including:

Blowing Rock Fire Department
Blowing Rock Rescue Squad
Watauga County Humane Society

The Blowing Rock Rotary Club
Horse Helpers of the High Country
The Blue Ridge 4-H Club

The organization places a high priority on encouraging youth interested in horsemanship, so the Foundation proudly supports Appalachian State University's Equestrian Team.

The Foundation also contributes generously through the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation, to the preservation and maintenance of the Cone Estate's Carriage Roads the public use of which inspired the popularity of recreational riding in Blowing Rock more than a century ago.

The Foundation, its Horse Show and the "Show Grounds" is managed by a volunteer board of directors who see their duty as not just producing a top drawer competition that will attract riders and spectators from across the country, but also is also about preserving the grand traditions of horse sports in Blowing Rock. It is an obligation that has been handed down for safe keeping by the pioneers of recreation in the Highlands and by the generations of those who have loved Blowing Rock because of horse sports.

In 1999 The Blowing Rock Horse Show Association was reorganized as the Blowing Rock Charity Horse Show Foundation. This was the first of many changes made in an effort to assure the survival of the show and to continue as an anchor for horse sports in the High Country. In its not-for-profit application the Foundation was charged with "maintaining the tradition of horse sports in the High Country, and supporting worthy charities in and around Blowing Rock."

Along with creating the Foundation the directors re-named the Horse Show Grounds the Blowing Rock Equestrian Preserve which more appropriately defined the facility's role in the overall mission of the organization. In 2016 the Preserve was once again re-named the Broyhill Equestrian Preserve to acknowledge Tom Broyhill's original gift and the decades long support provided of the Broyhill family.

MDE (March 8, 2017)

Blowing Rock Charity Horse Show

2012 Economic Outlook Study

Talking Points

This study was submitted to the Department of Economics at Appalachian State University by Nicole Jelley of Raleigh, NC, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, Economics and Marketing. Preparation of the study was under supervision of Tanga McDaniel, PhD and Todd Cherry, PhD of the ASU Walker College of Business.

It should be noted that some of these statistics have changed over the five years since the study was completed. Most areas have increased, however the 2012 statistics remain a viable example of the regional economic impact of the Blowing Rock Horse Shows.

It should also be noted that the economic impact of the Broyhill Equestrian Preserve, significant in its own right, is not included in these statistics.

*There are twenty-one days of horse showing at the Broyhill Equestrian Preserve each year. The entire economic impact of the shows, **\$7.7 million**, is measured during these 21 days. We believe no other attraction in the Highlands provides this much economic benefit over so short a period.*

The data gathered for this study was collected via 455 completed surveys collected on the grounds during the three weeks of shows in 2012.

Based on a widely accepted model created by the American Quarter Horse Association there are approximately 3.5 people accompanying a single horse to a horse show. They include owners, riders, trainers, and grooms.

Over the course of three weeks of showing 785 horses competed with approximately 2,748 people participating.

It takes approximately 56 additional support personnel to conduct each show.

There are 430 permanent horse stalls at the Preserve. About 100 stalls are typically used for tack rooms, feed and hay storage, and changing rooms during the shows. During the Hunter/Jumper shows, about 70 additional temporary stalls are added. For many years now, the Hunter/Jumper stalls have sold out every year. 2012 was the first time the Saddlebred show was "sold out".

The Rotary Club sells program ads and tickets at the gate. In 2012, 1,717 tickets were sold at the gate. Riders, trainers, attendants, owners and sponsors receive free admission.

40% of those responding to the survey were from out of state and represented 19 different states from South Carolina to New Jersey to California. The average respondent traveled 203 miles to Blowing Rock, and 87% said the show was the primary reason for being in Blowing Rock. About 77% said the expected to return to Blowing Rock in the future.

The average respondent stays in Blowing Rock 6.6 nights, would shop, dine in restaurants, and visit attractions. They expected to spend \$2,375 during their stay. About 80% of those funds are spent within 15 miles of the Show Grounds. Only about 38% of the total is spent on horse show expenses.