

Leaving Sharkey, Famous Bucking Bull, Pendleton Round-up

By Ralph Doubleday

This photograph shows Sharkey, “the famous bucking bull,” throwing Tuck Reynolds at the fourth Pendleton Round-Up, held in September 1913. It was taken by Ralph Doubleday, a well-known rodeo photographer and postcard publisher.

The Pendleton Round-Up probably has roots in Pendleton’s 1909 Fourth of July festival, which featured bronc and bull riding, horse races, Indian dancing, greased pig contests, foot races, and other informal competitions. The success of this celebration inspired community leaders to organize a more formal celebration along the lines of Cheyenne’s Frontier Days, a popular Wyoming rodeo first held in 1897. In July 1910, Pendleton residents established the Northwestern Frontier Exhibition Association, which arranged for the first Round-Up to take place that September, timed late in the month to allow grain farmers to finish the harvest.

The 1910 Round-Up proved successful beyond expectation, attracting tens of thousands of visitors to Pendleton, which at the time only had a few thousand residents. People poured in from all over the region to watch dozens of events, including bucking contests, trick riding, steer roping, and the Roman race, where two horses ran abreast while a rider stood on top of them, one foot on each horse. There were events for both men and women, and unlike some rodeos, people of all races were invited to participate.

The first Round-Up earned \$3,000 in profit, though money was not the primary motivation behind the Round-Up, which was first and foremost an exhibition of Pendleton’s civic pride and a celebration of their not-so-distant frontier past. The official program of the 1912 Round-Up described it as “a carnival of the cowboy, that’s what the Round-Up is; a three-day frontier festival...where riders of the range, man and woman, white, red, and black, meet to compete with each other in the various contests which go to prove cowboy and cowgirl skill.”

Further Reading: Boylen, E.N. *Episode of the West: The Pendleton Round-Up, 1910-1951, Facts and Figures*. Pendleton, Oreg., 1975.

Rupp, Virgil. *Let 'Er Buck!: A History of the Pendleton Round-Up*. Pendleton, Oreg., 1985.

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