

NEWSLETTER



*Sheri Stuart,
Oregon Main
Street
Coordinator*

Celebrating Oregon's Historic Downtowns

There's a renewed energy pulsing through Oregon's historic downtowns-- and it's contagious.

As I traveled across the state in 2024 and 2025 meeting with board members, staff, and volunteers from our Oregon Main Street Network communities, it became clear that last year marked a turning point. After years of challenge and adaptation, we're seeing our communities not only bouncing back but leaping forward. The enthusiasm is real, and the impacts are tangible. From revitalized gathering spaces to regional collaborations, from increased event activity to record-setting investment in building rehabilitation, the transformation is happening block by block, with people at the heart of it all.

Take Gold Beach Main Street, for example. With funding in hand, they renovated a new office into a welcoming, inclusive hub where residents are encouraged to stop in, get involved, and connect. Their diverse staffing team and passionate board are creating a ripple effect of engagement throughout the community.

In Wallowa County, the Chamber of Commerce has stepped into the role of Rural Regional Hub, building on a strong foundation laid by the Northeast Oregon Economic Development District. With community coordinators now embedded in three towns, the momentum is unmistakable—projects are moving forward, and people are stepping up. Baker City Downtown is another bright spot, where an impressive increase in events and downtown activities has taken shape, fueled in part by lodging tax funds dedicated to marketing. Even more exciting, they've tapped into grant programs like Diamonds in the Rough, Preserving Oregon, and the Oregon Main Street Revitalization Grant to breathe new life into downtown buildings.

Across the state, we're seeing stronger partnerships, revitalized business districts, and the kind of walkable, vibrant downtowns that draw people in and make them want to stay. Nowhere is this more apparent than in downtown Pendleton where investment, creativity, and entrepreneurs are coming together to enhance downtown. We partnered with the Pendleton Downtown Association to host one of our OMS Network meetings at Heritage Station in July. Folks from our participating communities across the state, many who have never been to Pendleton before, were astounded by the beauty, architecture, and retail and dining experiences downtown has to offer.

We know great downtowns don't just happen, it takes the efforts of strong organizations like the Pendleton Downtown Association and the partnerships they forge with the City of Pendleton and the Pendleton Chamber of Commerce, as well as all the other entities doing good work in the community. Indeed, all community members have a place in ensuring downtown remains vibrant.

It's exciting to witness this resurgence firsthand in Pendleton and across the state. Our historic downtowns aren't just places of the past - they're engines of possibility, community pride, and local prosperity. Let's keep this momentum going!

Sheri Stuart, State Coordinator, Oregon Main St ~ 2025 Mary Means Leadership Award Recipient



New
Downtown
Alerts!

RIVER WALK SOUNDTRACK



Local musician James Dean Kindle has composed and recorded a series of custom musical pieces for the Umatilla River Parkway. Presented along the signage of the Library's Story Walk, the River Walk Soundtrack is a series of nine original compositions ranging from western, folk, tribal, minimalist and krautrock, all with ambient overtones. To enjoy the music, listeners/walkers can scan a QR code printed on each of the signs linking to corresponding compositions.

The River Walk Soundtrack is made possible in part by a grant from the Umatilla County Cultural Coalition. The River Walk Soundtrack recording and mixing process was engineered by Addison Schulberg, and the logo for the River Walk Soundtrack was created by Pendleton High School student Tiffany Wiseman.



September Business Birthdays!

Join us in wishing two mainstays of the downtown scene **happy birthday!**

Great Pacific is celebrating its 45th (and doesn't look a day over 30!)

&

Re-Ride is celebrating its 10th.

Happy Birthday from the PDA!



Pendleton Street Fair 2026

The fair returns! That's right, the revival of the 1907 Pendleton Street Fair will continue. Next year's parade will be held Saturday, May 16, 2025.

The theme will be More Fun And Games!

If you are interested in participating in the 2026 Pendleton Street Fair email the Historical Preservation Commission.



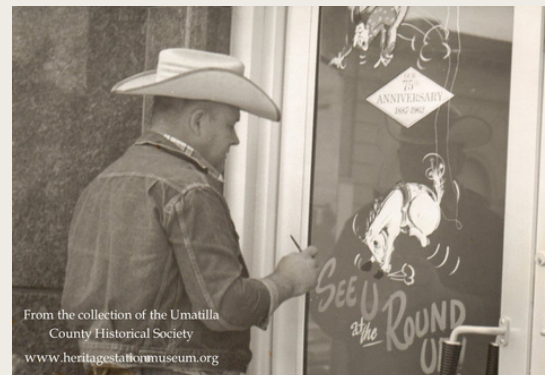
History Corner

History Mystery

Readers overwhelmingly thought the photos featured in the July newsletter were of the Harris Pine Factory.

September's mystery is rodeo themed. Who is this mystery artist painting this mystery door?

Have a mystery photo you'd like to share? Email the HPC the photo and any known clues. History Mystery courtesy of Pendleton's Historical Preservation Commission (HPC) and the Umatilla County Historical Society (UCHS)



From the collection of the Umatilla
County Historical Society
www.heritagestationmuseum.org



Chatting Round-Up & Rodeo with Casey Beard

Casey Beard hasn't just experienced Pendleton's rodeo history, he's been a driving force behind it for much of his life. The first general manager of the Pendleton Round-Up, Casey served for five and a half years before passing the reins over to Erica Patton in 2019. Casey is also my neighbor, so we got together and chatted Round-Up and the sport of rodeo over coffee.



What is your earliest connection to the Round-Up?

The first time I attended rodeo I was a babe in arms. My grandfather and father had both been competitors, but that was before my time. My brother Pat was also a competitor, but by then I was in the Army. It wasn't until the late eighties, when my family became the primary stock contractors to the Round-Up that I really developed an appreciation for all the things that made the Round-Up unique and more than just a regular rodeo.



Not pictured: Casey's Grandfather

I read in an EO article that your grandfather had “raced stagecoaches in the Pendleton Round-Up before the event was canceled due to safety reasons.” Do you remember seeing any of these stagecoach races?

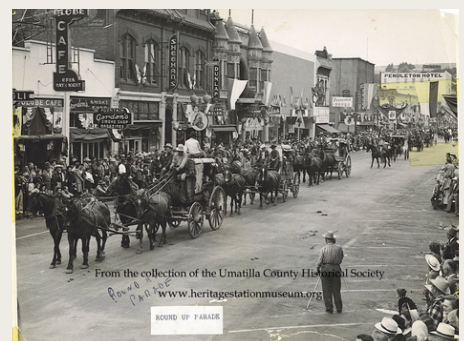
No, I was too young to witness the stagecoach races - they ended in the forties or fifties, not only over safety concerns but for economic reasons as well. It got too expensive to wreck and rebuild antique stagecoaches. Somewhere out there there's a well-known picture of my grandfather being flung from a stagecoach during one of the last stagecoach races.

Speaking of things economic, it's no secret that the Round-Up is a major driver to Pendleton's economy. Can you expand on this?

Well, there's no question that the rodeo brings a lot of money into town. When I served as General Manager I saw a study that estimated that Round-Up brought between twenty and thirty million of economic activity to Pendleton every year. Since then, the Round-Up has only grown, so the number has probably increased significantly. Restaurants and hotels are all packed and booked up well in advance, and hotels boost their rates. A number of folks in town tell me that they had one of the best days of business ever the night before this year's Whiskeyfest, and most of the businesses downtown have a second Christmas during Round-up. It's a tremendous economic shot in the arm. Many organizations and clubs in Pendleton also fund themselves through rodeo-related activities, things like selling foods and drinks, offering parking, that sort of thing. All of these help fund operations for the coming year.

What's the relationship between Round-Up and Downtown Pendleton?

When I was hired as General Manager one of the goals was to try to increase the support the directors of both the Round-Up and Happy Canyon gave to the entire community, including downtown. If you're going to have a healthy Round-Up you're going to need to have a healthy community and healthy downtown, so the two go hand in hand.



Chatting Round-Up & Rodeo with Casey Beard (cont'd)

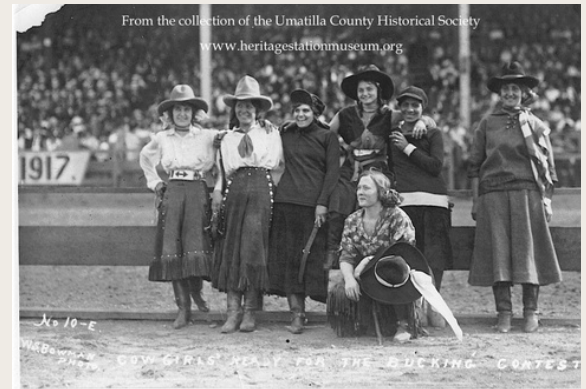


Speaking of health, rodeo seems to be among the most physically demanding sports out there.

Oh yes. And rodeo riders are definitely a tough breed. Everyone winds up with bruises and strains, and some riders have been known to keep riding with broken bones. But if you can get out of the arena on your own power, you've made it. It's part of the code.

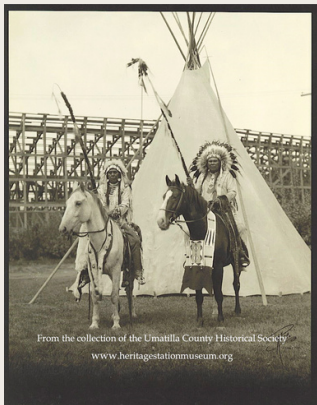
Round-Up week doesn't just bring folks to Pendleton from around the region - it puts Pendleton on the global travel map. Could you speak a bit to this?

The Pendleton Rodeo has been an ambassador to the world for years, bringing guests from around the globe. We get visitors from across Europe and Asia, and of course plenty of visitors and contestants from Canada – Alberta and BC are very much cowboy country. So it's definitely safe to say that the event enjoys a worldwide following. There was a Dutch TV show called *Who Is The Mole*, at the time the most popular show in Holland. They filmed an episode in the Round-Up grounds, and it was their most popular episode.



Is it accurate to refer to Rodeo as a multicultural event?

Absolutely! No sport is as multicultural as rodeo, with many die-hard competitors from Brazil, Mexico, New Zealand, France, Australia and Canada. Of course, no other sport comes close to claiming to be that inclusive for Native Americans. From early champions like Jackson Sundown of the Nez Perce tribe, many of the champions have been Native American. So there have always been and will always continue to be great Indian cowboys.



Anything else you want our readers to know?

Rodeo is undergoing a cultural renaissance, and Pendleton is at the forefront of rodeo culture in America. It's an asset that the community needs to embrace and perpetuate. Pendleton is a town that's staked its future on tourism, specifically our western heritage, and there's nothing more symbolic of America than the image of the cowboy. I like to think of three venues as our anchors, kind of like Orion's Belt in this endeavor – Pendleton Woolen Mills, the Round-Up grounds, and Hamleys. They all work together, but it's the Round-Up that puts Pendleton on the map. Without it, we'd be just another struggling rural town.

Special thanks to Shannon Gruenhagen, Executive Director of the Heritage Station Museum and curator of the historical archives at the Umatilla County Historical Society for locating all the amazing historical photos featured in this month's newsletter!

Thank You Shannon!



ROUND-UP WEEK HAPPENINGS

9/10 – 9/13, 6am-10am / VFW Outdoor Cowboy Breakfast / Stillman Park

A Round-Up tradition for locals and rodeo guests alike since 1949, breakfast is \$12 for adults and \$6 for kids 12 and under.



Saturday, 9/6

From 10-11:30am / Round-Up Dress Up Parade

The event that kicks off Round-Up week, the annual Dress Up Parade is hosted by the Main Street Cowboys and impossible to miss. It's free, fun, family friendly and best reached by foot.

Wednesday, 9/10

5pm / Roy Raley Park / Láwtiwaama Sobriety Friendship Dance

An annual tradition since 2012, the dance proves a safe space for families and community to celebrate sobriety, strength, and healing. For more details about this family-friendly, drug-and alcohol-free event, please contact Jessica or Leighton at 541.240.8425

7pm – 10pm / Great Pacific / William Surly & The Barroom Gospel Band

William Surly is a singer/songwriter who mixes classic country with outlaw, honky tonk, a dash of folk, some rock, soul and a whole lot of tequila. Best suited for those with a restless leg and a long running bar tab.

Thursday, September 11

7pm – 10pm / Great Pacific / James Dean Kindle's Country Combo

Pendleton's own James Dean Kindle plays music that blur the boundaries between country, folk, jazz, and Latin genres.

Friday September 12

10am - 11:30pm / The Streets of Pendleton / Westward Ho! Parade

A must-experience event blending tradition, community, and pageantry in a unique Western celebration. One of the parade's highlights is the participation of Native American families, dressed in full tribal regalia—from elders to young children—representing their heritage with pride. History is further celebrated and preserved by the parade's motor-free vehicles, including oxen-drawn covered wagons, Mormon handcarts, mules guided by jerk lines, buggies, surreys, and horseback riders, creating a living tribute to the pioneers and early settlers of the American West. Music, dancing and history - what more could anyone want from a parade?

7pm – 11pm / Great Pacific / Olivia Harms

Olivia Harms was born Western Music royalty, but the rhinestone cowgirl has stepped out on her own to craft music that is equal parts Texas, Bakersfield, and Nashville country, creating a style that's uniquely her own.

Saturday, September 13

7pm – 11pm / Great Pacific / Dusty Rust

A GP Round-Up staple for years, Dusty Rust blends the rugged landscapes of his upbringing with the blue-collar spirit of Kansas City's country music scene.

COMMUNITY HAPPENINGS

Single serving events

Saturday, 9/6 from 9am-1pm / Round-Up Pop-Up / Roy Raley House

Pop-up shop at the Roy Raley House (233 SE 4th Street) featuring one of a kind jewelry and handmade clothing.

Wednesday, 9/9 @ 5:30 / Author Reading at Pendleton Library

The library will host Melody Carson, who'll be reading from her newest novel *Once Upon a Christmas Carol* and signing books afterwards.

Thursday, 9/11 @ 7pm (Doors open at 6:30) / Pendleton Center for the Arts / The EOcenos

Top-notch bluegrass at the Pendleton Center for the Arts. Tickets are \$15. [Reserve your seats here.](#)

Thursday, 9/18 @ 7pm / Zoom Only / First Draft Writers' Series

This virtual event features a reading and conversation with Joe Wilkins, author of the novels *Fall Back Down When I Die* (2019) and *The Entire Sky* (2024), both published by Little, Brown and Company ~ the Zoom event hosted by the Pendleton Center for the Arts. [Click here for more details.](#)

Friday, 9/19 / 4-7PM / Pendleton Center for the Arts / Art at the Market

Your favorite PCA Teaching Artists and some special guests will provide hands-on demos for all ages in a range of mediums. Contribute to a community painting, try your hand at the ceramics wheel, wail on an electric guitar, and more!

Saturday, 9/20 / noon-5pm / Unity Collectibles / Mystical Market

Come on down to the always-hip Unity Collectibles (237 S. Main) to browse the works of local vendors selling handmade items. Cool people, music & more.

Thursday, 9/25 / 5pm / Flying X Speakeasy Lounge / Bingo For Boomsticks

10 rounds of Bingo with a firearm being awarded to the winner of each round at the Flying X (220 SW 1st). Come for the food & drinks, stay for the Bingo and firearms.

Saturday, 9/27 / noon-whenever / Unity Collectibles / DJ Day

The last Saturday of the month is always DJ Day at Unity, with music provided by a rotating cast of DeeJays.

Pendleton Community Connection's weekly senior (55+) free lunch socials will pause for Rodeo Week but continue through September at Backfire Station (911 SW Court Ave). The event runs from 10-1 on Tuesdays, with lunch being served around 11:30.

The Pendleton Library has ongoing events for kids and caregivers through September, including Read Ride Run every Tuesday@9am and Story Time every Thursday@10:15.

For more event listings
download the Live
Pendleton App from
[Google Play.](#)





Let's Go Rodeo



Living in Pendleton means trotting out the phrase “not my first rodeo” at least once a year. Like many Pendletonians, I have a mixed relationship with Round-Up week. As a writer promoting all things Pendleton, I’m increasingly aware of the importance the event plays in Pendleton’s economy. But as anyone who lives in this town knows, sticking around for Round-Up week is a mixed bag. Round-up week is to Rodeo & North American Old West Culture what Mardi-Gras is to New Orleans, with all the pros and cons.

We first became aware of these challenges in 2021-- our first year in Pendleton and our first rodeo. Well-meaning neighbors (some of whom have since become close friends) offered us their own Round-Up week survival tips.

“Get your supermarket trip in no later than Friday before Round-Up starts,” advised one neighbor. “Avoid driving, forget about parking anywhere in town, and if someone wants to park in your driveway charge ‘em at least 25 bucks a day,” said another.

The stakes were particularly high in 2021, the Pandemic having canceled the previous year’s event (along with everything else around the globe). I remember walking through town a few times during Round-Up week, still very crowd-shy thanks to the still seemingly omnipresent virus yet equally eager to do something fun involving food and beer on demand. The previous year’s financial loss had been felt, and you could almost feel the town breathe a collective sigh of relief when the crowds roared back, wallets fat and eager to party after being cooped in for too long.

But the downtown carnival and clusters of pop-up booths and food carts are only part of the Round-Up experience. The Rodeo is the main event. We didn’t get tickets the first year, but we didn’t have to. Our home gives us a fairly unobstructed view of the Round-Up grounds, so we watched chunks of various events from our window. Being our first rodeo, I didn’t know Team Roping from Barrel Racing, but I was definitely enthralled by the play-by-play of the Bull Riding event, which to my untrained ears sounded something like this:

“AAAAAAAAAAAAANNNDDDD next up at one hundred and fifty pounds Johnny John Johnson from Ogden, Utah strapped to the back of a one thousand five hundred pound bull bred specifically for speed and aggression. Johnson has only to last eight seconds with one hand strapped to this beast’s massive backside to qualify! AND THE CHUTE HAS OP...AND HE’S DOWN!”

...Followed by cheering loud enough to be felt all the way up the North Hill.

Let's Go Rodeo (Cont'd)



By our second year we were hosting friends from out of town who'd always wanted to experience Round-Up but didn't want to spend the money on a hotel. With Pandemic paranoia mostly faded by that point, we enjoyed the week even more, and were more able to see the material benefit it brought to the community.

By our third Round-Up year, we were already feeling pretty established and the same friends who'd visited us the previous year graciously offered to return to watch our house and cats, allowing us to do what we'd learned many seasoned Pendletonians do during the week, namely get out of Pendleton.

Ironically enough, it was this trip that really clued me in to how much Round-Up week (to borrow a phrase from my neighbor Casey Beard) put Pendleton on the Map.

I'd crossed the border to spend a few days bopping around Vancouver, and the guard on the Canadian side began the usual series of questions to determine how much welcome to extend.

"Where do you call home?" The guard asked me. When I answered "Pendleton, Oregon," he smiled and asked why I wasn't sticking around for Round-Up.

A seasoned traveler, I've learned the hard way that most customs officials don't share my sense of humor, so I refrained from responding with the first thing that came to mind, which was definitely Meh...it's not my first rodeo, and played it straight instead.

"Stuck around the past two years, figured I'd travel this one instead."

"Rodeo fan myself," the guard told me, handing my passport back. "Welcome to Canada."

"Thanks," I replied. "Next time you make it to Pendleton, look me up."

Have a great Round-Up, and see ya next month ~ JSB

Any rodeo memories you'd like to share (or other suggestions for future Let's Go columns)?
Drop me a line at newsletter@pendletondowntown.org



Mail to P.O. Box 1912

541-215-8254

director@pendletondowntown.org

<https://www.pendletondowntown.org/>

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Share this newsletter with them!

