

= Horse rings in Portland , Oregon =

Horse rings , remnants of a time when horses and horse @-@ drawn vehicles provided the primary mode of transportation , can be found throughout Portland , Oregon . They were removed from curbs and sidewalks for safety purposes until the late 1970s , when one Portland resident complained about the rings disappearing . Today , the city of Portland helps to preserve the rings by requiring them to be replaced following sidewalk construction or repair .

In recent years Portland residents have started tethering model horses to the rings , sparking interaction , and drawing attention to part of the city 's history . The Horse Project , started by one resident of the Woodstock neighborhood in 2005 , encourages participation in the urban art movement . The rings and art installations have become a tourist attraction .

= = Background and history = =

Horse rings , often made of iron or brass , are remnants from the 1800s , when horses , and horse @-@ drawn vehicles , provided the primary mode of transportation . In 1978 , The Register @-@ Guard suggested that the rings might only be as old as the early 1900s . The rings allowed residents to tether their horses to sidewalks .

Prior to the late 1970s , rings were removed during sidewalk reconstruction or repair for safety purposes . In 1978 , after one Portland resident complained about the disappearance of rings , Connie McCready , then a City Commissioner , announced that rings could be replaced at a homeowner 's request , likely for a fee of \$ 5 . Today , the city of Portland is committed to preserving the horse rings , which are reinstalled following curb and sidewalk construction or repair . An ordinance requires rings to be replaced at their original location (or " as close as practical ") . Original street names are also reset or restamped into new concrete . The ring supply is monitored by the Bureau of Maintenance . Portland is not the only city to preserve horse rings . City officials in Oak Harbor , Washington , confirmed that the last in a series of horse rings would be preserved during a February 2011 sidewalk construction project .

= = Horse Project = =

In September 2005 , Woodstock resident Scott Wayne Indiana tied his first plastic toy horse to a horse ring located in the Pearl District . Of his attempt to draw attention to the rings , and to celebrate Portland 's history , Indiana said : " I loved the rings , and felt that people just weren 't noticing them . This was an attempt to shake people out of their routines and get them to notice their surroundings . " Since then , the Horse Project has gained momentum and participation ; horses can be found tied to rings throughout the city , especially in east Portland . The installations have sparked interaction with residents , who have left hay , lassoes , riders , saddles , water , wool blankets , and other " treats " for the horses . Horses are often defaced or go missing .

The Horse Project has an official website , which encourages participation , and offers instructions for tethering . The project accepts donations and volunteer support . Participants considered selling kits for consumers interested in tethering horses . One Portland resident has reportedly installed more than 150 horses . Horses are the most frequent animal to be tied to rings , but pigs , dolls , and other animals have also appeared throughout the city .

Willamette Week included the Horse Project in its Best of Portland list for 2006 under the category Best Horse of a Different Color . In 2007 , The Oregonian 's Anna Griffin mentioned the project in an article about the " Keep Portland Weird " slogan , writing : " The ' Horse Project ' comes up anytime the subject of Portland weirdness arises . " Project participation continues despite Indiana 's move out of state in 2008 . In 2011 , the documentary film It 's a Ring Thing : The Portland Horse Project premiered at NW Documentary 's Homegrown DocFest . In 2012 , The Oregonian highlighted the engagement of a couple who attribute the start of their relationship to a horse ring installation in the Pearl District .

The city 's " Sustainable Stormwater Management " calendar for 2012 called the installations "

stormwater art " , which " highlights healthy watersheds and demonstrates that stormwater is a resource and an asset " . The horse rings , and urban art installations , have become a tourist attraction .