

## Davenport Arabians celebrate a century in the United States

The purebred horses are direct descendants of Davenport's own Arabians

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Homer Davenport was more than a famous cartoonist. In

1906, the Silverton native trekked the arduous deserts of Syria in his quest to bring the majestic Arabian horse to the United States, a journey he documented in his book "My Quest for the Arabian Horse."

During this time, it was necessary to receive permission from the ruling Turkish Empire to enter Syria. Davenport requested, and obtained, the proper license to enter the country — to the amazement of others — leaving for the Middle East in early August.

However, being the "modern" Westerner that he was, Davenport expected to acquire the beautiful Arabian horses from the residing Bedouin tribes easily.

Luckily, through many cultural tribulations and unforgettable experiences, Davenport made it back to his home, about a month later, with 27 Bedouin Arabian horses.

During this year's Homer Davenport Days, partake in a once-in-a-century exotic journey chronicling his legendary adventure through interactive theater.

The centennial event is the brainchild of Carrie Brendle, one of four project managers for the affair. Brendle is one of Oregon's only Arabian horse breeders, currently owning 12 of the beautiful thoroughbred horses, all direct descendants of the original 27 Davenport returned to the States with. There are currently 40 horses in the Dallas, Ore., area in which Brendle lives.

"I've been working on this for the past few years," Brendle said. "I'm very excited."



By Danielle Kuehnel

Carrie Brendle shows off her 27-year-old stallion, Ascendant. Ascendant is one of the oldest Davenport Arabian breeding stallions.

The journey begins at Coolidge-McClaine Park, where most of the Davenport Days activities commence, and where you can purchase a “passport” to participate in the Arabian Quest reenactment for \$20, with proceeds going toward the Silverton Historical Society, Homer Davenport Days and the Davenport Arabian Horse Conservancy, an organization committed to preserving the Davenport Arabian.

At the park, “meet” Theodore Roosevelt, and listen to him tell the tale of Davenport’s perilous travels — from Davenport’s struggle to obtain permission to enter the elusive country of Syria to his victorious crossing back to the United States with his prized horses.

With passport in hand, make your own (significantly shorter) jaunt to the Silverton Country Museum, where you can buff up on Davenport’s most notable works — cartoons and other forms of art — which display his love of the town of the Silver Falls and show that even this celebrated artist was a country boy at heart.

Finally, let the party begin when you join other Davenport-enthused pilgrims for a ride on the “Orient Express” — a short bus (simply a fraction of the time it took Davenport) ride to GeerCrest — the farm on which Davenport lived during his childhood — where a tour guide will escort you and the other passport carriers through a series of six theatrical vignettes, depicting Davenport’s time during his authoring of “My Quest of the Arabian Horse.”

“The vignettes are all little pieces of Homer’s quest,” Brendle said. “Dan Hayes [of Philomath High School] scripted the plays, but Homer’s book had a lot of that already laid out.”

Be charmed by dancers and live musicians, awed by living Arabian horses – direct descendants of the ones Davenport brought back from his expedition. Shop at the enticing Grand Bazaar, reminiscent of Middle Eastern nomadic recreation, before boarding a return shuttle to Coolidge-McClaine Park and barter for delicious dried fruits and nuts, find brass bobbles and rest under the shade on rich Oriental rugs.

“We’ll have 19 Davenport Arabians at GeerCrest,” Brendle said. “It’s the largest gathering of Arabians in Silverton, ever, and it will fulfill Homer’s dream of bringing them back here.”