

## **Horseshoe Pitching in Earlier Days**

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### **Watermelon Festival-Forestburg South Dakota**

For several years, to promote the famous Forestburg watermelons and muskmelon, Dan Baysinger created the Watermelon Festival that ran for two days along the James River of South Dakota. Various activities were held for the attendees from singing and fiddling to a horseshoe pitching contest.

Stakes were driven into ground near large cottonwood trees for shade. The pits were just the sandy soil. Attendees came from Huron to join local people in seeing who could score the most points in so many shoes pitched. Sometimes an abbreviated round-robin contest was held.

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### **Meadowwood Craft Fair—Huron South Dakota**

The Meadowwood Craft Fair was held in Memorial Park by the James River, Huron South Dakota. Horseshoe pitching contests involved “professional” pitchers as well as local participants. The events were organized by \_\_\_\_\_ and Herman Jans of Huron. There was a doubles contest as well as the singles contests. The courts had blue clay pits.

There was also black powder gun, tomahawk and knife throwing events also.

The Fair was a successful local attraction for a number years.

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### **Valley Station- Armour, South Dakota**

Valley Station was a place to go on a hot summer Sunday afternoon. Besides the beer and other drinks, horseshoe pitching and bow and arrow contests were held.

The four pits were SD black dirt. Competitors came from some distance. Occasionally members of the Mitchell Horseshoe league attended to compete against the local pitchers.

This was always a very friendly, though competitive event.

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## **South Dakota Centennial Events**

When South Dakota towns celebrated their first 100 years of existence with parades and many other community events were held. Horseshoe pitching contests were usually held. The small town events had either dirt or sand for the pits.

Some contests were just high score in so many shoes pitched. Others were round robin events. Scorekeeping was done many times by the players. Sometimes scorekeepers were available.

Some women competed but there were very few. Children contests would be held also.

One would see many horseshoes being flipped end over end which was very common by amateur pitchers. Tournament competitors that traveled state-wide usually pitched a more flat turn and a quarter. Some pitched a three quarter turn and a few used the turn and three quarter. Flipped shoes tended to “walk” away from the stake. Turned shoes would land in front of the stake in slide in for the score. The best pitchers pitched the shoe right to the stake itself.

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### **Artesian South Dakota Horseshoe Club**

Paul Hilgenberg and Harry Everhart of Artesian had organized horseshoe pitching events in the city park in Artesian. There was a youth league and also a yearly sand court event in September following the South Dakota Horseshoe Pitchers State Tournament. People came even from Aberdeen, Madison, Mitchell and Sioux Falls to compete.

The courts were surrounded by a galvanized wire fence about 4 foot tall. Scoreboards could be attached. Scorekeepers were furnished for the September contest.

There was a horseshoe two day event for the Town of Artesian’s Centennial celebration. Some of the South Dakota champions in various classes came which made tough competition for local players. The weather on Sunday turned extremely cold and windy for a July afternoon. Very few spectators turned out which was very disappointing as they would have seen some of South Dakota’s best pitchers compete.

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### **Scoreboards for Horseshoe Competitions**

The most common scoreboards for years consisted of two pieces of sheet plywood with numbered plywood wheels between them. They would be attached to the galvanized park fence.

Scorekeepers sat outside the fence behind each set of stakes. Scores would be kept on NHPA score sheets. Results would be posted to a master scoresheet updated for each round.

Prizes were usually trophies/cash for major events or ribbons for the top finishers.