

Weird and wonderful



A few unusual sights can be found West of Salem off Highway 18. Although these sights are well known to residents in the area, they continue to attract a lot of attention and generate questions from visitors. Seasonally you may find a reverse crop arrow, reminiscent of one seen in the movie “Signs,” which is located just east of Grand Ronde. Don’t confuse this region with New York just because of the 20 foot high Statue of Liberty located in the front yard of a longtime Polk county resident. Also attracting attention is a red, white and blue 1950s car suspended from a tree and a 25 foot lighted martini glass. Motorists are encouraged to pull over to the side of the road for safety to view these uniquely abstract sights!

Interested in the world’s largest porcine (hog) hairball? Well look no further. Mount Angel Abbey, thirty minutes north of Salem in nearby Mt. Angel, is home to a small Natural History museum that has, what is believed to be, the world’s largest porcine (hog) hairball. The museum also astounds visitors with two 8-legged taxidermy calves and other amazing artifacts.



Legendary to the Oregon State Fair is the story of Rufus the bull, also known as the “Houdini” bull. In 1979 Rufus escaped while he was being unloaded from his livestock trailer. A county sheriff ground crew tracked Rufus through Salem and lost his trail. Sightings of Rufus were reported but he continued to elude capture. Four weeks later Rufus was found 15 miles away in a corn field. He had crossed railroad tracks and swam across the swift Willamette River.

Rufus was captured and returned to his 17 year-old owner. The Oregon State Fair later purchased Rufus and he became the official mascot for the Oregon State Fair. Rufus retired from his mascot duties in the 1980s and lived a relaxing life on the farm annex of the Oregon State Penitentiary where prisoners cared for him - they seemed to admire his ability to elude authorities. Rufus died in 1987.

The Oregon State Fair is also known for Vive La France No. 319616 a.k.a. Wonder Cow. In the 1900s this cow held three world records for her milk which was extremely rich in butter fat. When Vive (Wonder Cow) died she was buried at the Oregon State Fairgrounds in Salem. Her headstone can be found next to the livestock pavilion.

Photos below, l to r: Polk County yellow submarine; 8-legged calf; Porcine (hog) hairball.

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