

Mary Elizabeth Petrey & the 1929 Women's State Championship



Mossman Brand
Horseshoes

We have another edition from our Golden Age of horseshoes containing some new information and photos provided, courtesy of Ms. Charlotte Detherage. Charlotte is the daughter of the 1929 Women's Kentucky State Champion, Mary Elizabeth Petrey McGuire. Ms. Detherage has been kind enough to share here memories, photos and insight into the life of the 1929 Champion.



This photo, taken sometime after the 1929 State, shows Elizabeth in her horseshoe form with a table to the right, showing off her Trophy and "Certificate Of Championship".

1929 Women's State
Championship Trophy.
Engraving reads: Kentucky
Championship Horseshoe
Tournament, 1929, Kentucky
State Fair, Won By, Mary
Elizabeth Petrey, Presented By
Her Buddies.



In 1929, Elizabeth Petrey won the Women's title over a competitive field of three other women, Miss Eleanor Dye Of King's Mountain, Ky., Mrs. Watkins of St. Matthews. Ky. and Mrs. Flannigan from Louisville. Information on the 1929 Women's State Championship comes from a few available sources: The Louisville Courier Journal, Sept 15th, 1929. The LCJ's account simply mentions the data as I have it listed above, including the photo showing President E. B. Patterson

Photos above were
taken in April, 1929
at 18 years of age.

presenting cups to Miss Petrey and Men's Class B Winner, F. E. Kappesser. The "Horseshoe World" generates a few more clues to the participants. The November 1929 Edition states that there were four entrants in the Women's Division, listing only the Champion Petrey and the runner-up, listed as "Eleanora Dye" of King's Mountain. The March 1930 edition of "Horseshoe World" gives a second reporting of the 1929 activity at the State Championship in an article titled "Says Horseshoes Made Greatest Stride". In this article, it gives an overview of the three divisions in the State tournament, listing Elizabeth Petrey of Waynesboro as winning the "Women's State Title with Elizabeth Dye Of King's Mountain second. Mrs. Margaret Watkins of St. Matthews was third." One key mention here is the name change from "Eleanor/Eleanora" to "Elizabeth". The reporting of names in newspapers and other publications is often presented with name inconsistencies and typos.

A search for Eleanor or Eleanora Dye yielded no results in research but everything found on “Elizabeth Dye” seems to fit in the timeline of events. It is likely the error was noted and corrected by the reporting in the March 1930 edition of “Horseshoe World.” Elizabeth Petrey traveled to Louisville and was the guest of the Flanigans, William T. and his wife Laura. Laura Flanigan was the sister of Elizabeth Dye and would have been 46 years old in 1929, Elizabeth Dye, 41 years old. Research was attempted on the third place finisher, Margaret Watkins, but that search was not able to pinpoint the specific individual mentioned. All that is currently known is that she resided in St. Matthews area of Louisville. There was a Men’s horseshoe pitcher of this era, “E. F. Watkins”, but little is known about him and no connection between the two could be made.



Elizabeth Dye
of King’s
Mountain

Women’s State Competitors of 1929:

- 1st - Mary Elizabeth Petrey- Waynesburg
- 2nd - Elizabeth Dye- King’s Mountain
- 3rd - Margaret Watkins- St. Matthews
- 4th - Laura Flanigan- Louisville

No further statistics are provided in any of the news reports.



President, E.B. Patterson,
presents trophies to Elizabeth
Petrey & F. E. Kappesser.

Word was out: In May of 1929, KHPA President, E. B. Patterson, sent out a notice to many county newspapers looking for local horseshoe champions to enter the Kentucky State Championship. *“In every county there is a horseshoe pitcher that cannot be beaten, and we are asking you to help us find that pitcher to represent your county at the Kentucky Championship Horseshoe Tournament at the Kentucky State Fair, September 9th to 16th. Please advise your readers they can get full information and entry blanks by writing Kentucky Championship Horseshoe Tournament Committee, 611 South 34th St., Louisville, Ky.”*

It is not known for sure what drew Miss Petrey to the Kentucky State Fair Horseshoe Championships in 1929, as Lincoln County is a good distance from Louisville. It may have been noticed in the newspapers with her connections as correspondent with the Stanford Interior Journal, or perhaps it became know through her connection to Laura Flanigan and her sister Elizabeth Dye who had grown up in Lincoln County, with Laura now living in Louisville. Laura Flanigan had been a well respected educational teacher in Lincoln County prior to her marriage to Will T. Flanigan in 1909. The teaching profession would have been some common ground between Laura Flanigan and Elizabeth Petrey. Will T. Flanigan was employed by the L & N Railroad, which was an organization populated by many Louisville horseshoe pitchers. In the Summer of 1929, Elizabeth’s brother Theodore Petrey had erected a horseshoe court and had been conducting matches and games, of which Elizabeth participated. It could have been through these horseshoe pitching sessions that they had heard talk of the competition. All three of these are viable theories.

Another interesting observation from the photo of Miss Petrey holding the horseshoes she pitched in the State tournament is that they appear to be the “Putt Mossman” brand of horseshoe. It is obvious the shoes she is posing with have “hooks.” This brand of horseshoe was patented and entered the horseshoe market in 1927. They were the first horseshoe with “hooks” and the most innovative shoe available. This tells me that Miss Petrey took the competition seriously and wanted the best available equipment.

Other facts and footprints of the 1929 horseshoe related activity can be found in Elizabeth Petrey's local area newspaper "The Stanford Interior Journal". I have listed some excerpts here:

Sept. 17th, 1929: : *"Miss Elizabeth Petrey, a member of the National Horseshoe Pitchers' Association, left Sunday for Louisville to attend the fair."*

Sept. 17th, 1929: MISS PETREY STATE CONTEST WINNER: *"Miss Elizabeth Petrey, the attractive Ottenheim correspondent for this paper, won in the state contest for women horseshoe pitchers at the State fair last week. Quite an honor for the fine young woman and we congratulate her. While in Louisville she was the guest of Mrs. W. T. Flanigan. Miss Petrey brought home with her a handsome silver loving cup."*

Sept. 20th, 1929: *"Miss Elizabeth Petrey returned home Sunday after attending the State fair for the past week. Miss Petrey, who will be better known as the woman champion horseshoe pitcher of Kentucky in the future. Miss Petrey received a beautiful silver loving cup. Also an engraved certificate of championship."*

Sept. 20th, 1929: *"The people of Lincoln County and especially her school mates are proud of having the champion woman horseshoe pitcher of the state, Elizabeth Petrey, back home among them."*

Oct 4th, 1929: *Several of Miss Elizabeth Petrey's friends assembled Sunday afternoon at her home to see the silver loving cup that she was awarded at the state fair. (7 names were mentioned as being" among those present."*



Elizabeth
Petrey,
April 1929

Miss Petrey achieved a fair amount of local fame with the win in the 1929 State Horseshoe Championship as the above articles indicate and per the article below it seems that she had luck on her side as well!

Nov 1st, 1929: *Miss Elizabeth Petrey was notified the other day that she was the lucky one to win the lot given away at the Kentucky State Fair this year.*

It is not certain what transpired in Women's horseshoe pitching after the 1929 State tournament. In 1929, horseshoe pitching was at the height of its popularity in Kentucky. No further mentions of a Women's Division can be found in any later news outlets or publications after 1929. Perhaps this should not be too surprising. After 1929, nationally, there was no Women's World Championship held either from 1930-33, and only three Women's World Champions were crowned from 1933-1946. It is assumed that the nation's economic status had some impact on this. You can also see a noticeable decline in reporting on future Kentucky State tournaments after 1929.

Elizabeth Petrey's desire to continue to pitch horseshoes was not a one time flash in the pan. After speaking with her daughter, Charlotte, I am of the opinion that Elizabeth had the spirit and passion for the game. Charlotte notes that her mother had two sets of horseshoes which she had kept her entire life and passed them on to her after her passing. She had also kept her trophy and other memorabilia and Charlotte states that she felt that her mother took pride in her achievement of the title of Women's State Champion.

One other article from the Stanford Interior Journal solidifies the fact the Elizabeth's horseshoe pitching and claim to fame carried on for at least two years after her big win.

Sept. 11th, 1931: “Kelly Lankford won the horseshoe pitching contest by defeating Miss Elizabeth Petrey, State horseshoe pitching champion.”

This article was referring to a local Crab Orchard horseshoe tournament but it is important to note that Miss Petrey was still pitching and carrying the title of Champion.

BIOGRAPHY-

Mary Elizabeth Petrey was born in August of 1910 to Mr James M. & Violetha Petrey. Elizabeth was one of five children with brothers James Cooper Petrey (1908-1998), Robert Peyton Petrey (1909-1911), Theodore Blaine Petrey (1911-1997) and a sibling who died at birth. She was referred to as “Beth” and as “Mary Sunshine” in her younger days due to her smile and personality. Miss Petrey loved horses and horseback riding in her youth, using the method much of the time as transport to and from Crab Orchard school. Elizabeth graduated from Crab Orchard High in 1930. Elizabeth Petrey was 19 years old when she won the Women’s State Championship in 1929 at the Louisville Kentucky State Fair.



In 1930, Miss Petrey was attending Union College in Barbourville. She began her teaching career in Ottenheim in 1931 and taught at various other elementary schools before taking a break to complete her degree at Eastern Kentucky University and raise her family. Elizabeth Petrey married Virgil McGuire in October, 1937 and raised two children, a son, James, and a daughter, Charlotte. Elizabeth would make her home in Stanford of Lincoln County and was a woman of many talents, always on the go, busy and active with life’s activity. In her spare moments, she liked to read, knit, crochet, sew, and work on scrapbooks. Elizabeth McGuire would further her teaching career in the elementary and junior high schools of Crab Orchard, Lincoln County, for 17 years before retiring in 1971. The McGuires were devoted members of the King’s Mountain Nazarene Church. In one article Ms. McGuire was quoted,

“One thing that we live for is the church and everything related to it.” She kept a plaque in her home that read, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” Elizabeth also served as an Emergency Medical Technician for the Stanford EMS for many years, making nearly 900 runs with the squad, garnering high praise and much respect from her fellow squad members, retiring as Captain of the Rescue Squad in 1978. Ms. McGuire tallied many accolades throughout her life, including being named the 1978 Woman Of Achievement of the National Business and Professional Woman’s Week in Stanford. Elizabeth was also the historian for the Crab Orchard’s Alumni Association. After being a dedicated servant to her community for many years, Mary Elizabeth Petrey McGuire’s full and rich life came to a close in September of 2000 at 90 years of age. At the time of her death she was survived by her husband Virgil, (1910-2002), her two children James (1938-2020) and Charlotte, three grandchildren and two great grandchildren. Mary Elizabeth Petrey McGuire, an amazing woman and a life well lived!



Elizabeth McGuire, 1976.

