



Hop King: Ezra Meeker's Boom Years

Dennis M Larsen

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Two of Ezra Meeker's most defining traits were his ability to recognize business opportunities and his willingness to take risks. The Oregon Trail pioneer traveled west in 1852, eventually settling in the Puyallup Valley. In the mid-1860s, he planted his first hops and attained modest success. Serving as a broker, he traveled to New York and London to open new markets, and hired a chemist to confirm Northwest hops produced more extract than those grown in Bavaria or New York. In 1882, Pacific coast growers benefited from widespread crop failure elsewhere. Desperate brewers offered astronomical prices. E. Meeker and Co. became the largest hops exporter in the country, and Ezra the official "hop king." As an outstanding entrepreneur on a local and global scale and through his involvement in pivotal regional events such as women's suffrage and the Chinese expulsion, Meeker helped transform the landscape, economics, and politics of his adopted home on Puget Sound.



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