

Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles

Carroll's Yesteryears
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Past Pimlico winners got start in Carroll
By Jay Graybeal

This week, horse racing fans from around the world will witness the 117th running of the Preakness Stakes at Pimlico. The history of Pimlico and Carroll County are forever linked by Bowling Brook near Middleburg, the estate of Robert Wyndham Walden. The great horseman holds the record of having saddled seven Preakness winners.

Walden purchased the property in 1878 and began an ambitious building plan to create a first-class race horse training facility. A key to Walden's success was his indoor track built in 1878 but destroyed by fire this year. A June 1, 1905 *Baltimore Sun* article described the building:

"The stables and the track are inside a large frame building built in the shape of a hollow oval. The track is one-sixth of a mile around and is said to be the largest of its kind in the country. It is intended for use in bad weather. Here the horses could be galloped at the rate of a mile in two minutes in all kinds of weather, and this was said to be the secret of Mr. Walden's success in early spring events.

"Around the outer rim of the track are fifty box stalls for as many horses, and in the open space or court in the center is a large hollow of asphalt connecting with a sewer where the horses were sponged and washed. Each box stall opens directly upon the field and all the stalls can be emptied in a few minutes. This form of construction is the result of the bitter experience of 1892 when the stable was destroyed by fire and fourteen blooded horses were burned to death. The stable contains a feed room, a saddle room and the quarters for the stable boys and embryo jockeys. There are about thirty of the boys and stable men and they have a comfortable lounging room fitted with tables and chairs. Above this room are the sleeping apartments and bathrooms."

The above article was written shortly after Walden's death. A week before he died, Walden enjoyed perhaps his greatest victory at Pimlico. His granddaughter Thelma Walden Littlefield Shriner recalled the April 1 victory:

"There is one racing event I remember and way perhaps grandfather's most gratifying win at Pimlico. It was the taking of the Claybaugh Memorial Stakes for two year olds, just a week before his death. In the feature of the day his gorse CONSISTENT won the race, TICKLE, owned by his little granddaughter was second, AMBITIOUS, trained by grandfather was third

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and HEADWAY also trained by grandfather was fourth. The headlines ‘Great Day for Maryland’ – another ‘Terrapin State Carries off all Honors in Stake at Pimlico,’ third headline ‘Walden Central Figure’ and fourth headline ‘Veteran Turfman runs 1-2-3-4 in Claybaugh Memorial.’ The article read ‘The Sage of Middleburg held the center of the stage at Pimlico yesterday and was the recipient of congratulations on all sides. In addition of the stakes money, Mr. Walden received a beautiful silver cup. “The cup,” said Mr. Walden, “will go to the little girl” meaning his granddaughter Thelma.’”

When Walden died on April 28, 1905, newspapers lamented the loss of the “Prince of American Trainers.” The Maryland Jockey Club noted that it had “lost one of its very best friends and hardest workers, a man singularly lovable and of such integrity and worth that he numbers his friends in the thousands.”

Photo credit: Courtesy of the Historical Society of Carroll County

Photo caption: Robert Wyndham Walden at Pimlico, c. 1905. Photo is from collection of Thelma Walden Littlefield Shriner.