

# SILVERTAIL

## And the Golden Age of the American Road Horse

By THEODORE JESSUP

### INTRODUCTION

This story is really a collection of more or less disconnected memoranda relating to a region inhabited by high-class people who have for over one hundred years been rearing, training and racing the best driving horses in the world.

Orange County, New York, is one of the most beautiful regions of a state rich in beauty. Like a great park its tree-clad hills and mountains enclose broad, level valleys so agriculturally rich as to have made it famous for two centuries. Inhabited for the most part by people of as English descent as Virginia's, her nomenclature abounds with English names. You have Chester, and Warwick, Oxford and Salisbury, Little Britain and New Windsor, Newburg and Cornwall and so on even to a Greenwood and Greenwood Lake, suggesting Robin Hood and his Merry Men.

The story is divided into four chapters and each chapter includes notes which will endeavor to show how Orange County Horses were a stimulus to literature and an inciting cause to membership in the Chicago Literary Club, before which it first was read.

### Chapter I

#### THE RIDE OF JONAS SEELEY

It was nine o'clock on a September morning in the year 1807 that a man stepped up to the bar of an inn near the New York cattle-market, much frequented by farmers and drovers. He paid his bill for lodging of himself and ten-year-old son and asked that his horse be brought out from the stable.

"How far is it to your home, Mr. Seeley?" asked the proprietor. He had known his patron for a number of years as a prosperous farmer and drover from Orange County, who made one or two trips to the New York market yearly.

"By the way we have to go, it is about seventy-five miles," was the reply.

"Do you mean to say you expect to ride that distance in a day?"

"Why, of course I do! We have good horses in our county—no better anywhere. The mare I am riding is second to none. I have ridden her in a day from my farm to Albany, a hundred miles—more than once.

"And the boy? Does he stay with friends here?"

"Not a bit of it; he is going to ride behind with me."

"Well, the horse that can carry two of you must be a stayer!"

Just then a stable boy brought the mare to the door. The inn-keeper came out and looked her over with admiring glances. Large and strong, well groomed, lithe and supple, she, stood before them a splendid specimen of an American edition of an English race-horse.

"What is her name, Mr. Seeley? Stars and garters! I think she may do what you say."

"We call her Silvertail because of that tuft of white hair in her tail. She is just eight years old. Her dam was the strongest and most spirited mare I ever owned, and her sire was Messenger, still living somewhere on Long Island. He's a thoroughbred, you know, imported from England about fifteen years ago."

The owner stepped to the horse, giving her an affectionate pat before he swung himself into the saddle and helped his son, Jonas, Jr., on behind. The rider carried no whip, no spurs jingled at his heels, a plain one-bar bit was all the mechanism applied to her mouth. With an impatient jump the mare started off on her long journey. But she was quickly controlled by the rider with a gentle yet firm pressure on the bit until she settled down into a long, easy gallop. Mile after mile flew by under her ringing hoofs. Occasionally they would come to a sharp ascent in the road, when the two riders, senior and junior, would dismount and walk slowly to the top, giving themselves and the horse a rest. When the summit was reached, man and boy remounted and fairly flew down the gentle descents and long stretches of level valley roads. Frequently they slowed down to a trot or a walk as they met farmers with herds of cattle or droves of sheep and other live-stock bound for the market they had just left. Once they met the tri-weekly stage, which required one and one-half days, with relays of fresh horses every ten miles, to traverse the same distance the riders were doing in half the time.

By twelve o'clock, twenty-five miles of their journey had been completed.

A convenient cross-roads inn provided a place to rest and eat. The elder rider himself went to the stable to see that not too much feed or water was given to his mount. He, too, himself removed the saddle, rubbed off the lather where the leather had chafed and carefully attended to every detail of the mare's comfort, before attending to his own and his son's needs.

After an hour's stop they were off again. The refreshment put them all in fine condition and as they neared home and one familiar scene after another came into view, both horse and riders seemed not to feel the fatigue of their arduous journey.

Galloping was easy for Silvertail and the last fifty miles were reeled off in six hours, so that when they reached Sugarloaf Farm it was only seven o'clock—in time for a belated supper.

But again the master did not seek his own comfort until, with the aid of his slave boy, he had seen everything possible done for the mare. And again, before retiring for the night, he made



JONAS SEELEY

The Breeder of Hambletonian 10

a trip to the stable to see that nothing had been omitted to assure Silvertail's comfort.

Jonas Seeley was known as a good horseman, and being that meant to him constant and unremitting care. Doubly careful was he when a severe strain had tried the mettle of his mount, as on this occasion. The next morning he gave Silvertail a careful going over and found no evil effects of the hard ride of the day before.

A day or two later the father sent the son on an errand with Silvertail over to Chester, to call on his wife's uncle, Mr. Peter Townsend, proprietor of the Sterling iron mines—one of the oldest and largest of its kind in the country.

Uncle Peter made fun of the boy, admired his mare and offered to buy her. He found that Jonas, Jr., could meet him on his own ground with apt replies, and assured him the mare was not for sale as she was soon to be bred to a stallion and raise a colt the next year.

The conversation shifted to Uncle Peter's past and the boy found his uncle was a mine of information about Revolutionary times. He took the boy into the front room and had him sit on the carved mahogany chairs, assuring him that George Washington, LaFayette and other Revolutionary heroes, who had occasionally been his guests when passing through Chester from New Jersey to Newburgh-on-the-Hudson, had used these same pieces of furniture.

Uncle Peter had been thrown into intimate relations with the nation's leaders because it was his iron-works—working day and night without

ceasing for six weeks—that made the iron chain which was stretched across the Hudson River just above West Point, to prevent English vessels from passing up stream.

We may add that in the course of time one of Peter Townsend's sons, Isaac, settled in northern Illinois, at Aux Sable Grove, in Kendall County, where his initial purchase was the Waish-Ke-Shaw Indian Reservation. The son brought with him some of his father's furniture. A great-grandson of Isaac's inherited one of the George Washington chairs, who cherishes it as one of his most precious family heirlooms. And this son, Mr. Louis Martin Sears, is now a member of the Chicago Literary Club.

Isaac Townsend, with his sons, established in the '40's, at Aux Sable Grove, the best equipped wood and metal working shops in that region. Owning thousands of acres of magnificent virgin forest and prairie lands, they developed an establishment representing the investment of many thousands of dollars. They brought along fine specimens of Orange County road horses and laid out driving tracks at their homes. When young Cyrus McCormick of Virginia came to Chicago and looked about for a shop which could make models of his mowers and reapers, he found what he wanted at the Townsend shops—forty-five miles from the city.

Thus began the great International Harvester Co.

### Chapter II

#### ORANGE COUNTY'S FAMOUS HORSE

Jonas Seeley, the owner of Silvertail, was the father of a number of vigorous sons, several of whom achieved celebrity in connection with horses and cattle.

One, Jonas, Jr., was the breeder of the greatest sire of harness horses which ever lived.

Another, Edmund, was the owner for many years of another famous Orange County sire, Seeley's American Star, 14, a horse which once left his New York home and made a pilgrimage for a year to the Townsend settlement at Aux-Sable Grove.

A third son, Peter Townsend Seeley, was a pioneer live stock commission man of Chicago, being the first to sell a car-load of live stock at the then new Chicago Stock Yards. The race for generations were typical English country people. From generation to generation they were neither rich nor poor. The husband dressed like a gentleman on occasions and toiled like a laborer often. He wore broadcloth, had his own and his wife's pictures painted in miniature, ate with solid silver ware on imported china, in a house furnished with mahogany. He often milked his own cows, cleaned his own horse stables, planted his own fields, and led the way for the hired men and perhaps slaves in the harvest field. He liked a horse race, kept and used a dozen kind of liquors in his sideboard, attended Church regularly on Sunday, often was eloquent in prayer at Wednesday night prayer meetings.

Jonas, Sr., was a leader in his county, winning prizes at the agricultural shows for his live-stock and once received the one given for the best kept farm in Orange County. He bred Silvertail to Bishop's Hambletonian—a son of imported Messenger—and the resultant foal, a mare known as One Eye, was in her turn bred to another imported horse, the trotter Bellfounder.

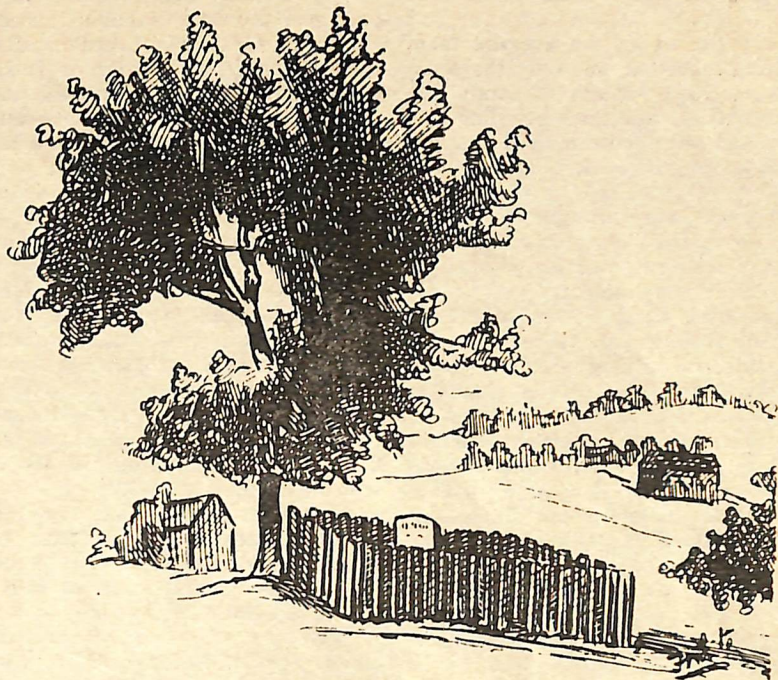
The foal from this mating, having passed out of the Seeley family became known as the Charles Kent mare.

Jonas Seeley, the younger, the boy of the 1807 ride, repurchased her, bred her to Treadwell's Abdallah, a grandson of imported Messenger and she became the mother of Rysdyk's Hambletonian, or Hambletonian 10.

There have been many famous horses in America, but among them all, one stands out pre-eminent in the number of his famous descendants and in the influence of his blood and that horse was Rysdyk's Hambletonian, the great-grandson of Silvertail.

Up to the beginning of the nineteenth century the horse of the road in America was a saddle horse. Driving for the most part was impossible; there were neither the roads nor the horses, neither the vehicles nor the appreciation of their need. The English thoroughbred was a wonderful animal, but due to his style of going, where saddles were not needed he had few practical uses. For centuries he has been maintained in England, and in this country, as a plaything. By contrast the light-harness horse is recognized the world over as one of the greatest triumphs of the industrial life of America. The change of gait began with the importation of Messenger, the English thoroughbred, in 1788. He lived to be





### Hambletonians Grave

THE GRAVE OF HAMBLETONIAN 10

As It Appeared a Few Years After His Death. From a Sketch by Frank Weitenkampf

twenty-eight years old and spent his life in New Jersey, on Long Island and in Orange County. The remarkable trait in his descendants was their ability to maintain the trot or running walk at high speed for long distances. As roads improved this gait became in demand and it was soon found to be a lucrative business to rear driving horses for the road.

Orange County breeders had descendants of Messenger in abundance, the king of them all being Rysdyk's Hambletonian. Tracing back through dam and sire, he had three near crosses to Messenger.

The latter was so appreciated in his day that on his death in 1808 he was buried with military honors, a volley of musketry being fired over his grave.

Hambletonian was foaled in 1849 and lived until 1876. His breeder, Jonas Seeley, Jr., sold him when a colt at his dam's side to his hired man, William M. Rysdyk, of Dutch blood. He spent his whole life in the village of Chester, not far from Goshen, Orange County's county seat. His owner died before his famous horse did, but left instructions to have him buried near the stable in which he spent his days. No Arab Sheik ever watched over and cared for a horse more carefully than did Rysdyk and Harmon Showers, his groom, part Indian, who had continuous care of him for twenty years. The horse proved a veritable gold mine for his owner. He sired in his life-time 1,333 foals for which the service fees received were \$185,715. And half a century ago that meant almost as much as half-a-million would today.

He was lifted into his first great fame by his son Dexter. This famous animal, foaled in 1858, became the most widely known horse in America. In 1845 Lady Suffolk had been the first to make a record at the trot better than 2:30; in 1856 Flora Temple reduced the mile time to 2:24½ and in 1859 lowered her own record to 2:19¼. For eight years this record was undisturbed and unchallenged until Dexter, driven by Budd Doble at Buffalo, N. Y., on Aug. 14, 1867, lowered the time to 2:17¼. This established a new world's record for a trotted mile. Immediately it was announced that Dexter had been bought by the Presbyterian deacon-publisher, Robert Bonner, of the "New York Ledger," for \$35,000. Up to this time this was the most extraordinary price ever paid for a gelding. At one bound Dexter's fame became national. A picture of the horse with a rider mounted on him, going at full speed, was scattered everywhere. Weather-vane reproductions of this picture are still to be seen on old stables all over America; country newspapers still use a small cut of it with the rider removed, to illustrate horse advertisements. "Dexter Parks" were common. "Dexter" was the name on the sled of the '60's and '70's the boy received at Christmas.

Chicago has entertained in her time many distinguished visitors. Some individual has appeared at a great convention and voiced an idea which has influenced a nation's actions; some celebrity has held us all with interested attention and what he said or did has profoundly affected the city, the West, the nation. Such an occasion was her first national convention, the River and Harbor Con-

vention of the '40's, reported by Horace Greeley; the Republican Convention of 1860, which nominated Abraham Lincoln, when a Pennsylvania Judge read the "platform," which by contrast with modern convention productions reads like a chapter from the Hebrew prophets; it was a dramatic moment in the Garfield Convention of 1880, when Roscoe Conkling, rising to nominate Grant for a third term, shook his splendid curl over his magnificent forehead as he started his speech with the rhyme:

"When asked what state he hails from,

My sole reply shall be:

He hails from Appomattox

And her famous apple-tree!"

Famous works of art have visited us, such as Millet's Angelus which taught the artists so to paint simple scenes as to convey an emotion to the onlooker.

Royalties have honored us, as did the stripling Prince of Wales, afterwards King Edward the Seventh, in 1860 and Prince Henry, the Kaiser's brother, in the '90's. But I doubt if in Chicago's eighty-one years of life there has been a welcome accorded to any visitor more universal in its appeal than the one given to the trotting horse Dexter, when he appeared there in September, 1867.

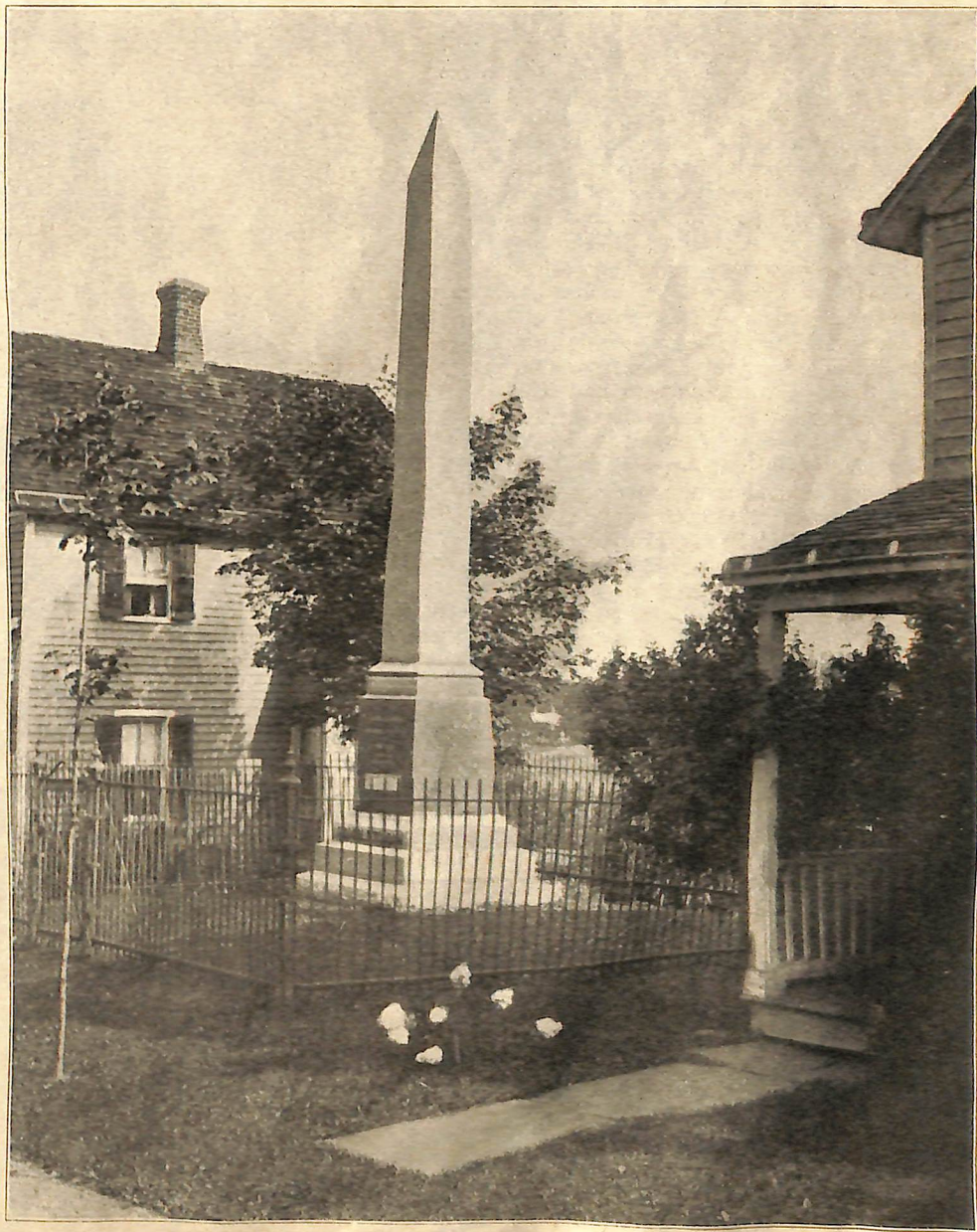
He, too, was a royalty, the king of the road-horse world.

The story is told that Deacon Bonner invited Henry Ward Beecher to ride with him through Central Park behind Dexter. When thoroughly warmed up the horse was for a few moments beyond the driver's control, but when Mr. Bonner managed to take him back a trifle he noted that his passenger was clinging to the seat with both hands while tears were coursing down his cheeks. When he asked him if he should stop the horse, Mr. Beecher replied: "Don't stop him, Mr. Bonner; Don't stop him sir! What you see are tears of joy over a ride behind such a magnificent horse!"

It was Dexter's popularity, his becoming a household word the nation over, that centered the nation's gaze upon Orange County, his sire, Rysdyk's Hambletonian and his dam's sire, Seeley's American Star. From that time forward flourished for forty years the golden age of the American Road Horse.

The village of Chester, where Hambletonian was born, lived, died and is buried, had an academy attended among others by the Seeley boys, which was presided over by William Bross, a college-bred school teacher, who had married a daughter of Dr. Jansen, of near-by Goshen. The death of a child in this family suddenly determined the teacher to give up his school and move to Chicago, which he did in 1848, seventy-nine years ago.

This man, with his brother-in-law, Mr. Jansen, and Mr. A. C. McClurg, started the great book store long known as Jansen, McClurg & Co., later A. C. McClurg & Co., of which the present Brentano store is the successor. Mr. Bross, often re-



THE GRAVE OF HAMBLETONIAN 10  
Showing the Monument as It Appears Today



ferred to as "Deacon" Bross, took up journalism and was part owner of one or two papers which were afterwards merged into the Chicago "Tribune," so that with Joseph Medill he was co-founder of our well known "W. G. N." Mr. Bross maintained his connection with the paper until his death and his financial interests therein are still held by his grand-children.

Now the relationship is very plain here between Orange County horses and their owners, both of whom Mr. Bross knew and admired, and the Chicago Literary Club, for was not his son-in-law, Mr. Henry Demarest Lloyd, a long time member of this club, as well as his nephew, Mr. Mason Bross?

The story of Rysdyk's Hambletonian and the American Road Horse in general has often been written, and, in particular, was set forth with eloquent amplitude and legal exactness in a book published by H. T. Helm, a Chicago lawyer, in 1878. This book was first tried out as a serial in the "National Live Stock Journal," of Chicago. That publication was the fore runner of the "Breeder's Gazette," one of whose editors, Mr. DeWitt Wing, is a member of the Chicago Literary Club. Mr. Wing affirms that he hasn't the slightest interest in driving horses and yet I trust I make it perfectly clear that his association with a paper whose ancestry did have great interest therein has reacted upon him and brought him into the fold.

Yet more remarkable is the fact that the late beloved president of our club, Mr. Wm. M. R. French, was a son-in-law of this horse-loving lawyer, Helm.

It does take a high-class people to associate with the high-class horse.

#### Chapter III

##### THE GOLDEN AGE OF THE ROAD HORSE

The forty years from 1865 to 1905 I venture to call the Golden Age of the Road Horse.

In this time the fame of the great trotters, of which Dexter was the most widely known, reached the smallest villages; wherever newspapers penetrated, there the accounts of the trotting horse races were eagerly read and discussed. Drivers and trainers like Hiram Woodruff, Orrin Hickok, John Splan and Budd Doble became national celebrities. Breeders and breeding farms of national fame were developed in nearly every northern state.

Many of these were the amusements of rich men; some were developed by poor men and made them rich. Who has not heard of Alexander's Woodburn Farm, in Kentucky, of Leland Stanford's Palo Alto Farm, in California, of Marcus Daly's Bitter Root Farm, in Montana, of the Highland Farm, at Dubuque, Ia., and, among and most important of all, the Alden Goldsmith Farm and the Stony Ford Farm of Charles Backman, both in Orange County? From this last farm went forth sires and dams to all parts of this country and Europe. Mr. Backman's nerve as a breeder can be illustrated by a single incident. Dexter was out of a daughter of Seeley's American Star and sired by Rysdyk's Hambletonian. Therefore he assembled as many mares as he could, twenty-six altogether, all Star's daughters, and bred all of them in a single season of Hambletonian, paying total service fees to the amount of \$13,000!

In the smoking room at Stony Ford gathered many well known men, whose interest in the road horse was the one thing they had in common. Here came artists, literary men, editors, statesmen, generals, the great men of their time; among these were Leland Stanford, William C. Whitney, Benjamin F. Tracy, Oliver H. Payne, H. O. Havemeyer, C. J. Hamlin, Robert Bonner, L. L. Lorillard and General Dan Sickles. It was in this smoking room that General Grant, enfeebled by the disease soon to end his career, indulged himself in the last cigar he ever smoked.

"Hambletonians" were the favorites all over the country and Orange County was the fountain of supply. Hambletonian's sons and grandsons, distributed, were source of a mighty stream of track performers and good road horses. There was scarcely a county in the northern agricultural states where one could not find representatives of Orange County stock. Progressive farmers reared a few road horses each year. A market was always to be found for a speedy and handsome trotter at a nearby city. Distinguished and well known men in New York, like Cornelius Vanderbilt and his son, William H.; John D. Rockefeller, his brother, William; Robert Bonner and others of the like, skimmed the cream for their private stables. They not only aimed to own the best, but drove their own horses for relaxation and amusement. Their example was followed far and wide. To own the fastest horse or team in his town or

city was a distinction for which many noted men strove.

Not every horse reared on the average farm was a speedy trotter; indeed it was only the occasional few who were good enough to attain the standards set in the cities, but their breeding put life, fire, and go, and vim, bottom and staying qualities in the light-weight work horses of the farm.

Incalculable benefit was brought about by speeding up the pace in the fields; on the road a good driving team became a necessary part of every successful farmer's equipment.

Interest in the best local horses was kept alive and stimulated through all these years by the county and state fairs held annually from Maine to California. The big crowds came on the days of the big trotting races.

Just as every farmer's daughter expected to have a gold watch on her eighteenth birthday, so every farmer's son supremely desired a driving horse, or better yet a team, and a new single-seat top-buggy for his twenty-first birthday. On the race days of the fair there gathered from miles around scores and hundreds of these single top buggies containing twenty-one-year-old sons and eighteen-year-old daughters, behind handsome horses. These rigs usually foregathered inside the race-track rail and faced the grandstand, thus allowing their occupants to be seen by the largest



THE GREEN MOUNTAIN MAID MONUMENT  
Erected by Charles Backman at Stony Ford

possible number of their friends and to permit them the same sort of private publicity afforded the box-holders at the opera.

Any one of these youths would doubtless have found it difficult to have told you the names of the presidents of his country in order; but you could count on his knowing what horses had held the best trotting records, from Dexter down to date.

Poorly informed, indeed, is the man and dull has been his career if he cannot yet recall with enthusiasm the name of such horses as Goldsmith Maid, sired by a brother of Dexter's, who took his crown from him in 1871 and held it for eight years, reducing the time to 2:14. Rarus, an outsider, and St. Julien, by Volunteer, son of Hambletonian, followed, then another granddaughter of Hambletonian, Maud S., took first rank and held it against all comers for eleven years, except a brief period for one season when Jay-Eye-See, a grandson, temporarily surpassed her. In 1885 she reduced the record to 2:08 $\frac{1}{4}$ . Other speedier ones arose lowering the time record year by year. You all know their names, as Sunol, Nancy Hanks, Alix, The Abbot, and Cresceus. Finally in 1903, the two-minute record for a trotted mile was passed by Lou Dillon, who made it in 1:58 $\frac{1}{2}$ . That record was lowered in 1912 by Uhlman to 1:58. Today the champion is Peter Manning 1:56 $\frac{1}{4}$ .

The breeding of road horses having become a national industry, an American Trotting Register was established to record pedigrees correctly. The first volume of this was published in 1871. A National Trotting Association was established soon after.

With rich men rivaling each other to own or breed the best, fabulous prices were paid for choice animals. The breeders often received these large prices; for instance it is shown by records of Woodburn Farm, Kentucky, that it reared and sold in the thirty years between 1866 and 1896, 750 animals which brought an average of \$1,000 each.

Stony Ford made, once or twice, sales to a single purchaser amounting to \$40,000. Robert Bonner in the course of his long career spent \$600,000 for the "extra-selects" he assembled in his stables. He paid \$35,000 for Dexter, \$40,000 for Maud S. and \$41,000 for Sunol. In 1891 J. Malcolm Forbes, a Massachusetts breeder, paid Leland Stanford \$125,000 for Arion, a grandson of Hambletonian who had made a record of 2:10 $\frac{1}{4}$  as a two-year-old. In 1889 \$105,000, had been paid for Axtell who made a three-year-old record of 2:12, a syndicate buying him from C. W. Williams, who bred him.

Hambletonian's fame as the greatest progenitor of trotting horses was spread around the world, and through him the descendants of Silver-tail became as the stars in heaven or the sands of the sea-shore for number.

Toward the end of this period, however, clouds appeared on the horizon, indicating coming changes. Inventors of farm machinery, introduced gang-plows, heavier reapers, etc., and larger loads for the roads developed a need for heavier horses than the light-weight roadsters had been, while the cities demanded draft horses for trucks. This made many farms change to the rearing of the heavy horse. But the all-important reason for the decline in the rearing of the road horse was the invention of the automobile. That, however, is another story.

A young man, once upon a time, was wont to stand at the curb on New York's streets on the afternoons when her road princes were likely to drive by, watching if perchance he could see a Vanderbilt or a Bonner. He knew the famous horses in their stables by name; he knew the record which went with each one.

Occasionally his watching would be rewarded by a good view of these fast steppers and equally well-known drivers; sometimes a famous general or ex-president would share the seat with the driver. He was standing "with reluctant feet, where the brook and river meet" at the critical point of his career, undecided as to whether he should strive to become a great horseman like Budd Doble "with the catarrhal name" or stick to his books.

Eventually the books won, the turf lost, and he became a professor of mediaeval history, but his early association and knowledge of the best in horse flesh certainly had something to do with James Westfall Thompson's long time membership in the Chicago Literary Club.

The most conspicuous breeder of road horses in Chicago in the Golden Age was Arthur J. Caton. The head of his stud was a grandson of Hambletonian, known as Don Cossack. An Eastern rival so profoundly disapproved of this horse that he sent a telegram of congratulation to his owner when he heard of the Don's death! Subsequent to Mr. Caton's own death, his widow became Mrs. Marshall Field, wife of Chicago's great merchant.

In the '50's and '60's, Chicago owners of fast horses were accustomed to race each other in the winter on the ice of the Chicago river. The stream at that season was never used for boats and afforded, from Rush Street bridge to the branching forks, a good half mile of smooth roadway. One of the boys who watched these races with sparkling eyes, who knew the owners and the horses, and was sometimes permitted to try out his father's Morgan mare, longed for the day when he, owning the fastest team in town, could clean up the bunch. This horse admiration eventually resulted in making Mr. Clarence Burley one of the most loyal members the Chicago Literary Club has ever had.

#### Chapter IV

##### THE DECLINE

The automobile has profoundly changed the road horse situation, but it must not for a moment be supposed that the rearing of fast trotting horses has been abandoned. As a popular business it no longer exists, but specialists still continue to rear and race the fastest horses ever known. The reigning stallion of our day, Peter the Great, a great grand-son of Hambletonian, and the eighth generation from Silver-tail, sired over 150 sons and daughters with official records of 2:10 or better. But it seems to me that rearing of trotters has almost reached the stage which the training and racing of the running horse long ago



reached—a form of amusement rather than a phase of the practical needs of the ordinary citizen.

We started with Orange County, and to revert again to that delightful region is necessary, in this fourth chapter, to round out this appreciation thereof. At Goshen, four miles from Chester, is maintained the only half-mile track that has been continuously kept in use for upwards of a hundred years. This, the so-called "Historic" track, is but one block distant from the main street of the village. The velvet lawn of the \$200,000 Goshen Inn stretches down to the track itself just above the judges' stand. The Inn faces the public square whose center is occupied by the \$100,000 Presbyterian Church.

Not far distant is the Noah Webster public school—a reminder that Noah Webster was once upon a time a teacher in the Goshen Academy and here formulated America's first "best-seller," the Webster Spelling Book; and here he planned, also, the immortal Webster's Unabridged Dictionary.

Around this track have been driven the finest driving horses of each horse generation for five or six generations of men.

It is the fastest half-mile track in the world. I know of no other race course in so small a community—the village has only about 3,000 people—which has for so long a period been maintained with honor. The whole village and country 'round about go as regularly to the races held there as city people go to the movies or to baseball games. Betting is not allowed; the inhabitants are not that kind of folks. The Presbyterian Church looks after that. In August the big annual meet occurs, and so large are the purses offered, so strong a hold has this "Historic" track upon the affections of all driving horse men everywhere that the whole country's fastest and best are there; not merely on the track, but in the grandstand. To call the roll-call of the crowd in attendance is like reading the society column of the trans-Alleghany Metropolitan papers.

One of the chief sustainers has been in recent years the E. H. Harriman family, whose \$5,000,000 estate, Arden, is not far distant. But the millionaires of near-by Tuxedo all have a hand in making Goshen and Orange County still a great center of interest in the trotting horse world.

Orange County, so far as I know, has within her borders the three most notable monuments to horses that have ever been erected in America.

The first one is at Middletown and is in honor of Sayre's Harry Clay 2:29, a horse whose chief distinction was the phenomenal speed transmission qualities of some of his daughters, the chief of which was Green Mountain Maid. She was born and raised in Orange County: never driven—but for twenty years a brood mare whose sixteen foals as a group exceed in merit those of any other matron of her time.

Mr. Chas. Backman at his own expense erected to this mare, at Stony Ford, a monument more dignified than most mortal men achieve.

The inscription reads:

In Remembrance  
of

GREEN MOUNTAIN MAID

The Great Mother of Trotters and Producers of  
Trotters

Born 1862—Died 1888

at

Stony Ford

The Birth Place of all her children

dam of

Electioneer 1867

(Names of Fourteen Children)

This stone was erected A. D. 1889 by  
Charles Backman on the spot dedicated to  
her worth and honored by her dust.

While Hambletonian died in 1876, it was not until fifteen years after his death that the National Association of Trotting Horse Breeders erected an impressive red granite shaft twenty-six feet high over his grave, in the village of Chester.

The inscription is:

Hambletonian—Born May 5th, 1848

Died March 25th, 1876

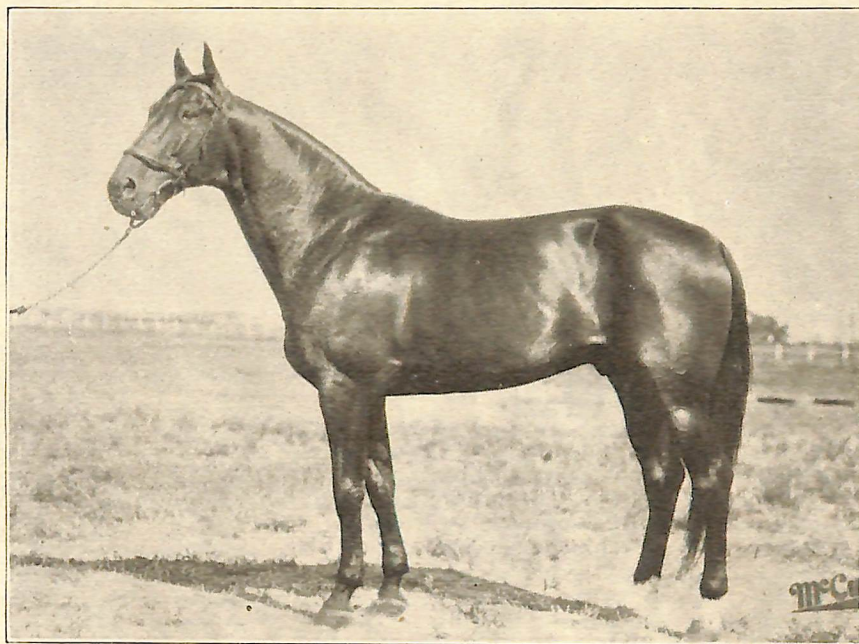
The great Progenitor of Trotters

It is the writer's belief that an irreparable loss has occurred in farm life by the disappearance of the road horse and its replacement by the automobile. The high-bred horse, in his finer variety, tracing back through centuries to the Arabian, is the crowning achievement of man's efforts to make the animal world serve him. Centuries of care

have resulted in producing an animal more valuable to the human race than any other. The result of intimate association between a fine horse and a fine man is to bring about an understanding akin to affection for one of his kind. Many a family had a favorite horse whose personality was almost as much a part of it as its human components. I have seen the women in such families going around for days with suspiciously red eyes when a loved horse had just died; the head of the house on such occasions seemed to find it necessary to hold the evening paper very close, so as to hide his face, and to blow his nose vigorously before replying to a single question. Many of these animals had a dignified bearing that commanded the respect and admiration of their owners; in their willingness to do all that was asked of them, even until they dropped in their tracks, they were a constant example of uncomplaining service with the best

that was in them. A farm boy whose companions will be restricted to the dull-brained clod of a truck horse, or automobile, will miss from his life the inspiration and happiness conferred by having as pet, companion, helper and confidant the road horse which his father once enjoyed.

We close this paper with the gentle urge that to those who do not know Orange County, her people, her horses, her beautiful scenery, that they forego trips to countries "Where Lions Are" to visit scenes no less fair, and more interesting. It is a great pleasure to spend a few days or weeks visiting Orange County's delightful villages attending the races there and exploring the large tracts of forest-covered mountains which are being incorporated into New York State's park system, which will give New York City the most beautiful outlying park area of any great metropolis in the world.



CHIEF ETAWAH 2:07¼, BY ETAWAH 2:03

## Chief Etawah 2:07¼

California is so remote that it is only occasionally nowadays that horses are brought East from there for campaigning, but it is the opinion of coast horsemen that had Mr. Homer W. Bunker, of San Mateo, cared to do so, his stallion Chief Etawah 2:07¼ would have been a notable success in the Grand Circuit stakes. However, that gentleman is so fond of his son of Etawah 2:03, and takes such pleasure in visiting the meetings where the stallion is engaged, also during the out-of-season period enjoys riding and driving the Chief so much that he has kept him at home.

The young stallion was bred by Mr. J. T. Williams, of Sterling, Ill., and was personally selected by Mr. Bunker, who, liking his individuality and breeding, secured him in the year of 1923, when he was a five-year-old, and turned him over to the noted California trainer, John P. Quinn, to be trained—up to that time the son of Etawah 2:03 had had little done with him. While California at this time does not offer a trainer the opportunities in the way of material to work on that it did when breeding was so active there, Quinn annually is out with good campaigners, which fact attests his ability. He also had out, in 1927, that crack two-year-old trotting filly by The Senator 2:03½, Betty Senkay 2:12¼, with which he broke the state record for trotters of her age in competition.

Quinn developed his pupil till he was satisfied that he was ready to take to the races, the first start of the Chief being in 1925. He raced well for a green horse, and at Ventura, Cal., in a winning race, earned a record of 2:12¼, over the half-mile track.

It was in 1926 that Chief Etawah caused those who had the pleasure of witnessing his races to temporarily cease expressing themselves upon the glories of their delightful climate and turn to him as the object of their verbal enthusiasm. Starting first in a \$2,000 2:12 stake at Sacramento he won off the reel, stepping heats in 2:07¼, 2:08¼, 2:07¼, the ease with which he won, and the fine appearance of the stallion winning friends for him even among the uninitiated members of the audience. He followed this up by taking the 2:12 trot at Stockton with the same facility, and in straight heats, the time of which were 2:10, 2:08½, 2:09¼. These were mile tracks, and Mr. Bunker's stallion had yet to show that he was equally invincible on half-mile tracks. His season's debut at that form

of racing came at Pomona in a 2:12 stake, and here he won the essential two heats in 2:13¼, 2:12¼, but in the third heat had the misfortune to cast a shoe, thus losing the only heat of the campaign.

He marched at the head of the 2:12 division at Riverside like a drum-major, putting in heats in 2:13, 2:12½, 2:14. Ventura was the next port of call, and here Chief Etawah did not have to exert himself to win in 2:13, 2:12½, 2:14. By this time so prominent had the Chief become that Mr. Bunker began to hear from the Grand Circuit buyers who had learned of his stallion's capability and desired to secure him for racing on the Big Ring. However, as stated, the owner was thoroughly enjoying himself and, like the fabled Arabian, declined to part with the steed he is so fond of. An examination of the summaries reveals the fact that throughout the campaign Chief Etawah was winning in approximately as fast time as were the free-for-all pacers and the same classification of trotters. The tracks are not quite so good out there as in the East, and this fact tended to make his performances all the more meritorious.

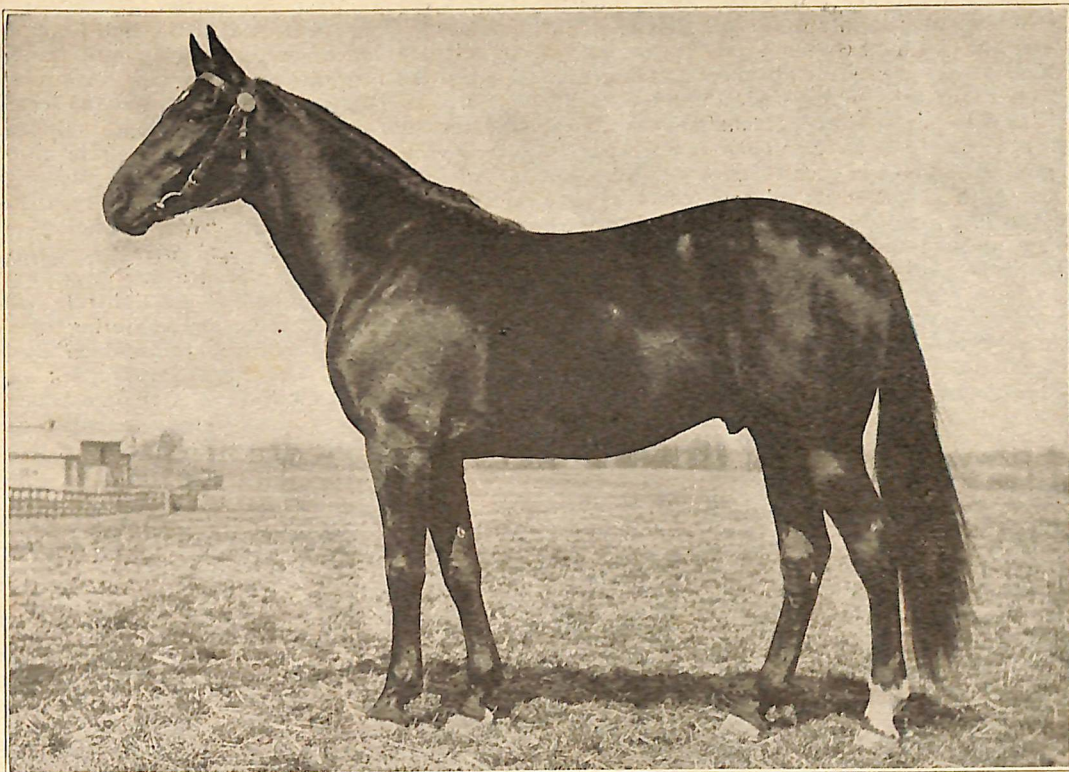
A campaign over the same terrain was planned for him the past season, but, unfortunately, it was brought to a close through sickness, after he had won the free trots at Stockton and Sacramento.

Among those defeated at Stockton was that tough old gelding, Dr. Nick 2:04¼, the first and second heats being under 2:10. It was the Doctor that came second to him when he won, reducing his record to 2:07¼ at Sacramento in two of the rounds.

Chief Etawah is a horse of fine appearance and of perfect temperament; also, he is highly bred, his dam being by Legateer 2:13¾, a son of Heirat-Law 2:05¾; his second dam a daughter of Gothad and sister of the noted gelding Lavette 2:12¼. It is Mr. Bunker's ambition to see Chief Etawah a member of his sire's 2:05 list, which could readily have been realized this season but for the fact that upon reaching Ventura, like a number of other horses on the circuit, he contracted a severe cold. But there are other seasons coming.

While not making any pretensions as a breeder, Mr. Bunker has mated several mares with Chief Etawah, and now has a little bunch of foals by him that are much admired by the horsemen who have seen them. Two yearlings especially have shown, with little work, that they will be heard from next season in the two-year-old events of the coast.





LEE TIDE, 4, 2:05, SIRE OF SPENCER, 2, 2:05½

## CASTLETON

A number of gratifying incidents and circumstances are to be recorded in connection with the campaign of 1927, many of them of a nature calculated to stimulate and encourage owners, but it may be said that in a general way nothing transpired quite so important as the advent of the two-year-old trotter Spencer 2:05½. In this sport of ours the ownership of a horse that wins admiration is vested in one man, but unlike any other character of property, every horseman shares with that fortunate man a degree of interest in the animal. This is particularly to be observed should the horse be an entire male, for that means that his services will be later obtainable by the public for use to improve future generations of the breed.

Several features go to make the appearance of Spencer more welcome than that of any other young horse that has appeared in recent years, the most important of which is that he represents our champion trotting stallion, Lee Axworthy 1:58½, in the direct male line. A strange fatality appeared to follow that wonderful horse, for he died at the age of seven years after leaving only two crops of foals, each limited in number. Following upon this catastrophe came the death, at the age of five years, of his foremost son, Lee Worthy 2:02½, after one limited season in the stud, only fifteen foals being left to represent him.

When Lee Axworthy was retired to the stud, he was secured by Mr. David M. Look, master of Castleton, that famous and beautiful breeding establishment at Lexington, Ky., for service there. And Mr. Look was fortunate enough to breed to him, both seasons that he made there, ere his untimely taking off, his renowned brood mare Emily Ellen, 3, 2:09¾, by Todd 2:14¾, son of Bingen 2:06¾. More than that, she produced to both matings and the first of these foals was Lee Tide, 4, 2:05, the sire of Spencer.

Spencer, therefore, truly represents his birthplace, also the efforts of his breeder, Mr. Look, who bred both his sire and his dam before him. The name and fame of Emily Ellen are so well known that we need merely say that from her also he has secured Daystar, 3, 2:05, now Lee Tide's companion in the stud; Brusiloff, 3, 2:04¼, Harvest Tide 2:06¼, Elilee, 2, 2:10 and Velocity, 3, 2:07¾, making six 2:10 trotters and placing her on a par with Nervolo Belle, Honeymoon H. 2:09¾, dam of seven, alone surpassing the pair. A game and high class race horse before being placed in the stud, when stinted to Petrex, 3, 2:05¾, a noted futurity trotter, by Peter the Great, Lee Tide got Spencer and so the male line of the dead champion is destined being carried on in a splendid way by his son and grandson, bred at Castleton.

Even in these days when we look for so much from our juvenile trotters, and when they are showing such extreme capability, Spencer may truly be said to be outstanding in several respects. First of all, he is one of the most attractive and desirable individuals of his age that the breed has ever provided, and maturity will further emphasize

this feature of merit. Next, he has stood the severest test possible to ask of speed and gameness. Throughout the season he fought against the greatest fields of two-year-old trotters that were ever raced together and when the results were summed up it was Spencer who landed at the top of the money winners of his age, having earned the splendid sum of \$26,213.75, which gives him the season's precedence. Then, too, his gait is such that every student of that important feature pronounces him as being superbly equipped to sire naturally-gaited trotters. As a yearling he was broken and handled by James Snell at Lexington, brought to a quarter in :34½ and then let up on. Snell also wintered him and last spring turned him over to Lon McDonald when that trainer came north from Memphis, where he had wintered.

Spencer made his turf debut at Toledo, O., making in the race the only break charged to him during the season, but he finished second to Nellie Signal in the second heat, the time of which was 2:07¼—ultra-sensational for a Grand Circuit inaugural. At Detroit, in a field of ten, he defeated the filly and the balance, following this up with a victory over the same character of opponents in a \$2,000 event at Kalamazoo, where he scored heats in 2:07¼, 2:07½, never extended. The Rainy Day Sweepstakes worth \$16,400 at North Randall, which followed, was accounted the greatest race that two-year-olds had ever engaged in, and indeed it deserved this distinction, for it was filled with every element calculated to thrill; a first half in 1:01 in the second heat, finishes of a sparkling

character, etc., etc., Taking the first heat in 2:05½, Spencer gave way to Scotland and The Virginia Senator in the second in 2:05¾, but, lion-hearted colt that he is, he came back to take the third heat and the race in 2:10¾.

In order to fully appreciate the greatness of Spencer, one must learn that the day after this race he in some manner strained himself, resulting in hernia, which, however, was discovered and treated in time to relieve serious consequences. Although his work was retarded he came back two weeks later to win the \$14,700 Good Time Stake at Goshen, defeating Scotland, Red Aubrey and Otzinachson in 2:07¾, 2:11¾. In the rich Wet Weather Stake, at Syracuse, Scotland was the victor, The Virginia Senator also defeating Spencer, but he came right back and the next week over a very heavy track at Indianapolis won easily from these same colts and others, trotting his second heat in 2:07.

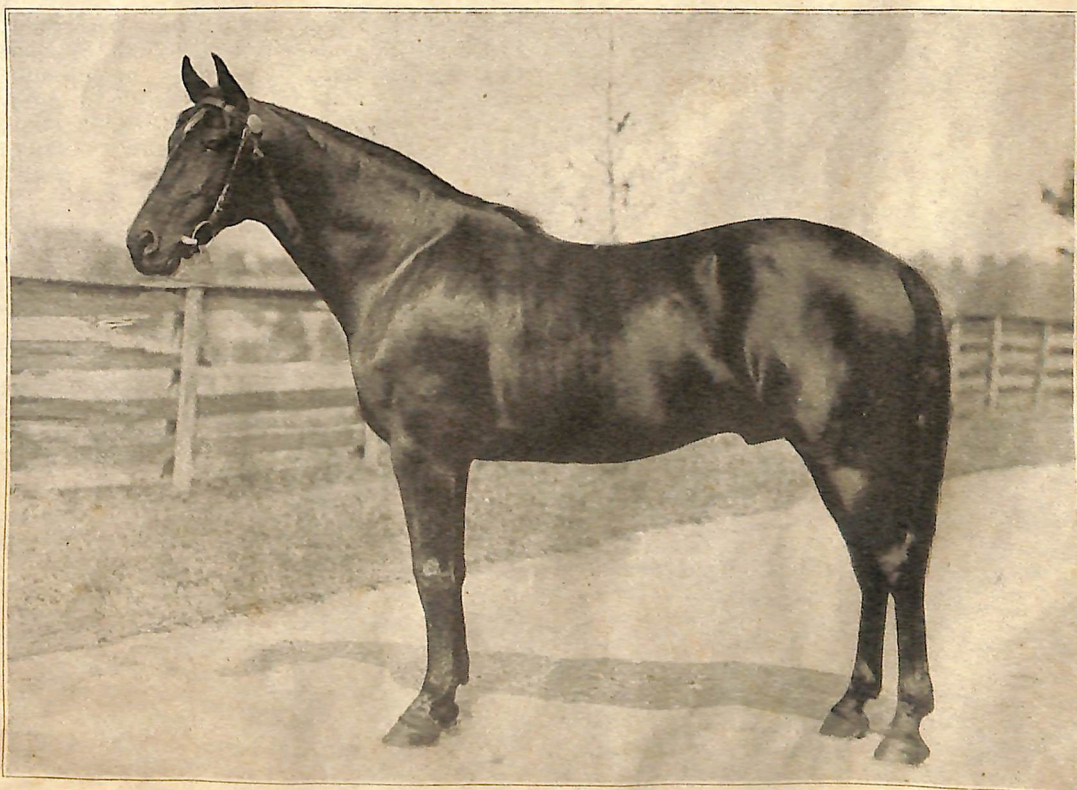
Even a harder fought race than the Rainy Day was witnessed in the Kentucky Futurity, Scotland trotting in 2:05 in the first heat while Fireglow set a new world's race record of 2:04 for the age in the second, and took the third in 2:07. Spencer carried Scotland to the quarter in :29½ and half in 1:01¼ in the second heat, and then came second in the final. While defeated, Mr. Look's colt covered himself with glory, for he was always there, fighting in a manner that called for the praise of both critical horsemen and the public. The new champion also won the \$10,000 May Day Stake the next week at Lexington, but Spencer acquired second money, this race closing his campaign. The heats were trotted in 2:06 and 2:07 and Spencer forced Fireglow to trot the last quarter of the second heat in 29 seconds—a rate of speed hitherto unheard of for two-year-olds.

From a very limited number of foals Lee Tide, from his first crop, had seven two-year-olds join the Standard list in 1926; this number having been added to the past season by nine new performers, including seven new two-year-olds, of which Spencer 2:05½ and Tidy Grace 2:09½ were the fastest, May Tide 2:09¾ being a three-year-old. Tidy Grace accounted for the special Michigan two-year-old trot given at the State Fair, also taking second money in the Rainy Day consolation. The best three-year-old trotter that raced at the New York fair meetings was Adjuster 2:12, while others gave evidence that Lee Tide needs only farther opportunity to assure a long speed list.

It is not strange that already numerous bookings have been made to Lee Tide for 1928 and that he will enjoy a large patronage in 1928 is a foregone conclusion.

His companion in the stud, Daystar, 3, 2:05, also acquitted himself with great credit in 1927, having thirteen new performers, including Starbertha, 2, 2:09¼, as well as Dawn o' Day, p, 2:08½, winner of 10 races.

Mr. Look has built substantially, and has reached a stage in his breeding operations when he has two of the most popular young sires of the day, which is pleasing indeed, for it is to such breeders that we must look to furnish us with the fruits of their experiments if progress is to



DAYSTAR, 3, 2:05, SIRE OF 13 NEW PERFORMERS FOR 1927



# SILVERTAIL

## And the Golden Age of the American Road Horse

By THEODORE JESSUP

### INTRODUCTION

This story is really a collection of more or less disconnected memoranda relating to a region inhabited by high-class people who have for over one hundred years been rearing, training and racing the best driving horses in the world.

Orange County, New York, is one of the most beautiful regions of a state rich in beauty. Like a great park its tree-clad hills and mountains enclose broad, level valleys so agriculturally rich as to have made it famous for two centuries. Inhabited for the most part by people of as English descent as Virginia's, her nomenclature abounds with English names. You have Chester, and Warwick, Oxford and Salisbury, Little Britain and New Windsor, Newburg and Cornwall and so on even to a Greenwood and Greenwood Lake, suggesting Robin Hood and his Merry Men.

The story is divided into four chapters and each chapter includes notes which will endeavor to show how Orange County Horses were a stimulus to literature and an inciting cause to membership in the Chicago Literary Club, before which it first was read.

### Chapter I

#### THE RIDE OF JONAS SEELEY

It was nine o'clock on a September morning in the year 1807 that a man stepped up to the bar of an inn near the New York cattle-market, much frequented by farmers and drovers. He paid his bill for lodging of himself and ten-year-old son and asked that his horse be brought out from the stable.

"How far is it to your home, Mr. Seeley?" asked the proprietor. He had known his patron for a number of years as a prosperous farmer and drover from Orange County, who made one or two trips to the New York market yearly.

"By the way we have to go, it is about seventy-five miles," was the reply.

"Do you mean to say you expect to ride that distance in a day?"

"Why, of course I do! We have good horses in our county—no better anywhere. The mare I am riding is second to none. I have ridden her in a day from my farm to Albany, a hundred miles—more than once.

"And the boy? Does he stay with friends here?"

"Not a bit of it; he is going to ride behind with me."

"Well, the horse that can carry two of you must be a stayer!"

Just then a stable boy brought the mare to the door. The inn-keeper came out and looked her over with admiring glances. Large and strong, well groomed, lithe and supple, she, stood before them a splendid specimen of an American edition of an English race-horse.

"What is her name, Mr. Seeley? Stars and garters! I think she may do what you say."

"We call her Silvertail because of that tuft of white hair in her tail. She is just eight years old. Her dam was the strongest and most spirited mare I ever owned, and her sire was Messenger, still living somewhere on Long Island. He's a thoroughbred, you know, imported from England about fifteen years ago."

The owner stepped to the horse, giving her an affectionate pat before he swung himself into the saddle and helped his son, Jonas, Jr., on behind. The rider carried no whip, no spurs jingled at his heels, a plain one-bar bit was all the mechanism applied to her mouth. With an impatient jump the mare started off on her long journey. But she was quickly controlled by the rider with a gentle yet firm pressure on the bit until she settled down into a long, easy gallop. Mile after mile flew by under her ringing hoofs. Occasionally they would come to a sharp ascent in the road, when the two riders, senior and junior, would dismount and walk slowly to the top, giving themselves and the horse a rest. When the summit was reached, man and boy remounted and fairly flew down the gentle descents and long stretches of level valley roads. Frequently they slowed down to a trot or a walk as they met farmers with herds of cattle or droves of sheep and other live-stock bound for the market they had just left. Once they met the tri-weekly stage, which required one and one-half days, with relays of fresh horses every ten miles, to traverse the same distance the riders were doing in half the time.

By twelve o'clock, twenty-five miles of their journey had been completed.

A convenient cross-roads inn provided a place to rest and eat. The elder rider himself went to the stable to see that not too much feed or water was given to his mount. He, too, himself removed the saddle, rubbed off the lather where the leather had chafed and carefully attended to every detail of the mare's comfort, before attending to his own and his son's needs.

After an hour's stop they were off again. The refreshment put them all in fine condition and as they neared home and one familiar scene after another came into view, both horse and riders seemed not to feel the fatigue of their arduous journey.

Galloping was easy for Silvertail and the last fifty miles were reeled off in six hours, so that when they reached Sugarloaf Farm it was only seven o'clock—in time for a belated supper.

But again the master did not seek his own comfort until, with the aid of his slave boy, he had seen everything possible done for the mare. And again, before retiring for the night, he made



JONAS SEELEY

The Breeder of Hambletonian 10

a trip to the stable to see that nothing had been omitted to assure Silvertail's comfort.

Jonas Seeley was known as a good horseman, and being that meant to him constant and unremitting care. Doubly careful was he when a severe strain had tried the mettle of his mount, as on this occasion. The next morning he gave Silvertail a careful going over and found no evil effects of the hard ride of the day before.

A day or two later the father sent the son on an errand with Silvertail over to Chester, to call on his wife's uncle, Mr. Peter Townsend, proprietor of the Sterling iron mines—one of the oldest and largest of its kind in the country.

Uncle Peter made fun of the boy, admired his mare and offered to buy her. He found that Jonas, Jr., could meet him on his own ground with apt replies, and assured him the mare was not for sale as she was soon to be bred to a stallion and raise a colt the next year.

The conversation shifted to Uncle Peter's past and the boy found his uncle was a mine of information about Revolutionary times. He took the boy into the front room and had him sit on the carved mahogany chairs, assuring him that George Washington, LaFayette and other Revolutionary heroes, who had occasionally been his guests when passing through Chester from New Jersey to Newburgh-on-the-Hudson, had used these same pieces of furniture.

Uncle Peter had been thrown into intimate relations with the nation's leaders because it was his iron-works—working day and night without

ceasing for six weeks—that made the iron chain which was stretched across the Hudson River just above West Point, to prevent English vessels from passing up stream.

We may add that in the course of time one of Peter Townsend's sons, Isaac, settled in northern Illinois, at Aux Sable Grove, in Kendall County, where his initial purchase was the Waish-Ke-Shaw Indian Reservation. The son brought with him some of his father's furniture. A great-grandson of Isaac's inherited one of the George Washington chairs, who cherishes it as one of his most precious family heirlooms. And this son, Mr. Louis Martin Sears, is now a member of the Chicago Literary Club.

Isaac Townsend, with his sons, established in the '40's, at Aux Sable Grove, the best equipped wood and metal working shops in that region. Owning thousands of acres of magnificent virgin forest and prairie lands, they developed an establishment representing the investment of many thousands of dollars. They brought along fine specimens of Orange County road horses and laid out driving tracks at their homes. When young Cyrus McCormick of Virginia came to Chicago and looked about for a shop which could make models of his mowers and reapers, he found what he wanted at the Townsend shops—forty-five miles from the city.

Thus began the great International Harvester Co.

### Chapter II

#### ORANGE COUNTY'S FAMOUS HORSE

Jonas Seeley, the owner of Silvertail, was the father of a number of vigorous sons, several of whom achieved celebrity in connection with horses and cattle.

One, Jonas, Jr., was the breeder of the greatest sire of harness horses which ever lived.

Another, Edmund, was the owner for many years of another famous Orange County sire, Seeley's American Star, 14, a horse which once left his New York home and made a pilgrimage for a year to the Townsend settlement at Aux-Sable Grove.

A third son, Peter Townsend Seeley, was a pioneer live stock commission man of Chicago, being the first to sell a car-load of live stock at the then new Chicago Stock Yards. The race for generations were typical English country people. From generation to generation they were neither rich nor poor. The husband dressed like a gentleman on occasions and toiled like a laborer often. He wore broadcloth, had his own and his wife's pictures painted in miniature, ate with solid silver ware on imported china, in a house furnished with mahogany. He often milked his own cows, cleaned his own horse stables, planted his own fields, and led the way for the hired men and perhaps slaves in the harvest field. He liked a horse race, kept and used a dozen kind of liquors in his sideboard, attended Church regularly on Sunday, often was eloquent in prayer at Wednesday night prayer meetings.

Jonas, Sr., was a leader in his county, winning prizes at the agricultural shows for his live-stock and once received the one given for the best kept farm in Orange County. He bred Silvertail to Bishop's Hambletonian—a son of imported Messenger—and the resultant foal, a mare known as One Eye, was in her turn bred to another imported horse, the trotter Bellfounder.

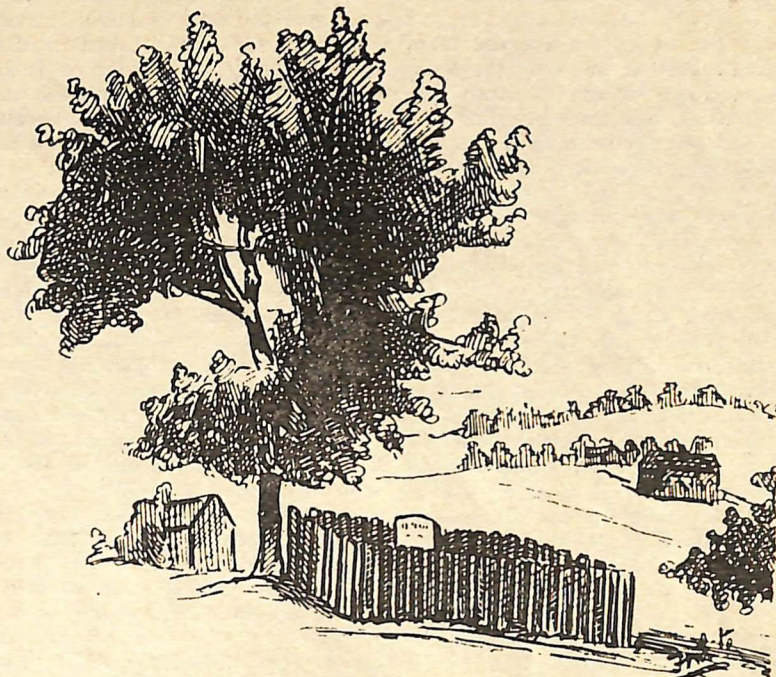
The foal from this mating, having passed out of the Seeley family became known as the Charles Kent mare.

Jonas Seeley, the younger, the boy of the 1807 ride, repurchased her, bred her to Treadwell's Abdallah, a grandson of imported Messenger and she became the mother of Rysdyk's Hambletonian, or Hambletonian 10.

There have been many famous horses in America, but among them all, one stands out pre-eminent in the number of his famous descendants and in the influence of his blood and that horse was Rysdyk's Hambletonian, the great-grandson of Silvertail.

Up to the beginning of the nineteenth century the horse of the road in America was a saddle horse. Driving for the most part was impossible; there were neither the roads nor the horses, neither the vehicles nor the appreciation of their need. The English thoroughbred was a wonderful animal, but due to his style of going, where saddles were not needed he had few practical uses. For centuries he has been maintained in England, and in this country, as a plaything. By contrast the light-harness horse is recognized the world over as one of the greatest triumphs of the industrial life of America. The change of gait began with the importation of Messenger, the English thoroughbred, in 1788. He lived to be





### Hambletonians Grave

THE GRAVE OF HAMBLETONIAN 10

As It Appeared a Few Years After His Death. From a Sketch by Frank Weitenkampf

twenty-eight years old and spent his life in New Jersey, on Long Island and in Orange County. The remarkable trait in his descendants was their ability to maintain the trot or running walk at high speed for long distances. As roads improved this gait became in demand and it was soon found to be a lucrative business to rear driving horses for the road.

Orange County breeders had descendants of Messenger in abundance, the king of them all being Rysdyk's Hambletonian. Tracing back through dam and sire, he had three near crosses to Messenger.

The latter was so appreciated in his day that on his death in 1808 he was buried with military honors, a volley of musketry being fired over his grave.

Hambletonian was foaled in 1849 and lived until 1876. His breeder, Jonas Seeley, Jr., sold him when a colt at his dam's side to his hired man, William M. Rysdyk, of Dutch blood. He spent his whole life in the village of Chester, not far from Goshen, Orange County's county seat. His owner died before his famous horse did, but left instructions to have him buried near the stable in which he spent his days. No Arab Sheik ever watched over and cared for a horse more carefully than did Rysdyk and Harmon Showers, his groom, part Indian, who had continuous care of him for twenty years. The horse proved a veritable gold mine for his owner. He sired in his life-time 1,333 foals for which the service fees received were \$185,715. And half a century ago that meant almost as much as half-a-million would today.

He was lifted into his first great fame by his son Dexter. This famous animal, foaled in 1858, became the most widely known horse in America. In 1845 Lady Suffolk had been the first to make a record at the trot better than 2:30; in 1856 Flora Temple reduced the mile time to 2:24½ and in 1859 lowered her own record to 2:19¼. For eight years this record was undisturbed and unchallenged until Dexter, driven by Budd Doble at Buffalo, N. Y., on Aug. 14, 1867, lowered the time to 2:17¼. This established a new world's record for a trotted mile. Immediately it was announced that Dexter had been bought by the Presbyterian deacon-publisher, Robert Bonner, of the "New York Ledger," for \$35,000. Up to this time this was the most extraordinary price ever paid for a gelding. At one bound Dexter's fame became national. A picture of the horse with a rider mounted on him, going at full speed, was scattered everywhere. Weather-vane reproductions of this picture are still to be seen on old stables all over America; country newspapers still use a small cut of it with the rider removed, to illustrate horse advertisements. "Dexter Parks" were common. "Dexter" was the name on the sled of the '60's and '70's the boy received at Christmas.

Chicago has entertained in her time many distinguished visitors. Some individual has appeared at a great convention and voiced an idea which has influenced a nation's actions; some celebrity has held us all with interested attention and what he said or did has profoundly affected the city, the West, the nation. Such an occasion was her first national convention, the River and Harbor Con-

vention of the '40's, reported by Horace Greeley; the Republican Convention of 1860, which nominated Abraham Lincoln, when a Pennsylvania Judge read the "platform," which by contrast with modern convention productions reads like a chapter from the Hebrew prophets; it was a dramatic moment in the Garfield Convention of 1880, when Roscoe Conkling, rising to nominate Grant for a third term, shook his splendid curl over his magnificent forehead as he started his speech with the rhyme:

"When asked what state he hails from,  
My sole reply shall be:  
He hails from Appomattox

And her famous apple-tree!"

Famous works of art have visited us, such as Millet's Angelus which taught the artists so to paint simple scenes as to convey an emotion to the onlooker.

Royalties have honored us, as did the stripling Prince of Wales, afterwards King Edward the Seventh, in 1860 and Prince Henry, the Kaiser's brother, in the '90's. But I doubt if in Chicago's eighty-one years of life there has been a welcome accorded to any visitor more universal in its appeal than the one given to the trotting horse Dexter, when he appeared there in September, 1867.

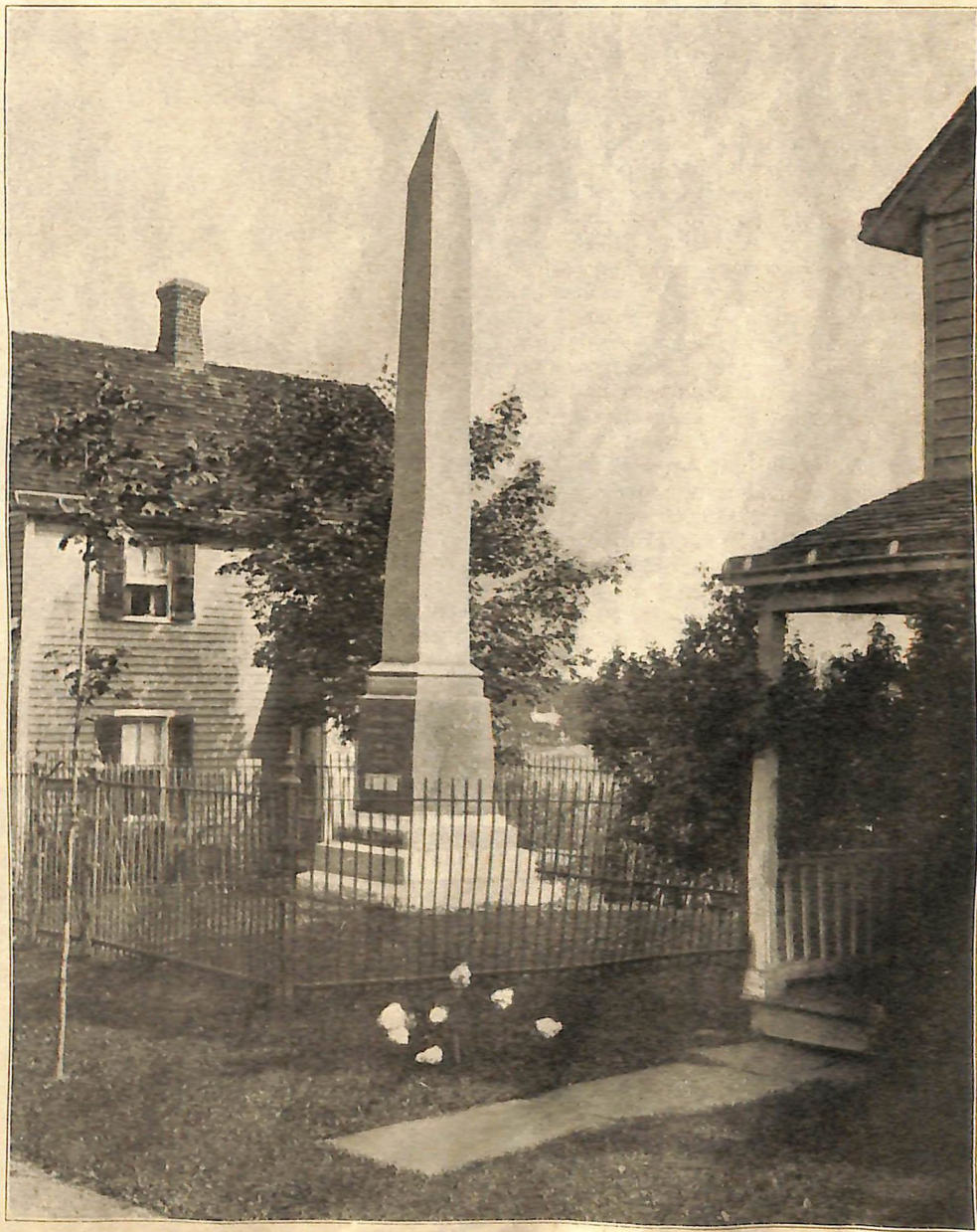
He, too, was a royalty, the king of the road-horse world.

The story is told that Deacon Bonner invited Henry Ward Beecher to ride with him through Central Park behind Dexter. When thoroughly warmed up the horse was for a few moments beyond the driver's control, but when Mr. Bonner managed to take him back a trifle he noted that his passenger was clinging to the seat with both hands while tears were coursing down his cheeks. When he asked him if he should stop the horse, Mr. Beecher replied: "Don't stop him, Mr. Bonner; Don't stop him sir! What you see are tears of joy over a ride behind such a magnificent horse!"

It was Dexter's popularity, his becoming a household word the nation over, that centered the nation's gaze upon Orange County, his sire, Rysdyk's Hambletonian and his dam's sire, Seeley's American Star. From that time forward flourished for forty years the golden age of the American Road Horse.

The village of Chester, where Hambletonian was born, lived, died and is buried, had an academy attended among others by the Seeley boys, which was presided over by William Bross, a college-bred school teacher, who had married a daughter of Dr. Jansen, of near-by Goshen. The death of a child in this family suddenly determined the teacher to give up his school and move to Chicago, which he did in 1848, seventy-nine years ago.

This man, with his brother-in-law, Mr. Jansen, and Mr. A. C. McClurg, started the great book store long known as Jansen, McClurg & Co., later A. C. McClurg & Co., of which the present Brentano store is the successor. Mr. Bross, often re-



THE GRAVE OF HAMBLETONIAN 10  
Showing the Monument as It Appears Today



ferred to as "Deacon" Bross, took up journalism and was part owner of one or two papers which were afterwards merged into the Chicago "Tribune," so that with Joseph Medill he was co-founder of our well known "W. G. N." Mr. Bross maintained his connection with the paper until his death and his financial interests therein are still held by his grand-children.

Now the relationship is very plain here between Orange County horses and their owners, both of whom Mr. Bross knew and admired, and the Chicago Literary Club, for was not his son-in-law, Mr. Henry Demarest Lloyd, a long time member of this club, as well as his nephew, Mr. Mason Bross?

The story of Rysdyk's Hambletonian and the American Road Horse in general has often been written, and, in particular, was set forth with eloquent amplitude and legal exactness in a book published by H. T. Helm, a Chicago lawyer, in 1878. This book was first tried out as a serial in the "National Live Stock Journal," of Chicago. That publication was the fore runner of the "Breeder's Gazette," one of whose editors, Mr. DeWitt Wing, is a member of the Chicago Literary Club. Mr. Wing affirms that he hasn't the slightest interest in driving horses and yet I trust I make it perfectly clear that his association with a paper whose ancestry did have great interest therein has reacted upon him and brought him into the fold.

Yet more remarkable is the fact that the late beloved president of our club, Mr. Wm. M. R. French, was a son-in-law of this horse-loving lawyer, Helm.

It does take a high-class people to associate with the high-class horse.

### Chapter III

#### THE GOLDEN AGE OF THE ROAD HORSE

The forty years from 1865 to 1905 I venture to call the Golden Age of the Road Horse.

In this time the fame of the great trotters, of which Dexter was the most widely known, reached the smallest villages; wherever newspapers penetrated, there the accounts of the trotting horse races were eagerly read and discussed. Drivers and trainers like Hiram Woodruff, Orrin Hickok, John Splan and Budd Doble became national celebrities. Breeders and breeding farms of national fame were developed in nearly every northern state.

Many of these were the amusements of rich men; some were developed by poor men and made them rich. Who has not heard of Alexander's Woodburn Farm, in Kentucky, of Leland Stanford's Palo Alto Farm, in California, of Marcus Daly's Bitter Root Farm, in Montana, of the Highland Farm, at Dubuque, Ia., and, among and most important of all, the Alden Goldsmith Farm and the Stony Ford Farm of Charles Backman, both in Orange County? From this last farm went forth sires and dams to all parts of this country and Europe. Mr. Backman's nerve as a breeder can be illustrated by a single incident. Dexter was out of a daughter of Seeley's American Star and sired by Rysdyk's Hambletonian. Therefore he assembled as many mares as he could, twenty-six altogether, all Star's daughters, and bred all of them in a single season of Hambletonian, paying total service fees to the amount of \$13,000!

In the smoking room at Stony Ford gathered many well known men, whose interest in the road horse was the one thing they had in common. Here came artists, literary men, editors, statesmen, generals, the great men of their time; among these were Leland Stanford, William C. Whitney, Benjamin F. Tracy, Oliver H. Payne, H. O. Havemeyer, C. J. Hamlin, Robert Bonner, L. L. Lorillard and General Dan Sickles. It was in this smoking room that General Grant, enfeebled by the disease soon to end his career, indulged himself in the last cigar he ever smoked.

"Hambletonians" were the favorites all over the country and Orange County was the fountain of supply. Hambletonian's sons and grandsons, distributed, were source of a mighty stream of track performers and good road horses. There was scarcely a county in the northern agricultural states where one could not find representatives of Orange County stock. Progressive farmers reared a few road horses each year. A market was always to be found for a speedy and handsome trotter at a nearby city. Distinguished and well known men in New York, like Cornelius Vanderbilt and his son, William H.; John D. Rockefeller, his brother, William; Robert Bonner and others of the like, skimmed the cream for their private stables. They not only aimed to own the best, but drove their own horses for relaxation and amusement. Their example was followed far and wide. To own the fastest horse or team in his town or

city was a distinction for which many noted men strove.

Not every horse reared on the average farm was a speedy trotter; indeed it was only the occasional few who were good enough to attain the standards set in the cities, but their breeding put life, fire, and go, and vim, bottom and staying qualities in the light-weight work horses of the farm.

Incalculable benefit was brought about by speeding up the pace in the fields; on the road a good driving team became a necessary part of every successful farmer's equipment.

Interest in the best local horses was kept alive and stimulated through all these years by the county and state fairs held annually from Maine to California. The big crowds came on the days of the big trotting races.

Just as every farmer's daughter expected to have a gold watch on her eighteenth birthday, so every farmer's son supremely desired a driving horse, or better yet a team, and a new single-seat top-buggy for his twenty-first birthday. On the race days of the fair there gathered from miles around scores and hundreds of these single top buggies containing twenty-one-year-old sons and eighteen-year-old daughters, behind handsome horses. These rigs usually foregathered inside the race-track rail and faced the grandstand, thus allowing their occupants to be seen by the largest



THE GREEN MOUNTAIN MAID MONUMENT  
Erected by Charles Backman at Stony Ford

possible number of their friends and to permit them the same sort of private publicity afforded the box-holders at the opera.

Any one of these youths would doubtless have found it difficult to have told you the names of the presidents of his country in order; but you could count on his knowing what horses had held the best trotting records, from Dexter down to date.

Poorly informed, indeed, is the man and dull has been his career if he cannot yet recall with enthusiasm the name of such horses as Goldsmith Maid, sired by a brother of Dexter's, who took his crown from him in 1871 and held it for eight years, reducing the time to 2:14. Rarus, an outsider, and St. Julien, by Volunteer, son of Hambletonian, followed, then another granddaughter of Hambletonian, Maud S., took first rank and held it against all comers for eleven years, except a brief period for one season when Jay-Eye-See, a grandson, temporarily surpassed her. In 1885 she reduced the record to 2:08 $\frac{1}{4}$ . Other speedier ones arose lowering the time record year by year. You all know their names, as Sunol, Nancy Hanks, Alix, The Abbot, and Cresceus. Finally in 1903, the two-minute record for a trotted mile was passed by Lou Dillon, who made it in 1:58 $\frac{1}{2}$ . That record was lowered in 1912 by Uhlan to 1:58. Today the champion is Peter Manning 1:56 $\frac{1}{4}$ .

The breeding of road horses having become a national industry, an American Trotting Register was established to record pedigrees correctly. The first volume of this was published in 1871. A National Trotting Association was established soon after.

With rich men rivaling each other to own or breed the best, fabulous prices were paid for choice animals. The breeders often received these large prices; for instance it is shown by records of Woodburn Farm, Kentucky, that it reared and sold in the thirty years between 1866 and 1896, 750 animals which brought an average of \$1,000 each.

Stony Ford made, once or twice, sales to a single purchaser amounting to \$40,000. Robert Bonner in the course of his long career spent \$600,000 for the "extra-selects" he assembled in his stables. He paid \$35,000 for Dexter, \$40,000 for Maud S. and \$41,000 for Sunol. In 1891 J. Malcolm Forbes, a Massachusetts breeder, paid Leland Stanford \$125,000 for Arion, a grandson of Hambletonian who had made a record of 2:10 $\frac{1}{4}$  as a two-year-old. In 1889 \$105,000, had been paid for Axtell who made a three-year-old record of 2:12, a syndicate buying him from C. W. Williams, who bred him.

Hambletonian's fame as the greatest progenitor of trotting horses was spread around the world, and through him the descendants of Silver-tail became as the stars in heaven or the sands of the sea-shore for number.

Toward the end of this period, however, clouds appeared on the horizon, indicating coming changes. Inventors of farm machinery, introduced gang-plows, heavier reapers, etc., and larger loads for the roads developed a need for heavier horses than the light-weight roadsters had been, while the cities demanded draft horses for trucks. This made many farms change to the rearing of the heavy horse. But the all-important reason for the decline in the rearing of the road horse was the invention of the automobile. That, however, is another story.

A young man, once upon a time, was wont to stand at the curb on New York's streets on the afternoons when her road princes were likely to drive by, watching if perchance he could see a Vanderbilt or a Bonner. He knew the famous horses in their stables by name; he knew the record which went with each one.

Occasionally his watching would be rewarded by a good view of these fast steppers and equally well-known drivers; sometimes a famous general or ex-president would share the seat with the driver. He was standing "with reluctant feet, where the brook and river meet" at the critical point of his career, undecided as to whether he should strive to become a great horseman like Budd Doble "with the catarrhal name" or stick to his books.

Eventually the books won, the turf lost, and he became a professor of mediaeval history, but his early association and knowledge of the best in horse flesh certainly had something to do with James Westfall Thompson's long time membership in the Chicago Literary Club.

The most conspicuous breeder of road horses in Chicago in the Golden Age was Arthur J. Caton. The head of his stud was a grandson of Hambletonian, known as Don Cossack. An Eastern rival so profoundly disapproved of this horse that he sent a telegram of congratulation to his owner when he heard of the Don's death! Subsequent to Mr. Caton's own death, his widow became Mrs. Marshall Field, wife of Chicago's great merchant.

In the '50's and '60's, Chicago owners of fast horses were accustomed to race each other in the winter on the ice of the Chicago river. The stream at that season was never used for boats and afforded, from Rush Street bridge to the branching forks, a good half mile of smooth roadway. One of the boys who watched these races with sparkling eyes, who knew the owners and the horses, and was sometimes permitted to try out his father's Morgan mare, longed for the day when he, owning the fastest team in town, could clean up the bunch. This horse admiration eventually resulted in making Mr. Clarence Burley one of the most loyal members the Chicago Literary Club has ever had.

### Chapter IV

#### THE DECLINE

The automobile has profoundly changed the road horse situation, but it must not for a moment be supposed that the rearing of fast trotting horses has been abandoned. As a popular business it no longer exists, but specialists still continue to rear and race the fastest horses ever known. The reigning stallion of our day, Peter the Great, a great grand-son of Hambletonian, and the eighth generation from Silvertail, sired over 150 sons and daughters with official records of 2:10 or better. But it seems to me that rearing of trotters has almost reached the stage which the training and racing of the running horse long ago



reached—a form of amusement rather than a phase of the practical needs of the ordinary citizen.

We started with Orange County, and to revert again to that delightful region is necessary, in this fourth chapter, to round out this appreciation thereof. At Goshen, four miles from Chester, is maintained the only half-mile track that has been continuously kept in use for upwards of a hundred years. This, the so-called "Historic" track, is but one block distant from the main street of the village. The velvet lawn of the \$200,000 Goshen Inn stretches down to the track itself just above the judges' stand. The Inn faces the public square whose center is occupied by the \$100,000 Presbyterian Church.

Not far distant is the Noah Webster public school—a reminder that Noah Webster was once upon a time a teacher in the Goshen Academy and here formulated America's first "best-seller," the Webster Spelling Book; and here he planned, also, the immortal Webster's Unabridged Dictionary.

Around this track have been driven the finest driving horses of each horse generation for five or six generations of men.

It is the fastest half-mile track in the world. I know of no other race course in so small a community—the village has only about 3,000 people—which has for so long a period been maintained with honor. The whole village and country 'round about go as regularly to the races held there as city people go to the movies or to baseball games. Betting is not allowed; the inhabitants are not that kind of folks. The Presbyterian Church looks after that. In August the big annual meet occurs, and so large are the purses offered, so strong a hold has this "Historic" track upon the affections of all driving horse men everywhere that the whole country's fastest and best are there; not merely on the track, but in the grandstand. To call the roll-call of the crowd in attendance is like reading the society column of the trans-Alleghany Metropolitan papers.

One of the chief sustainers has been in recent years the E. H. Harriman family, whose \$5,000,000 estate, Arden, is not far distant. But the millionaires of near-by Tuxedo all have a hand in making Goshen and Orange County still a great center of interest in the trotting horse world.

Orange County, so far as I know, has within her borders the three most notable monuments to horses that have ever been erected in America.

The first one is at Middletown and is in honor of Sayre's Harry Clay 2:29, a horse whose chief distinction was the phenomenal speed transmission qualities of some of his daughters, the chief of which was Green Mountain Maid. She was born and raised in Orange County: never driven—but for twenty years a brood mare whose sixteen foals as a group exceed in merit those of any other matron of her time.

Mr. Chas. Backman at his own expense erected to this mare, at Stony Ford, a monument more dignified than most mortal men achieve.

The inscription reads:

In Remembrance  
of

GREEN MOUNTAIN MAID

The Great Mother of Trotters and Producers of  
Trotters

Born 1862—Died 1888

at

Stony Ford

The Birth Place of all her children

dam of

Electioneer 1867

(Names of Fourteen Children)

This stone was erected A. D. 1889 by  
Charles Backman on the spot dedicated to  
her worth and honored by her dust.

While Hambletonian died in 1876, it was not until fifteen years after his death that the National Association of Trotting Horse Breeders erected an impressive red granite shaft twenty-six feet high over his grave, in the village of Chester.

The inscription is:

Hambletonian—Born May 5th, 1848

Died March 25th, 1876

The great Progenitor of Trotters

It is the writer's belief that an irreparable loss has occurred in farm life by the disappearance of the road horse and its replacement by the automobile. The high-bred horse, in his finer variety, tracing back through centuries to the Arabian, is the crowning achievement of man's efforts to make the animal world serve him. Centuries of care

have resulted in producing an animal more valuable to the human race than any other. The result of intimate association between a fine horse and a fine man is to bring about an understanding akin to affection for one of his kind. Many a family had a favorite horse whose personality was almost as much a part of it as its human components. I have seen the women in such families going around for days with suspiciously red eyes when a loved horse had just died; the head of the house on such occasions seemed to find it necessary to hold the evening paper very close, so as to hide his face, and to blow his nose vigorously before replying to a single question. Many of these animals had a dignified bearing that commanded the respect and admiration of their owners; in their willingness to do all that was asked of them, even until they dropped in their tracks, they were a constant example of uncomplaining service with the best

that was in them. A farm boy whose companions will be restricted to the dull-brained clod of a truck horse, or automobile, will miss from his life the inspiration and happiness conferred by having as pet, companion, helper and confidant the road horse which his father once enjoyed.

We close this paper with the gentle urge that to those who do not know Orange County, her people, her horses, her beautiful scenery, that they forego trips to countries "Where Lions Are" to visit scenes no less fair, and more interesting. It is a great pleasure to spend a few days or weeks visiting Orange County's delightful villages attending the races there and exploring the large tracts of forest-covered mountains which are being incorporated into New York State's park system, which will give New York City the most beautiful outlying park area of any great metropolis in the world.



CHIEF ETAWAH 2:07¼, BY ETAWAH 2:03

## Chief Etawah 2:07¼

California is so remote that it is only occasionally nowadays that horses are brought East from there for campaigning, but it is the opinion of coast horsemen that had Mr. Homer W. Bunker, of San Mateo, cared to do so, his stallion Chief Etawah 2:07¼ would have been a notable success in the Grand Circuit stakes. However, that gentleman is so fond of his son of Etawah 2:03, and takes such pleasure in visiting the meetings where the stallion is engaged, also during the out-of-season period enjoys riding and driving the Chief so much that he has kept him at home.

The young stallion was bred by Mr. J. T. Williams, of Sterling, Ill., and was personally selected by Mr. Bunker, who, liking his individuality and breeding, secured him in the year of 1923, when he was a five-year-old, and turned him over to the noted California trainer, John P. Quinn, to be trained—up to that time the son of Etawah 2:03 had had little done with him. While California at this time does not offer a trainer the opportunities in the way of material to work on that it did when breeding was so active there, Quinn annually is out with good campaigners, which fact attests his ability. He also had out, in 1927, that crack two-year-old trotting filly by The Senator 2:03½, Betty Senkay 2:12¼, with which he broke the state record for trotters of her age in competition.

Quinn developed his pupil till he was satisfied that he was ready to take to the races, the first start of the Chief being in 1925. He raced well for a green horse, and at Ventura, Cal., in a winning race, earned a record of 2:12¼, over the half-mile track.

It was in 1926 that Chief Etawah caused those who had the pleasure of witnessing his races to temporarily cease expressing themselves upon the glories of their delightful climate and turn to him as the object of their verbal enthusiasm. Starting first in a \$2,000 2:12 stake at Sacramento he won off the reel, stepping heats in 2:07¼, 2:08¼, 2:07¼, the ease with which he won, and the fine appearance of the stallion winning friends for him even among the uninitiated members of the audience. He followed this up by taking the 2:12 trot at Stockton with the same facility, and in straight heats, the time of which were 2:10, 2:08½, 2:09¼. These were mile tracks, and Mr. Bunker's stallion had yet to show that he was equally invincible on half-mile tracks. His season's debut at that form

of racing came at Pomona in a 2:12 stake, and here he won the essential two heats in 2:13¼, 2:12¼, but in the third heat had the misfortune to cast a shoe, thus losing the only heat of the campaign.

He marched at the head of the 2:12 division at Riverside like a drum-major, putting in heats in 2:13, 2:12½, 2:14. Ventura was the next port of call, and here Chief Etawah did not have to exert himself to win in 2:13, 2:12½, 2:14. By this time so prominent had the Chief become that Mr. Bunker began to hear from the Grand Circuit buyers who had learned of his stallion's capability and desired to secure him for racing on the Big Ring. However, as stated, the owner was thoroughly enjoying himself and, like the fabled Arabian, declined to part with the steed he is so fond of. An examination of the summaries reveals the fact that throughout the campaign Chief Etawah was winning in approximately as fast time as were the free-for-all pacers and the same classification of trotters. The tracks are not quite so good out there as in the East, and this fact tended to make his performances all the more meritorious.

A campaign over the same terrain was planned for him the past season, but, unfortunately, it was brought to a close through sickness, after he had won the free trots at Stockton and Sacramento.

Among those defeated at Stockton was that tough old gelding, Dr. Nick 2:04¼, the first and second heats being under 2:10. It was the Doctor that came second to him when he won, reducing his record to 2:07¼ at Sacramento in two of the rounds.

Chief Etawah is a horse of fine appearance and of perfect temperament; also, he is highly bred, his dam being by Legateer 2:13¾, a son of Heirat-Law 2:05¾; his second dam a daughter of Gothad and sister of the noted gelding Lavette 2:12¼. It is Mr. Bunker's ambition to see Chief Etawah a member of his sire's 2:05 list, which could readily have been realized this season but for the fact that upon reaching Ventura, like a number of other horses on the circuit, he contracted a severe cold. But there are other seasons coming.

While not making any pretensions as a breeder, Mr. Bunker has mated several mares with Chief Etawah, and now has a little bunch of foals by him that are much admired by the horsemen who have seen them. Two yearlings especially have shown, with little work, that they will be heard from next season in the two-year-old events of the coast.