

**BRING THE HOSSES PAST THE START  
IN A STRAIGHT LINE, GENTLEMEN**  
A Century of Horse Racing at the Pike County (Ohio) Fair

**BLAINE BEEKMAN**

Dedicated To All Past, Present and Future Pike County Horsemen

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## INTRODUCTION

The harness races at the Pike County (Ohio) Fair are held on the last Friday and Saturday evenings in July before the rest of the fair opens. The fair board voted to separate the races after pari-mutual betting came to Piketon. The separation is evident. The average age of the grandstand crowd seems to increase each year. The backstretch horse barns are no longer filled with 4-H kids looking at the trotters and pacers. There are no more live race broadcasts on local radio and the results are not reported in the weekly paper.

The activity among trainers and owners at the Piketon fairgrounds is actually near an all-time high. Horsemen have been training year-round at Piketon since the first fair in 1907. During the 1954-57 period when a dispute between the county and the fairgrounds owner caused a cancellation of the fair, horsemen continued to train there. Bob Farrington trained his first horses at Piketon during that period. Today, a dozen trainers and owners keep at least 30 horses in the barns.

Harness racing at the fair is a partnership between the horsemen and the fair board, which manages the fairgrounds for the Pike County Commissioners. The horsemen pay stall rent, keep the track in shape and do general maintenance around the barns. The fair board is responsible for major repairs. The partnership is subject to periodic tensions.

Most of the owners at Piketon do not depend on racing for their livelihood. Seldom do the yearend books show a profit. Purses at Ohio Fairs are lower than in most neighboring states and the number of race days has declined. For most of the Piketon horsemen, their involvement with the Pike County Fair races goes back through their families. David Seif's racing roots go all the way back to the original 1907 fair.

On July 27, 2007 a crowd will gather to view the races. Some will hope to see the track's trotting record of 2:03.1 or the pacing record of 1:58.1 broken. Both Justin Hall, whose horse set the trot record in 2005, and Earl D. (Buck) Owings, who picked up the pacing mark in 2001, are from neighboring Ross County. Justin's grandfather, Harry Richardson, also held the held the Piketon track record for many years.

Many in the crowd will be rooting for the local horses, just as the fans did a century ago.

# CHAPTER ONE

## The First Fair

A crowd, estimated at 1,500, had gathered by mid-morning in Piketon on August 14, 1907. Horse drawn wagons and buggies brought families who lived close to town. Norfolk and Western Railroad dispatched Special Passenger Train Number 10 from Portsmouth to bring riders from Wakefield and Sargents south of Piketon, and passengers from Waverly and Omega to the north. The destination was the inaugural Pike County Fair being held on 30 acres overlooking the town of Piketon. Less than four months before, the site had been an empty pasture field.

The events that led to the formation of the Piketon Fair Association and the subsequent scheduling of the 1907 fair had come about in less than a calendar year. The Beaver Driving Society, which had been running town fairs in Beaver since the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, disbanded in 1906 and put its holdings up for sale. A group of businessmen and farmers from Piketon, believing that a county-wide agricultural fair was needed, purchased the Beaver holdings for \$600. Piketon was located in the center of the most fertile farmland in Pike County. The rich Scioto River bottomlands lay to the east of the river south of Piketon and switched to the west side of the river north of town. The river bottoms extended all the way to the northern county line above Omega.

A half century before, 89 farmers headed by former United States Congressman John I. Van Meter, had formed the Pike County Agricultural Society. The state legislature in 1846 had provided for each county in Ohio to establish its own board of agriculture to organize a county fair. Yearly gatherings were held in Piketon until the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861. These mini-fairs featured speakers on agricultural topics, amusements and displays of local produce and farm animals. After the Civil War, the Agricultural Society dissolved. The mini-fairs evolved into Farmers' Institutes in locations around the county. In any given year from the 1880's to the 1920's as many as a dozen different communities in Pike County held the Farmers' Institutes.

Most of the Beaver Driving Society's problems were financial issues. The Piketon group, intent on providing a stable economic base, set the initial capital stock issue at \$5000. On March 21, 1907 the Piketon Fair Association opened its books. Forty-three subscribers bought the initial stock. The purchasers represented a cross section of businessmen, farmers and professionals. A majority were farmers. J.M. Brown managed a 2000-acre bottomland farm for his father-in-law, John Van Meter. William H., Thomas N. and Charles K. Patterson operated the Patterson Milling Company in Piketon. William and Thomas had returned to Piketon after selling their silver interests in New Mexico. William had served as a senator in the New Mexico territorial legislature. He later served two terms as a State Senator in the Ohio Senate. The three men owned a thousand acres of bottomland across the river from Piketon. Thornton Rittenour, president of the Piketon bank, had similar holdings on the Piketon side of the river. Robert Welty and the Vulgamores had Scioto Valley acreage south of Piketon. James Corwine owned sizable bottomland property near Omega. A plateau east of Piketon contained several thousand acres of rolling farmland nearly as fertile as the Scioto River bottomland. Ira Hawk, Mike Rader and W.A Cissna represented that area as stockholders.

A second widely-shared goal of the Piketon Fair Association was to present the best possible quality of harness racing. The Beaver fair had offered horse racing, but it was mainly local horses. The bigger fairs vied for membership in one of the regional colt circuits in Ohio. At its March 25, 1907 organizational meeting, the Piketon Fair Association authorized its newly elected officers to take the necessary steps to seek admission to the Ohio Valley Racing Association, headquartered in Cincinnati. President William H. Patterson, treasurer Thornton Rittenour and secretary Sandy Bateman were on a tight timeframe. No fair could join the Ohio Valley Racing Association until it first became a member of the American Trotting Association. The ATA was a sanctioning group that required adherence to its operating rules. Once the Piketon group joined the American Trotting Association, it petitioned for Ohio Valley colt stake race dates. Piketon's request was granted. The dates of August 14-16, 1907 were available. Piketon had exactly four months to find a suitable spot and ready it for a fair.

William H. Patterson had a site in mind. Just across the railroad tracks from his grainmill was the Daily farm with a flat rise large enough for a half-mile racetrack, grandstand and the assorted sheds and stables necessary for a county fair. Since S.S. Daily was one of the original stockholders, working out a lease was not difficult.

The farm was the scene of frenzied activity in late spring and early summer. The race track had to be laid out and then cut and worked with horse-drawn pans and graders. Evan Harry, from neighboring Jackson County, who was one of the most respected harness racers in the area, was hired to layout the half-mile track. A three-foot-high picket fence was built around the outside perimeter and a lower hub rail fence on the inside. Two sets of shed row stalls for the race horses were built outside the backstretch fence.

The association had purchased the grandstand and art hall from the Beaver group, but the buildings were nine miles away. A crew of carpenters was dispatched to Beaver to disassemble the art hall and the grandstand. Teamsters then transported the lumber down Beaver Pike to the Piketon fairgrounds by horse and wagons. The grandstand and the art hall were reconstructed just in the time for all of the buildings and fences to be white-washed before the fair opened.

The first race at the 1907 Pike County Fair was scheduled to begin at one p.m. on August 14. The Waverly Cornet Band had just finished entertaining in the little pavilion at the front of the grandstand. The benches were filled in anticipation of the harness races. James Corwin had come down from Waverly to be the starter.

The first race was to be a trot for Pike County-owned horses. The horses were all making their first start. The purse was only \$50. The colt circuit races on Thursday and Friday would offer five and six times as much, but local bragging rights were on the line in the first race. The crowd and the starter were ready. A dispute in the judges' stand was holding up the race.

The judges' stand was located on the finish line just across the track from the grandstand, close enough for those on the lower benches in the grandstand to hear. The rules of the American Trotting Association stated that a driver must weigh at least 150 pounds. If he did not, the driver would be required to carry weights in his sulky to reach the 150 pound total. Evan Harry was five pounds too light. He argued that he was still racing the old fashioned high-wheeled sulky, which was exempt from the 150-pound rule. The three race judges- George Nutt of Beaver, Waverly attorney Forrest Daugherty and

Thomas N. Patterson- did not accept his theory. Harry was ordered to carry the additional five pounds in his sulky. When he refused, he was fined \$25 and the horse he was scheduled to drive was disqualified. Harry declined to pay the fine. Two other horses he was to drive in later races were also suspended. Evan Harry, the track architect was thrown off the fairgrounds before he could drive a race.

While the three race judges made the decision to disqualify a very angry Evan Harry, the man charged with carrying out the official suspension was the clerk of the races, 20-year-old G.W. "Will" Rittenour. A 1904 graduate of Piketon High School, he was back home on summer break after attending Ohio Wesleyan College for two years. Shortly after the Pike County Fair's conclusion he would be transferring to Yale University. Will Rittenour listened to Evan Harry's verbal protests until he calmed down. Harry, who weighed 145 pounds, did not seriously contemplate any physical actions. Will was six foot-five inches tall and expected to play college football when he got to Yale. When the Evan Harry issue was finally decided, the races began on Wednesday afternoon. The two scheduled races were for Pike County-owned horses. Trotters would compete in the first race, followed by a pace. The \$50 purse reflected the inexperience of the entries. Many of the out-of-county horsemen, who had shipped in by train, also had young horses who could benefit. A request was made to the race committee that a race be added for out-of county 'green' horses. Will Rittenour agreed, and the race was added to the Wednesday afternoon program.

The races, under the 1907 rules, were marathon affairs. If one horse won three heats, the race was over. If no horse won three heats in five races, the winner was determined by the best overall finish in the five heats. Added to that was the difficulty of getting the horses to approach the starting line in a reasonable order so that starter James Corwin could yell "go" for an official start. In any race, there were two to three bell rings signaling a wave off by the starter. Then it was a wait while the drivers brought the horses back for another score.

The first official race at Piketon on Wednesday afternoon took five heats. Jessie D., a trotting mare owned and driven by Charles Vallery of Waverly, finished second in the first two heats. Jessie D, then won the next three races. Charles Vallery, the owner of several farms and a large packing plant in Waverly, was one of four brothers with great interest in harness racing.

The second race, a \$50 purse for Pike County-owned pacers, was won by a mare named Minnie McGregor. Wesley Woods, a Waverly driver, steered the horse to a composite victory over five heats. The pre-race favorite Onward Jr, owned by Dr. George Nye of Waverly went lame after winning the first heat.

The final event of the first day was a half-mile race for Pike County-owned running horses. Mike Rader, a Piketon farmer, had entered his gelding, O.C. Steve Cameron, a jockey from Portsmouth, was to ride O.C. As the horses were lining up for the start, O.C., still on the backstretch, jumped the outside fence and headed for the shed rows. The jockey was still hanging on when O.C. was finally pulled up. The horse returned to the track and finished second in the one-heat race.

Fair Attendance on Thursday swelled to 5,000. The Norfolk and Western Passenger Extra Number 10 was so full that people had to sit three- wide in seats intended for two. The aisles were full and the baggage car was opened to riders. The

regularly scheduled “through” train, Passenger Number 16, had to make “whistle stops” to pick up the overflow.

The Thursday and Friday races were Ohio Valley Racing Association colt stakes. The purses were much larger, either \$250 or \$300 depending on the horses’ classification. The lone Pike county horse to win a colt race was Cadmus, Jr., a trotter owned by Clarence Vallery, who operated the livery stable in Waverly. Driven by Wesley Woods, the gelding won the 2:35 trot in straight heats.

The fair concluded after the Friday afternoon races. Total attendance for the three-day fair was nearly 10,000 people. William H. Patterson, Thornton Rittenour and Sandy Bateman were pleased. Will Rittenour completed his duties as race secretary and left for Yale.

The horsemen loaded their horses on the Norfolk and Western Railroad to move on to the next fair. Some moved south to the fair at Lucasville. Others, including Cadmus Jr., were transported to Chillicothe. Charles and Clarence Vallery went back to Waverly with the winners’ share of two race purses.



## CHAPTER TWO

### First Decade

The success of the 1907 Pike County Fair in Piketon did not escape the attention of the town leaders in neighboring Waverly. In truth, nothing that occurred in either town went unnoticed by the other. At Pike County's formation in 1815, the state legislature designated Piketon as the seat of county government. When the Ohio-Erie Canal was constructed in the late 1820s, it passed through Pike County on the west side of the Scioto River, bypassing Piketon. Waverly, founded along the canal in 1829, became a shipping point for lumber and farm products. With the construction of a packing plant, a sawmill to cut quarried stone and a whiskey distillery, Waverly developed into a commercial center, gradually catering less to the county's agricultural interests. In 1861, after a dubious county-wide vote, the seat of government moved to Waverly. Fifty years later the two towns maintained a bitter enmity toward each other.

Like much of the rest of the country, Waverly had experienced an economic downturn in the 1890s. The stone sawmill and the distillery were closed. The aqueduct that carried the canal over Crooked Creek was breeched by ice in the winter of 1908. The canal, which had been losing business to the railroads for 40 years, was now inoperable. The state of Ohio had no plans to repair it.

The idea of a town fair to bring business appealed to the commercial interests in Waverly. The town's population of 1500 was twice that of Piketon. Both the Norfolk and Western and the Detroit, Toledo and Ironton Railroads had depots in Waverly, providing twice as many excursion opportunities. If Piketon could get 10,000 people, Waverly hoped to draw more.

Horse racing would also be the main attraction of the Waverly fair. The financial commitment was lacking to allow membership in an Ohio Colt Circuit. Instead Waverly would hold its fair after Labor Day when most of the colt races, including the Ohio State Fair stakes, had ended. Horsemen could race one more time before turning their horses out for the season. Calling itself the Pike County Fair Company of Waverly, the group leased 27 acres from the Hibben family on the east side of Waverly. A half-mile track was cut out and a grandstand was constructed in the early summer of 1908. In September, the first Waverly Fair was held.

Pike County horsemen accepted two fairs in the county. William Patterson, the president of the Piketon Fair, entered five horses in the Waverly races. Charles and Clarence Vallery who held similar positions with the Waverly Fair also competed at Piketon. An indication of the importance that the Vallerys and the Pattersons put on their racing was made clear on July 4, 1909 when a special match race was held at the Piketon fairgrounds. Clarence Vallery's Cadmus, Jr. driven by Wesley Woods took on the Patterson Brothers' pacer George Offut. Each owner put up a side bet of \$200. The winner had to win three heats. The Pattersons admired the Portsmouth driver George Offut who often drove for them. They had named one of their most promising colts in his honor. George Offut, the driver would be handling his namesake in the match race. George Offut won the first heat. Cadmus, Jr. won the second. Then it was another heat win for George Offut. Cadmus, Jr. swept the final two heats to claim the race, and Clarence Vallery collected the \$200.

The Pike County Fair at Piketon continued to grow on an annual basis. Several weeks before the 1910 fair, a fire destroyed the art hall, but a replacement structure was in place by fair time. The Piketon track developed a reputation as a "fast" half-mile oval.

One point of contention between the two towns was the Waverly group's insistence that it hosted the true Pike County Fair. In 1910 and 1911, Waverly printed picture postcards calling its fair the Pike County Fair. On January 8, 1912 the Piketon Fair Association officially reorganized as the Pike County Agricultural Association. William Patterson was still president and Thornton Rittenour remained as treasurer. A recent state law allowed certified county fairs to receive government money on a per capita basis. Independent fairs received nothing.

While the Piketon Fair was financially sound, money always seemed to be an issue in Waverly. In the summer of 1912, the Waverly Fair stockholders had to reassure the community that a fair would be held. A rumor had been circulating that the rent on the fairgrounds had not been paid. The fair company president, Charles Vallery, assured townspeople the report was untrue. Vallery, the Mayor of Waverly at the time, was also the most avid advocate of horse racing. He loved to bet on his horse's ability and his own skill as a driver. In the on-going debate over the relative practicality of the horse versus the automobile, Charles was strongly on the side of the horse. In June, 1913 he attempted to win a bet by driving his horse, Lewis W, 30 miles to Portsmouth in two hours and 10 minutes. On Monday, June 9, 1913, escorted by several Waverly acquaintances, he reached Portsmouth in two hours and seven minutes. Believing he could go faster, the Mayor scheduled a second trip a week later. This time he reached Portsmouth in one hour and 58 minutes. The Mayor had the satisfaction of winning the bet, but he lost the argument on the horse versus auto dispute. The next year his brother Clarence, who ran the largest livery stable in Waverly, acquired the Ford motorcar franchise.

The Waverly NEWS reported in June, 1914 that there would be no fair in Waverly. An unnamed gentleman, who had reportedly given away all of the fair passes the previous year, had supposedly skipped town with all the money from the Cockfighters Club. There was a rumor he had absconded with fair money as well.

The 1914 Waverly Fair did take place. One of the major commercial exhibits was the Patterson Milling Company which supplied premiums for the best baked goods made from Patterson's flour. The Patterson Brothers also entered a horse in the 2:35 trot and T.N. Patterson was one of the race timers. The 1914 Waverly Fair generally received positive reviews from the public. The fair company gave permission in December for the boys' high school basketball team to use the art hall to play its games. The art hall was remodeled to install electric lights and heaters. The boys' team paid the increased insurance premiums.

The Piketon Fair had enjoyed its largest attendance in 1914. The Norfolk and Western agent at Waverly reported he had sold 180 tickets to Piketon on Thursday and half that number on Friday. The only negative was a larger than usual number of physical altercations. In one case, a sheriff of a county in Kentucky reportedly knocked down a man and kicked him repeatedly. The law officer allegedly was not charged with a crime.

The biggest blow to the Piketon Fair came in December, 1914 when William Patterson died after a several-months battle with Bright's Disease. Patterson, the fair association's only president, was not only a partner in his family's milling company and a farmer; he was also a director of the Piketon National Bank and a stockholder in the

REPUBLICAN HERALD newspaper. He served on the Pike County Board of Education until his health problems forced him to resign in October, 1914. He was 59 years old. His brother, Charles, succeeded him as president of the Pike County Agricultural Association. He shared William's appreciation of harness horse racing which included standing two standard bred stallions at stud on their farm near Piketon.

The two Pike County towns continued to hold their fairs in 1915, but they were clearly going in different directions. Piketon still concentrated on horse racing; the Waverly fair was desperately trying to up its attendance. In January, 1916, both fairs were certified for state funds which meant each would receive about \$400. The 1916 Piketon fair drew nearly 10,000 people. That included more than 800 automobile drivers. Ohio Governor Willis and several members of the Ohio State Board of Agriculture were among the 5,000 who attended the fair on Thursday. Three weeks later, the Waverly Fair drew only 6,300 people. Wednesday and Thursday were harness racing days at the Waverly Fair, but Friday featured auto and motorcycle racing. The 40 mile auto race for a \$100 purse had only three entries. The local favorite was Al Foster, who sold Overland automobiles at his Waverly garage. Driving a new Westcott Special, Foster built a big lead. Then a wheel fell off Foster's car, leaving him 18 laps behind. After making repairs, Foster was only able to make up four laps. The Friday crowd totaled just under 1500, less than half of a typical final day at the Piketon Fair.

The 1917 fair in Waverly seemed destined to be the last. After 10 years, the lease was up. The Vallerys were no longer actively involved. The need to make operating money had caused the fair company to accept some questionable midway and sideshow entertainment. There were very few displays of agricultural exhibits. Only the horse racing still drew public approval.

For the first time the Waverly Fair would be held before the Piketon Fair. The organizers got a tip from the Wellston fair that the people working on the midway were a particularly rough crew. Immediately on opening day in Waverly, there were complaints about the vulgarity of the "hoochaoochas" and "honky tonk" shows. Others reported that the games of chance were all rigged.

The worst criticisms came when the illegal activity spilled over into the town of Waverly. A gang of thieves broke into Dr. Metzger's office and stole his supply of morphine tablets. A similar robbery had occurred in Wellston the previous week.

The final straw was the death of a 28-year-old fair hanger-on who called himself Monk Moore. He had been following the fair circuit for several weeks before his arrival in Waverly. He rented a room for the week at Lou Hays's boarding house. On Friday night, Moore, who was really John Jacob Shanley of Grafton, West Virginia, got drunk in a Waverly saloon. He had to be restrained from taking a morphine tablet, a deadly additive when mixed with alcohol. He was found dead the next morning in the Hays' boarding house. Morphine tablets were found scattered around his body. Moore's death proved to be the final act for the Waverly Fair. The association quietly disbanded.

The Pike County Fair at Piketon had avoided many of the vicissitudes that had plagued the Waverly group. The Piketon officials had never allowed the "girlie" shows and gamblers were thrown out as soon as they were exposed. Horse racing was the fair's feature event. The track earned a reputation for fair, honest treatment of owners and drivers. Will Rittenour, who annually served as the clerk of the races, repeatedly proved capable of responding to the variety of unexpected crises.

After the 1907 fair, Will had left Piketon to enter Yale. He played guard on the varsity football team that went undefeated. In the spring of 1908 he played on the baseball team. That summer he was back clerking the races again. Arguably the biggest man physically in the county, he had an air of calm, was soft spoken and was willing to listen. Once again at fair's end in 1908, Will went back to Yale for the 1908 football season. He graduated in 1909 with a degree in Agriculture. After clerking the 1909 Piketon Fair, Will left for Harvard Law School. After two years at Harvard, he transferred back to Yale for a year to collect his law degree. Passing up bigger economic opportunities, he returned to Piketon to farm and practice law. Each August, he continued to clerk the races at the Pike County Fair. The horsemen seemed to take little notice that an Ivy League-educated lawyer was handling their entries.

When the fair needed a starter for 1910, Will, who was 24 years old, decided to hire an inexperienced 23 year old from Xenia named Steve Phillips. It was Phillips's first time as a race starter. The trotting and pacing races on Wednesday went smoothly. The final race was a running race. After the finish of the first heat, a horse named Kiatus, ridden by Steve Cameron, jumped the hub rail fence, came to a sudden stop and fell back across the hub rail. Cameron was thrown off and shaken up, but not seriously hurt. The horse was dead.

The 1911 fair had some special challenges for Will. Tempers often flared in multi-heat races. After the fourth heat of the 2:20 trot on Thursday, two drivers got into a heated argument as they waited to take their horses off the backstretch. Words escalated into blows. Special police, deputized by the town Marshall specifically for the fair, came running to the track. One of the Specials, Cleve Martin, went tearing into the middle of the backstretch brawl. He started swinging his "billy club" at any available target. His first wild swing struck a driver named Haynes, knocking him down, opening a sizeable gash on his head. Cleve took a swipe at another driver, but missed. One of the other Special Police subdued Cleve, just as Haynes, his head covered with blood, recovered his senses enough to go after Cleve. Will finally got order restored so the races could continue.

The next day Will had to rule on a special request. The pacing mare, Hattie B., had been bred in Pike County by Colonel John Barger and later sold to Billy Miles of Portsmouth. Hattie B. had won at a previous Piketon fair and held the track record at Waverly of 2:10 ½ for a mile. Will received a request from Billy Miles and his 21-year-old son, Mack, who drove the horse to allow a one-mile time trial to try to break the Piketon track record of 2:12. Will scheduled the attempt after the first heat of the 2:15 pace on Friday. As an expectant crowd watched, Mack Miles brought Hattie B. out on the track. A pacemaker horse would leave ahead of Hattie B. After a few trials to determine how much lead the pacemaker should get, Miles signaled he was ready. He turned the mare and brought Hattie B. toward the start line. The timers clicked their watches and the time trial began. The quarter splits were called out to the people in the grandstand. Hattie B. covered the first quarter in 32 seconds. The half went in 1:04 ½. The three quarter time was 1:35 and the final was 2:09 ¾, a new track record.

Will Rittenour's return to Pike County to practice law in 1912 assured his spot in the society notes of the local papers. An eligible bachelor of 26, he was the topic of considerable speculation among the local families with daughters of marital age. His

attendance at events such as a New Year's Eve Charity Ball in Chillicothe always made the newspapers.

Inevitably, Will also made the political news. Piketon was the center of Republican Party influence in Pike County. The Patterson and Rittenour families were both active in Republican politics. In 1914, Will was elected treasurer of the Pike County Republican Party executive committee. His name was widely mentioned as a likely candidate in the 1916 Pike County elections.

In fact, Will did become the Republican candidate for Pike County Prosecuting Attorney in 1916. Winning a county office was not a small issue for Republicans. Only twice in the previous 70 years had the Republican Party gained a majority of the offices in the Pike County courthouse. Abe Lincoln, who had once visited Pike County, was unable to carry the county in either 1860 or 1864. Ohioans U.S. Grant, Rutherford B. Hays, James Garfield, William McKinley and William Howard Taft had all been elected President as Republicans. None carried Pike County.

Admittedly, Will did not give the election his total attention in 1916. Lillian Marple, a Chicago native, had been visiting friends in Chillicothe in 1913 when she met Will. The two had carried on a long distance relationship over the next three years. The announcement of their September, 1916 marriage in Chicago caught many around Piketon by surprise. In early October, the newlyweds took up residence in Piketon.

The first mention of any public activity by 30-year old Will and his bride, who was six years younger, was a society note that the couple attended the fair in Lancaster. The upcoming election and his marriage overshadowed an eventful year at the fairs. The 1916 Pike County Fair at Piketon had featured good racing. The highlight was a time trial by Florence McKinney, owned by Oscar Vallery. While Charles Vallery loved to race horses locally, his brother Oscar was widely acknowledged as one of the best drivers of harness horses in the state. Unlike his other brothers, Oscar had not stayed in Pike County. He had bought a farm near Orient and then moved on to Logan County. Oscar had driven race horses all his life, but he stopped temporarily while he moved from farm to farm. In 1910, he once again took up racing in earnest. He campaigned a string of excellent trotters and pacers across the state, setting a record for money winnings in Ohio. Oscar established another record when he drove his trotter, Royal Cadet, to victory in three separate races in a week at the Ohio State Fair. He had brought several horses to the Piketon fair in 1916, winning four races and finishing second in two others. The two seconds were with a pacer, Babe Cresceus, that Oscar had started as a "green" pacer a month before. The filly had already moved up to the 2:25 pace by the Piketon Fair and would finish the 1916 season winning nine events of the 15 she entered. Oscar then sold her for \$2,500, a large sum in 1916.

It was the Florence McKinney time trial that the crowd in the grandstand wanted to see. The pacer was reputed to be as fast as Hattie B. Vallery got his mare out well and clipped off good quarter times. Coming out of turn four, the pacer had a chance. The last fraction was a tick slow. The mare's time for the mile was 2:10, slower by a quarter second than Hattie B's 1911 time.

Governor Willis came to the 1916 Pike County Fair to make Will a unique offer. His work over the past 10 years as speed secretary at the Pike County Fair had not gone unnoticed. He was appointed Secretary of the speed ring at the 1916 Ohio State Fair. He oversaw the biggest colt races in the Ohio fair season.

In a year where he got married and served as secretary of the Ohio State speed ring, Will's year did not finish on a high note. In November, Will got his first personal taste of Pike County electoral politics. His 1779 votes for prosecuting attorney left him 129 votes short of victory in his quest to be Pike County's Prosecuting Attorney.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Death on Saturday

Most Pike Countians in 1923 had never attended a Cincinnati Reds baseball game. Even fewer had seen a world championship prize fight. Every August, thousands of Pike Countians attended the harness races at the Piketon Fair. The successes of the drivers were as well-known as major league baseball players' batting averages or Jack Dempsey's knockouts.

By 1923, the Pike County Fair was firmly established as the social event of the season. Business owners in the village of Piketon made decisions based on expectations of fair week revenues. Arthur Willis remodeled the Piketon Hotel in the Spring of 1923. The hotel had been closed for a year, and he wanted to get it reopened in June so he could take advantage of the Fair traffic.

Horses raced at the track only one week a year, but the soil consistency was perfect for year round training. The Daily family and the Fair Association were amenable to horsemen utilizing the facility to train trotter and pacers from late winter through the racing season. S. S. Daily, the property owner, did not own racehorses, but he was interested in the sport, regularly serving as a judge at Piketon and other nearby fairs.

The construction of an enclosed barn and a reasonable rent structure made Piketon the permanent home for a group of trainers. An article in the June 7, 1923 *REPUBLICAN HERALD* noted that despite an exceptionally wet spring, the Piketon track was in good shape and getting better each week. While the trainers still had their horses in the spring conditioning mode, several quick miles had recently been clocked.

Most owners had only a small number of standardbreds in training. J.M. "Mack" Miles had first received notice as a driver at Piketon when he set the track record with Hattie B. in 1911. A butcher by occupation, Miles, who was still in his 20's, decided to move to Piketon and open a meat market. The business did well. Equally important, his butcher shop was only a few blocks from the fairgrounds where he stabled his trotters.

The move to Piketon had an additional benefit for Mack Miles. He and his wife had quickly entered the social activities and Mack had made a favorable impression on the community leaders in Piketon. It was generally accepted that in the next three or four years, he would probably become the town's mayor.

Two men were training large stables at Piketon in 1923. Wes Woods had been a successful trainer in Pike County for more than 25 years. His original fame came while driving horses for Colonel John Barger around the turn of the century. Woods continued his success at the early Pike County Fairs at Piketon. He stopped training in 1918 at the age of 50. Woods, who moved into a Piketon boarding house after the death of his wife, had no interests to take up his time. At the encouragement of T.N. Patterson, he reopened a public stable at Piketon in 1923. Among the 15 head he was training was the top-flight Patterson trotting mare, Virginia P.

The largest string of Standardbreds training at Piketon belonged to 37-year-old Fred Hatfield. A native of Ironton, Hatfield had first raced at the Pike County Fair in 1912. He returned to Piketon each year. In 1920, he decided to give up the management of a meat market in Ironton. His real interest was in horses. Still single, with few debts, Hatfield became a full-time horse trainer. Training for his brother, Elmer, who lived in Gallipolis,

and Brooks Capper, an Ironton businessman, Hatfield was handling 30 horses at Piketon. Hatfield would enter two horses in nearly every colt race.

Fred Hatfield's personal life was the topic of considerable discussion among the other horsemen, but always outside his hearing. He stood six feet tall and weighed 200 pounds. He had never had any altercations around Piketon, but Hatfield carried a reputation in the Ohio Valley colt circuit as being an ill-tempered man when riled. Other drivers went out of their way to avoid trouble with him.

During the last week of July, 1923, the Piketon horsemen were racing at the Wellston Fair. The Pike County Fair would start on July 31 and run through August 3<sup>rd</sup>. On Tuesday, July 24, a Norfolk and Western railcar unloaded tack, sulkies and horses on the Piketon depot siding. When the owner inquired about the upcoming fair, he was referred to the race secretary, Will Rittenour, who accepted his entries and assigned him stall space in the shed row barn. When the horseman walked downtown to buy some necessities, word spread quickly that he was Kemper Sherwood Smith from Mullens, South Carolina. Drivers from Kentucky and West Virginia regularly raced in the Ohio Valley colt circuit. No one had ever come all the way from South Carolina.

Kemper Smith's arrival in Piketon, a week before the 1923 Pike County Fair's opening, was the culmination of a five-year evolution. He had been born into a substantial farm family near Marion, South Carolina. During WWI Army service in Europe, he suffered, first, a head wound and, then, was caught in a poison gas attack. Smith was hospitalized and finally returned to South Carolina in a weakened physical condition. He opened a livery business in Marion, which led to an increasing interest in training and racing Standardbreds. The sport was not big in South Carolina. Smith decided his best option was to make the long train journey to Southern Ohio.

Kemper Smith scheduled his arrival at Piketon for a week before the Pike County Fair's opening. It allowed him to freshen the horses after the train journey. The news that a South Carolina horseman was working his stock at the fairgrounds brought out a number of observers. Smith, who was polite and charming, picked up a cadre of admirers.

The Wellston Fair ended on Friday. The Piketon horsemen returned on Saturday morning. Kemper Smith jogged his horses before noon and walked down to a blacksmith shop in Piketon. Fred Hatfield had brought several horses in to be reshod. The two men were introduced. They engaged in a brief conversation and Smith, noting the blacksmith would not have time to shoe his horse, returned to the fairgrounds. Smith met the other drivers over the next three days. Charles Thomas, a veteran of the colt circuit, had the stalls next to Smith. He was friendly and helpful. Charles Swisshelm, who made his living as a livestock dealer in Highland County, was one of the leading drivers. The 41-year-old Swisshelm had narrowly escaped serious injury at the Rainsboro Fair in mid-July. At the start of the race, his horse went down in the first turn, throwing him from the sulky. He was knocked unconscious. Somehow, 12 other drivers maneuvered their horses around him. He had been back in the sulky at Wellston, and his pacer, J.W. Mack, was one of the best horses in the 1923 colt circuit races.

The fair opened on Tuesday, with the first races on Wednesday. Kemper Smith was exercising a horse on Wednesday morning. A horse-drawn drag was being used to condition the track, leaving only a narrow lane for horses to pass. Smith was going one way; Fred Hatfield was headed in the opposite direction. Smith slowed his horse to let Hatfield pass and received a polite acknowledgment.



Once the races began, Kemper Smith realized how tough the colt races were. Wes Woods won the 2:40 trot with T.N. Patterson's mare, Virginia P. The horse had already won four races with two seconds and two thirds in 1923. Charles Swisshelm won races on Wednesday and Thursday. Fred Hatfield did not win on Wednesday or Thursday, but his horses did pick up checks in nearly every race.

Success did not come immediately for Kemper Smith. He had four entries. The first three finished out of the money. Smith's best chance was in Friday's 2:20 pace. He would be driving a horse named Robert R, owned by the Rawls Brothers of Marion, South Carolina.

When the horses paraded, Smith saw there were five starters. Neither Charles Swisshelm nor Wes Woods had horses entered. Fred Hatfield had two horses in the race. He was driving one, while a man named Scott was handling the other.

Smith got Robert R. moving well off the start. He held the lead for the entire mile, winning the heat. The second heat began the same way, but Valley Commodore, the Hatfield horse driven by the "catch driver" Scott, caught Robert R. in the stretch. Smith could not hold off Valley Commodore, finishing second. Once again, Smith worked his way to the lead in the third heat. On the back stretch, Hatfield, who was back in third place, kept yelling to Scott to take Valley Commodore, then in second place, to the lead. Coming out of the final turn, Smith still held the lead. Scott started to pull his horse to make his stretch drive. He was not clear and his horse's hoof got tangled with a wheel on Smith's sulky. The bike turned over, throwing Smith against the hub rail fence. Valley Commodore went off stride, the driver pulling the horse up to check for injury.

The other horses slowed to avoid the wreck, and then paced on to the finish. Smith was shaken, but not seriously hurt. As he righted the sulky to finished the heat to avoid disqualification, Smith heard Hatfield yell at him, "I hope it kills you, you SOB. If it doesn't, I'll finish you later."

Smith's horse appeared to be uninjured, but the sulky needed a new wheel and other major repairs before the next heat.

The main concern was the threat from Fred Hatfield. Smith decided to seek out the fair association president, Charles Patterson. After learning of the threat, Patterson escorted Smith back to his barn. Hatfield was not to be seen.

Smith's sulky was demolished beyond repair. With the assistance of Charles Swisshelm, he put together a sulky that would get him through the final two heats. He was working on the bike in front of the barn. Hatfield was on the track warming up for a heat in another race. When he saw Smith making repairs, he yelled over, "Fix it up and bring it out and I'll finish you. If I don't get you today, I will tomorrow." His pronouncements were accompanied by profanities.

Smith stepped back into the barn and took a revolver from his trunk. Putting the gun in his pocket, he walked over to the judges' stand. Will Rittenour listened to Smith's story. Smith demanded protection, and Rittenour went immediately to Hatfield's barn. Rittenour told Hatfield that a complaint had been lodged and the threatened behavior would not be tolerated. Hatfield admitted to Rittenour that he had considered physical action. Now, after a few minutes of cooling off, it was no longer an issue. Rittenour, aware of Hatfield's reputation, did not return to the judges' stand until he was satisfied that Hatfield had truly calmed down.

No problems developed in the fourth or fifth heats of the 2:20 pace. Valley Commodore won both heats to win the race. Smith's horse finished second in the fourth heat, fell to third in the final mile, but picked up second place money in the final placing. He had no further problems with Hatfield, who was apparently abiding by his promise to Will Rittenour.

Smith and Hatfield had no contact after the races on Friday afternoon. To avoid any further confrontations, Smith went into town and rented a room at the Piketon Hotel. He took a bath, changed clothes and ate dinner. Smith spent the evening in Piketon with friends. He had planned to stay at the hotel that night, but concern that his tack and equipment might be vandalized caused him to return to the fairgrounds around midnight.

Smith saw a light in the adjoining stalls. Charles Thomas was still up and Smith joined him. Thomas knew about the incident on the track and Hatfield's threats. He repeatedly warned Smith in the course of an hour-long conversation that Hatfield was a dangerous man when aroused. When Smith went back to his section of the barn, he bolted all the doors and openings and laid the revolver where it could be reached instantly if someone came around. Smith had decided to leave Piketon as soon as he could make arrangements at the train station.

Morning finally dawned and Smith was up early. While his stable attendant, Theodore Hargraves, took care of the horses, Smith returned borrowed sulky wheels to Charles Thomas and Charles Swisshelm. Smith left the loading of the tack and equipment to Hargraves and started to the Norfolk and Western depot down the hill from the fairgrounds. It was around 7:30 a.m.

Smith walked past the shed row barn to the draw gate in the middle of the backstretch. He intended to take the path through the infield to the fairgrounds entrance. Smith was nearly across the track at the infield gate when Hargraves called to him. The stove had already been removed from the shed row barn, and Smith needed to bring back some sandwiches.

Hargraves' yell had drawn the attention of Fred Hatfield and Wes Woods who were leaning against the outside fence at the start of the backstretch. John Hockman of Cynthiana, in western Pike County, was preparing his truck to haul some horses. In 1923, movement by truck was still untested. Woods and Hatfield were advising Hockman when they heard Hargraves yell to Smith.

Events of the next few minutes were confused, resulting in conflicting stories. According to Kemper Smith, he saw Fred Hatfield jump over the outside fence and come across the track toward him. Smith moved toward the center of the track. He reached out his arm and shook hands with Hatfield. The bigger man demanded that Smith pay him money due on a "split pulse" in a Thursday race. Smith had not collected from the Fair Secretary, but thought he might have enough cash in his pocket to cover what Hatfield had coming. He started to reach in his pocket to check.

According to Smith, Hatfield struck him in the face, knocking him to the ground, leaving him momentarily stunned. Smith thought he saw Hatfield reaching for his back pocket. Fearing that Hatfield might be going for a weapon, Smith pulled out his revolver and started shooting. Hatfield had thrown up his left hand in a defensive manner when Smith pulled the gun. The first shot hit him in the left hand causing the arm to fall. Hatfield yelled, "My God, don't shoot," and started to turn away. The second shot struck

him in the back between the waist and his ribcage. The third shot went wild striking the new barn.

Hatfield staggered toward the outside fence. Newton Gardner, Hatfield's groom, was holding a horse along the fence about 20 feet from the shooting. He ran to help Smith to a place where he could lean against the fence. Hatfield said to him, "I am shot and going to die. Don't let that fellow get away." Gardner left Hatfield to follow Smith who was walking away across the fairgrounds. Gardner stayed a safe distance behind.

Immediately after the shooting, Smith asked the stunned onlookers to get a doctor for Hatfield. Then he left the fairgrounds and walked down the hill into Piketon. Smith asked Pike County School Superintendent, O.F. Williamson, where he could find the town marshal, Charles Markham. When he located Markham, Smith turned over his gun and surrendered.

Back at the fairgrounds, Dr. Chambers Penn had arrived to examine Hatfield. When he found the entry wound in Hatfield's back, Penn ordered him taken to Hempstead Hospital in Portsmouth. Hatfield was loaded into Piketon undertaker, C.M. Freeman's ambulance for the 30-mile journey. It was around 8:30 a.m. when he reached the hospital, roughly an hour after the shooting.

Hatfield was rushed into X-ray. The X-ray did not pinpoint the location of the bullet, but it did show major damage in the intestines. The bullet had traveled downward creating multiple puncture wounds throughout the intestines. Two surgeons spend several hours sewing the damaged organs. Hatfield had been physically fit, but he had lost a lot of blood and suffered severe internal damage. The doctors came out to the hospital waiting room to tell Hatfield's brother, Elmer, and other family members that the wounded man had little chance. Still, Hatfield remained alive through Saturday night and Sunday morning. His condition worsened on Sunday afternoon. At 6:45 p.m., he passed away.

Hatfield owned no property of his own, so Brooks Capper, his business partner, had the body brought back to his home in Ironton. Capper arranged for a short funeral service at his house before Hatfield's body was buried in a cemetery near Waterloo.

Kemper Smith was taken to the Pike County jail by Sheriff William Anderson on Saturday morning. Smith was notified of Hatfield's death on Monday morning. The Pike County Prosecuting Attorney George Nye announced that he would convene a special grand jury to seek an indictment for First Degree Murder. Because Smith was charged with murder and lived out of state, he was denied bail. He would remain in the Pike County jail at least until after the Grand Jury met.

The case quickly evolved into a political issue. In 1920, the Harding presidential landslide resulted in a full slate of Republicans being elected to Pike County offices. In 1922, the Democrats recaptured the positions. There were so many claims of voter fraud that the state did an investigation in early 1923. The election results were finally allowed to stand, but the bitterness of the Pike County Republicans, headquartered in Piketon, had hardly abated. George D. Nye, the Prosecuting Attorney, had been put in office in the 1922 election. He was the son of the chairman of the Pike County Democrat Party, the subject of particular dislike among the Republicans.

Kemper Smith was a WWI combat veteran, so the members of American Legion Post 498 at Piketon announced two days after the shooting that they would "take up the fight" for Smith. The American Legion Post at Waverly did not get involved. The

people from Piketon were so committed to running errands, making contacts and providing an abundance of cakes and pies, Hatfield's family sent a letter to Sheriff Anderson protesting the preferential treatment Smith was receiving.

The Hatfield murder case went before a Grand Jury in September. As expected, Prosecuting Attorney Nye asked for a charge of First Degree Murder. Smith appeared before the Grand Jury in his own defense. The Grand Jury returned an indictment for Second Degree Murder. While the deliberations were secret, it was rumored that the jury debated between Second Degree Murder and the lesser charge of Manslaughter. One of the Grand Jurors was Thornton Rittenour, the treasurer of the Pike County Fair association and an active member of the Pike County Republican Party. Another Pike County horseman, L.P. "Steve" Vallery, was also on the panel.

After the indictment, Kemper Smith was arraigned before Pike County Common Pleas Judge, L.G. Dill. Smith pleaded not guilty and, because the charge had been lowered to Second Degree Murder, he was eligible for bail. Judge Dill set the bond at \$5,000, cash only. Smith's family posted the money, and Smith and his wife, who had been staying in Waverly since the arrest, were allowed to return to South Carolina.

Before he left Waverly, Smith stopped by the REPUBLICAN HERALD office to thank the people for being so kind to him. He was able to get his side of the story into a friendly paper. The paper's editor described him as a "refined southern gentleman."

The trial would be held the first week of December, 1923. Interest built as the trial date neared. Rumors made the paper periodically. Hatfield's family was supposed to have taken part in the Hatfield-McCoy feud. He was reported to have married a girl in Latham shortly before his murder, but no one could find a record of the marriage license.

Kemper Smith was rumored to be the nephew of United States Senator, Ellison Darant "Cotton Ed" Smith. Another story alleged that Smith's lawyer would be Cole Blease, the former governor of South Carolina.

Neither "Cotton Ed" Smith nor Cole Blease were in Waverly for the trial, but there was no lack of drama. The state's case would be presented by Prosecuting Attorney Nye, trying his first murder case, and A. Romulous Johnson, a former Congressman, who had represented the Pike County Democratic Party in the election dispute in early 1923. Elmer Hatfield, the dead man's brother, sat at the prosecution table throughout the trial.

Courtroom spectators were much more interested in the people gathered in support of Kemper Smith. His wife was in attendance every day, accompanied by her niece Louella Olive Smith and her nephew, Professor B. F. Smith, a college professor in Illinois. For the people of Waverly, it was a touch of southern culture. The character witnesses who appeared for Smith, had made the trip all the way from South Carolina. The newspapers described them as being "typical courtly southern gentlemen of the old school". The defense attorneys were L. M. Gasque from South Carolina, Judge Garrett Claypool of Chillicothe and Levi B. Moore of Waverly.

The jury had one unique aspect. Mrs. Margaret Denny was selected as the first Pike County woman to serve on a jury considering a murder case. She was the last name on the list of 25 prospective jurors. Eleven men were selected out of first 23 interviews. When the 24<sup>th</sup> name, David Nutt of Beaver, was found to be deceased, Margaret Denny was called, and accepted.

The trial opened on December 3, 1923 to a full courtroom on the second floor of the Pike County courthouse. Judge Benner Jones of Jackson was assigned to hear the case due to the illness of Judge Dill.

The courtroom presentation fascinated the spectators. Both sides had strengths and weaknesses. The prosecution could establish that Fred Hatfield had been shot and killed by Kemper Smith. It could produce the weapon and eyewitnesses to the shooting. Wes Woods, well known to most of the courtroom spectators, testified that Smith had called Hatfield to the center of the track. When the two were four to six feet apart, Smith pulled out a gun and started shooting. Woods stated emphatically that Hatfield did not strike Smith, a claim echoed by Newton Gardner, Hatfield's groom.

Rom Johnson, who handled most of the state's case, had one issue that worried him. He knew that Hatfield had threatened Smith. He needed witnesses to attest to the quality of Hatfield's character. He produced nearly 20 witnesses who spoke of Hatfield as a good man. It was not lost on the spectators that only a few of the character witnesses were Pike Countians. None professed to be his wife.

The defense's only chance was to prove self-defense. There were four separate strategies. First, witnesses were brought forward who heard Hatfield's threats. Next, four witnesses, including school superintendent O.F. Williamson and Marshall Charles Markham, testified that Smith's head was bruised and bleeding at the time of his arrest. Markham had purposely been left off the prosecution witness list to avoid questions about Smith's bruised face. The third strategy was the extensive group of character witnesses for the defendant. The final theme, repeated through a number of people on the witness stand, was the defense's contention that Wes Woods was not with Hatfield at the time of shooting and could not have been an eyewitness. No one seemed to remember seeing Woods after the shooting. Woods's explanation was that he had hurried to find a cot for Hatfield rather than rushing over to the crowd of men surrounding Hatfield after the shooting.

The defense, led by L. M. Gasque, quietly but effectively, played on the idea of Smith as a Southern gentleman. Smith, himself, made a favorable presentation. Even the Pike Countians, who testified for the defense, seemed more educated and cultured than the prosecution witnesses. Will Rittenour, who had spoken to Hatfield about the threats at the fair, had left Piketon a month after the Piketon fair for a trip to Canada to study the damage done by the European corn borer. Rittenour was one of the 10 members of the Ohio State Board of Agriculture. Likewise, Charles Patterson, Dr. I. P. Seiler, Daniel Daily and Dr. A. B. Anderson were also among Piketon's leading citizens.

In the end, the trial came down to the issue of whether or not self-defense was a legitimate argument. There was sufficient evidence to suggest that Smith had been struck by Hatfield, but it was also clear that the fatal bullet struck the victim in the back. Courtroom observers felt public sentiment was on Smith's side, but the jurors still had to determine if Smith had the right to shoot a second time after Hatfield's cry for him to stop.

After four days of testimony, the jury received the judge's instructions and started deliberations. The 11 men and one woman discussed the evidence for half an hour, took its first and only vote, and returned to the courtroom. The foreman handed the slip to the court clerk who read the verdict aloud. When he announced, "Not Guilty", the crowd in the courtroom erupted in cheers.

The stress of the trial was evident on the participants. The local papers noted that Kemper Smith's departure to South Carolina had been delayed due to his wife's illness.

Fred Hatfield's horses had been sold at an auction at the Piketon Fairgrounds back in October. Twenty-three head were knocked down in the sale which took a whole day. Bob Brammer of Ironton paid the highest price of \$3900 for the pacer Henry Direct, a horse that had worked miles in 2:03. Many felt the pacer could go in two minutes or faster. Brammer had to outbid John Dillon, who had come all the way from New Haven, Connecticut to buy Henry Direct. Brammer bought four other horses at the sale. A broodmare, Ruth Stackhouse, with a foal by her side, was bought by Judge Reese Blizzard of Parkersburg, West Virginia. Judge Blizzard was a longtime President of the National Trotting Association. Interestingly, the track at Piketon belonged to the American Trotting Association. By an odd coincidence, five of the people who purchased horses at the auction testified as character witnesses for Fred Hatfield at the trial.

The Smith trial receded into a memory as the early months of 1924 passed. Wes Woods, who may or may not have been an eyewitness, was back at the fairgrounds training horses for T. N. Patterson and John Barger. Several horses that had been campaigned by Fred Hatfield were entered in the races at the 1924 Pike County Fair. West Virginia, owned by Bob Brammer won the 2:20 Trot. His pacer, Henry Direct, won the 2:18 pace in three straight heats. Later in the summer, Henry Direct developed physical problems. Eventually, the horse had to be turned out. It would be two years before Henry Direct could return to the track. The pacer never recovered its pre-injury form.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Will Rittenour

G. W. "Will" Rittenour learned early in his adult life the truth of the biblical maxim that no man is a prophet in his own land. He attended Yale where he played football and baseball. After graduating in 1909, he spent the next three years getting a law degree from Harvard and Yale. Some of his Piketon neighbors were surprised that he did not take advantage of the economic opportunities offered to Yale graduates when Will moved back to Piketon in 1912 and opened a private law practice. He managed legal affairs in Pike County for a railroad and prepared his share of mortgages, deeds and wills. Will seldom got involved in the high profile cases that made the front pages of the weekly Waverly papers.

Will had an undergraduate degree in agriculture from Yale and he was very interested in the changing developments in the breeding of Hereford cattle. In early, 1928 he purchased a Hereford bull that possessed the bloodlines he admired. In October, 1928 Will bought 45 White Face yearling heifers from a farmer in Hillsboro to start his herd. Two years later his heifers were producing calves from his bull and his total herd was now up to 100 animals. Yet Will knew that whatever the success or failure of the Herefords, people would ascribe the changes to his father, Thornton, who had built their Piketon farm over the past 40 years. Even though his father had passed away in 1928, Will knew the people in Piketon would always refer to it as the Thornton Rittenour farm.

A similar situation came about at the Piketon National Bank, which Will's father had founded in 1903. Thornton had been the bank's president from its inception till his death in 1928. Will, whose only experience at the bank had been as a fill-in-cashier, had never been on the bank board. He now took a position on the board and was elected president. Once again, he was aware that many people believed the bank position was only due to family inheritance.

There were other apparent examples of family influence on Will's activities. Thornton Rittenour had been active in the Republican Party in Pike County for decades. Not surprisingly Will soon followed. From 1914 on, he was a member of the Pike County Republican Party Executive Committee. The Republican Party held a majority in Piketon. Will spent most of the 1920's serving on the Piketon town council. On four occasions, he also allowed his name to be placed on the ballot for county office. In 1916, Will was an unsuccessful candidate for Pike County Prosecuting Attorney. In 1924, he ran for Pike County Common Pleas Judge, but lost. Two years later, he filed petitions for Prosecuting Attorney, only after the expected Republican candidate pulled out at the last minute. In predominantly Democrat Pike County the results were inevitable. He lost again. Will viewed running for office as a civic duty, but political campaigning was not easy for him. He was by nature modest and self-effacing. Between 1916 and 1926, the REPUBLICAN HERALD noted only one occasion where he spoke at a political rally.

His only county-wide political service came in April, 1930 when he was appointed to fill the Pike County Common Pleas Judge position left vacant by the death of Judge Stephen McLaughlin. McLaughlin was a Democrat, but the governor of Ohio has the power to fill judicial vacancies. Governor Myers Cooper, a Republican, was personally acquainted with Will from state fair activities. On April 30, 1930, he appointed Will to

fill the vacancy. He ran for election in November, 1930, but was defeated. In January, 1931, he left office.

In small towns, the lifestyle of the more affluent citizens often draw attention. Even a casual reader of the Piketon society news in the REPUBLICAN HERALD would notice that Will and his wife, Lillian's lifestyle was unique for Piketon. As the economic crunch deepened in 1930 and 1931, Will and Lillian continued to travel regularly. Lillian was dedicated to the game of Bridge. She played in the Waverly Bridge Club and at both the Chillicothe and Portsmouth Country Clubs. The couple seldom missed driving to Ohio State University football games in Columbus. Lillian made regular trips to Chicago and Louisville to visit family and friends. Indiana and Wisconsin were also common destinations. From the early 1920s, they left Ohio during the coldest winter months for Florida. While Will often cut his visit short to take care of business in Piketon, Lillian usually remained until spring.

When Will returned to private practice in 1931, he found a disturbing percentage of his clients were trying to save their farms. The 1920s had not been easy for American farmers. During WWI, the war-torn European nations could not raise enough food to keep their populations from starving. The United States government asked American farmers to produce more for export to Europe. Prices were high and farmers went in debt to buy more land to increase production. Farm land sold for all time highs. The end of WWI in 1918 meant that the European countries could start farming again. By the early 1920s, the European markets had largely disappeared and farm prices had plummeted. In 1910, the total value of agricultural products in Pike County was \$1,166,256. By 1920, it had tripled. In the late 1920s, it was back down to 1910 levels. As farm income fell, so did the selling price of farmland. Only the expensive mortgages remained.

A growing number of Will's clients had no money to pay for their legal work. A number of clients owed money to the Piketon National Bank. Financial institutions were threatened across the nation. Nearly 25,000 banks were functioning in 1928 when Will became president. Two years later, the number had fallen below 20,000. Will and his cousin, John Stratton, who he had appointed cashier in 1929, were watching the bank's transactions very closely in 1931.

Like his father before him, Will went to extensive lengths to help the bank customers who were in trouble. Despite his imposing physical stature, Will was a gentle man who seldom raised his voice. He treated every person with respect and was widely liked. No one seemed to have a bad word for him. One admiring employee described him as "a piece of gold".

As 1931 progressed into spring and early summer, Will faced a hard decision. The Piketon National Bank was running into difficulties. The bank allowed farmers to postpone principal payments if the interest could be paid. By the second quarter of 1931, there was no money to cover the interest. Foreclosure was inevitable. Combined with a low return on investments, Will had to face the inevitable. His father's bank could not survive in its present configuration.

Will opened discussions with the First National Bank of Waverly about a possible merger. The Waverly Bank's capitalization of \$100,000 was four times that of Piketon's. Managed very conservatively by Wells Jones, Jr., it was financially capable of incorporating Piketon's operation. On Saturday afternoon, August 8, 1931, the officers and directors of the two banks met in Waverly. The outcome was a merger where the



Waverly bank assumed the assets and resources of the Piketon National Bank. The transfer was immediate. On Monday morning, January 10, 1931, customers discovered that all transactions would now be handled in Waverly. John Stratton, the Piketon bank's cashier, transferred to Waverly to ease the transition for the Piketon customer.

The Piketon officials tried to make the change easier for the Piketon customers, especially those who could not drive. John Stratton received an hour for lunch. He would make the five mile drive to Piketon where his wife would have lunch waiting. His customers would ride to Waverly with him, do their banking as well as other business, and ride back to Piketon.

Will Rittenour released a statement to the local papers explaining that the Piketon bank was solvent and deposits were perfectly safe. Decreased earnings made it apparent that merging with a larger and stronger institution was advisable.

Still, the merger came as a shock to Piketon residents. An article in the Waverly papers only a few months before had reassured readers that all Pike County financial institutions, including the Piketon National Bank, were sound.

Will remained accessible and reassuring to the bank's customers. He provided legal counsel at no charge. As part of the merger, he joined the First National Bank's board of directors. Will was able to make recommendations about his former customers.

The closing of the Piketon bank drew much of Will's attention in the latter part of 1931. Ironically, the bank closed on August 10, 1931. The Pike County Fair opened the next day. Once again, Will served as clerk of the races.

Standardbred horse racing was in danger of collapse by the early 1930's. The paucity of cash money caused drastic attendance drops at fairs nation wide. Many fairs had already discontinued racing. The horsemen who trained at Piketon were having so much difficulty finding fairs that were offering races in 1930 that a July 4<sup>th</sup> matinee sponsored by the Piketon American Legion post drew a full field of horses. Piketon owners Fred Rowe, Dan Evans, Colonel John Barger and John B. Foster, who raced the Patterson horses as well as his own, entered horses for experience since the matinees offered no purses.

The Pike County Fair was forced to cut the number of races in 1931. The purses of \$200 were less than those offered at the initial Pike County Fair in 1907.

The 1932 Pike County Fair marked the 25<sup>th</sup> consecutive year Will had clerked the races. Unexpected events still transpired. On Thursday morning at the 1928 Fair, horse trainer Gus Eddings of South Solon complained of chest pains, got up from a chair in front of one of the horse barns, took a couple of steps and dropped dead. Eddings was 74, and no family member claimed the body. He was buried in a pauper's grave in Piketon.

The shortage of races and low purses caused horsemen to look for any edge. One of the most common tricks was to enter good horses under assumed names in a slower class of races. The "ringers" could pick up easy money. Will grew suspicious of a horse named Guy Steele, Jr. that dominated the 2:28 class pace at the 1931 fair. The horse was clearly too good for that competition. Will asked Dan Evans, who trained regularly at Piketon, to see what he could find out. Evans, a Jackson County native with no immediate family, boarded in Piketon. He was 60-years old and his only occupation was training race horses. Few people in Piketon knew that for many years he had worked as a prison guard. Dan made quiet inquiries, discovering that instead of living in Morgantown,

Alabama as the driver had listed on his entry form, he was really from West Virginia. Will telegraphed one of his acquaintances there who did some further checking. It turned out that the horse was really named L.F.T and had been campaigned through the south under a variety of names. The horse had an excellent record and the driver was simply traveling the Ohio fair circuit picking up easy purse money. The driver had a second horse that he was also racing under an assumed name. Judge Rittenour confronted the man with the evidence, took back the purse and ordered the driver out of the state on a permanent suspension.

Will Rittenour had built a reputation as a man of integrity who treated horsemen at the Pike County Fair in a fair and honest manner. He clerked a number of Southern Ohio Fairs. What many local people did not realize was the great respect he received from harness horsemen around the state. Will had gained widespread notice in 1916 when he was appointed Secretary of the Ohio State Fair races, a position he still held in 1932. In 1923, he accepted a seat on the newly-restructured Ohio State Board of Agriculture. In 1930, he was elected president of the agriculture board.

Will also held a position on the Ohio State Fair board. S.S Daily, whose family owned the land where the Pike County Fairgrounds was located, realized Judge Rittenour's influence in Columbus. S.S was regularly employed as a judge at the State Fair races during the 1920s. He saw first-hand the respect the horsemen held for Will.

Early in 1932, Will had been approached by Judge I.L. Halterman, President of the Ohio Fair Managers Association and Don Detrick the organization's secretary. Their proposal was to create a new regulatory body for harness racing in Ohio. The basic rationale was that the American Trotting Association and the National Trotting Association were out of touch with the plight of the county fairs in Ohio. If the local fairs did not band together, they would not survive. Conversely, the Ohio fairs would not join a new organization unless they trusted its leadership. Judge Rittenour could bring instant recognition and credibility.

Will was initially resistant. For 25 years the Pike County Fair had been affiliated with the American Trotting Association. He was far from satisfied with the ATA's performance, but he was not certain a new group could convince the fairs that it could do a better job. Finally, Will decided a new direction was necessary. He joined with Judge Halterman and Don Detrick to incorporate the United Trotting Association. Will was elected President, Halterman was Vice President and Detrick was Secretary. After establishing a new set of regulations and rules the three men immediately started contacting the local fairs in Ohio. Detrick, operating out of two rooms in Bellfountaine, handled the paper work.

To encourage the Ohio county fairs to join, the United Trotting Association offered memberships at half the price of the other regulatory bodies. After Will Rittenour or Judge Halterman made the initial contacts, Don Detrick would follow-up with a personal visit to complete the contract. The response of the county association officers was more than the United Trotting Association officers could have imagined. By the summer of 1932, 85 percent of the county fairs in Ohio raced under UTA rules.

Will Rittenour knew that his group could succeed long term only if it produced results. That meant that drivers who entered horses under assumed names and raced them in the wrong classifications had to be disciplined. Fairs were reporting that drivers were writing bad checks to cover the entry fees or not paying them at all. The United Trotting

Association had to act fast to discipline owners and then pass the information to the upcoming fairs. Tom Billingsley headed the appeals committee and Don Detrick worked tirelessly to keep the association members informed. When Will Rittenour moved the state fair races under the UTA banner, survival for the first year was assured.

Interestingly, one of the more critical situations was the Pike County Fair. It was not until June, 1932 that the fair association decided to go forward with a limited schedule of races.

At year's end in 1932, the United Trotting Association was still in existence, but there were more hills to climb. Financial stability was still in the future. The state of Ohio had given no official sanction to the UTA. Fifteen percent of the fairs were still outside the organization, as well as the Grand Circuit races held yearly in Cleveland and Toledo. It would be left to Will Rittenour to use political influence to bring regulatory stability to the harness racing industry in Ohio.

In 1933, the Ohio legislature took up the issue of pari-mutual betting at racetracks in Ohio. Passage of the Emmons bill would require the creation of an Ohio Racing Commission, which in turn would need rules to regulate Thoroughbred and Standardbred racing in the state. Judge Rittenour was the unquestioned authority on harness racing. His advice was to adopt the UTA rules. When the Emmons Bill became law in early 1933, the United Trotting Association rule book became the governing authority. No matter what regulatory body a track belonged to, it would race under UTA rules. Within two years every track in Ohio had switched to the United Trotting Association.

Under the everyday leadership of Don Detrick, the UTA's dynamic executive secretary, every facet of Standard bred racing in Ohio was brought into an organized structure. The registration of race horses grew from 871 in 1932 to 910 in 1933 and continued to a 1936 peak of 1026 horses.

The stress of his job affected Don Detrick's health. In 1934, he became critically ill and was forced to resign. His wife was appointed to fill his position. Finances remained tight and preliminary talks with the American Trotting Association concerning a merger were held. The two groups were unable to reach an agreement. At times nearly all the organization's officers became discouraged, but the association held together and by the late 1930's the UTA and the county fairs in Ohio were all making money. The organization had proven it could make its fines and suspensions stick, although the appeals board would occasionally overturn a ruling if it seemed arbitrary.

The United Trotting Association had emerged as a prototype for representing county fairs, but much of the harness racing sport across the nation was still in disarray. By the late 1930's, the leading figures in the sport were looking for a single governing body. No one pushed harder than E. Roland Harriman, the president of the Grand Circuit, which offered harness racing's biggest stake races. Roland's family was incredibly wealthy, most of the family fortune coming as a result of his father's control and expansion of the Union Pacific Railroad. His father's love of Standardbred racing had passed to Roland, who continued to operate the Arden Homestead Stable on the family's 32,000 acre country estate in Arden, New York. The family also owned the Historic Track at Goshen, New York.

Roland campaigned excellent trotters on the Grand Circuit. In 1929, at the age of 34, he became president of the Grand Circuit. Roland and a few close associates literally kept stake races and the tabulation of race and breeding records afloat during the 1930's.

He founded the Trotting Horse Club of America to encourage the foundation and growth of more stake races on the Grand Circuit. He also pledged, mainly at his own expense, to print the official Standardbred YEARBOOK and REGISTER OF PEDIGREES. Those books had originally been issued on a yearly basis by the American Trotting Register Association, but in the 1920's that organization had run out of steam and money. Roland had both the YEARBOOK and REGISTER prepared and published as special editions of HOOFBEATS magazine from 1933 to 1938. HOOFBEATS was the monthly publication of the Trotting Horse Club of America.

Roland Harriman did not spend all his time around race horses. He was a partner in a Wall Street bank, Chairman of the board of the Union Pacific Railroad, director of the Delaware and Hudson Railway, and served as a board member of NEWSWEEK, the Anaconda Copper Mining Company, American Banknote Company and two insurance companies. He also served on several charitable boards, most notably as treasurer of the American Museum of Natural History.

Roland and Leo McNamara, the owner of the Two Gaits breeding farm in Indianapolis, were determined to bring all of the harness racing groups together. On October 25, 1938 Roland sent telegrams to 50 individuals he considered to be leading Standardbred horsemen in the nation, inviting them to a national gathering in Indianapolis on November 11-13, 1938. The purpose was to discuss "matters for the good of our sport and to recommend specific actions thereon. Will was one of the invited.

Roland Harriman's prestige as a horseman and his willingness to commit considerable financial resources were enough to draw most of the 50 key men to Indianapolis. The meeting quickly evolved into two threads. The first was to divide into committees to agree on the best methods to handle rules, starting, classification and organization. The second thread was to reach agreement on one national organization. At the end of the three-day session, representatives from the American Trotting Association, the United Trotting Association, the National Trotting Association, Roland Harriman's Trotting Horse Club of America and the American Trotting Register Association issued a "Horsemen's Declaration" calling for the combining into one organization on January 1, 1939.

The United States Trotting Association did not complete its agreement until January 6, 1939. Representatives of the various associations met in Columbus on January 6<sup>th</sup> and January 7<sup>th</sup> to finalize the details and file the incorporation papers with the Ohio Secretary of State's office. The United States Trotting Association was officially born.

Selecting a President for the new organization would be critical. Roland Harriman had been a leader in organizing the Indianapolis meeting and he had personally guaranteed the USTA's expenses for the first two years. The presidency was his if he wanted it. Harriman realized that for all his input and dedication, he was regarded as being part of the moneyed interests in horse racing. Most horsemen raced one or two horses for small purses at county fairs. They never expected to have the resources to compete in Grand Circuit Races, and they saw little in common with those who did. Many of the men invited to the Indianapolis meeting were wealthy breeders and owners. Of the 33 original regional directors, eight had horses eligible to the 1939 or 1940 Hambletonian. The USTA's president had to be a man the small owners could respect and trust.

Will Rittenour had been the only president of the United Trotting Association. It had grown to 79 Ohio tracks and the fair at Mt. Sterling, Kentucky. Every one of the UTA's members made a profit in 1938. Since the opening fair at Piketon in 1907, Will had clerked local fairs. He understood the concerns of the smaller stables. On the other hand, the United Trotting Association had only one-third the membership of the NTA and was nearly 200 tracks shy of the ATA total. Will did not seem a likely choice to be president.

Roland Harriman found very positive attributes in Will Rittenour. The fact that the quiet, self-effacing judge from Pike County had dealt with the problems of owners and drivers at the local fairs and the larger State Fair stakes for years was important. When the Grand Circuit races came to Ohio, the horses had raced under UTA rules which the Grand Circuit drivers considered fair and reasonable. In 1936 and 1937, the Ohio State Fair track hosted Grand Circuit stakes and Roland had worked directly with Will.

There was a shared bond that went further. Will was a small town lawyer, while Roland was one of the wealthiest men in the world. Both were Yale graduates. In fact, Will and Roland's brother Averill, had known each other in college.

When Roland Harriman declined the USTA presidency, Will Rittenour was elected unanimously. The REPUBLICAN HERALD ran one paragraph on the front page the next week announcing Will's election, noting that the USTA's Board of Directors, under the Judge's leadership, was working on the simplification of racing regulations. The February, 1939 issue of HOOF BEATS MAGAZINES, which was now part of the USTA, offered a positive view of Judge Rittenour, declaring that "he combines excellence in the technical aspects of the law with sound common sense and understanding of the harness horse sport in all its branches. . . . (H)is practical appreciation of racing problems will aid in making his tenure of office a decided advantage to horse interests". A picture of the USTA officials showed a tall, dignified Roland Harriman who was the honorary president. Physically towering over the entire group, looking quite distinguished in his three-piece suit was 53-year-old G.W. "Will" Rittenour.

To expedite the USTA's startup in 1939, business would be conducted from the United Trotting Association's former office in Bellefontaine, The National Trotting Association's office in Hartford and the Trotting Horse Club's building in Goshen, New York. The USTA billed itself as the national sanctioning body for harness racing and it did possess key components. Roland Harriman's Grand Circuit was a member. The YEARBOOK and the REGISTER, both essential to standardizing the sport, now passed to the auspices of the USTA. Will Rittenour's UTA with 80 members and the 215 track of the NTA were ready to come aboard.

The third regional sanctioning body, The American Trotting Association, had its offices in Chicago and listed 270 tracks in its membership. The ATA had lost several tracks in Ohio after the UTA was formed in 1932. In the mid-1930s, the ATA skipped Ohio, but made aggressive moves into Kentucky, Tennessee and Pennsylvania to sign tracks away from the NTA. The American Trotting Association had sent representatives to Indianapolis in 1938 who signed the "Horsemen's Declaration" A week later the ATA declined to join, leaving the USTA with only 60 percent of the nation's tracks and none west of Ohio.

The man hired to coordinate the everyday activities of the USTA was a New York lawyer named Frank L. Wiswall. Wiswall was given the titles of Executive Vice

President and Secretary. He had been elected to the New York state legislature in 1920 at the age of 25. The next year, he moved to the New York state senate. Elected office did not pay well so Wiswall entered law practice in the state capitol of Albany. He proved an excellent lawyer. One of his lifelong interests was harness racing. He campaigned a small stable in New York and was President of the Albany County Driving Club. Wiswall saw the potential for growth in harness racing on a national basis, and the promise that pari-mutual betting held for the state of New York in particular. He had attended the Indianapolis meeting, constructing both the prospective by-laws and the rule book for the new USTA. Wiswall was handsome, charming, extremely persuasive and looked every bit the part of a successful corporate lawyer. Coordinating the activities of the three USTA offices would have been a full-time job, but it was the least of Wiswall's challenges in 1939.

It was soon obvious that the American Trotting Association was not going to surrender to the USTA without a battle. The ATA member tracks wanted to see some evidence that the new organization could succeed. Relatively few switched during the 1939 racing season. It was not from a lack of effort on Wiswall's part. He was tireless and driven. He was also working on getting the New York betting bill passed. An indication of his persuasive powers was a matinee at his home track at Altamont, New York in October, 1939. The matinee offered no purses and the racing season was basically over, yet he convinced the owners of Billy Direct to bring the great pacer to Altamont for an exhibition. The purpose was to showcase the potential of harness racing to the press, politicians and moneyed interests as a way to push the pari-mutual bill. The weather was lousy, keeping the crowd to a couple of thousand. Billy Direct did not disappoint. What was originally scheduled as an exhibition turned into a time trial and a new half-mile record of two minutes flat was established. The publicity for the USTA and the push for passage of the betting bill made the day a success.

At the end of 1939, Will Rittenour was once again chosen President. The organization had not shown a profit, but it had made substantial gains in membership. Will was the ideal counterweight to the hard-charging Frank Wiswall. When feelings were hurt or egos damaged, it was Will who listened. When employees, spread across the three work sites, felt neglected or mistreated, it was the Judge who reassured them. The workload for certain employees was terrific. Will Gahagan would continue as editor of HOOF BEATS magazine which would now be a USTA publication. He was officially Assistant Secretary of the USTA as well as holding the critical post of Registrar. In addition, he was the long-time Secretary of the Grand Circuit promoting at least a half-dozen major stakes each year. In 1927, he had accepted a position with the Register Association to put the registration records of Standard and Non-Standard horses into some workable order. It had taken years. The formation of the USTA brought changes in the rules. As the USTA grew, so did the number of horses that had to be registered. Gahagan, in his mid-50s, took on the challenge. Frank P. Kenney continued as the editor of the yearbook that had been printed as part of HOOF BEATS during the 1930s. The USTA YEARBOOK was expanded to carry race results in one volume and the Sire and Dam records in a second.

The biggest development in the expansion of harness racing as a business occurred when Roosevelt Raceway in Westbury, New York opened on the evening of September 2, 1940. The thoroughbred interests in New York had reserved the best

daytime racing dates. Standardbred horsemen built Roosevelt Raceway and Saratoga Raceway at Saratoga Springs, New York specifically for nighttime racing. Nighttime harness racing was not entirely new. In 1926, the track at Toledo started carrying its Grand Circuit races under the lights. When the Emmons bill passed in 1933, Will Rittenour and his supporters were able to get a provision that harness racing could be held between the hours of noon to midnight. The thoroughbreds in Ohio were restricted to daytime hours. The public response to night racing at Roosevelt and Saratoga was so successful that a dozen similar tracks were planned in other states.

The spectacular success of the two standard bred tracks convinced the state of New York to create a state standard bred racing commission in 1940. Frank Wiswall was appointed the first Secretary of the new commission. He continued to work with the USTA through 1941 before resigning his position as Executive Vice President. He remained as Secretary of the board.

The entry of the United States into WWII in December, 1941 put a temporary hold on expansion. The war effort took over several state fairgrounds. Will Rittenour and his colleagues at the USTA found themselves facing President Roosevelt who was hostile to any racing activities during the war. Night racing was suspended for the duration. Grand Circuit meetings and state fairs at Toledo, Columbus, Indianapolis and Sedalia, Missouri were cancelled. Roland Harriman's Historic Track at Goshen, New York held only sporadic breeders' meetings. In 1943, only 461 tracks had any racing at all, off by more than 100 from 1938. The number of horses that were raced was one-third less than in 1940.

Even with all the problems caused by the war, the United States Trotting Association continued to grow. The war wiped out the last vestiges of the American Trotting Association. In 1941, the USTA showed its first profit after losing \$26,000 in its first two years. Roger Duncan, the new Executive Director, lacked Frank Wiswall's flair, but he was a careful administrator. The 1942 numbers were good and Will Rittenour began a call for a permanent headquarters.

One major problem remained that had to be solved if harness racing was to become a major spectator sport. The races were still started by the same "Yell or Bell" system that had been in place for decades. It was one thing to see three or four "wave offs" at a county fair before a race actually got under way. It was quite another story where bettors had plunked down money to see if their horse could win. They wanted the races finished in a short time, so they could bet the next race. Steve Phillips, widely regarded as the best starter in the sport, had been experimenting with the idea of a mobile starting gate since the 1930s. Others were developing alternative starting measures, but none were feasible. In 1944, the USTA actually studied a standing start similar to Thoroughbred starts. It was quickly discarded.

Steve Phillips continued to experiment. He made numerous visits to the Rittenour home in Picketon where he always found the Judge supportive. After WWII ended in 1945, Phillips took a design to the Liberty Aircraft Corporation on Long Island. A mobile gate was constructed on a modified truck chassis with two retractable metal arms. Roosevelt Raceway had reopened after WWII and Phillips convinced the race officials to let him use the mobile gate in 1946. It was a success and the Hambletonian Trot, held at the Goshen track in 1946, also used it. There was one competing model, but it was soon

discarded. Will Rittenour considered his long-time support of Steve Phillip's efforts as the most important achievement of his USTA Presidency.

Not all of the Judge's USTA responsibilities involved crises. There were always dinners to preside over and presentations to make. The fairgrounds in Delaware, Ohio had hosted Grand Circuit races since 1940, the second year of the track's existence. Under the leadership of promoter Joe Neville and race secretary Hank Thomson, the Delaware races gained immediate national attention. The half-mile track was lightning fast. During the 1941 week-long meeting, eight world records were set. Five came on the same afternoon. Neville and Thomson, noting the lack of big-money races for three-year-old pacers, decided to fill the void. It was announced in January, 1944 that a race for pacers, with a purse comparable to the Hambletonian three-year-old trot, would be held in 1946. Owners could nominate the 1944 foals. Neville's next step was to announce a nationwide contest to name the race. The winning name would net the submitter \$100. He then contacted Will Rittenour and prevailed on him to chair a committee to choose the winning name. Will recruited two of his USTA employees as well as the editors of HORSEMAN AND FAIR WORLD and the HARNESS HORSE magazine. Participation in the contest exceeded even the optimistic Neville's expectations. Will and his committee had to sort through 4,000 entries, before selecting the name Little Brown Jug, a legendary 19<sup>th</sup> Century pacer. The horse had spent much of its life as a plow horse before being turned into a racehorse. The winning name was announced at the USTA's 1945 annual meeting. Ironically, the submitter of Little Brown Jug name died before the announcement came.

The Judge's role as President of the USTA never drew much attention in the local papers. An article in the December 12, 1945 REPUBLICAN HERALD noted that he had spoken at the District Banquet of the Ohio Fair Managers Association. No mention was made of the USTA. Two weeks later, the paper did mention that Will had been reelected as Vice President of the Pike County Fair Board.

Will Rittenour continued as President of the USTA until 1946. He continued to chair annual meetings of the USTA board until his retirement in 1952. Will and his wife, Lillian, made regular appearances at major stake races and USTA functions where they were always accorded a place of honor. In a 1960 article in HOOF BEATS, he remained the same modest self-effacing man, giving credit to others and downplaying his own role in the growth of the United States Trotting Association.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### The 1940's

The summer of 1943 was a critical time for harness racing at the Pike County Fair. It was the second full year of American participation in WWII. Men and women were leaving Pike County in sizeable numbers to join the war effort. Many more were working in defense plants across the state. For the first time women were being actively recruited to work in the wartime manufacturing plants.

Everyone in Pike County faced rationing. Tires and gas were on the restricted list limiting travel. The Pike County Fair was one of the few vacation times county residents could still enjoy. The Ohio Department of Agriculture strongly encouraged farmers to increase production to support the war effort. County fairs would be the showcase for those efforts.

Harness racing received less governmental support. President Roosevelt made his opposition known. Local county fair boards agreed that racing never made money for the fairs and cutting expenses was a necessary war time sacrifice. In 1942, there was no racing at the Pike County Fair. It would take an effort to bring it back in 1943.

The fans of harness racing had been experiencing up and downs since the start of the Great Depression in the early 1930's. As attendance at the Pike County Fair had fallen, so had the number of races. In 1938, only 6,800 people attended the Pike County Fair, a third less than the crowds at the initial fair at Piketon back in 1907. The speed program in the late 1930s still offered only four races, each with four or five starters. In 1940, 18 horses competed in the four races. The next year the number of horses jumped to 29. The cancellation of the 1942 races cast uncertainty on just how many horsemen would find the gas and tire rationing to be too great a detriment to hauling horses to Piketon.

The Pike County Fair Board reluctantly agreed to offer a racing program in 1943. The fairs in Chillicothe, Jackson County and Scioto County had all announced that they would not be racing in 1943. In early summer, no one was certain how many horses would come to Piketon.

One advantage that Pike County held was its reputation as having one of the best-run racing programs in the state. Will Rittenour, with years of experience with the state fair races and his Presidency of both the United Trotting Association and the United States Trotting Association, still clerked the races at Piketon. Equally important to the Pike County Fair's reputation was the presence of the race starter, L.P. "Steve" Vallery.

Steve Vallery had been active in horse racing for 40 years, an interest he shared with three of his brothers. His older brother, Oscar, had been one of the top drivers during the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Charles Vallery, a financier as well as the owner of several Pike County farms, had driven Jessie D. a trotting mare, to victory in the first race ever contested at the Piketon Fair in 1907. Charles drove his own horses for several years before settling for the role of owner as he grew older. He still had at least one horse racing at Piketon every year. The third brother, Clarence, had owned Cadmus, Jr., a horse that won races around Ohio from the first fair at Piketon until Clarence finally sold him in 1911. Clarence had operated the Ford Motors dealership in Waverly since 1914. He had formed a partnership with a Washington Court House farmer and businessman, McKinley Kirk, in 1938 to breed and race Standardbreds. McKinley was convinced they could

develop superior horses by breeding to the daughters of his foundation mare, Belle Mahone.

Steve Vallery had bought the Stahler Brothers Hardware in Waverly in 1912. He had owned horses in partnership with his brother Charles through the 1930s and into the 1940s. Steve's particular interest was in the difficult job of being a race starter. His first experience was at the Pike County Fair in mid-1930s. His distinctive voice and his commanding manner soon had him in demand at other local fairs. He was appointed to the speed committee at the Ohio State Fair, starting the featured stake races for several years. Twice he served as Speed Superintendent at the State Fair. Steve had an approach that was uniquely his own. As the horsemen turned their horses to score them for a start, they would be greeted with, "Wait! Wait! Wait! Let's bring the hosses past the start in a straight line, Gentlemen". Horsemen could still recite his orders years after the races were all using the mobile starting gates.

The 1943 racing schedule would include four races. The local trainers at Piketon would have a few entries. Charles Vallery would drop in at least two. Still, there was concern that the fair board was about to commit \$1,200 in purses and not have enough horses for competitive racing. The responsibility for finding a field of horses fell to the Pike County Fair Secretary Frank Cooper.

Frank had returned after college to run his father's general store, the largest in Piketon. Frank and his wife Polly had quickly settled into community life, and Frank was elected to the fair board. His organizational abilities soon elevated him to the position of fair secretary, a post he would retain for decades. He loved horse racing and he and his son, Johnny, who was just entering elementary school, spent June and July, 1943 at the fairs in central and southern Ohio that were hosting horse racing. Frank and Johnny would go in the horse barns and pass out the Pike County Fair race schedule to horsemen. That allowed the owners to see if they had horses that fit into the classifications designated at Piketon. The Coopers went back to Piketon to await the results of their efforts.

The fair opened to sunny and warm weather in the second week of August, 1943. Attendance broke all records. The Piketon Fire Department food booth and the various church eating stands sold more sandwiches than ever before.

The horse races were held on Friday and Saturday afternoons. Frank Cooper's efforts were rewarded. Horsemen filled most of the stalls in the two shed row barns. The 2:25 pace on Friday drew so many entries, Will Rittenour split it into two divisions. A similar situation occurred in the 2:15 pace on Saturday. The other two races had either five or six entries. The horses were shipped in from a number of locations in Ohio. Bellefontaine, Kenton, Waldo, Perrysville, Arlington, Columbus and Milford were all listed addresses for the owners. Jesse Palmer brought horses from Indianapolis. None came close to the distance traveled by 15-year-old Billy Raymond. He and his father had brought horses from Southern Pines, North Carolina.

When horses in the 2:17 trot turned and approached Steve Vallery's starting line, Billy Raymond had his father's mare Millie Aubrey in against one of the legendary drivers to compete at Piketon on a regular basis. Uncle Joe Wolfe, from Circleville, was 77 years old by Piketon's calculations. Other southern Ohio fairs used varying ages. Part of the confusion probably came from Uncle Joe's habit of celebrating his birthday every week at every track at which he raced. Whatever his exact age, Joe was widely

appreciated by racing fans. He was always assigned the same stalls at Piketon and that shed row barn came to be known as Uncle Joe Wolfe's barn. He would be starting his nine-year-old stallion, Little Pat W., a horse he had campaigned since it was a colt.

Uncle Joe Wolfe drove Little Pat W. to victory in the first heat, Billy Raymond picking up third place. In the second heat, Uncle Joe's old trotter broke in the stretch. No one was too surprised. Little Pat W. seemed to break a lot and then go galloping into contention before Uncle Joe would pull the horse back on stride. The judges at Piketon were not charitable on this occasion. Little Pat W. was placed sixth, and Billy Raymond was awarded the win. In the third heat, Little Pat W. was scratched.

Billy Raymond, with his chief competition out of the race, did not immediately push his mare in the final heat. At the head of the stretch he realized that Charles Swisshelm, a driver from Hillsboro who had been racing at Piketon for more than 20 years, had a lot of horse left. Swisshelm, who had been a defense witness in the Kemper Smith murder case in 1923, drove his mare, Jewel Spencer, across the line in first place ahead of Raymond's mare. Billy still finished first in summary.

The highlight of the 1943 fair came in the first division of the 2:15 pace on Saturday. Piketon had a reputation as a fast half-mile track. Hattie B. had established the track record of 2:09  $\frac{3}{4}$  in a time trial back in 1911. In 1937, a pacer, Little Chan, went 2:09  $\frac{1}{4}$  in a race. No one was ready for Gabe Cartnal's performance in the 2:15 pace. Cartnal won the race in straight heats with the pacer Moon Flower. The time in the second heat was 2:05  $\frac{3}{4}$ . Moon Flower had knocked almost four seconds off the old record.

The 1943 fair had brought racing back to Piketon. WWII was still ongoing and the Pike County speed committee was looking to strengthen its position. Steve Vallery was starting fairs all over the state and he heard the horsemen's concerns. The owners, faced with mounting transportation costs, were looking for a series of fairs on consecutive weeks in close geographical proximity.

Steve Vallery met with the Pike County Fair speed committee which included himself, Will Rittenour, and two younger fair board members, Robert Vallery and Madeira Brown, Jr. Ross County had dropped racing for the duration of the war, so the Pike County committee would have to partner with other local fairs.

In the late spring of 1944, Steve Vallery arranged a meeting of speed committees of the fairs in Pike County, Scioto County, Jackson County, and Adams County. An agreement was reached to have the four fairs offer similar classes of races at each fair so horsemen would have a chance to race for four consecutive weeks. Each fair would offer six races, each with \$ 300 purses. Steve Vallery agreed to be the starter for each fair.

The 1944 circuit concept proved to be a success. More races brought more horses. The only negative for the horsemen was the quality of the competition. Local horses had trouble finishing in the money. Charles Vallery's pacer, Escamillo, took second money in the 2:25 pace. McKinley Kirk drove Patsy Mc, a mare he owned with Clarence Vallery to 6<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> place finishes in the 2:24 pace. Uncle Joe Wolfe came back to Piketon, but the best he could do was 4<sup>th</sup> place money with his pacing mare, Gertie T. III.

Buoyed by the success of the 1944 fair, the speed committee worked on the 1945 program. Will Rittenour remained as clerk and Steve Vallery once again would start the Piketon races before moving on to the State Fair. Bob Vallery and Madeira Brown had assumed larger roles in the planning. Bob, a 1933 graduate of Waverly, had returned after

finishing Ohio State to join his father's Ford dealership. He was quite interested in the horses his father and McKinley Kirk were sending to the races. Madeira Brown had moved to Piketon from Chillicothe shortly after his marriage in 1939. He succeeded his father as manager of the sprawling Woodburn Farms, the largest agricultural operation in Pike County. Madeira's grandfather, Judge John Vanmeter, had given the name Woodburn Farm to the 2,000 acres that made up the family's holdings, but to most Pike Countians it was known merely as the Van Meter Farm. As farm manager, Madeira supervised the employees who farmed the core river bottom land. He also dealt with a handful of farmers who farmed smaller holdings on shares. Madeira, who was not yet 30 years old, was busy rearing a family with his wife Jane, and participating in a variety of community affairs. He enjoyed harness racing, but his job responsibilities limited his participation to the fair's speed committee.

Bob Vallery kept Madeira apprised of the progress his father's horses were making in the summer of 1945. Clarence Vallery and McKinley Kirk were campaigning six horses. McKinley drove the horses and he was high on a 2-year-old filly, Honest Truth. The horse getting the most attention was their 3-year-old pacer, Valdo Abbe. Beginning at the county fair in Marion in early June, Valdo Abbe won on a regular basis. On August 2, the colt scorched the half mile track at Washington Court House in 2:03 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>. Valdo Abbe would not race at Pike County, but his progress drew regular coverage in the local papers.

Frank and Johnny Cooper had traveled widely to advertise the 1945 races at Piketon. Nine races were scheduled over the three days of races during the second week of August. The horse stalls filled quickly on Monday and Tuesday.

World news competed for the attention of fairgoers. The first Atomic bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima, Japan on August 6, 1945. Three days later, the second exploded at Nagasaki. The Germans had surrendered in May, and radio commentators were predicting a Japanese surrender by week's end. The crowds were in a festive mood.

Frank Cooper sensed that the 1945 attendance could be a record breaker from the fair's official opening on Thursday. He was stunned when the Saturday crowd, alone, topped 10,000. The grandstand and any standing space along the outside rail were filled to capacity. The races were competitive, the high light being a 2:07 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> mile trotted by a mare, Sharon Arlene, which destroyed the old trotting record. By the final race on Saturday, 62 horses had competed for \$ 2,261 in purses. Madeira Brown's attention was briefly diverted from the races on Saturday morning when a registered Hereford heifer he consigned to the Pike County Purebred Livestock Sale brought the top price in the sale at \$ 310.

After the last fair closed each summer, a group of Pike County horsemen and their friends drove to Lexington, Kentucky for the Lexington Trots. Held at the Big Red Mile, the world's fastest mile track, it featured a week of races and individual time trials. In October 1945, Bob Vallery and his brother Harry, along with their uncle Steve, Hancel (Hank) Butler who owned the Grand Tavern in Waverly and Madeira Brown and Dr. Mack Moore made the trek. The men decided to attend the Tattersalls fall horse sale, located next to the Big Red Mile. Some of the Pike Countians were considering the purchase of a horse. Madeira and Mack Moore, who had moved from Adams County to Piketon to practice medicine during the 1930s, were the two men with no plans to buy.

Hank Butler and his father, Preston, purchased a yearling colt sired by the stallion Long Key out of a producing dam. Steve Vallery bought a 3-year-old filly by Tiger Flowers out of a Peter Volo Dam. Near the end of the day a yearling colt by Guy Castleton was brought into the sales ring. Guy Castleton was nearly 20 years old and had produced only one outstanding colt in his career as a sire. The yearling's dam had produced previous winners, but no one at the sale showed much interest. On a whim, Mack Moore bid \$ 250 and found himself the owner of a race colt. That presented two problems. He knew nothing about training a horse, and he had no way to get his colt back to Piketon. At that moment he decided to take in a partner. If Madeira could transport the horse back to Piketon, winter him at Woodburn and break and train him, he would become half-owner. The offer appealed to Madeira. Steve Vallery made him the same offer on his horse. The REPUBLICAN HERALD described the transactions in an October 11, 1945 article, "Trainer J.M. Brown of the Woodburn Farm of Piketon immediately became a co-owner of the two colts and will be a manager of them during the racing season".

When Madeira called his wife to have a truck and trailer sent to Lexington, she was playing Bridge with Mack Moore's wife. Mrs. Moore was absolutely incredulous at the news.

For Bob Vallery, the autumn of 1945 would permanently alter his world. His father, Clarence, died suddenly. Bob and Harry were left with the operation of the Ford dealership, which their Dad had owned since 1914. To settle the estate, it was decided to dissolve the racing partnership with McKinley Kirk. On December 15, 1945 a dispersal sale was held at Kirk's farm in New Holland, Ohio. Despite zero temperatures and icy roads, buyers showed up from all over the eastern United State. Valdo Abbe, coming off a great summer went to Mary Lou O'Conner of Warwick, Rhode Island for \$10, 500. The average price for the 16 head was \$ 2, 243.

Charles Vallery attended his brother's sale. After McKinley Kirk bought the 2-year-old filly, Honest Truth, out of the sale for \$ 3,600, Charles bought a yearling, The Miracle, for \$2, 000. His filly was a full sister to Honest Truth. Charles also bought a yearling trotting filly, Big Girl, for \$ 1, 350. Charles left the two fillies in the care of Frank Lanum who trained at the Washington Court House fairgrounds. Bob and Harry Vallery still maintained a partnership with McKinley Kirk to continue breeding colts.

Madeira Brown enlisted the aid of Si Zimmerman who had worked with horses at the Piketon fairgrounds for years. Their intent was to have Florian, ready for the 1946 fair season. Madeira and Mack Moore had decided to geld the colt shortly after they brought the horse back to Piketon. The breaking and training went well and Madeira and Mack decided to start Florian in a 2-year-old trot at the Ross County Fair two weeks before the Piketon Fair. Madeira would drive in the race.

The 1946 races in Chillicothe were the first in several years. A new fairground was being established. While a track had been built, the rest of the grounds were basically a tent city. Horsemen had to find stables for their horses. Brownie put Florian in an old brick barn on a nearby farm.

Madeira brought Florian to the start in the 2 year old trot. The gelding got away well and proved the best in the field. His fastest time was 2:15, an excellent record for a 2-year-old trotter on a new track. Piketon would be the next start.

The 1946 Pike County Fair began on a Thursday. The 1945 fair attendance had exceeded all previous years, and Frank Cooper did not expect to top it. As he watched people began to stream onto the fairgrounds, it did appear to Frank that this crowd was at least as large. He believed that many in the crowd had come to Piketon to see several local horses race.

The opening race on Thursday was a 2-year-old pace. Charles Vallery had entered the filly, The Miracle, that he had purchased at his brother's dispersal sale. Driven by Frank Lanum and cheered on by the grandstand crowd, The Miracle was an easy winner in straight heats.

The next race had crowd favorite Uncle Joe Wolfe, driving his stallion, Little Pat W. When starter and announcer Steve Vallery told the crowd that Uncle Joe was celebrating his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, the response was loud and continuous. Dressed in his bright blue silks, Uncle Joe drove his 12 year old trotter to two straight second places before falling off to third in the final seat.

Madeira Brown and Mack Moore entered Florian in the 2-year-old trot. Hank Butler also put his trotter, Major Key, in the race. The horses were scoring for the first heat when Hank's colt suddenly lurched, tossing him from the sulky. Hank lost his grip on the reins and the colt made for the barn. The horse was finally caught and brought back to the track. The 2-year-olds scored once more and Steve Vallery let them go. Major Key, still shaken from his run-off, finished fifth in the first heat and fourth in the final. Madeira Brown drove Florian to a second place finish in the first heat and won the final. Florian took place first in the summary.

Charles Vallery had another horse Escamillo finish fourth in the 2:18 trot on Saturday. Dr. Vic Eiselstein drove Escamillo. Vic lived in Pomeroy, but trained his horses at Piketon. In that race Uncle Joe Wolfe finished third with Gertie T. III, Jesse Palmer who came all the way from Indianapolis finished second and O.C. Silvey of Dayton picked up one of the three first places he won at the fair in the 2:18 trot..

Charles Vallery continued to race The Miracle with good success. Madeira Brown won with Florian at Pomeroy and finished second in one of the 2-year-old early closers at the Ohio State Fair. Madeira, who had only a few drives under his belt, lost to "Curly" Smart's horse. Smart's success on Ohio tracks was legendary.

Madeira and Mack Moore decided to turn Florian out for the rest of the season. Madeira had enjoyed the racing, but training had taken a lot of time from his farm management duties. Florian was a promising colt, but Madeira could not devote the time necessary to develop him further. Mack bought out Madeira's share.

The 1947 racing season was memorable. The Pike County Fair speed committee remained unchanged in Steve Vallery, Will Rittenour, Bob Vallery, and Madeira Brown. An article in the REPUBLICAN HERALD, the week before the Pike County Fair started, listed the horses scheduled to appear. The two main attractions would be Florian and The Miracle.

Mack Moore had turned the training of Florian over to O.C. Silvey, who had won three races at the Pike County Fair the previous year. Silvey was a full-time trainer and he had Florian in a race at Wapokoneta on May 30, 1947. By the start of the Piketon fair during the second week of August, the trotter had entered 10 races, winning 11 of 16 heats with three seconds and a third. Local race watchers were comparing him with not

only the best 3-year-old trotters in the state, but with the Rodney and Hoot Mon, the top two in most national polls.

The initial reports predicted that Charles Vallery would bring his regular stable to Piketon, but not The Miracle. He owned two other excellent 3 year olds, the pacer Linda B and the trotter, Big Girl. Charles had a couple of older horses that started occasionally. Regardless of which horse was entered, attention always centered on his driver, Colby Turner. A childhood accident with a corn shredder had taken both of Colby's hands and forearms. He did not have artificial limbs. He would climb onto the sulky and have someone loop a rein around each arm. His whip would be held under an arm. To whip the horse he had to turn his body in a snapping motion. Somehow, he got the job done. He always seemed to get plenty of drives.

At the last minute, Charles Vallery decided to ship The Miracle in for the Pike County Fair. The filly had already won three of five races at the raceway at Westbury, New York and had finished second in a heat of the \$6,500 Abbedale Stake for 3-year-old pacing fillies on July 29. She faded to eighth in the second heat, but still collected third place in summary. The purse in the 3-year-old pace at Waverly was only \$350 and it would be a three-heat race. Add to that, the fact that Charles' other 3-year-old pacer, Linda B, would be a huge favorite in The Miracle's absence. Whatever the motivation, a huge crowd was expected to watch.

There were other local horses entered at Piketon. Hank Butler, his father Preston and his brother Vora were campaigning four horses at the fair. Hank had driven their pacer Pluto Law to a win at Washington Court House the week before Piketon. Beril Crace, the proprietor of Beril's Bar and Grill in Piketon, would be driving Main Rose, a 2-year-old he owned in partnership with Mack Moore. Beril would also drive Viola Abbe, a mare owned by Uncle Dan Evans. The mare was the last of a long string of horses Dan Evans had trained at Piketon over the past 20 years. With no close family, he alternated living in a shack at the fair grounds and the Piketon Hotel. Beril had won with Viola Abbe at the Proctorville Fair.

The 3-year-old Trot was the opening race on Thursday. Florian won all three heats as the crowd expected. Colby Turner got Big Girl up for second money. The 2-year-old trot went to Beril Crace with Main Rose in straight heats. Madeira Brown was second with Ruth Main, a filly he owned with Steve Vallery.

The 3-year-old pace was on Friday. Seven starters came to the line, with most eyes on The Miracle. Steve Vallery gave the call to start and The Miracle took off like a rocket. Charles Vallery wanted his filly to set a record for the first half mile. To the delight of disbelieving fans, the filly hit the half-mile mark in a minute flat. The Miracle won all three heats although the mile times were less than remarkable. Linda B, driven by Colby Turner was second.

In the final race, the Free for All Pace, Uncle Joe Wolfe now listed at 81 years of age drove the 13 year-old Little Pat W. to a pair of fourths and a third.

Race fans in Pike County continued to follow the exploits of Florian and The Miracle. On August 22, Florian finally got to face Rodney in a 3-year-old trot at the Ohio State Fairgrounds. Rodney won all three heats with Patrick Hanover, another Grand Circuit colt finishing second. Florian was third in each of the three heats. Rodney who won all five of the events the trotter entered earned \$133,000 for the year. Florian went on to enter seven more races finishing with a straight heat victory at Lancaster in

October. All told the horse was entered in 20 races, trotting a total of 40 heats. Florian was first 28 times, with four seconds and six thirds. A fourth place in one heat and a fifth in another were the only times out of the money. Because the purses were small, all but three for less than \$1,000, the horse's earnings for 1947 were just over \$5,000.

The Miracle moved on from Piketon to the fair at Troy. Now being driven by Clayton Cox, the filly won two of the three heats. The next week, The Miracle had trouble with a field of older horses, but consecutive straight heat victories at Wapakoneta, Bellfountaine and Sydney convinced Charles Vallery to take a substantial financial risk. He paid the necessary fees to start The Miracle in the Little Brown Jug at Delaware.

The Little Brown Jug would be contested for the second time in 1947. The purse was \$ 38,200 and 30,000 fans would see the race. The colt pacers, Forbes Chief and Goose Bay, were heavily favored. Nine other pacers were entered. The Miracle would be the only filly.

Charles Vallery thought the Jug was a logical fit for The Miracle. In 1946, McKinley Kirk had entered Honest Truth, a full sister to The Miracle. The filly had finished third in the first two heats before slipping to eighth in the third heat. Charles believed that The Miracle was a better race filly than her sister.

The 1947 Jug took only two heats with Forbes Chief winning easily. The Miracle did not warm up well for Clayton Cox and the filly was never a factor, finishing eleventh and last in the first heat and ninth in the second.

A week later, The Miracle won in straight heats at the fair in Hamilton with a similar result the following week at Ottawa. At Coshocton, on October 9, the filly won the first heat but fell to second and then fifth against older horses. Two days later, The Miracle finished 4-3-4 in a 3-year-old pace. Charles Vallery decided to turn the filly out. For the 1947 racing season, The Miracle started in 16 races, pacing in a total of 38 heats with 24 wins, two seconds and three thirds. The filly's winnings were \$5,500.

Charles decided to sell his two other 3-year-olds at McKinley Kirk's sale in the fall of 1947. Big Girl brought \$2500 and Linda B. sold for \$2,000.

Steve Vallery was elected President of the Pike County Fair Board in 1948. He kept his spot on the fair's speed committee, but cut back on some of his former activities. He brought in Howard Fuller from McConnellsville to start the 1948 races. Howard Jewett of Portsmouth served as the presiding judge with Steve as one of his assistants. The timers were Bob Vallery, John Rittenour and Mack Moore. Madeira Brown was now responsible for supervising the race track preparations and making the barn assignments for the horsemen.

The race program offered nine races over three days. The speed committee had solicited contributions from local businesses to up the purses in all races to at least \$400 to be more competitive with competing fairs. Frank Cooper had been encountering resistance from horse owners because the purse structure at Piketon was so low. He was hopeful that more horses would ship to Pike County.

The fair opened on Thursday, August 12 with a full grandstand. Fred Rowe won the 2:28 Trot in three straight heats with Harry R., a gelding owned by Rowe and Wilbur Busler of Jackson. Fred Rowe had trained horses at Piketon for years. A bachelor, he lived for part of the year at the fairgrounds and the rest of the time at the Piketon Hotel. Some of his spare time was spent with one of the maiden elementary teachers in Piketon.



While his main vocation was training horses, Fred also served as the part-time town marshal in Piketon. On the weekends he would put on a sport coat and a western hat and armed with a Billy Club would patrol the main street of Piketon. There was no thought of catching speeders. Fred was a driver of race horses, but he had never learned to drive a car.

Vic Eiselstein drove Charles Vallery's 2-year-old filly Janie Val to a win in the 2-year-old pace on Friday. In the next race, Eiselstein piloted Steve Vallery's filly, Ruth Main, to three straight heat wins. On Saturday, Beril Crace drove his mare Viola Abbe to straight heat wins. Beril Crace had bought the mare from Uncle Dan Evans, who had finally decided to stop training horses at age 78. He had lived at the Piketon fairgrounds, off and on, since 1930. No one seemed to know the exact circumstances, but Uncle Dan Evans and Fred Rowe had fallen out with one another. For several years they had not spoken.

A very fast mare, shipped in from Weston, West Virginia, won the 2:16 trot in straight heats. The crowd's favorite was Uncle Joe Wolfe and his trotter Little Pat W. Uncle Joe was 82 years old. His old stallion was now 14. Little Pat W. was able to pick up second places in all three heats.

The previous year's two outstanding 3-year-olds went in opposite directions as 4-year-olds in 1948. The Miracle, Charles Vallery's pacing mare had soundness problems from the start of the year. Clayton Cox finally entered the mare at the Circleville Fair on July 3, 1948. The Miracle could do no better than fourth and last in the first heat of a race that carried a purse of only \$300. The mare improved to second in the next heat, but fell in the third and did not finish. The mare was not started again until the Wellston Fair on July 22. Clarence Newhart drove The Miracle, finishing fifth in a five horse race in the first heat. She was fourth in the next heat, but did come back to win the finale. Six days later Clayton Cox finished 1-4-6 in a three heat race at Washington Court House. The Miracle was not sound enough to return to the track for the rest of the year.

By contrast, Florian opened the 1948 season with six straight wins at Lebanon Raceway. After a handful of county fair starts, O.C. Silvey moved Florian to Northville, Michigan in August. Two months later, Florian started racing in Free-For-All trots at Aurora, Illinois. On October 22, the gelding won both heats of the \$9,900 Aurora Downs Trotting Derby. After one more start, Florian was given some time off. For the year, Florian had started in 27 races. In a total of 49 heats, the horse was first 20 times, second 10 times, with six thirds. Florian earned \$13,927 for the year.

## CHAPTER SIX

### World Champions

The time frame from 1949 through the late 1960's was the period of greatest change for Pike County horsemen. It ranged from multiple world champions to a debate over a lease that stopped racing at the Pike County Fair from 1954 through 1957.

The 1949 Pike county Fair races were notable as the first to be started by a mobile starting gate. Howard Jewett, who owned farms in Scioto and Pike County, had been using the mobile gate for two seasons, but this was the first time at Picketon.

When the state of New York legalized pari-mutual betting in 1940, George Morton Levy, a prominent New York attorney convinced a group of investors to build a harness racing track on the site of the old Vanderbilt Automobile Oval on Long Island. Roosevelt Raceway opened in 1940, but struggled financially through 1945.

Levy and other standard bred track operators knew that the major complaint of bettors was the inconsistent starts. Nearly every race had several recalls before the "go" signal was finally given. The first heat of the 1940 Hambletonian finally started after 10 "wave offs." The bettors at Roosevelt Raceway wanted to put money on nine or ten races and get home in time to get some sleep before reporting to their day job. The false starts were a very real deterrent. George Milton Levy was willing to expend the necessary money to find a solution.

The practical answer came from the man who was regarded as the very best of the traditional starters. Steve Phillips had continued to start harness races from the time Will Rittenour had given his first job as a starter at Picketon in 1910. By the early 1940s, Phillips was widely regarded as the very best, but even he would often have several recalls in a race before getting a satisfactory start. He had experimented with a number of ideas for more than a decade. By 1945, Phillips believed he had a workable plan. George Morton Levy agreed and offered to fund the project.

Steve Phillips took his design to the Liberty Aircraft Company located at Farmingdale on Long Island. The result was unveiled at Roosevelt Raceway on May 24, 1946. The gate had cost \$63,000, but the rewards were instant. Attendance and the betting totals increased dramatically. A competing system that featured a moveable arm mounted on a rail at the inside of the track was also introduced, but mechanical reliability issues led to its quick demise. The demand for Steve Phillips's design was so great that it took two years to meet the need. In 1947 and 1948, Picketon was still using the traditional "yell and bell" system. Finally, in 1949 the Pike County fans were witnessing the mobile gate.

One Pike Countian was already busy with the mobile starting gate. Hancel (Hank) Butler had met Steve Phillips several times when Phillips was visiting Will Rittenour, who had lobbied hard for the mobile gate during his USTA presidency. Hank had two horses entered at the Franklin County Fair at Hilliards where Steve Phillips was using his mobile gate.

Steve showed Hank the gate and suggested that Hank consider investing in one. If Hank could find a suitable car, Steve would put him in touch with a builder in Illinois. Hank discussed it with his brother, Vora. Their string of four horses was racing well.

One, a pacer named Pluto Law, won one of the overnight races at the Ohio State Fair with Hank driving.

Still, Hank was intrigued. The mobile gate would be an expensive investment, but Hank's businesses were doing well. When his brother was able to locate a new 1948 Ford Sportsman convertible, Hank sent the car to Illinois. The retracting gate was powered by an air compressor installed in the car.

Hank was immediately swamped with offers. Either his brother or Buzz Andre would drive while Hank handled the starting gate. The demand for his services increased so much each year that in 1950, Hank had a new Buick convertible converted to a second starting gate. Hank now split starting assignments between the two gates. Hank and his brother Vora now divided the fairs into two circuits. With no time to train horses, Hank dissolved his stable. He leased Pluto Law to a Pennsylvania driver, only to have the horse destroyed in a barn fire.

Hank's schedule increased throughout the next decade. He started races at the Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Ohio State Fairs. In 1959, Hank was offered the job as starter at the new racing facility at Scioto Downs. A conflict with the Ohio State Fair finally convinced him to decline. Hank's son David drove his dad for a decade and then acquired his own starter's license. David then handled a circuit at his own fairs.

The 1949 Pike County fair races came off well behind Howard Fuller's mobile gate. In 1950, there were no Pike County horses racing at the fair for the locals to support. Florian, physically worn-down from too many hard races was finally brought back to Piketon by Dr. Moore and turned out in 1950. Over the next five years the gelding won a total of only \$80 in purses. Charles Valley also retired his mare, The Miracle. The mare would soon enter the brood mare rinks.

Still, 1950 would be a landmark year for Pike County horsemen. Bob Vallery was a member of the Pike County fair speed committee along with Madeira Brown and Beril Crace. Bob and his brother Harry had assumed the management of their father's Ford dealership in Waverly after his death in 1945. Bob and Harry had also continued a partnership with McKinley Kirk of Washington Court House to breed and race standardbreds. Specifically, McKinley and Clarence Vallery had committed to breeding the best stallions to the daughters of Belle Mahone. Bob and Harry were equally committed. The 1950 racing season would bear the first fruits of that partnership.

McKinley Kirk, who owned several farms as well as a number of businesses, had started his partnership with Clarence Vallery in 1938. In 1945, at the age of 49, McKinley drove his first race. The next year, he drove his 3 year old Honest Truth in the Little Brown Jug. In 1950, Floating Dream, a Billy Direct filly out of Abbe M. a daughter of Belle Mahone, entered the track as a 2 year old. In August, Floating Dream gave Bob and Harry Vallery their first world's champion when the filly set a two heat record for 2 year old pacers on a half-mile track at the Miami County fairgrounds. In October, Floating Dream broke three more world's records when she won the Hanover Shoe Farm Stake at Lexington's Big Red Mile. The filly, at season's end, was chosen as the initial Ohio Harness Horse of the Year for 1950.

In 1951, Floating Dream won four major stake races, competing against the best colts in the nation. The filly was a co-favorite in the 1951 Little Brown Jug until lameness slowed her.

The following year, Pleasant Surprise, an Adios filly also out of Abbe M, set a world's record as a 2 year old. Pleasant Surprise also won the Hanover Shoe filly pace for 2 year olds. As a 3 year old, the filly won three of the same stakes that Floating Dream had won.

While Floating Dream and Pleasant Surprise were the best-known of the Vallery – Kirk horses, another mare, Waverly Ann, an excellent pacer who had won at the Pike County Fair, would prove a key producer through her daughter Ann Waverly. McKinley Kirk owned horses in partnership with others, many of which he drove. From 1951 through 1954, he started 441 races with 120 wins, 87 seconds and 69 thirds. He never took money for driving horses, maintaining his amateur status. In 1952, his Universal Drivers Rating System was an incredible .532. In eight separate years his UDRS was over .400.

In 1955, Floating Dream foaled a colt by Adios. Harry's Dream showed early speed, won the Director of Agriculture 3 year old pace in 1958 and finished sixth in that year's Little Brown Jug. Harry's Dream remained competitive as a free for all aged pacer for the next three years. When the horse was finally retired with \$50,000 in winnings, Harry's Dream went on to a successful career as a sire.

In 1961, McKinley Kirk had his greatest year as a driver. At age 65, he was turning much of the driving assignments over to his nephew, Wendell Kirk, McKinley still drove 91 times in 1961 resulting in a UDRS percentage of .607. Harry's Dream had a good year as did the pacer Little Hostess, a half-sister to Floating Dream and Pleasant Surprise. The biggest key to McKinley's success was a 1956 foal out of Pleasant Surprise named Great Pleasure. As a 2-,3- and 4 year old pacer Great Pleasure took Bob and Harry Vallery to the winner's circle several times, earning a total of \$42,789. Great Pleasure had been sired by McKinley's double-gaited champion Hodgen. In 1961, when Great Pleasure was five, the mare was switched to the trot. Neither Bob nor Harry nor McKinley anticipated the success that Great Pleasure would experience. In 30 starts in 1961, the mare won 27 times with two thirds. Great Pleasure's 27 wins was the most for any trotter in 1961. At the fall Lexington Meet, Great Pleasure twice trotted 2:00 flat. The mare was voted the Ohio Harness Horse of the year as well as the Aged Trotter of the Year, the second time a Vallery-Kirk horse had been selected as a horse of the year. Great Pleasure remained competitive for the next half dozen years, winning \$142,000 on the trot.

Perhaps the greatest horse in the Vallery-Kirk partnership was a 1965 Adios Butler colt out of the Vallery's mare, Ann Waverly. Ann Waverly had been a 2:05 pacer. Her dam, Waverly Ann has posted a 2:02 time trial on the way to winning \$30,000 in the late 1940s and early 1950s. In 1964, Bob and Harry decided to breed Ann Waverly to Adios Butler, the first pacing Triple Crown winner. The Vallerys and McKinley Kirk had each spent \$15,000 to buy a share in the Adios Butler syndicate when the horse was ready to go to stud. Ann Waverly's 1965 foal, Adios Waverly, was small in stature like his sire. Trained by McKinley Kirk, Adios Waverly was brilliant as a 2-year-old, won a heat of the Little Brown Jug in 1968 and went on to earn more than \$250,000 in his career. He was still winning at the age of eight when he was finally retired. As a stallion, Adios Waverly produced 13 2:00 performers out of 93 race starters.

Bob and Harry Vallery's uncles Steve and Charles continued to own race horses together. In September, 1951, their mare, Janie Val, won the Deshler-Wallick Hotel

trophy at the Ohio State Fair. It was the first state fair trophy that either had ever won. The victory was bittersweet for Steve. Four days after the race Charles passed away. In the division of their horses, the mare, The Miracle, passed to Steve's son, William Vallery. The Miracle was the only one of seven mares out of Abbe M. that was not still owned by McKinley Kirk and Bob and Harry Vallery.

McKinley still handled the breeding process at his farm. In 1952, Bill Vallery had The Miracle bred to Ensign Hanover producing a 1953 filly foal which he named Flaming Arrow. McKinley Kirk trained Flaming Arrow in a very successful 2-year-old season. As a 3-year-old, Flaming Arrow set a world's record for filly pacers by smoking the Big Red Mile in successive heats at 1.58.2. Not only did Bill Vallery join his first cousins in owning a world's champion, Flaming Arrow joined Floating Dream as an Ohio Harness Horse of the Year, winning the award in 1956. Flaming Arrow continued to win regularly as an aged pacing mare until she was finally retired for breeding.

The three world champions in the Vallery family in the 1950s drew plenty of attention from Pike County horsemen, but a crisis at the fairgrounds in 1953 had a more immediate effect. In August, 1952, the Atomic Energy Corporation announced that a gaseous diffusion plant to enrich uranium would be built on 3,800 acres of land in southern Pike County. Construction would begin in 1953 and was expected to continue for the next five years. As many as 20,000 construction workers would be entering the county. When completed, the facility, to be operated by Goodyear Atomic Corporation would have 5,000 permanent employees.

The announcement in August, 1952 was astounding to Pike County which did not have a single industrial facility of any type. Madiera Brown, who had acquired his starter's license, was in Berea, Ohio to start the fair races. Madeira was filling in for Hank Butler. He received a call from his wife telling him about the announcement. One rumor had it that the whole county would have to be evacuated. When Madeira returned to his farm in Piketon at fair's end, he found a steady stream of people wanting to lease or buy land.

The change in demographics was immediate. Pasture field trailer parks sprang up all over the county. Five government housing projects were built in Waverly and one in Piketon. Local schools went on double sessions. Roads were soon clogged with construction traffic.

In Piketon, town Marshall Fred Rowe's foot patrols were no longer sufficient. The increase in traffic and Fred's inability to drive made a change inevitable. He still looked good in his suit coat and western hat, but necessity forced the mayor to replace Fred with a man who had a driver's license.

A major problem developed at the fairgrounds. Peter Kewitt, the general contractor at the gaseous diffusion facility, needed a place to store the construction equipment he was bringing over the winter of 1952-1953. The fairgrounds were the logical place. He agreed to have the equipment off-site before fair time and to make sure the horsemen training year round at Piketon would not be inconvenienced. He would pay Nellie Daily, the property owner, by the month.

Neither the fair board which operated the fair for the commissioners nor the commissioners were particularly pleased. The Waverly papers carried commissioners' statements to the effect that the lease would probably not be renewed and that a new fairgrounds would be built on county property in the village of Idaho. To cover the cost,

the commissioners placed a \$200,000 bond levy on the May, 1953 primary ballot. It was defeated 1814 to 1595. Mrs. Daily, angered by the commissioners' actions, refused to renew the lease. Unless a new agreement was forthcoming, there would be no horse races in 1954.

The ensuing negotiations were acrimonious and continuing. No lease was agreed to for 1954. Nor 1955. Nor 1956. The fair board sponsored a "Junior Fair" twice at Waverly High School and once at a grade school in Piketon. The efforts fell short of the old fair.

Horsemen training at Piketon found Mrs. Daily very accommodating. When the lease expired, all of the buildings were sold at auction. Mrs. Daily had purchased them. She dealt directly with the horsemen who agreed to maintain the track. There was no actual racing at Piketon, but training continued.

The plant construction produced a huge need for skilled artisans. Robert G. Farrington and his wife, Vivian, moved south to Pike County. Bob who was 24 at the time, joined his father as a brick mason and heavy equipment operator. Both men liked standardbreds. Bob bought a horse that he initially left with another trainer. He decided to move the horse to the Piketon fairgrounds and train it himself.

Bob would leave his house in Waverly early in the morning to take care of the horse. Then he would work a long day in construction before returning to the horse barn. While Vivian found it a challenge to merely find time for him to see a dentist, Bob always made it to Piketon. In 1955, he drove his first race at Lebanon.

In 1956, he spent every moment he could find working with standardbreds. With limited funds, he looked for horses that owners had given up on and would sell cheaply. Steve Vallery owned a 5-year-old mare that had won only a little over \$1,000 in its first three racing seasons. The horse, Hazel Val, was named for his wife, but Steve did not let sentiment affect his pocket book. Bob soon owned the pacer. He purchased a trotting mare cheaply. Dowager was 11 years old with lifetime earnings of only \$500. He bought another little-raced 6-year-old trotter, Grand Martha, and a 3-year-old trotter, Pay Skipper, that had never started a race.

The most intriguing horse in Bob's string was the return to the track of Dr. Mack Moore's great trotter, Florian. Since 1950, the gelding had basically been turned out on the Moore farm. John Moore, the owner's son, convinced his father to give Bob a chance. In 1956, Bob very carefully brought the 12-year-old back to the races.

Bob raced at pari-mutual meetings at Lebanon, Hilliards, Florence, Kentucky and Jackson, Michigan. He entered horses at Ohio fairs in Wellston, Proctorville, Athens, Lancaster, Kenton, Coshocton and the West Virginia State Fair in Lewisburg. Hazel Val had seven wins, 12 seconds and eight thirds in 45 starts, winning \$2,867. Pay Skipper, the 3-year-old trotter won 13 races in 42 starts with money earnings of \$3,240. Grand Martha went 6-7-10 in 42 races banking \$2,432. Dowager set a new lifetime mark of 2.11 at age 11. Florian won two and finished second nine times in 25 starts. Racing for small purses, the old gelding won \$1200.

Bob Farrington knew that he wanted to pursue harness racing as a full-time career. Racing in Ohio was still confined to about a four month period each year. Vivian Farrington still remembers having races cancelled because of rain.

A new lease was finally signed on the Pike County fairgrounds in June, 1957. the 20-year lease at \$1,000 a year guaranteed that racing would return to the fair in 1958.

That was too late for Bob Farrington. Construction work had slowed in Pike County and he and Vivian had moved to Richwood.

The same article in the Waverly papers that announced Great Pleasure's selection as the Ohio Harness Horse of the Year in 1961 also informed Pike County readers that Bob Farrington had established a national record by winning 201 races in 1961. He had concentrated his efforts at Maywood, Illinois and Freehold, New Jersey. Bob drove 40 different horses to victory. There was not a single colt of stake quality in his stable, but he exhibited the same success with older horses that he had shown at Piketon. Sixteen of the 40 winners were eight years old or older. Half of the horses set new lifetime marks including Leah Spencer, a 13-year-old trotter.

Bob Farrington broke the 300-win barrier in 1964 and led the nation in wins in that year, 1965, 1966 and 1967. In 1972, he purchased a colt, Rambling Willie, that became one of the greatest free-for-all pacers of all time. Bob trained and drove Rambling Willie throughout a career that saw the horse win 128 races with money earnings over \$2 million. Bob was elected to the national Hall of Fame in 1979.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Second Fifty Years of Racing

The signing of the new 20-year lease on the Pike County fairgrounds in 1957 signaled the start of the track's second 50 years of racing. The terms of the lease guaranteed that the Pike County commissioners would be making significant improvements. The first was the construction of a new grandstand in 1959. The next year a new \$10,000 horse barn was built outside the backstretch. In 1962, a concrete judges' stand replaced the rickety old wooden structure.

Pike County retained leadership in state and regional organizations. Steve Vallery remained as Speed Superintendent at the Ohio State Fair through 1966. Madeira Brown who had been involved in every phase of racing at the Pike County Fair was elected President of the Southern Ohio Harness Racing Circuit for several years during the 1960s. The circuit included fairs at Pike, Ross, Muskingum, Guernsey, Washington, Noble, Morgan, Harrison and Monroe Counties. Madeira had served as a judge, announcer and chairman of the Piketon speed committee. He also served as President of the Pike County Fair Board. Madeira trained and drove race horses and traveled to many fairs to start races with one of Hank Butler's mobile starting gate. Bob Vallery, who gained national attention from the success of his horses, always found time to serve as a timer, judge or announcer at the Pike County Fair.

The condition of the race track was the responsibility of Richard (Bo Jay) Jackson who had worked around the fairgrounds since the mid-1940s. He worked for farmers around Piketon, before taking a job at the Patterson Milling Company. Still, he spent most of his time at the fairgrounds. Bo Jay jogged and groomed horses for Steve Vallery, but his real skill was in preparing the track. The track record heading into the 1960s was 2:05  $\frac{3}{4}$  set by the pacer Moon Flower back in 1942. The record had been threatened several times, but not lowered. Bo Jay kept conditioning the track, and in 1963 Dusty Paul paced a mile in 2:03.2.

In 1965 the commissioners asked Wes Sheridan the Pike County Engineer to use his county road crew to reelay the racing surface at the fairgrounds. Bo Jay got a quick handle on the new surface. In the 3 year old pace at the 1965 Pike County Fair, Rene Carpenter, driven by Harry Richardson, of Chillicothe blistered the half-mile track in 2:02.2. The local papers noted that Richard Jackson's efforts had made the Piketon track one of the best in the state of Ohio.

The 1965 fair was an example of the fair's speed committee having to respond quickly in a crisis. Phil Mauger, the race announcer at Scioto Downs, called the races at the Pike County Fair in 1964. Mauger was signed back for 1965. In addition to Scioto Downs, he was the race caller at the Ohio State Fair, the Little Brown Jug, the Hambletonian and the Kentucky Futurity. One day before the 1965 Pike County Fair was to begin, Mauger cancelled. Fair manager Frank Cooper told his son John, who had never called races before, to plan on being the announcer. Things went well for John until the filly colt race where Rene Carpenter set the record. The horse's owner



complained that he kept pronouncing the horse's name wrong. John Cooper continued to announce races at the Pike County Fair for the next two years. He also called races at the Lancaster fair. Waverly radio station WPKO carried John's race calls live. One of his neatest experiences at Piketon was calling a race in which Hall of Famer Howard Beisinger and Beisinger's second trainer Mike Zeller drove. Years later, John would reflect on the fact that Hall of Famer Bob Farrington started training at Piketon and Beisinger had driven there a decade later.

A new job in 1968 created scheduling difficulties that forced to John to give up race announcing. A subsequent move to Michigan ended his relationship with the fair for nearly two decades. In the 1980s, he formed a partnership with Eugene McRoberts to race a stable of horses at the Piketon fairgrounds.

In the Spring of 1967, Carl Harness brought a string of horses belonging to Dr. Fred Hess of Jackson to the Pike County fairgrounds. Carl had completed winter training at Dr. Hess's farm track and brought them to Piketon to prepare them for the racing season. For the next 37 years, Carl would be a fixture at the Piketon fairgrounds.

Carl had graduated from Valley High School in 1956. After service in the army, he went to Pennsylvania as a carpenter and was soon training gaited horses. When his father became ill, Carl came back to Lucasville. Soon after, he took the job training for Fred Hess. He stayed with Hess for nearly two years before switching to Howard Coburn's stable. In 1970, he accepted a position with the Mac Jay Stable which he would keep for more than 30 years.

The Mac Jay stable was a three-way partnership between Portsmouth physicians Jack MacDonald and Jerome Rini and trainer-driver George Ursitti. It was large stable with several employees headquartered at Piketon. Carl signed on as second trainer in 1970. Dr. Rini left the partnership in 1973. Three years later, George Ursitti moved on. It was still called the Mac Jay stable, but now it was just Jack MacDonald and Carl.

The Mac Jay horses were excellent stock. Carl and Mac were successful from the beginning. Carl trained all the horses, using catch drivers at the raceways. He drove the Mac Jay horses at all of the fairs. He won multiple driving awards in the River Valley Colt Circuit. In the mid-1980s, he drove the trotter, Mac's Class, to track records at Piketon and at Chillicothe. The Piketon record stood nearly 20 years. In July, 1996 he recorded his 100<sup>th</sup> colt stake win. He had years when his UDRS was over .400.

Carl displayed a particular skill in placing his horses in races where they could be competitive. Beck Gate was a foul-gaited horse that could do no good at most tracks. However, Carl felt the horse could go well at Rock Springs, not one of the quicker tracks on the colt circuit. It was an amazing match. Beck Gate won five straight two-heat races and the first one-heat event contested at Rock Springs. Those 11 heat wins represented the total wins in Beck Gate's career.

Carl was always ready to help the other drivers at Piketon. Ed Davis remembers several times when he assisted him. Drivers coming into the Pike County Fair often experienced equipment problems. John Barr, the Superintendent of Huntington Local Schools in Ross County, raced at Piketon for nearly 20 years. He recalled that Carl was the man the trainers looked to for help even if they would be racing against him.

By the mid-1990s Carl had a family member anxious to become a horse trainer. Olin Harness, Carl's son, groomed his first horse in 1989 when he was 12. Olin's older brother, Rodney, went to college and entered teaching, but Olin, after graduating from

Eastern High School in 1995, did not enjoy his Freshman year at Ohio University. He had trained his first horse in 1994, and in the spring of 1996, decided to pursue a career in standard bred racing. His father already had Greg Beekman working for him, so Olin found employment with Brett Elliott, another Piketon trainer. After a year and a half, Olin decided to try it on his own.

Olin was single and still lived on the family farm near Beaver. He had qualified for his raceway license in 1996 and drove his first winning race in August, 1998. He trained a horse he owned with his brother Rodney, one for Joe Andre, a couple for Tom McConkey, and one for George Edward Leist. He contracted with an Amish horse trader to freshen and rehab several horses that had come off the race track. The horse trader then sold them as race horses rather than buggy horses.

Carl Harness, recognizing his son's dedication to racing, tried to pass on his knowledge. Olin learned the tricks of horseshoeing, conditioning, handling and many other facets of training. After Jack MacDonald's death in 2001, Carl opened a public stable. Olin worked with him until Carl became very ill in the Fall of 2003. Olin took over the horses at Piketon. His father felt well enough to help until mid-August, 2004 when his health failed again. He died in February, 2005.

Olin continued the public stable with the help of his brother Rodney and his niece, Nicole. In 2006, he brought 10 horses to the Piketon barns, sent nine to the track and gave seven of them new lifetime marks. Olin drives many of the horses but also uses a select few "catch drivers" that he has learned to trust.

Olin trains for several owners. Fred Foster, a Piketon, businessman, was one of the first. Fred's family's involvement with horse racing at the Pike County Fair goes back to the 1920s when his grandfather, John B. Foster, trained and drove horses for the Patterson Brothers. His father, John, owned race horses at Piketon from the 1960s. Fred became a partner in 1995. He continued to own horses after his father's passing.

Fred breeds his own colts from two mares that his father and uncle owned. He breeds the mares at Success Acres in Sunbury, Ohio, brings them home to winter, and takes them back to Sunbury in time to foal. Fred breaks his own foals and then turns them over to Olin for race training. At present, Fred has two 3 year olds and a 4 year old at the fairgrounds.

Gary and Mark Salisbury, partners in DGM Construction, in Stockdale entered the horse business by buying their first horse out of a claiming race. They then purchased two horses in the dispersal sale after Dr. MacDonald's death. Mark, who holds a law degree, was the more reticent at first, but now is very committed to harness racing. The brothers buy all their racing stock through horse sales or private purchases. Mark and Gary prefer the challenge of trying to develop winners out of overlooked or under-achieving horses.

Olin has a colt at Piketon that belongs to Doyle and Mary Jo Bross. Mary Jo is the daughter of Dr Jerome Rini, one of the original partners in the Mac Jay Stables. Doyle and Mary Jo campaign their older horses. One is an 8 year old trotter, originally a gift, that was lost in a claiming race and had to be repurchased from the Amish. Doyle drives the older horses, but the colts come to Olin.

The current dean of the Piketon trainers is Bill Miller, who brought his first horse to Piketon in 1968. Bill trained horses while making his living doing construction. One summer, Bill had 16 horses in the barn, most of whom he was sending to the races. He

would leave the week's entry list with his wife Cathy before he left for a construction job at the Gavin Power Plant. Cathy would haul the horses entered to that week's fair. Bill would meet her at the race site and drive the horses. She would then take them back to Piketon and exchange them for the next day's entries. He currently keeps a half dozen head at Piketon.

Tom McRoberts grew up around horses at the Piketon fairgrounds. His father Eugene spent two terms on the fair board serving on the speed committee. Along with Richard Jackson, he was considered one of the experts in conditioning the Piketon track. Eugene also owned several race horses with John Cooper in the 1980's. Tom was always interested and after his Freshman year at Ohio State, he qualified to drive that summer and won three races. Tom was hooked, but it meant giving up his position as a student manager on Earl Bruce's Ohio State football team. After graduating from Ohio State, Tom looked for an opportunity to learn more about horse training. He went to the Lexington Fall Meet in 1983, and inquired about a job with Billy Haughton's operation. He was hired on to stay at Lexington after the sale and break the yearlings that had just been purchased. That operation took a month and then the crew transferred to winter training in Florida.

Tom remained with Haughton from November, 1983 to April, 1984. He was amazed that Haughton, who had 80 to 100 2 year olds in training seemed to know the development and abilities of each horse. Tom returned to Piketon and went to work for Dick Elliott. After working several jobs over the next few years, Tom took a teaching job at Piketon. He still trains and drives, but limits himself to one or two horses at a time. A limiting factor is Tom's position as an assistant coach on the Piketon High School football team. Summer conditioning and two-a-day practice times tend to conflict with the fair racing schedule, forcing Tom to look for acceptable times to enter his horses.

Bob, Harry and Bill Vallery have passed away and the family no longer owns horses. One current horseman does have a direct connection to the 1907 races. David Seif is the great grandson of William Patterson the fair society's first president and a partner in the original Patterson Brothers' racing stable. David, a Waverly attorney, and his partner, Ed Davis, the elected Pike County treasurer, have been campaigning horses first singularly and then in partnership since 1985. David's first horses were trained and driven by Jim Parkinson. Ed's first training experience was handling a family-owned horse. In 1993, David and Ed joined forces. Ed does the training of colts that they raise from their own mares. David and Ed race mainly 2- and 3-year olds, selling the geldings after the fair season. Occasionally they keep a mare for breeding purposes.

Ed has driven some of the races, although he did not do so last year. This summer, his 13-year-old son, Gunner, will be acquiring his matinee license. David and Ed use a variety of drivers. At the past three Pike County Fairs, Ed and David have been in the winners' circle, each time with a different driver.

Several owners have one or two horses at Piketon. Danny Thompson and Denny Lanum have a couple and Doug Pfeifer also has a horse.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### Behind the Scenes

To the true fan of harness racing few things are more exciting than watching close races on county fair tracks. The Little Brown Jug is contested at the Delaware County Fairgrounds. A total of 69 Ohio fairs offer standard bred racing, down from 72 locations 15 years ago. Illinois, with 44 fairs, is next. None of the other 23 states that offer county fair harness racing are even close. Regardless of the location, the excitement of the racing is very similar.

Only a few people in the grandstand ever have an opportunity to see, first hand, the degree of professionalism that goes into presenting the fair races. The Pike County Fair Board employs a small group of experts to handle the key positions. The race clerk, the announcer, the presiding judge and the race starter are all USTA certified. None are Pike Countians.

One of the keys to success at the Pike County Fair, and the other southern Ohio fairs where local horsemen race, is the excellence of the race officials in the Southern Valley Colt Circuit and the familiarity they have with the horsemen and with each other.

Rodney Newhart, the clerk of the races, was literally born into harness racing. On the night Rodney was born in Marietta, his father was away racing horses. His father, Ray Newhart, won many races at the Pike County Fair. His brother Ron was a full-time trainer and driver winning more than 2,000 races. Twice, Ron won a national UDRS championship. Tragically, after winning his second championship in 2004, Ron passed away the following April at age 47.

Rodney also started driving horses at age 14 and continued to drive up till about five years ago. His main interests were in the organizational end of racing. In 1972, at age 16, Rodney learned how to chart races at the fairs, marking the positions of all the horses in a race at key points. This information is then listed in the past performance section of racing programs. Rodney attended Wittenberg University, majoring in Biology and Theatre. After college, he went to work for the Ohio Horseman's Association. Thirty years later, he still charts races at many of the fairs where he serves as clerk.

From October to April, Rodney works full-time as the race secretary at Northville Downs in Michigan. This year, he is also working at Jackson, Michigan. Rodney sets conditions for the races and decides which races will make the schedule. It is his task to offer competitive racing for the betting public at Northville and Jackson. In addition he deals with a myriad of issues with owners and drivers on a daily basis. In late June, he will move to the Historic Track at Goshen, New York to work the Grand Circuit races.

In July, Rodney begins his Ohio fair circuit. His work has actually begun months before when the Southern Valley Colt Circuit holds its annual meeting in November. The circuit, which includes Piketon, establishes rules for the upcoming year. As secretary, Rodney is responsible for collecting the nominating fees from owners who wish to make their two- and three-year-olds eligible to the Southern Valley Colt Circuit races. Nominating fees are due on February 15<sup>th</sup>, sustaining fees two months later and

entry fees are paid at race time. Rodney is either race clerk or presiding judge at every fair in the Southern Valley Colt Circuit except the Athens fair.

By race day at the Pike County Fair, Rodney has set the program, accepted the entries and collected the money before the first race. The Piketon track is only wide enough to score six horses meaning Rodney has to decide if large fields are to be split into two divisions. Horsemen are not always pleased when this occurs because the race purse is also split. Rodney, who has clerked the Pike County Fair for several years, knows the personalities of every driver on the circuit which helps when he has to calm owners and drivers unhappy with their heat or lane assignments. Before the first race starts, Rodney passes on any changes in the day's program to the presiding judge, the race announcer and the starter.

Russ Baldwin, of Plain City, has been a presiding judge at county fairs in Ohio for two decades. Most of those years, he has worked the Pike County Fair. In a typical summer, Russ presides at 16 fairs. About 10 years ago, he stopped driving race horses. He still owns three, two of which train at the Delaware fairgrounds. Russ cannot be presiding judge if he has a horse entered, so he races only at fairs where he is not a race official. The presiding judge is the final voice on disputes which are covered by USTA rules. Russ is the picture of intensity, watching every race for driver infractions. When drivers file complaints, Russ rules on them. At times his decisions are very unpopular. In 2005 at the Lancaster fair, a driver took his horse to the lead and then, to slow the pace, pulled the horse back so abruptly, it caused two trailing horses to wreck. The offending horse went on to win, but Russ disqualified the horse. The owners and driver caused such a ruckus in the judges' stand, Russ, finally, had the fair's speed superintendent bring up two deputy sheriffs to escort them out.

During a race, the judges' stand is the scene of frantic activity. Russ is moving from side to side to get a clear view of the track. The timers who are local horsemen or speed committee members are calling out quarter times. The associate judges assisting Russ are usually also Pike Countians.

The only person the people in the grandstand hear is the race announcer. Chris Patterson has been the race caller at Piketon for the past four years. Chris called 27 fairs in 2006, several before the Pike County fair. He learned how to call races and be an auctioneer at age 15. With 40 years of experience as a race announcer, he is still one of the best. Chris was the race announcer at Scioto Downs in 1990 and 1991 until a heart attack slowed him. Race announcing at Scioto Downs was all business and he finds the fairs to be more fun. At the first fairs of the year, he learns the drivers, their silks and their horses. He also learns to pronounce the names of horses and drivers. Seeing the same drivers and horses week to week makes the race announcing easier. Chris calls the race by the drivers' colors since he often cannot see the horses' numbers.

Chris plays a cassette of the trumpeter's call to post on a portable player before each race. He adds commentary for the people in the grandstand during the post parade and the race itself. His biggest problems are periodic interruptions by train horn blasts just behind the grandstand at Piketon as freight trains go through. Chris announces on the Ohio fair circuit for four months each year and spends the rest of the time at his home in Cambridge.

Once the post parade ends, the drivers turn their horses and approach the starting gate. The starter calls for the horses to come to the gate. No other sport uses a mobile

gate turning a half a dozen to a dozen horses and sulkies loose at the same moment to fight for position heading into the first turn. It is a tense few moments for drivers and starter alike.

Bob Mount has been the starter at Piketon for several years. He handles the car's speed as the horses approach. Bob talks to the drivers to bring them into order. When he is satisfied with the alignment he yells "go" and closes the hydraulic wings. At the "go" signal, his wife, Melissa, who had merely been steering up to that point, takes over the accelerator and speeds the car, watching to be certain the outside wing folds in so she can take the car to the outside of the track. The concern at that moment is that the horses farthest from the rail might not cut inside quickly enough and run into the gate. After the race ends, Melissa drives to a spot near the backstretch gate and parks until the next race. The car is connected by phone to the judges' stand and drivers with complaints or late scratches give them to Bob for relay to the officials.

Bob and Melissa Mount met when he was training horses at Toledo's Raceway Park and she was working as a groom. Bob started driving a mobile gate for Melissa's father, Richard Roth, who started races in several states. After their marriage nearly 20 years ago, Bob and Melissa gradually took over most of the assignments. Bob was the starter at Muskegon Raceway and at Jackson, Michigan for two years. Now all his starts are at fairs. Each year his father-in-law covers a few of the 48 fairs that their company, Starting Gate Service, handles. Bob and Melissa begin their season at Converse, Indiana in early June and work non-stop to the final fair in Hillsdale, Michigan in the third week of September. During the busy months of July and August, Bob and his father-in-law sometimes have to work out the logistics of covering four fairs in a single day.

The car that Bob and Melissa used at Piketon in 2006 was a 1984 model with a little over 100,000 miles on the odometer. It had previously been used at Scioto Downs. The couple rent a motel room for the nights they spend in Piketon. Then they drive the car to the next fair. The company has four gates that they use regularly and one that has been retired, but could be used in an emergency.

Bob's circuit remains fairly constant from year to year. He is familiar with most of the drivers he sees each week. Likewise, the drivers are used to him. He has proven that he keeps his gates in top operating condition, very important to the horsemen who score behind his gate. In 1980, before Bob handled the Pike County Fair, race officials considered canceling the free-for-all pace at Piketon due to a muddy track. The race finally went forward. John Barr brought his horse, Trip A Bell, up to the gate in the five hole. The starter was satisfied as the horses neared the starting line and gave the "go" call. The wing on the inside of the track retracted on schedule, but the other wing opened only a few feet before the hydraulics failed. John, trying to leave the gate quickly, had asked his horse for speed. When the wing stuck, Trip A Bell hit the gate with its nose and went down in front of the grandstand. The crowd watched in horror, but John was able to gather the animal and finish the race. The people at Piketon would never again take the mechanical condition of the mobile gate for granted.

The condition of the track on race week is the culmination of a partnership, between the fair speed committee and the trainers headquartered at the Pike County fairgrounds. The horsemen keep the track in shape. The fair board's speed committee consults with the horsemen on improvements that need to be made on the

track's surface. The current track was regraded in 1965 with soil hauled from the nearby Billy Cutlip farm by the Pike County Engineer's road crew. Richard Jackson was able to work the new track into shape, producing a new track record that year. He continued to work with the track conditioning while he was a member of the Fair Board in the late 1960s. After leaving the fair board, Bo Jay remained the accepted expert, as much a part of the fair on his tractor drag as the horses themselves. He continued to work the track until his health failed in the 1990s.

In 2006, Verlin Smith retired after 50 consecutive years on the Pike County Fair Board. Verlin held a number of leadership roles including a dozen years as President. During his last decade on the board, he served as the speed superintendent. After 1965 the fair board hauled in stone to mix with the clay on a yearly basis. The result was a fast track that drained well after a rain. On numerous occasions, Verlin had watched the track dry out after a heavy morning rain and be nearly perfect for late afternoon and evening racing. The problem came on days when it did not rain. The track would become very dusty in dry weather. Verlin consulted with Carl Harness and Eugene McRoberts. The consensus opinion was to bring in fine river gravel to hold down the dust. Over the past few years, the river gravel has been added to the track mixture with excellent results. Mark and Gary Salisbury, who have race horses at the fairgrounds, also own DGM Construction. Mark and Gary bought and hauled the gravel at their own expense.

Verlin's oddest experience with the races came in the 1980s before he became part of the speed committee. He was watching a race from in front of the dairy barn. A horse suddenly reared in turn three and fell, throwing the driver over the guardrail. Emergency workers brought the ambulance for the driver, who proved not to be seriously injured. In a lifetime of farming, Verlin had seen his share of dead animals. When he approached the stricken horse, he was certain there was no life.

The crowd was concerned for the driver and the horse that was prone on the track. Verlin hurried back to the dairy barn and mounted a small tractor with a lift. He had two men unhook the sulky and remove the harness. They then covered the horse with a tarpaulin and Verlin hauled the dead animal across the infield and down behind the barns. After Dr. John Allen, the fair veterinarian, took a blood sample, Verlin had a backhoe dig a hole and the horse was buried. The next race went on as scheduled.

The issue would have been settled, had not the driver refused to pay the \$35 fee for the backhoe operator. The owner had no plan to bury the horse, but he did not want to pay the fee. It was only after the Pike County Fair Board turned the matter over to the USTA that the owner decided to pay.

One of the key functions of the speed committee is to collect donations for blankets for winning horses. The blankets are purchased by businesses and families who wish to honor loved ones who played a role in Pike County horse racing. The blankets, which sell for \$75 are often presented to the winning drivers by the purchasers.

At the conclusion of the last race on Saturday evening, Rod Newhart, Russ Baldwin, Chris Patterson and Bob and Melissa Mount move on to the next week's assignments. The horsemen at Picketon, who had taken care of the program printing, ticket collection and parking on Friday and Saturday nights, could now merely think about racing at the next fair. The fair board had to rush to get the grounds ready for the remainder of the fair activities over the next week.

Barring some unforeseen circumstances the 2007 races will be history on Saturday night, a century after the initial races were contested at the first Pike County Fair.