

P.E.I. Horseman Becomes Legend On Grand Circuit

Over 50 harness horse racing men are on schedule at the Charlottetown Driving Park this year. The meets open the latter part of May and continue on into October. It will be the most ambitious program yet undertaken by the local track.

In connection with Harness Horse Racing there is no greater authority in eastern Canada and eastern United States than Col. D. A. MacKinnon who is known far and wide for his column "Down the Backstretch" in The Guardian.

For the benefit and entertainment of the many devotees of the harness racing, both visitors and Islanders the Colonel herewith recalls the interesting story of "Harry Lydiard."

In the history of harness racing in North America, the story of Pop Geers is legendary. He dominated an era from the time he came north in the 80's with his Tennessee pacers of the Hal family until his death in the sulky in a race at Wheeling West Virginia in 1924.

The Maritime Provinces had their own Pop Geers in the person of Harry Lydiard of Centerville, Nova Scotia, whose active participation in the sport started in the 80's and ended in 1926 when he fell dead on the sulky in a race on Labor Day at Aylesford, Nova Scotia.

I remember meeting him in Charlottetown in 1922, when I went to visit his stable with my father, who had known him in the pre World War I days of the Halifax Exhibition where they became friends. At that time, he was to me just another of Dad's horsey friends.

FIRST LEAD
It was only after coming to the United States that I became very interested in Harry Lydiard, because it was only then that I realized what an unusual horseman he was. Through our mutual interest in horses, I became friendly with an old retired blacksmith who had learned his trade at the famous Readville track.

He told me repeatedly the fabulous story of the Down East Farmer from Nova Scotia who fooled all the wise boys at Readville in the 90's. He remembered the details of the race, but the name of the horse and driver escaped him. His repetition stimulated my interest to the extent that I looked up records in the old year books and he immediately recognized the name of Harry Lydiard and especially his horse Warren Guy. He had helped shoe him. Now more interested than ever, I went to the files of the Boston newspapers and the American Horse Breeder published in Boston, for the news stories of those days.

I recently located and contacted his nephew, A. L. Lydiard of Vancouver, B.C., for additional facts and verification of my material.

FAIRY QUEEN
Harry Lydiard was born in Charlottetown in 1848, a son of Edward L. Lydiard one of the few survivors of the wreck of the Fairy Queen in 1853, (that is another P. E. I. yarn). His mother was a daughter of Hon. John Morton of Cornwallis, N.S.

I am unable to find out when he left Charlottetown or when he located in Centerville but I do know that he had a warm spot in his heart for the Island and always raced at Charlottetown when he had a horse to race, and when he didn't he usually attended the races at the Exhibition.

His nephew coming from Vancouver to visit Harry on an unannounced vacation, on arriving in Moncton and seeing an advertisement of the Exhibition decided to go to Charlottetown as Harry would probably be there and sure enough he was, racing Briar King.

LOVED HORSES
He was a breeder, owner, trainer and driver, a practical, if not

professional Veterinarian and farrier. A real good sport winner or loser. A race made no change in his countenance. He didn't like horses, he loved them. He was breeding horses in the eighties and was located near the stock farm of C. W. Bill, who was the leading importer and breeder of excellent breeding and the man who was responsible for bringing Rampart to Nova Scotia. It would be impossible to list all the horses Harry raised so we will have to be content with the highlights of his career.

His first big thrill was Warren Guy. By Princeer, Dam Lady Emery by Monte Carlo Grand Dam Red Rose by Nutwood. He was a very fast colt at two but a cripple, so was given a time trial of 2.25 in Ohio because he was not sound enough to race. This was almost the world's record in 1894. He raced once in 1895 as a three year old but was distanced because of lameness. He was then advertised for sale as unsound for racing, but having future possibilities as a sire.

Harry bought him cheap at that time hoping he could fix him up and get him to the races. In 1896 he raced him unsuccessfully due to lameness. In 1897 he raced him and won a seven heat race in Charlottetown. The best time two nineteen and a quarter.

There were two seven heat races that day. The late Johnny McCabe winning the other with Bye And Bye.

In 1898 he decided to try the big time in the United States winning his first race at Portland, Maine in an eleven horse field. Cresceus and Bingen both raced there that same day. The next weeks were devoted to post race care of his unsound horse and he decided to go to the famous Readville track.

OVER COBBLESTONES
He shipped him by train to Boston and then drove him over the road thru the cobblestone streets of Boston to Readville, a distance of about twenty-five miles. Harry sitting on the sulky with all his equipment and a bucket tied under the sulky. When he arrived at Readville he was a sight to behold, covered with

dust and dirt and his horse's shoes worn to paper thinness.

The wise boys gathered around to see the hick and his plug and when asked where he came from with a sly grin he said Nova Scotia and that he left home three weeks ago, thus deliberately leaving them to ponder on his long journey. To this my old blacksmith friend was an eye witness. The news spread widely around the track and he was the object of much curiosity and he played the part to perfection.

The sporting editors of the Boston papers were on hand as a daily column was written about the races at Readville. One reporter for the Transcript announced his arrival at the track in his column and said he evidently forgot to bring his collar and hames. Frank Trot, Sr., then the columnist for the Globe, as was his son Frank, Jr., for many

years later, also lampooned a bit.

SIXTEEN SCORES
S. M. Parlin editor of the Horse Breeder, then published in Boston, had contact with many maritime horsemen over the years and had a high regard for their capabilities made no comment at the time but gave an excellent account of the race when it was over. On September 21, 1898 starting from ninth position in a field of thirteen horses after sixteen scores, Harry skirted the outside of the track for three quarters of a mile before getting the rail and winning in 2.12 1/4. He was never headed in the next two heats.

He later raced at Dover, N.H., Walter Cox's racetrack, and at Brockton and The Mystic Track at Medford, without success due to lameness. In 1899 he raced him in the Maritimes with success beating Special Blend all season but beaten by Minota at Sydney and in a match race at Halifax Warren Guy took his record of 2.12 1/4 at Readville.

Border 2.11 1/4 was a full brother to Warren Guy. Foaled in 1895 and like Warren Guy was also a cripple. Harry bought him figur-

ing he'd patch him up the same way he did his brother but he did not succeed in getting him to the races until he was a six year old in 1901. He won with him earlier in the season at Amherst and Halifax taking a mark of 2.19 1/4. He spent the mid-season and early fall getting him ready to race again and then for some unknown reason shipped him to the deep South of the United States in the late fall.

WENT SOUTH
He won the first heat at the Memphis Tenn. Mile Track in 2.11 1/2, his mark, on October 21st and was second in the other two heats. In November he raced in Savannah, Ga. and Jacksonville, Fla. second in both races and on November 28th was first in Bainbridge, Ga., and then came back to Nova Scotia.

In 1902 he raced first in Sydney, Nova Scotia where he raced sound and he decided to go on to the Grand Circuit. At Columbus, Ohio he won a heat and second money, he was second again at Buffalo in 2.09 1/4 and was beaten at Providence and Hartford by a neck. In all three places by the famous Major Deller in 2.09, the leading trotter in the United States for some

time. He was second to the famous Roan Wilkes at Nashua, N.H. where he broke down and it was his last race. Border was Harry's favorite horse and he kept him until he died and he sired some good colts.

He must have been quite a horseman in those days to make such a showing against the experts in the Grand Circuit because those were the days when the great drivers were a closed corporation and the amateurs were confined to the matinees.

FAST STRAIN
Border sired Briar Queen 2.18 who took her mark at Halifax in 1911 thus lowering the record for Maritime Bred Trotting Marces previously held by Baby Logan at 2.18 1/4.

From Briar Queen he raised Briar Mac 2.14 1/4 purchased by Colonel MacKinnon after Harry's death and raced very successfully by him in 1927 and 1928.

Harry's ability to train a horse properly was exemplified in the race in which he died on the sulky at Aylesford, N.S. September 6, 1926. There were four horses in the race. Briar Mac, Torpedo Lady, John McGregor, and Aubrey the Great that was owned by Heber Sweeney who has assured me that my story of the race is correct.

Deformed oysters, without commercial value, are used in the transplant, but their spat produces normally shaped oysters in waters where conditions are more favorable.

About 100 dory fishermen are employed in harvesting the oysters from beds at the upper part of Bedouque Bay, are being supplied by the Prince County Company and by Sonier Bros. of Summerside to the federal fisheries department for transfer by the fisheries patrol ship Lamna. The project, reportedly the first:

of his kind in such volume, is being to be very successful. The transplanted oysters show a very low mortality rate in the new location.

The program is under the direction of H.R. Funder of the federal biological station at Eglarville.

HEADS ENGINEEPRS
MONTREAL (CP)—John Jeffrey Hanna of Calgary, who served with the Canadian Engineering Corps in the First World War, has been elected president of the Engineering Institute of Canada. It was announced Thursday, Mr. Hanna is to be inducted into office at the institute's annual meeting in Toronto June 10.

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100 Fishermen Are Employed In Oyster Transplant Project

SUMMERSIDE—A three-year project involving the transplanting of 10,000 barrels of oysters will conclude this summer with the relocation of the final 4,000 barrels of disease resistant oysters from Island waters to depleted oyster beds along the Nova Scotia and New Brunswick coastlines of Northumberland Strait.

At the word it was Aubrey the Great, John McGregor, Torpedo Lady and Briar Mac in that order all at the rail. Suddenly Harry was seen to throw up his hands and fall backwards off the sulky. Briar Mac then pulled out and passed Torpedo Lady and went back into an opening at the rail. He then took out again and passed John McGregor and levelled away for Aubrey the Great and finished at his wheel. The spectators watched in awe as it seemed the horse was driven with invisible hands. Harry was 78 years old and probably if he had a choice wouldn't have wished to die in any other way, and thus ended a career of what I consider was one of the Maritimes greatest horsemen.

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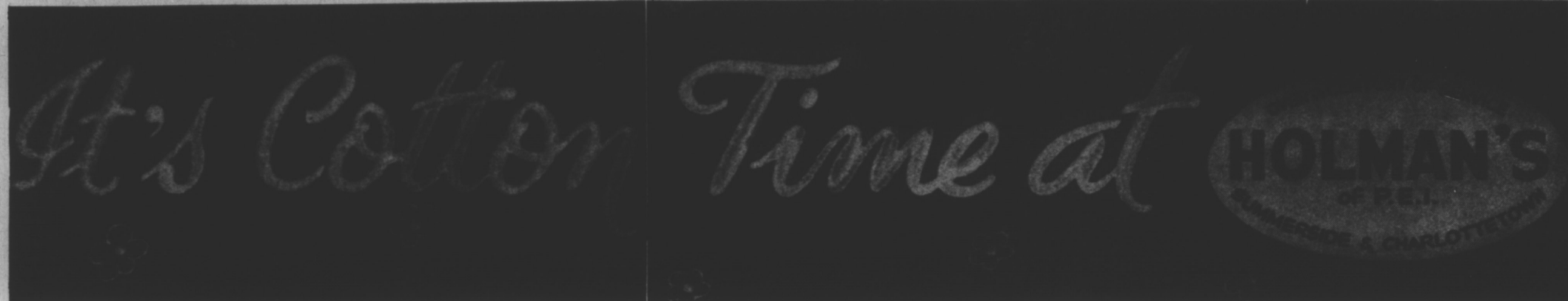
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