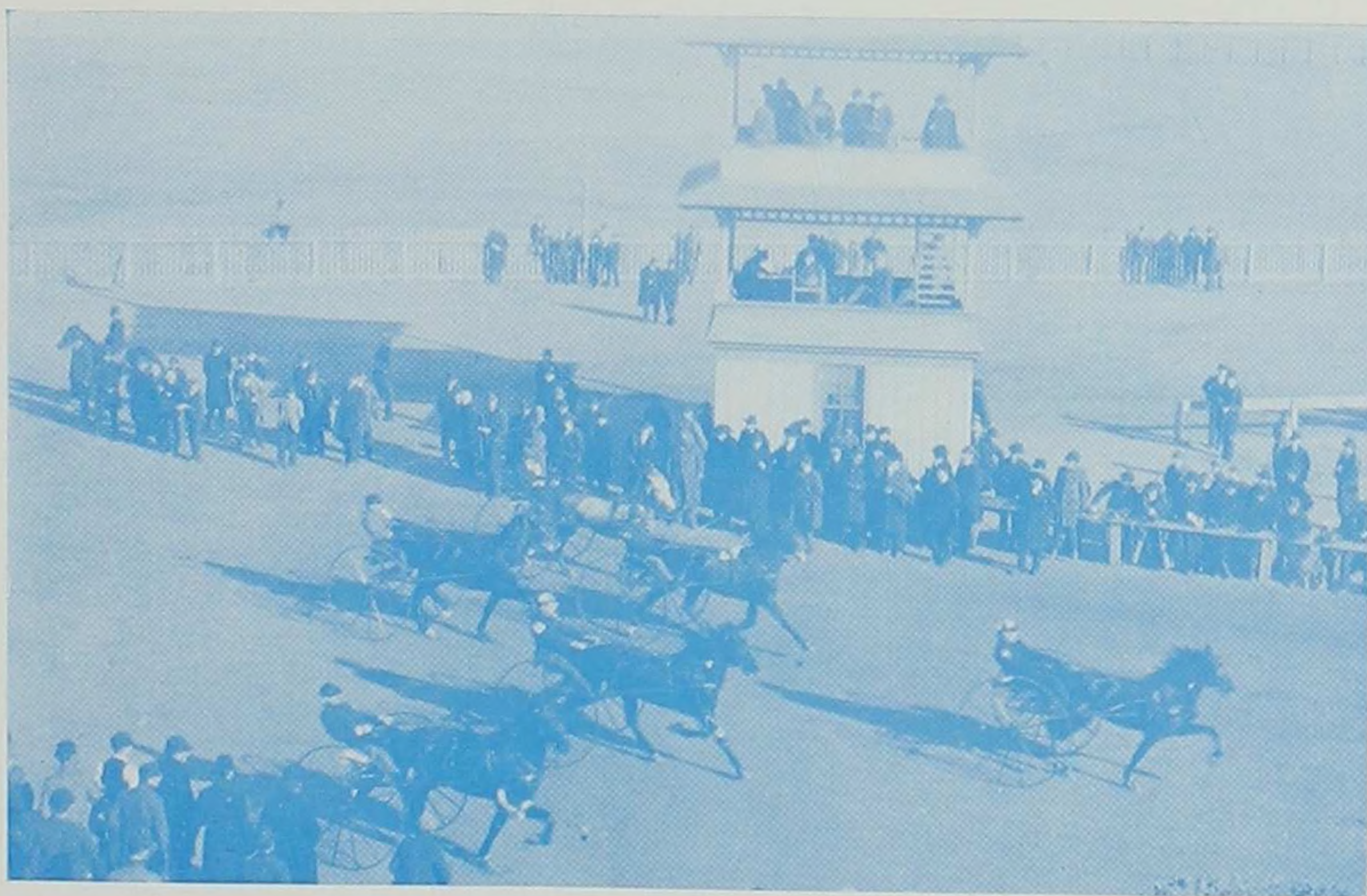
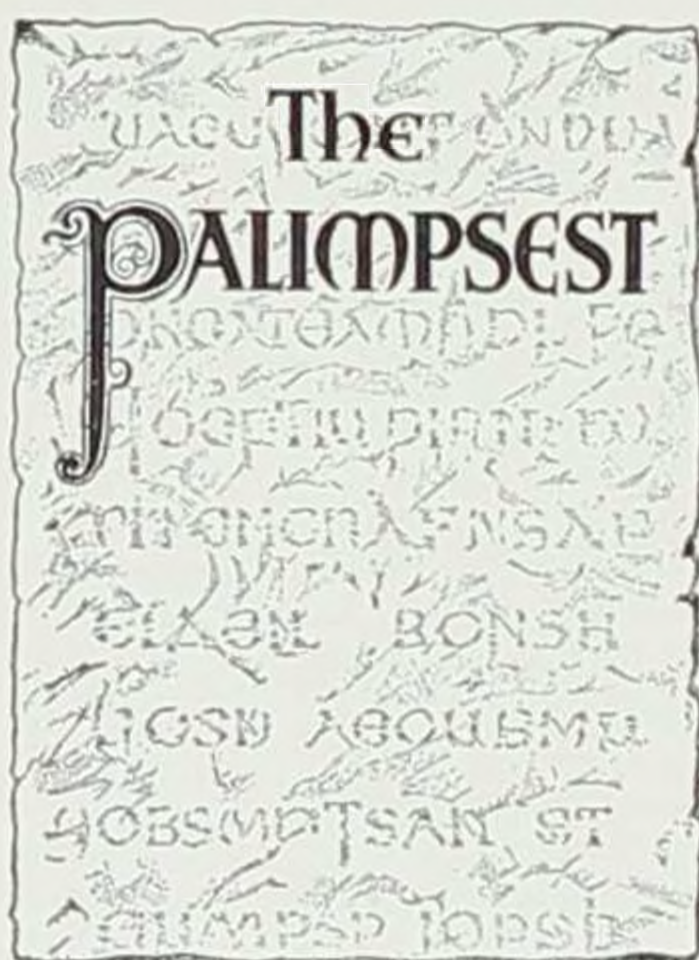


The
PALIMPSEST



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SEPTEMBER 1950



The Meaning of Palimpsest

In early times a palimpsest was a parchment or other material from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the records of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

Contents

LEXINGTON OF THE NORTH

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

Charles W. Williams	329
Axtell	349
Allerton	361
Rush Park	374

This number of THE PALIMPSEST is a reprint of the issue of September, 1932, which, because of heavy demand all over the country, went out of print in three weeks. The death of Charles W. Williams in 1936 and the destruction of the Gedney Hotel and opera house in 1945 make it particularly appropriate to revise and reissue this story of one of the most thrilling eras in Iowa history.

Cover

Front: Racing at Rush Park in October, 1890.

Back — Inside: Both photos are from *The American Trotter*.

Top — Nancy Hanks. Established world record of 2:05 $\frac{1}{4}$ at Rush Park in 1892.

Bottom — Roy Wilkes. Star performer at Rush Park in 1892. Time 2:07 $\frac{3}{4}$.

Back — Outside: The Williams home and part of Rush Park barns at Independence in 1950. Photo courtesy Mr. Don Risk.

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THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

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Charles W. Williams

Charley Williams had succumbed to the fascination of horse racing. He owned a gelding that was a fair trotter and two well-bred mares, Lou and Mabel. He determined to buy another mare and ship them to Kentucky to be bred. Then if he were not successful he could continue in his creamery business. After all, he was making money in butter and eggs while horse racing was only a diversion.

It happened that Henry Kelley, the popular manager of the Highland Stock Farm owned by H. L. and F. D. Stout of Dubuque, had just the horse for Williams. Gussie Wilkes was lame but very well bred. Her owners wanted to dispose of her. Rest and careful training might do wonders. Williams knew the Wilkes line, its splendid racing qualities, and its power to pass this quality on. He took a chance. He bought Gussie Wilkes for \$75. Lou produced Axtell while Gussie Wilkes foaled Allerton. Both were destined to become world champion stallions.

Charles W. Williams was born of American parentage at Chatham, Columbia County, New York, on December 4, 1856. His father, George W. Williams, was the son of an English sea captain who had been lost at sea. His mother, Julina Reynolds, traced her ancestry back to sturdy Quaker stock. As a lad, Williams attended country school in New York State. He was eleven when his parents moved to Iowa and purchased a farm near Jesup in Buchanan County. For the next four or five years he attended country school, assisted his parents on the farm, and, when not needed at home, hired out to the neighbors at twenty-five cents a day.

Early in the seventies his parents moved to town, and he worked in the Laird brothers' general store for five dollars a month and board. Before breakfast each morning he swept out the store, dusted the stock, and during the cold winter months started the fire. Since the store did not close until ten or eleven at night, the tired lad probably welcomed his hard bed under the counter.

Though the frugal Charley worked a year to earn sixty dollars, he spent the whole sum in a minute. The object of this wanton extravagance was a young colt. All his spare moments were utilized in "fussing" with his colt, breaking him to ride but making no effort to harness him. During the hard times of 1873 he found occasional em-

ployment at Newton brothers' general store, after which he clerked for a time in a hardware store owned by C. W. Taft.

Williams went to Chicago and drove a milk wagon throughout the spring, summer, and fall of 1874 for which he received \$20 a month. Returning to Jesup he attended school during the day and worked nights for the Illinois Central Railroad at fifteen dollars a month. He studied telegraphy and became a proficient operator. When a vacancy occurred at Independence he was transferred to that station at a salary of forty dollars a month for night work.

A striking characteristic of the youthful Williams was his tireless energy, a trait which he continued to exhibit throughout his life. While acting as night operator at Independence he spent the greater part of the day purchasing butter and eggs which he shipped to a New York commission house. His ambitious nature attracted the attention of A. J. Barnhart and in 1878 the two men established a creamery at Independence. The enterprise proved to be a great success. Barnhart soon bought out Williams, but urged him to start a creamery at Ossian, Iowa. Such a venture demanded a considerable outlay of capital but Williams found a New York commission house ready to form a partnership whereby he was to handle the butter, poultry, eggs, and creamery business in the West while the commis-

sion house sold the produce in the East. A little later he established a creamery at Postville, Iowa. While he busied himself in these new projects his young wife kept the books.

It soon became apparent that further outlets were needed for his energy. Visions of a lucrative return prompted Williams to establish a retail butter business in Chicago. There he sold what produce he could from his two creameries and shipped the surplus to his New York partners. Within two years the Chicago venture had developed into such a thriving business that A. J. Barnhart again prevailed upon him to sell out. This time Williams might have hesitated had not the trotting-horse fever suddenly overwhelmed him. Once his mind was made up he did not hesitate but launched out with characteristic vigor into the new field.

The purchase of Gussie Wilkes and Lou by an obscure creamery man at Independence caused no ripple of excitement in racing circles. Nevertheless, within five years the consequences of that event had revolutionized trotting standards in America. Bred to Jay Bird and William L., the two mares produced Allerton and Axtell who won national recognition for Charles W. Williams, for Independence, and for Iowa. Never before or since has a man developed two horses to hold the world stallion trotting record. And what is more astonishing, Williams bred them both the

same year and they were the first colts he ever raised. From the proceeds of the sale of Axtell he bought land on which to build the first kite track in the United States. On this track at Rush Park, attracted by generous purses, the fastest horses in America shattered one world record after another.

When the Iowa Association of Trotting Horse Breeders met at Cedar Rapids the Cedar Rapids *Standard* of September 13, 1888, noted the presence of such prominent horsemen as the Stouts of Dubuque, Judge Walter I. Hayes of Clinton, and Colonel W. W. Aldrich of Tipton. Williams was present but his name was not included among the elite. Two years later the Cedar Rapids *Republican* acknowledged the supremacy of Independence as the "great head center of horsedom" in the West. It believed a very large part of this new impetus in Iowa was due to Williams, and felt that the Independence races marked the beginning of a "new era in which our state, now chiefly famous for school houses, corn and pork, will also be famous as the native home of the American trotting horse."

Williams had "grandly demonstrated" to the *State Register* how much "knowledge and energy can accomplish" by the success of the races at Rush Park in 1890. A great number of world-famous horses had been brought together by the "enterprise of one man" who had given Inde-

pendence "more fame and brought her into greater prominence" than any other city of equal population in the United States. The Rush Park races constituted the "greatest turf meeting" Iowa ever had.

The meteoric rise of Williams in the trotting world attracted national and world-wide attention. A Saint Paul paper referred to him as "Captain Williams," causing the *Buchanan County Journal* to declare that by the time "Charley" reaches Kentucky his rank will not be below "Major General." A writer in the *Kentucky Stock Farm* urged every one to patronize that "game and energetic horseman" who had more "courage than half the track owners of the country." The "high praise" of Williams and his "plucky management" of Rush Park in the *Spirit of the Times* led the secretary of the Trotting Union of Great Britain to write the young "Napoleon of the Sulky" for advice regarding the laying of a kite track on the outskirts of London.

Williams was not as wealthy or experienced as some other famous horsemen, but he was richly endowed with enthusiasm, courage, and faith. Above all else he was energetic and persevering. He was convinced that to develop colts properly, intelligence, judgment, self-control, and a large amount of natural ability were required. These qualities Williams himself possessed to a marked degree. Horses responded to his masterful touch.

A number of contemporary papers and turf magazines spoke lightly of "Williams' Luck" each time a new record was hung up. Horsemen throughout the country resented this and sprang to his defense. None knew better than they the long hours and sacrifices necessary to register his astonishing victories with Axtell and Allerton.

"When the time came to handle these incipient wonders of the trotting world," the *Live Stock Indicator* remarked pointedly, "no very encouraging displays of speed rewarded his first efforts, but by persistent work, and that indomitable will that has characterized his undertakings, he fed, cared for, jogged and drove his two horses till he succeeded in landing them, victorious above their years and all previous records. . . . It was the cool calculation of a steady brain, coupled with the industrious cunning of the hand, moved by the fire of will force, that nerved him to the accomplishment of his hopes, and not the intangible phantom of *luck*, flitting before the eyes of the easy-going dreamer, that gave to C. W. Williams his unparalleled success."

Early in 1891 he disclosed his theories on breeding and training in a series of articles in *The American Trotter* entitled "Developing the Colts." Mindful of his own inexperience and aware that none agreed with him, the noted owner of Axtell and Allerton humbly addressed himself to the young breeder. The selection of a

proper location he thought was of primary importance. Proximity to other stock farms, a first class track for development and display, and a region where trotting horses were favored he conceived to be the foundation of success. Although he developed only one Axtell and one Allerton, Williams continued to produce great trotters at Independence and later at Galesburg, Illinois, many of them entering the 2:10 class.

He firmly believed that the development of a colt began long before it was foaled. To him the mare was even more important than the stallion. A young breeder must select a mare bred in the "height of fashion" on both sire's and dam's side for several generations. This mare must be fed liberally, jogged throughout the winter, worked for speed during the spring, and about June 1st, while in training, bred to a stallion that not only had a fast record but was being trained at the same time. In order to pass the trotting instinct on to her offspring, Williams would continue to train the mare and actually campaign her after she was in foal.

Eternal vigilance was necessary to raise and develop a young colt successfully. Oats, bran, carrots, and fresh grass constituted an ideal diet. When two or three weeks old, the colt should be halter broken. Constant and judicious handling would soon dispel fear, but the trainer should be careful not to make a pet of him. "Try and con-

vince yourself," Williams urged his readers, "that this youngster will *surely* prove to be a great colt if you develop him as you should. Don't let yourself think otherwise, and at the same time keep thinking that the least inattention on your part may make him worthless. Develop him as you would a child, watching every move he makes, and at the same time watching yourself closer, if possible, than you do the colt. Successful colt trainers must be on their guard at all times. They must first be able to control themselves, after which it will be an easy matter to control the colt."

The young trainer was cautioned not to attempt to prove the colt a trotter too quickly. After being faithfully jogged all winter, Williams advised that the distance should be gradually increased through the spring until the road work amounted to about seven miles daily. By the first of May, if the colt was a year or more old, he might be hitched to a sulky and taken to the track for the first time. Scalpers and shin and quarter boots must be used to insure protection. "After jogging two or three miles the wrong way of the track," Williams directed prospective drivers to "turn him around, and for the first time in his life ask him to go faster than a good, stiff jog. Don't try to find out yet how fast he can go, but simply score him two or three times well within himself, after which take him to the barn, giving him good

care after arriving there, as this slight exercise, as you may think it, will make him more or less muscle sore. For the next three days jog him on the road, not going near the track with him until the fourth day, when again work him as you did before, only ask him to show you a little more speed this time than he did the first; but require him to do it at the same place in the track. It will only take him a short time to learn that he is to go faster at this part of the track than the rest, and he will soon learn to make speed very fast at this one particular place."

Williams believed that the breeding and training of the trotting horse was one of the most fascinating games in the world. He watched with unalloyed joy the steady development of the colt from halter, to harness, to cart, and finally to sulky. An eternal mystery seemed to enshroud each colt. No one ever knew when the divine spark had fallen. Few would deny that champions must be made as well as bred. Even so keen a horseman as Budd Doble had paid \$7,500 for a full brother of Axtell only to learn there was but one Axtell.

It was not merely by means of races, attractive purses, fashionable breeding, and skillful training that Williams sought to develop prestige. On March 4, 1891, the first number of *The American Trotter* was published. Williams entrusted the management to C. B. Gildersleeve and appointed

as his assistants S. S. Toman and Milton A. Smith, men of "exceptional ability and experience." The first editorial declared that the paper would be "devoted exclusively to the American trotter and the interests of his breeder." Subscriptions poured in at a marvelous rate. One enthusiastic Indiana subscriber wrote: "I expect to renew annually for the next fifty years; after that I do not expect to be interested in trotters." At the end of the first year the magazine had 8,467 "fairly won and honestly esteemed subscribers" exclusive of exchanges, advertisers, correspondents, and sample copies.

The first issue of *The American Trotter* elicited a deluge of praise from all sections of the country. A handsome cover page, timely articles and editorials by noted horsemen, a veterinary department, and the usual "question box" won the instant approval of horsemen. Newsy letters from every corner of the Union, scintillating paragraphs from Iowa towns, together with dispatches from surrounding states made up the first twenty pages. An equal amount of space was devoted to advertising.

In the spring of 1892 Williams paid \$10,000 for the corner of Chatham and Mott streets and began the construction of a three-story brick hotel and opera building. A large force of men was employed day and night in order that the building might be ready for the August races. The

Gedney Hotel opened on August 21st and drew unstinted praise because of its unrivaled elegance. The floors of the lobby and dining room were handsomely tiled. The dining room was designed as a hunting lodge. The parlors were finished in mahogany, carpeted with Axminster, and elaborately furnished. A chandelier in the ladies' parlor cost \$175. The best suites were furnished in mahogany and the bridal chamber in bird's-eye maple. The rates for the bridal chamber were \$10 a day. There were seventy-three steam-heated guest rooms, all with hot and cold water.

Williams spared nothing in his endeavor to make the Gedney Opera House "second to no other in the west in point of elegance and completeness in all its details." It had a seating capacity of eight hundred and twenty-five. A self-appointed committee deposed the proprietor for the "First Night," took over the reins of management, auctioned the tickets to "Fra Diavolo," and bestowed \$2,689.50 on the man whose "energy, courage, and large public spirit" had made all this possible. Boxes had sold for \$100; single seats from \$5 up to \$30. When Stephen Tabor concluded his Dedicatory Ode with "Where there's a Williams, there's a way!" the audience heartily agreed.

To cap his astonishing activity Williams constructed an electric trolley line at a cost of \$40,000. The cars ran from the Illinois Central

Railroad depot past the Gedney Hotel and on to Rush Park. Williams had a complete monopoly! The transportation system to the hotel and to the races belonged to Williams. A stranger might dine and lodge at his hotel. The Gedney Opera House furnished the best entertainment to while away the evening. Upon retiring, *The American Trotter* provided the most appropriate literature. And yet, in an era when James B. Weaver, "Sockless Jerry" Simpson, "Calamity" Weller, and a dozen other anti-monopolists stalked the land, nothing but praise could be heard of this public-spirited man.

"What one man can do for a town is plainly shown in what C. W. Williams, of Axtell and Allerton fame, has done and is doing for Independence," observed the Cedar Rapids *Times* in 1892. "And Williams has no partners, no agents, and no advisers, but gives his personal attention to everything, keeps his own counsel and manages his own affairs. And the start of all this was a single horse — Axtell."

Suddenly there came a crash. The panic of 1893 destroyed countless fortunes and Williams himself was caught in the financial maelstrom. He quickly recognized the utter futility of holding on and turned over to his creditors real estate valued at \$250,000 to satisfy debts approximating \$100,000. Citizens of Galesburg, Illinois, made him a flattering offer to build up trotting interests

in their city. On the morning of April 11, 1894, Williams left Independence with his string of fifty-four horses aboard several cars. A special passenger coach carried him and his family together with a little band of loyal followers. Independence and Iowa had lost its most noted representative in the trotting world.

Sobriety as well as industry were indelibly impressed in his character. Born and reared in a religious atmosphere, ready to forego personal comfort in order to taste the joy of achievement, immune alike to the pitfalls of success and flattery, Williams exhibited throughout his career a sober moral character unique among horsemen of his day. He neither smoked, drank, nor used profane language. His iron will seemed to present an impregnable shield against all temptations. He would not tolerate anything offensive to good taste at Rush Park. With him there was no middle-of-the-road policy on matters of righteousness and human conduct. A man had to take a definite stand — either with the Lord or on the side of the devil. He firmly believed in total abstinence and would not employ a man who drank. At a banquet in honor of Axtell at Terre Haute in 1889 only one man except Williams refrained from drinking. His views were known and respected by horsemen wherever he went.

Religion was always a vital force in his life. From early childhood Williams identified himself

with the church. The simple Quaker teachings of his mother must have left their imprint upon him. His faith throughout life was patterned on the old fashioned religion whose foundation was laid upon the Gospel. As a young man he attended church regularly each Sabbath, and Rush Park was locked so tightly that no man was permitted even to see his horses on the day of rest. A half century has not altered his views. Each tenant on his Canadian farms must agree "that in no case will he do, or allow others to do, any work of any kind" on the Sabbath Day.

A crucial moment in the life of the noted horseman came as his boys grew to young manhood. He fully appreciated the snares his business presented to a family of boys. In order to shield his sons from these dangers he traded his entire string of horses for Canadian land.

After disposing of his horses Williams devoted much of his time to evangelistic work. He held meetings at Waterloo, Jesup, Independence, Des Moines, Cedar Rapids, and Mount Pleasant, besides conducting services at Galesburg and in adjoining Illinois towns. Every week during the winter he spoke several times in different Galesburg factories. He conducted meetings in the tabernacle and on the street. His influence over the young men was said to be remarkable. Once he gave a dinner to all the Galesburg grammar and high school students. "The work of this

night alone was worth a life time and the influence of this man of God in Galesburg will be felt in years to come." Simple in habits, steadfast in purpose, sincere in motives, faithful to himself, his friends, and his God, Williams' exhortations were unusually effective.

On the occasion of one of his visits to Independence he preached a strong and impressive sermon on faith. He selected as his text the twenty-third verse of the ninth chapter of Mark. "Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, All things are possible to him that believeth." Although a quarter of a century had passed, his old friends quickly recognized a personal portrait as he drew illustrations from his own rich experiences. Many churches, he told his audience, were lacking in that spiritual atmosphere without which the saving of souls was impossible. Just as the telegraph instrument must be properly adjusted in order to transmit messages, so God required certain conditions to be present before he could reach the hearts of His children here on earth with His messages of love and promises of life everlasting. He spoke of a certain man who had loved his horses, but he loved his Christ more and for the sake of his three boys, and for the sake of the Savior, he had disposed of his horses in order that he might live a consistent Christian life. He had prospered far beyond his greatest expectation. He gave the Master credit for this

success, believing that the spirit of Christ had led him along unknown paths to a distant country. He declared his land was not his own but the Lord's and that he was merely the steward, to look after it, and to turn it back into the Lord's work. Accordingly he consecrated the balance of his life to the Master's service and declined financial remuneration for any service he might be able to render.

In 1925 Williams moved to Aurora, Illinois. He established a small stock farm a mile from his beautiful home on the outskirts of that city and began breeding registered cattle. It was his belief that his Axtell Hereford cattle were the "most royally bred herd of Hereford Cattle in the World." He enjoyed working with them and they proved to be a profitable investment.

His youthful energy was still in evidence when the writer met him in Aurora in 1932 for, although nearing four score years, he visited his Canadian lands monthly during the summer, and supervised the work of nearly fifty tenants on his vast domain of 33,280 acres near Regina in Saskatchewan. The land was not in one body but scattered over a territory forty miles long and fifteen miles wide. A drive of 350 miles was required to visit all of the farms. Charles W. Williams claimed to be the largest individual grain farmer in North America.

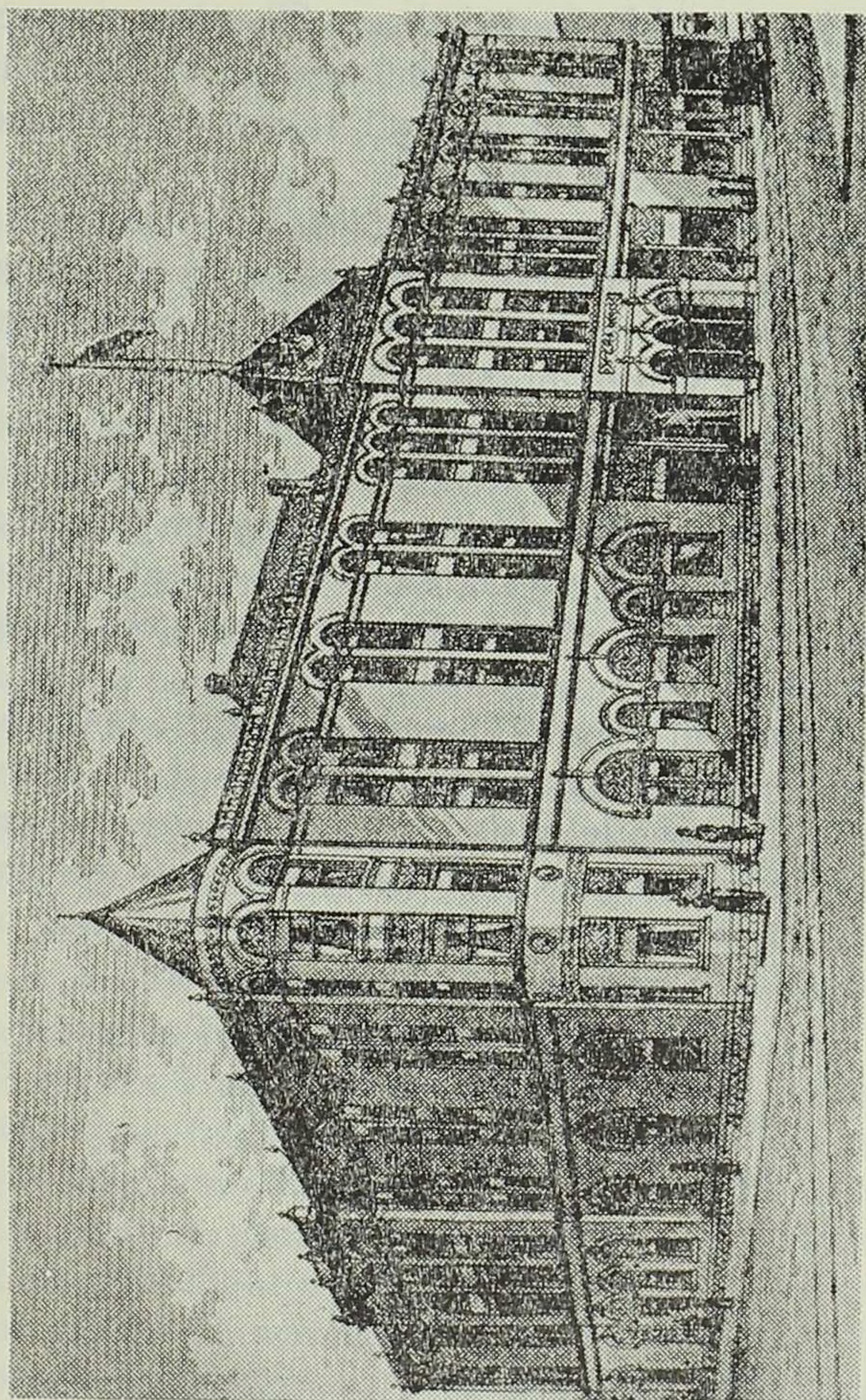
A half century of intense activity as a mature man had not robbed him of the devout Christian

spirit that marked his youth. On August 8, 1932, he wrote letters to each of his tenants urging them to be "thankful to God for the necessities of this life. There are millions of people in this old world right now, who are on the verge of starvation, and many of them are more worthy of a comfortable living than we are."

On February 18, 1936, citizens of Independence received word that Charles W. Williams had died at Aurora that day. The *Bulletin-Journal* of February 20, 1936, felt that young and old alike grieved at his passing. According to the editor:

"He brought fame to Independence. He was a man of unusual ability, aggressive, persevering, with unbounded energy and nerve, as evidenced by his life history here and his purchase of and belief in the ultimate value of Canada land. Remembrance of his activity here will never die. Monuments to his enterprise stand today, the Gedney Hotel, the Grand theater and others. His life was one of remarkable energy, foresight, industry, he lived to a ripe old age, and his death recalls vividly to old timers the active days here in the late eighties and the early nineties, when he was active locally. One trait of his that we have heard often is that in all of the busy life here he never would allow any training or activity at Rush Park on Sundays."

Charles W. Williams revealed his sentimental attachment for Independence when he designated



From *The American Trotter*

GEDNEY HOTEL

that he should be buried there. The deep respect of the Independence community for Williams is attested by the fact that all stores were closed during the funeral hour.

The destruction of the Gedney Hotel and opera house by fire in March, 1945, was a severe loss to the citizens of Independence. The Gedney Hotel block was valued at \$300,000 — the hotel itself containing 76 rooms while the theater had approximately 580 seats. The hotel dining room was the only place in Independence large enough for social functions and over a period of half a century had been the scene of "outstanding midwest social functions."

Today only the Williams home and one of the Rush Park barns stand as monuments to the memory of this gentle, visionary, public-spirited man. But the good that Charles W. Williams did lingers on in the hearts of countless thousands of Iowans who respect and cherish his work.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

Axtell

Axtell, a brown two-year-old stallion "unknown to fame," entered the three-year-old class of trotters in 1888 to compete for a \$100 purse against a fast field on the Keokuk racecourse. His driver had assured every one that this was the first race his horse had ever entered. After losing the first heat to Senator Conkling, Axtell won the second easily in 2:41 $\frac{1}{4}$. In the third and deciding heat he flashed away with a motion that was the perfection of ease, leaving Senator Conkling, Woodford Belle, and Golden Fleece hopelessly in the rear. With no apparent effort Axtell distanced all his competitors and came home in 2:31 $\frac{1}{2}$, a feat "unparalleled" in Iowa trotting.

Axtell was foaled on March 31, 1886. His sire was William L., a son of George Wilkes, who was one of the best producing sons of Rysdyk's Hambletonian, the founder of the trotting horse family of America. His dam, Lou, was by Mambrino Boy out of Bird Mitchell. As a colt he was plain-looking, willful, and stubborn. The great flight of speed which he exhibited as a two-year-old was not at first apparent and just before the spring of 1888 Williams offered him for sale at \$300, but could find no buyer.

Axtell was not hitched to a sulky until May 26,

1888. At the time of his appearance at Keokuk he had not trotted forty times to a sulky. His gait, according to an expert, was not artificial, "taught by patient and long continued effort," but perfectly natural without the aid of weights and boots. There was "not a suggestion of waste motion about his action; neither excessive knee and hock action, nor the sprawling wide gait behind." Axtell went "just high enough fore and aft to give him good length of stride and just wide enough behind to clear his front feet nicely." He trotted "with his legs, as the saying is." His knee action was bold and "straight ahead — no paddling." Behind he had "a pendulum-like swing from the hip." But "the grand secret of his extreme speed" was in the "electric rapidity" with which he struck and recovered his stride. He seemed to take two of those flashing, eighteen-foot strides in about the same space of time that an ordinary horse took one. It was this superior rapidity which made the pacer faster than the trotter, but Axtell was as rapid as a pacer and, with the "nerve-force and energy" which he inherited through his thirty-eight and a half per cent thoroughbred blood, some observers predicted that he would trot as fast as the best pacer.

The same admirer declared Axtell one of the "best formed stallions from his nose to his hocks" he ever saw. "Not only is his head handsome when he is animated," he wrote, "but his counte-

nance is likewise the most intelligent imaginable. The surprising breadth and fullness of forehead, the pricked ears, and, above all, the peculiar inquisitive expression of the eyes and the whole face, indicate an animal of far more than average intelligence. His neck is just the mould that one likes to see on a stallion — of good length, and masculine in fullness without being the least bit gross. His chest and shoulders, too, are such as I remember having seen but one other three-year-old carry; remarkable in depth and fullness at the brisket, splendidly muscled, loosely laid and very well sloped. His middle-piece is perhaps his best point; deep through the heart, grand in its length and hooped in by well-sprung ribs, it indicates most clearly the big feeder and hardy animal that Axtell is. Over the back, loin and hips there is beauty of outline together with remarkable breadth and power. His quarters and stifles are massive and broad, strangely so for a colt of his age, and they plainly show where his propelling power comes from. His feet are just about models in form, size and texture; long at the toe without being narrow, and open and low at the heel. They are neither shelly nor spongy, but dark, close-grained and dense."

A month after his sensational performance at Keokuk, Axtell won the three-year-old trot at Des Moines, but was declared ineligible because he was only two years old. Later in 1888 he

trotted at Independence, Cedar Rapids, and Lexington, Kentucky, and had a two-year-old record of 2:23 when the season closed. The most prominent rival of Axtell, both as a two-year-old and three-year-old, was the great California filly Sunol. Horsemen were partisan in their claims as to which was the better trotter. On October 27, 1888, Sunol trotted a mile in 2:18 at San Francisco, thereby lowering Wildflower's two-year-old record of 2:21 which had stood since 1881. Friends of Axtell were momentarily squelched but waited confidently for the contest to be renewed the next year.

Early in the following spring Williams brought Axtell out for road work. A citizen of Iowa Falls who saw Axtell pull a cart on a heavy track a quarter mile in thirty-six seconds declared him to be "the greatest colt that ever lived." Early in May, Axtell trotted an exhibition half-mile in 1:13. A strong wind and heavy track on May 20th did not prevent him from turning in a half-mile in 1:09½ which elicited an outburst of applause. Fifteen hundred saw Axtell driven an exhibition mile in 2:24 in June.

On July 2, 1889, Axtell was started against Sable Wilkes' three-year-old record of 2:18 at Saint Paul. A strong wind was blowing and the atmosphere was heavy, but the colt seemed to be in fine condition. The first quarter was trotted in :33, the half in 1:06, the three-quarters in 1:40,

and the mile in 2:15½, the "most sensational colt performance of the age." Axtell had not only broken the three-year-old record of Sable Wilkes, but the four-year-old record of Manzanita that had stood unchallenged since 1886. After this performance Dunton's *Spirit of the Turf* declared: "What he can do, no man can predict with any degree of certainty; but he is the greatest colt that has been foaled thus far."

Two days later Axtell appeared at home before an Independence Day throng of at least eight thousand. Although he had just stepped off the train from Minneapolis and showed signs of fatigue he trotted a mile in 2:20½ without a skip. His best previous record on a half-mile track was 2:21¾ made at Cedar Rapids on June 22nd. Returning to Minnesota he trotted at Saint Paul in 2:15½ over a cuppy mile track that was said to be at least two seconds slow.

The influence of Axtell on Iowa trotting was apparent to all. "A year or two ago," the *Oskaloosa Herald* declared after the Saint Paul performance, "the now world-wide famous Iowa three-year-old horse Axtell, could have been bought for \$250. To-day an offer of \$65,000 made for him by Robert Bonner of New York, is refused and nothing less than \$100,000 or \$125,000 will buy him. The Iowa horse leads the world to-day for both speed and valuation. Not only that, but in a retroactive way Axtell puts an

increased value on Iowa raised speeders. We have advanced the price on Richard III already."

His next exhibition was at Cleveland on August 1st. A correspondent of the Chicago *Herald* graphically described his wonderful performance. "John Splan got up behind a chestnut thoroughbred hooked to a sulky, and Williams brought out Axtell to go against his own record of 2:15½." After scoring three times he came up on the fourth trial eight lengths ahead of the runner and Williams nodded for the word. Though the starting judge said "Go!" Williams did not hear him and was uncertain "whether to pull up or go on until he looked back and saw Splan coming with the runner. Then he began sending the colt along." At the quarter post the watches registered 33½ seconds, a 2:14 clip. On the back stretch, two lengths ahead of the pace-making running horse, he made the second quarter in :33¾. Then Splan drew a little closer, and the upper turn was traversed at the same pace. "Coming into the home stretch Splan placed the runner on the colt's wheel. From the head of the stretch to the wire the wonderful youngster trotted as straight as ever an old campaigner did, and, without waning in the slightest degree, he reached the wire in 2:14¾, reducing his record three-quarters of a second." It was a remarkably even performance and Williams told the reporter that it was the easiest mile he ever trotted

in public. He saw no reason why Axtell should not reduce his time six seconds or more to establish a new world record.

On August 23rd, Axtell appeared in the stallion stake at Washington Park in Chicago. Earl McGregor alone of the half-dozen nominated came out to compete. The first heat was won by Axtell at a jog in 2:19. At the beginning of the second heat the judges announced that the distance flag would be waived and that Axtell would be accompanied the last half mile by a running horse. After a couple scores Axtell got off in good style followed by Earl McGregor. "On sped the son of William L., as steady as a rock, and a hundred watches announced the first quarter as having been made in :33 $\frac{1}{4}$. This scarcely looked fast enough, but the great colt kept on down the back stretch and the half was reached in 1:07." At the stable turn a running horse hitched to a light wagon started off with the flying trotter. The third quarter was slightly slower than the others, but after passing the three-quarters mark, "Williams commenced to send the colt for all he was worth, the runner hard after him. Swiftly the wire is approached, the colt moving like a machine, when in a fatal moment about fifteen yards from home, the driver of the running horse lets go his head, and he rushes up on even terms with the colt. Axtell will not be headed, and he breaks, losing a quarter or half a second,

and passes under the wire. A groan went up from the stand when the gallant colt broke, but this was changed into rounds of cheers when the timers hung out 2:14."

At Minneapolis, at Cleveland, and at Chicago, Axtell had lowered the championship record for three-year-olds. Suddenly the startling news was flashed east that Sunol had trotted in 2:13 $\frac{3}{4}$ at Fresno, California. The Axtell-Sunol feud was on again in earnest.

On the afternoon of October 11th, with the temperature at 79°, the wind blowing, and footing hard, elastic, and fast, Williams drove Axtell before the Terre Haute stand, doffed his red cap to the three thousand spectators, and scored up and down the stretch. George Starr came out with the thoroughbred Father John to trail Axtell to the half and stimulate his ambition to be first to the wire by lapping him out from that point.

Axtell was scored up once, and then, turning about seventy yards inside the wire so that his colt should waste little of his strength by a long score, "Williams 'chicked' him into speed and received the word as he passed the stand. He was at his best stride as he swept around the first turn and went true as a die to the stable quarter" in 33 seconds. "On around the corner and up and down the slight hill to the half went the colt," passing the red post in 1:05 $\frac{1}{4}$. The third quarter of the track was fast, and "Axtell, with Father

John on his wheel, was past the three-quarter post in 1:37 $\frac{3}{4}$." As they raced into the last quarter, "Starr sent up old John, the runner; Williams 'chicked' to the gallant colt and he came around the turn and into the stretch without 'hang' or swerve. Half way down the straight Williams lifted Axtell and thirty yards from the wire, the point where champions feel the tightest grip of relentless time, Starr sent up Father John and Williams lifted the colt anew, and let the whip fall twice on the heaving flanks. Under the wire the pair dashed." The watches of the timers recorded 2:12, which was not only 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ seconds faster than Sunol's mark, but established a new world trotting record for stallions of any age. The crowd cheered Williams wildly as he came back to the stand with the colt to weigh in.

That evening an elegant banquet was given in honor of Axtell. Its purpose was manifestly clear — to buy the popular champion. During the dinner there was much bantering as to whether Williams would sell Axtell for \$100,000. Williams simply replied, "There are a lot of men who have \$100,000, but I am the only one that has an Axtell." Nothing was accomplished, but in the lobby at midnight John Madden and Andy Welch offered \$101,000. Colonel John W. Conley rushed up and offered \$105,000. Williams smiled, thought a minute, and accepted. A syndicate composed of Conley, W. P. Ijams, Budd Doble,

and two others became the owners of the renowned Iowa three-year-old. No higher price had ever been paid for a trotting horse.

Throughout his racing career Axtell was tremendously popular in Independence, in Iowa, and throughout the United States. Thus, a large Independence delegation accompanied him to Cedar Rapids in 1889 to see him break his record on a half-mile track. At each station Axtell's car was crowded with enthusiastic admirers who had gathered at the depot to see the noble animal. The delegation was met at Cedar Rapids by a band wagon. The ladies of the party presented Axtell with a handsome floral collar. Throughout his turf career Axtell was presented with many rich trophies, blankets, and suits.

His popularity at Independence did not wane after his sale and many deeply regretted his departure. "Pictures of Axtell meet one everywhere," declared an astonished visitor at Independence in the spring of 1890. "They have an Axtell bank, Axtell laundries, Axtell cigars, Axtell shirts and underwear, Axtell soup at the hotels, and the city council and the board of education are now considering the propriety of making the anniversary of Axtell's birth a corporation holiday."

Axtell was never trotted in exhibitions or races after he was sold to the syndicate. He was retired to the stud at a service fee of \$1000. In

less than three years the great stallion had more than earned the price of his purchase.

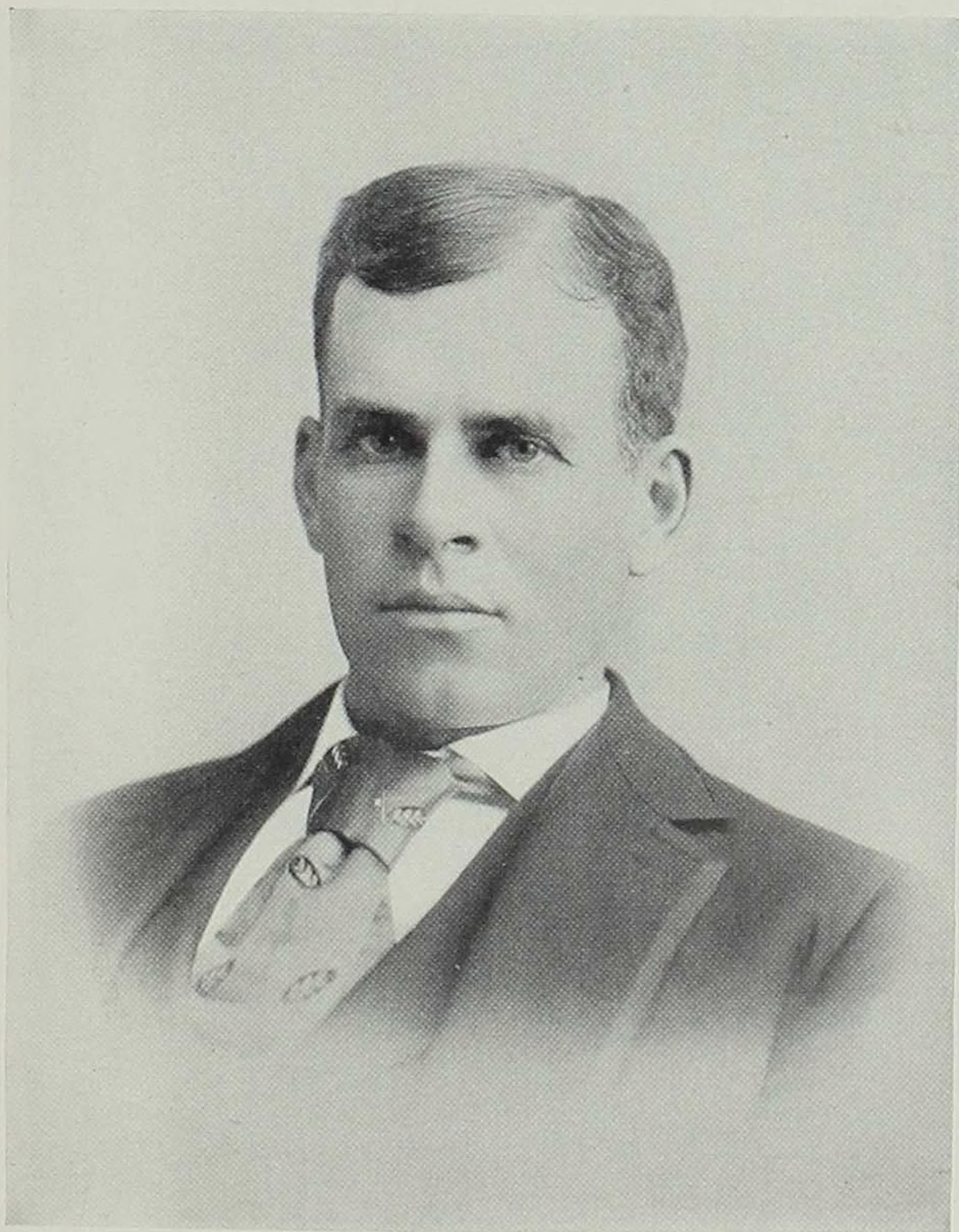
A distinguishing quality of Axtell was his remarkable power to pass on his great speed to his descendants. By 1900 he had 46 trotters in the 2:30 list and 5 pacers in the 2:25 list. The Axtell strain has persisted to the present through his son Axworthy (2:15 $\frac{1}{2}$). The most noted son of Axworthy is the mighty Guy Axworthy (2:08 $\frac{3}{4}$), the grandson of Axtell, and one of the greatest sires that ever lived. In 1931 this phenomenal stallion, although twenty-nine years old, ranked ninth in the list of producing sires with 15 new standard performers. Excepting Peter Volo, he is the only sire in the world to have four foals in the two minute list — Lee Axworthy, Arion Guy, Mr. McElwyn, and Guy McKinney.

Lee Axworthy (1:58 $\frac{1}{4}$) holds the world stallion record. Arion Guy (1:59 $\frac{1}{2}$) ranked third in the list of sires for 1931 with 25 new performers, bringing his total to 117. First among the sires for 1931 was Mr. McElwyn (1:59 $\frac{1}{4}$) with 30 new performers. His colts are trotting very fast and two of them hold the world record for age and sex. They are Main McElwyn who trotted in 2:02 $\frac{3}{4}$ as a two-year-old and Maid McElwyn who holds the world race record of 2:02 $\frac{1}{4}$ for two-year-old fillies. The fourth great foal of Guy Axworthy is Guy McKinney (1:59 $\frac{1}{2}$) who won the Hambletonian stake of

\$63,000 as a three-year-old. His first foals were just beginning to race in 1931, but he already had eight new performers and ranked well up among the producing sires.

Thus the stone that the builder rejected has become the cornerstone of one of the greatest families of harness horses in the world today. When Lou foaled Axtell by William L., whose sire, George Wilkes, sprang from the mighty Hambletonian, she blended the best blood of the Mambrino line with that of the fountain head of trotters. And Axtell — the only three-year-old to hold the world stallion record — through his son Axworthy has left an imperishable heritage to followers of the trotting world.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

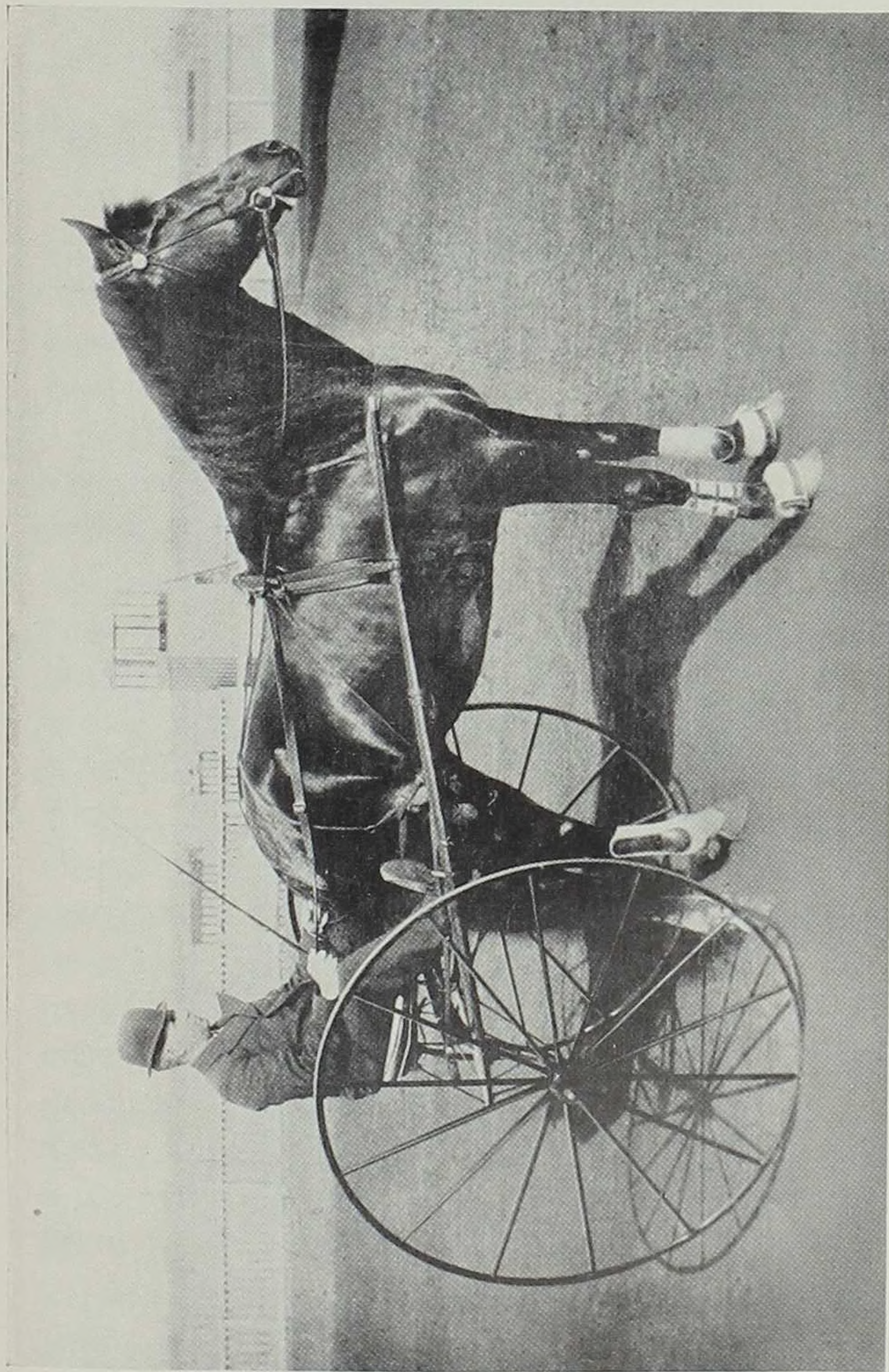


CHARLES W. WILLIAMS



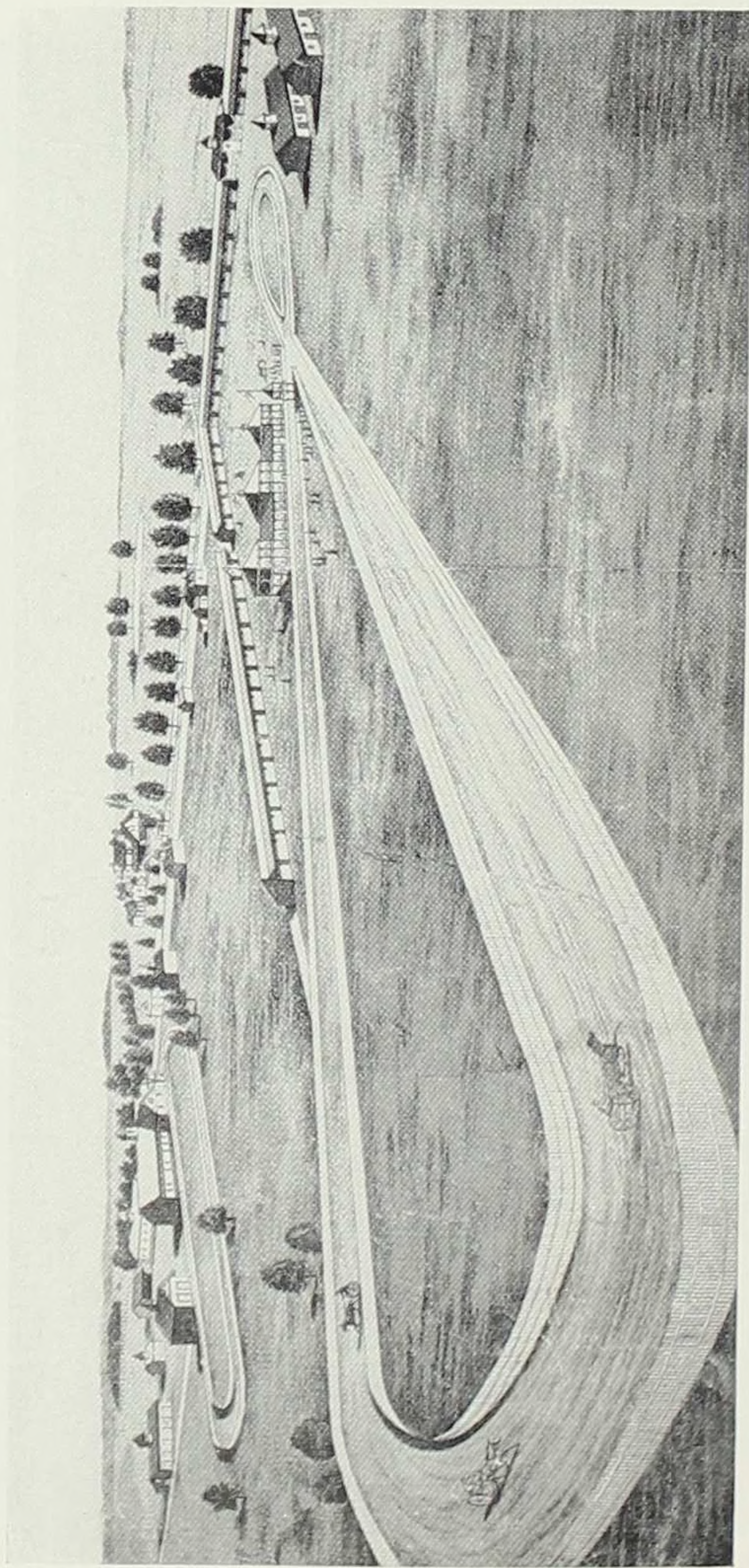
From the Horse Review

AXTELL



Courtesy of F. M. Shores

ALLERTON WITH WILLIAMS DRIVING



Courtesy of F. M. Shores

THE KITE TRACK AT RUSH PARK

Allerton

It was after five o'clock in the afternoon. Only one event remained before the word finis would be written on the Buchanan County Fair for 1889. And yet, despite the lateness of the hour, scarcely a person left the grounds. All remained to witness a spectacle never equaled on a race track anywhere — a match between Axtell and Allerton.

At last the horses appeared and began jogging around the track to warm up. Trainer John Hussey was up behind Allerton while Williams drove Axtell. The latter was the favorite, but John Hussey had an abiding faith in Allerton. The colts got the word for an even start with Allerton at the pole. "They trotted to the quarter as one horse in $:33\frac{3}{4}$; around the turn and down the stretch and past the stand they swept, and on around the lower turn and up the back stretch, still moving grandly together as though going to pole. Around the upper turn Axtell was driven wide and Allerton had drawn ahead nearly a length when they rounded into the home stretch. Here Williams began to send Axtell, and fifty yards from the wire they were on even terms. John Hussey was encouraging Allerton with voice and whip, and in spite of Axtell's efforts

Allerton was sent under the wire a winner by a nose in 2:22. The king of colts had been fairly beaten in the finish by his scarcely less kingly stable companion, and John Hussey was the proudest man that ever rode a sulky."

Allerton was the son of Jay Bird who, like the sire of Axtell, was a son of the mighty George Wilkes and inherited the strain of Rysdyk's Hambletonian. On his dam's side Allerton was more strongly bred than Axtell for Gussie Wilkes was by Mambrino Boy out of Dora Wilkes, the latter tracing her blood through George Wilkes to Hambletonian. Allerton was a handsome colt, brown with white spots on his front coronets and white hind ankles. Unlike the stubborn Axtell, he was kind and gentle, and remained so always. He loved to frisk about playfully when Williams took him out for a jog and at times became so animated he could scarcely keep his feet on the ground. As a three-year-old Allerton stood $16.0\frac{1}{4}$ hands high at the withers, $15.3\frac{1}{2}$ on the hips, and weighed 1,150 pounds.

A colt that can trot two races of eight fast heats within four days, the last the fastest of all, must be formed for stamina and speed. He must have no weaknesses in either mental or physical make-up to live out such an ordeal to the end. Such a colt was Allerton, in the opinion of his owner. "The depth through the heart region is simply abnormal," he declared, "the brisket is very full

and the shoulder itself grandly muscled, running away back at the withers into a wonderfully strong back, muscled over the loin like Wedgewood or Director. The length backward from the point of the hip is very fine and the breadth across is remarkable. There is something in the contour of Allerton's quarters and hind parts which reminds one of the immortal Dexter. A good many old-time turfmen have been struck by the resemblance. The formation is extremely speedy, and through the stifles and gaskins the muscular development suggests tremendous power. Allerton's hocks are quite low set, as perfect and clean as if chiseled from marble, and his legs and feet are of the highest quality. He has a bright, expressive head, with prominent eyes and thin, shapely ears."

Allerton began his career at Keokuk as a two-year-old in the fall of 1888. Black Wing won the first two heats in 2:54 and 2:52, but Allerton took the last three in 2:52, 2:50, and 3:10, a victory which clearly demonstrated his staying qualities. Allerton won his race at Des Moines in three straight heats and lowered his record to 2:48½; at Cedar Rapids he trotted against time in 2:42¾; and at Independence he won the two-year-old race without improving his record. He met his only defeat of the season at Lexington, Kentucky. Nevertheless, 2:40¼ was inscribed on his two-year-old banner.

In his three-year-old form Allerton participated in ten engagements, all of his races being against older horses. His first triumph was at Minneapolis where he defeated a field of eleven seasoned campaigners in the 2:38 trot and made a record of 2:24½ in the fourth heat, a performance "never equalled by a three-year-old colt in a race so early in the season." The following week he returned to Saint Paul and won the 2:40 trot in straight heats, setting a record of 2:23 in the second heat of this race after being jogged home to avoid distancing the field. Early in August he was driven two exhibition miles at Cleveland in 2:20½ and 2:19.

When Allerton returned to Independence to trot in the Buchanan County Fair he was hailed as a conquering hero. According to the *Buchanan County Journal*: "One of the events of the fair which was greatly enjoyed by all who were present Tuesday afternoon, was the presentation on the part of the citizens of Independence of a handsome suit of clothes to Allerton. At 3 o'clock the horse was led from the stable to the track in front of the grand stand, preceded by the band. C. E. Purdy, who first suggested the idea of buying the suit, placed the costly suit on the noble animal. Mayor Howard made the presentation speech, the ladies waved their dainty handkerchiefs and the crowd cheered. A more enthusiastic scene was never witnessed on the grounds. The blanket and

hood are made of the finest quality of cadet broadcloth, lined with lavender eiderdown, trimmed in heavy-weight gold satins and Japanese gold. The trimming consists of satin two inches wide, running completely around the blanket and hood, edged with Japanese cord. There are six ornaments of elaborate design made of satin, but obliqued on broadcloth. The name 'Allerton' is worked in raised gold letters three-eighths of an inch high."

His remarkable performance in the Brewster Stakes at Chicago elicited applause from the Chicago *Inter-Ocean*. After winning the first two heats of the 2:35 trot in 2:21 $\frac{1}{4}$ and 2:24 $\frac{1}{2}$, Allerton lost the third and fourth heats in 2:25 $\frac{1}{4}$ and 2:23 $\frac{3}{4}$. In the fifth heat he trotted a "grand race, laying third till the head of the stretch, when after a rattling finish he beat John W. by a neck in 2:24, the first instance of a three-year-old trotting a fifth heat in that time in a field of older horses."

Three days later, when everybody felt Allerton would have to lay up for a while, the game colt came out again in another class race against aged horses. To the astonishment of everybody, Allerton was never headed from start to finish, although he was forced to go the first heat in 2:24, repeat in 2:21, and then win the third in 2:18 $\frac{1}{4}$ with a fighting finish.

An excited observer has graphically portrayed

this struggle between Allerton and Bassenger Boy. "Down the stretch they came at a tremendous pace, neck-and-neck for the lead, with Allerton shaking his head like a bull-dog and doing his level best. At the distance stand it looked as though Bassenger was winning." Then Williams "was seen to draw his whip for a kind of despairing last effort. Down it went on Allerton's back with a sharp tap as they neared the stand. The baby race horse switched his tail, shook his head in an angry kind of way, and actually let out another link and won by a full half-length, right under the wire."

"I was proud of Axtell on the day he carried me a mile in 2:12 at Terre Haute," Williams declared, "but I am free to confess that I felt a keener thrill of admiration" for Allerton when he won the Brewster Stakes. "When the great colt flashed past the post in that heat, with Bassenger Boy at his saddle, still trying to win, I think he placed to his credit the gamest and greatest — if not the most brilliant — record ever made by a three-year-old."

A few weeks later Allerton wrenched his ankle badly at Des Moines and was forced to retire. Little improvement was shown in the spring of 1890 and he was in poor form throughout most of the season. Nevertheless, he was asked to reduce his record on several occasions and in almost every instance his determined spirit triumphed

over his bodily infirmity. He went into winter quarters as a four-year-old having reduced his record by six successive steps — 2:16 $\frac{3}{4}$, 2:16 $\frac{1}{4}$, 2:15 $\frac{1}{2}$, 2:14, 2:13 $\frac{3}{4}$, and 2:13 $\frac{1}{2}$.

It was this noble animal who faced Nancy Hanks in 1891. Although handicapped by his heavy stud service, Allerton was trained carefully and faithfully. Nancy Hanks and Margaret S. were pointed for this particular match alone but the latter had been ill and was in poor condition. In the pools before the race, Nancy Hanks sold for \$500, Allerton for \$235, Margaret S. for \$30.

A spirit of anxious expectancy pervaded the multitude of spectators at Rush Park as the starter's bell rang. Hundreds climbed upon the roof of the amphitheater. A crowd thirty lines deep extended far down the stretch on the outside fence. Fully three thousand spectators stood in the infield, and the stands were closely packed with ladies. Celebrated sport writers from far and near occupied the press box.

Shortly after two o'clock Allerton appeared, handsome, strong, determined, his rich brown coat shining like silk. Prolonged applause greeted Williams and his proud stallion. Budd Doble next came forth on the high-wheeled sulky behind Nancy Hanks and was warmly greeted. Margaret S. and her driver, George Starr, received another round of applause.

Allerton drew the pole. On the fourth score

they were sent off with Nancy Hanks, who was in the middle, a neck ahead of the other two horses. Up the stretch they went to the furlong post, head and head, when Margaret S. dropped behind. Allerton gained steadily on the flying Nancy and was a half length in the lead at the quarter. As they rounded into the long turn the stallion increased his advantage, and at the half, which was reached in 1:04½, daylight showed between them. Then Doble called on Nancy and she closed the gap in an instant. They came into the stretch on even terms. Nancy gained the lead, but Allerton was closing rapidly when he broke and lost a length and a half. Though he caught himself quickly and came on again, the wire was near and Nancy won by half a length in the unprecedented time of 2:12.

In the second heat Allerton came to the wire a trifle in the lead but at a pull and Nancy passed him in a twinkling. He broke before the amphitheater was passed but settled down and was at the mare's wheel when the turn was reached. At the head of the stretch the two champions began a terrific finish, but Allerton broke at the distance and Nancy won by two lengths.

The third heat opened with all three horses going like "bullets" to the turn, where Margaret S. dropped back beaten. The others continued their flight of speed around the bend with Allerton on the outside and a neck in front. "When

they straightened away for the long brush home," an eye-witness declared, "each horse and each driver strained every nerve, and no gamer pair ever flashed under the wire at better than a two minute gait, but the mare simply had a trifle the most speed, and finished with daylight between her and Allerton." The time of the three heats was 2:12, 2:12³/₄, and 2:12. Although the Kentucky mare was the victor, she had been forced to "go three faster heats than a trotter ever went" to win a race. "It was the greatest race on earth," declared an enthusiastic Tennessean.

At this time the supreme trotting stallion was Nelson. Driven by his owner, C. H. Nelson, this great horse had lowered Axtell's record of 2:12 by a half second on the kite track at Kankakee, Illinois. On October 21, 1890, he trotted in 2:10³/₄ at Cambridge City, Indiana. For a year this record remained unchallenged until Allerton brushed it aside at Independence on September 4, 1891, with a mark of 2:10. Nelson tied this mark at Grand Rapids, Michigan, and immediately a challenge was issued for a match.

At least twenty thousand people turned out at Grand Rapids to see Allerton and Nelson battle for the stallion trotting championship and a purse of \$10,000. In the betting pools, Allerton sold for \$100 to \$66 for Nelson. They were sent off with Nelson slightly in the lead and hugging the pole. At the first turn Nelson was a half-length in

front. They reached the half in 1:05 $\frac{1}{4}$ with Allerton a length behind. The breathless crowds in the stands were on their feet as the horses came into the stretch with Allerton rapidly closing the gap. Suddenly he broke, giving Nelson a three length advantage at the distance and, although he came on with an "electrical burst of speed," Nelson won by a half length in 2:13.

Nevertheless Allerton remained the favorite in the betting. In the second heat they were off at the first score. Nelson was urged to the limit, passing the quarter in :32 $\frac{1}{4}$ with Allerton a half-length behind. Up the back stretch his lead was increased. As they came into the stretch Nelson was ahead by two lengths but rapidly tiring. He made a final rally under the whip but the pace was too fast. When Allerton "collared" him twenty yards from the wire he had enough and Allerton won by a half length in 2:14 $\frac{1}{2}$ with one of the "finest finishes ever witnessed." Intense excitement prevailed and prolonged cheers greeted Allerton.

Before the third heat Allerton brought \$25 to \$6 for Nelson. The Maine stallion, clearly demonstrating his great flight of speed for a short distance, took the pole at the start, but not without a "palpable foul" as he pulled in front of Allerton so that Williams had to take his horse back. "Nelson is at the quarter in 32 seconds," wrote Milton A. Smith who witnessed the race,

“with Allerton moving along easily three lengths in the rear. ‘Look at him! Look at him!’ cried Nelson’s friends as on he sped, increasing his lead at every stride.” But they forgot that he was racing with a horse who did not know how to give up. “Nelson goes to the three-quarter pole in 1:40 and still Allerton has made no play for the heat. Even his friends begin to get a little nervous as they notice the long lead of the Maine stallion, but coming down the home stretch the brown colt strikes a 2:00 gait and when he comes up to Nelson it is all over; he passes him as though he was going the other way. Mr. Williams eases him up and he wins by three lengths in a jog; time, 2:15.”

The fourth and final heat opened with no pools sold. As they passed the quarter on even terms, C. H. Nelson, in his flashy cardinal colors, realized that he could not win. “Williams, I guess you’ve got me beat,” he called to his opponent. Up the back stretch they went together but at the distance Allerton began to draw away. Nelson called on his horse but he had no brush left, seeing which Williams pulled up and Allerton won the heat at a jog in 2:16½. Although Allerton took the “largest purse ever won by a trotting horse,” he did not establish a new record. Wild excitement prevailed, hats and cushions filled the air, and the applause was deafening. Allerton was presented with a fine blanket of cut roses.

A return match with Nancy Hanks had been arranged for Allerton at Lexington, Kentucky. A purse of \$8,000 was offered, but when the great day arrived Nancy Hanks was withdrawn, ostensibly because of an injury, and Delmarch, who held the stallion race record and was undefeated that year, was substituted. Bitterly disappointed, Williams showed great sportsmanship in accepting the substitution for he would lose much more than \$8,000 if Allerton were defeated. Between 18,000 and 25,000 people came in "carriages, carts, surreys, and fashionable turnouts loaded with Kentucky beauty." Allerton was the favorite \$100 to \$65, but just before the match Delmarch was selling even and one bookmaker lay eight to five that Allerton would not win the first heat.

Allerton received a tremendous ovation as he jogged briskly up the track with his mane and foretop gaily decorated with blue ribbons. Delmarch drew the pole and they were off after scoring three or four times. Allerton won easily in 2:13 $\frac{1}{4}$. The next two heats also went to Allerton in 2:15 and 2:15 $\frac{3}{4}$.

The Lexington meet closed Allerton's great races for 1891 and he retired for the winter with the world's stallion record of 2:09 $\frac{1}{4}$ made in an exhibition on the kite track at Independence on September 19, 1891. Unfortunately summers on the west coast are longer, and on November 17th

at Stockton, California, Palo Alto wrested the crown from him in 2:08 $\frac{3}{4}$.

In the following year when he was six years old, Allerton was injured in a race against Lobasco at Davenport, and was retired for the remainder of the season. He never raced again. Although he sired more trotters and pacers in the standard list than Axtell, his great racing ability has not been perpetuated as in Axtell's progeny.

Allerton's thrilling races won the hearts of all who loved a game horse. While Axtell never trotted against Sunol or any of the champions, Allerton met and conquered Nelson, Delmarch, McDoel, and lost to Nancy Hanks. Axtell never lowered his 2:12 record but Allerton reduced his mark to 2:09 $\frac{1}{4}$ as a five-year-old and was crowned the stallion champion of the world.

When Williams traded his horses for Canadian land, Allerton went with the rest but not as a part of the sale. Provision was made for the noble horse, then eighteen years old, to be given a comfortable home at Indianola until his death. He spent his last years in the state to which he brought great fame in his youth.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

Rush Park

The town of Independence had suddenly quadrupled its population. Over eight thousand people had swooped down on July 4, 1889, to help the town "swell the hallelujah chorus of freedom." Small boys were out in force, armed with large firecrackers, torpedoes, and squibs. Flags and bunting decorated the business district. Every one was brim full of patriotism, good nature, and red lemonade. A hose-cart race, a parade, and an oration were included in the morning program.

In the afternoon the spell of the turf left the streets of Independence deserted! The horse races at Rush Park served as an effective magnet and the fifty cents admission fee paid by over eight thousand spectators clearly indicated that men did not live for noise alone. The face of Charles W. Williams must have beamed with joy as he saw twenty-five hundred people jammed into his amphitheater, happy to pay an additional thirty-five cents for the privilege. Purses totaling \$2,400 had lured many of the fastest horses in the state to Independence, and the crowd was not disappointed.

Rush Park occupied the site of the old Buchanan County Fair Grounds west of Independ-

ence, but Williams had made so many changes that the place could scarcely be recognized. He had purchased the property in 1886 from Colonel Jed Lake and named it Rush Park in honor of Rush C. Lake of Kansas City. "The old rookery that hardly stood up under the name of amphitheater had disappeared and in its place has been erected a grand stand of magnificent proportions," reads the *Buchanan County Journal* of August 29, 1889. "Nice stables, built on the latest improved plan, ornament the grounds where one year ago half tumble-down sheds marred the beauty of the site for fair purposes. These stables are the homes of Axtell, Allerton and fashionably bred aristocratic horses that belong to the Rush Park horse family."

Axtell and Allerton had received their early training on the old Rush Park half-mile track which was said to be one of the best in the state. When Axtell was sold in 1889 Williams purchased 120 acres of land on the east and within a quarter mile of the city limits, increasing the area of Rush Park to 300 acres. On the new tract he decided to build a balloon or kite-shaped track.

The idea of a kite track was first advanced in 1887 by William B. Fasig, Secretary of the Cleveland Driving Park Association. It was designed in two stretches of one-third of a mile each with a connecting curve of the same distance. The start and finish were at the apex of the kite

where the two stretches met. A small loop at the apex was well adapted for scoring and finishing. The principal advantage lay in the fact that horses made only one turn instead of two as on the elliptical track. The longer stretches enabled the contestants to become strung out before reaching the turn, thus eliminating the dangerous struggle for the pole. The starter, timers, and judges stood in a small stand just inside the track at the apex. Foul driving, jockeying, and other unfair tactics could be quickly detected at this point. Scoring down for the word was also simplified. The grandstand was located opposite the starting point and another could be erected opposite the finish if necessary.

Williams had his new track surveyed and the ground prepared before snow fell. In the following spring, work was begun in earnest and by the first of June much of the track was in good condition for jogging. The judges' stand and even the big amphitheater were moved from the old Rush Park oval to the kite track without being taken apart. On June 17, 1890, when the first complete circuit of the kite track was made, it was found to be extremely fast.

The track extended north and south with the small loop to the north. Commencing at the turn of the small loop there was a straight stretch of 500 feet for scoring. The track was 75 feet wide on the straightaways and narrowed to 60 feet

around the great turn. This enabled ten horses to score up abreast. The stretches were 1574.743 feet and the turn 2130.514 feet long. Several surveys showed the track to be 1.76 inches over a mile. When finally completed, including resoiling and other general repairs, it cost no less than \$10,000.

The kite track, located on low swampy ground, had a peat-bed foundation. Over this was spread a layer of black spongy soil five or six inches deep. There were large ditches on both sides. When it rained the water soaked through the track making it soft and wet, but after the surface dried it remained springy and was very easy on the horses. The surface yielded readily to manipulation, so that the track could be put in superlative condition in half a day. Only a steady downpour on the day of a race could cause postponement. Old-timers declared it was as level as a billiard table. Teams worked the track continually and horsemen consequently found it a good training place.

The first meet on the kite track was held on July 4, 1890. Only local horsemen entered but some creditable performances were registered despite the weather. Allerton twice lowered his mark of 2:18 $\frac{1}{4}$, trotting the best heat in 2:16 $\frac{3}{4}$.

The grand opening day for the kite track was set for August 25, 1890. At least 225 horses valued at over \$1,000,000 were on exhibition for the price of one dollar at the gate. Season tickets, admitting the holder to all five days, could be pur-

chased for \$4; season tickets for a lady and gentleman cost \$7.

A dismal rain caused people to "look down their noses" and postponed the opening day, but fine weather drew an immense throng on August 26th, and fully ten thousand spectators were present on the following day. Among the visitors was a large contingent of Dubuque sportsmen with money to bet on Keno F., a flashy gelding who had just won important matches at Minneapolis, Rochester, and Chicago, bringing rich profits to his supporters. In the pools Keno F. sold for \$40, Mary Marshall for \$6, and the field for \$3 and \$4. When Keno F. won the first heat in 2:21 the Dubuque betters went wild and could not get their money up fast enough. Accordingly they made flat bets of \$50 to \$200 at big odds wherever they could find takers. Mary Marshall won the next three heats in 2:17, 2:17 $\frac{3}{4}$, and 2:18 $\frac{1}{4}$.

A few days later the Dubuque *Herald* made an astonishing revelation. "When residents of this glorious state of Dubuque go abroad to make a sure winning in sporting circles, they have sand and do not hesitate to put up their last dollar." When fortune smiles they "ride in palace cars," but when she frowns they walk home. "We had a trotting horse. He won. We bet. We won. The tide turned. We bet. We lost. And there are just 191,618 railroad ties between Dubuque and Independence."

Among the special races which caused the most excitement was the performance of Roy Wilkes, the great pacing stallion, who started against his own record of 2:09 and came home steady and true in 2:08 $\frac{1}{4}$, for a new world stallion pacing record. Altogether the August meet was one of the most successful ever held.

A seven-day meet which began on October 23rd closed the season of 1890. Although held rather late, the admission fee of fifty cents attracted a good crowd. There were nearly four hundred horses on the grounds and every available stall was filled. The track was in almost perfect condition. In the reporters' gallery were representatives of such magazines as the *Kentucky Stock Farm*, *Dunton's Spirit of the Turf*, *Iowa Farmer and Breeder*, and the *Des Moines Northwest*.

Many spectacular races featured the October meet but the special events elicited the greatest enthusiasm. Guy, the little black son of Kentucky Prince, failed to lower his record of 2:10 $\frac{3}{4}$ but gained the title of "champion equine crank of the world." While the patience of the spectators was being sorely tried by the erratic Guy, Allerton was trotted out to beat his record of 2:15 $\frac{1}{2}$. He was going level and strong on his first trip to the wire and Williams nodded for the word. Allerton trotted the first half in 1:07 $\frac{1}{2}$ and came home without faltering in 2:14, beating not only his own

record but the world four-year-old stallion record as well. A few days later he lowered this mark to 2:13½.

Two sparkling performances were executed by the celebrated pole team consisting of Belle Hamlin and Justina. These two sisters were the pride of their seventy-two-year-old driver and owner, C. J. Hamlin of New York. A cold damp wind was blowing when the racy pair were brought out and warmed up. After scoring down once Hamlin nodded for the word and the two were off like a "piece of perfect machinery." Trotting smooth and even the pair finished strong in 2:13¼ amid jubilant applause. The following Monday they flashed to the wire in 2:13.

According to *The American Trotter*, half of the ten best records broken during 1890 fell at the kite track at Rush Park. Beside the pole team record of Belle Hamlin and Justina, Allerton trotted a mile in 2:13½ for a new four-year-old stallion record. Among the pacers, Manager set the record for two-year-olds at 2:16½; Roy Wilkes reduced the mark for stallions to 2:08¼; and Cricket came under the wire in 2:10 to establish a new time for mares. No other track boasted of more than one new record in this list.

The influence of the 1890 races was apparent to all. Independence glowed with prosperity and pride at the accomplishments of the year. "The tracks contribute thousands of dollars to the local-

ity in which they are situated," declared the editor of the *Buchanan County Journal* on November 20, 1890. "There are always a thousand or more trainers, drivers and stable hands in and about a race track when a meeting is in progress. They live there entirely and what they eat and what they drink is invariably bought in the towns or villages roundabout. Five hundred or a thousand horses require an enormous amount of hay, oats, corn and straw, and this is purchased from neighboring farmers. Cash is always paid, and the money that comes to the people in this way is more than acceptable. Independence and Buchanan county have this year had a foretaste of these benefits, which in the future we are to enjoy in a much greater degree. Our citizens should do all they can to help on and encourage the work that is now being done wholly by one man."

The season of 1891 opened on July 1st with a meet that continued through July Fourth. The track was in perfect condition, the weather fair, music was furnished by the Toledo band, but only about 2,500 people witnessed the races on Independence Day. Enthusiasts generally were waiting for the great August meet when the champions would perform.

Fearful lest the weather might deter the more timid from attending the August meet, *The American Trotter* of August 13, 1891, assured its readers that every precaution had been taken to

insure a good track in case of rain. "A large number of big sponges that will hold nearly a pailful of water each have been secured, and immediately after a rain boys will go over the track with these sponges and take up all the water that is collected in pools. After this a large flock of sheep that is owned on an adjacent farm will be turned on the track and driven around several times; the horses and colts will be turned on from the pasture and also driven around, after which light harrows will be put to work and jogging on the track will begin. Within three hours the track will be fit for racing."

The August meet attracted horsemen from all over the United States. A group of "monied men" from Topeka, Kansas, chartered a special Pullman dining and sleeping car. Belle Fourche and the surrounding country in South Dakota sent a large excursion train. From every town and hamlet in Iowa, from distant California and the Atlantic seaboard, horsemen came to witness the "most important" meeting in the "annals of American harness racing."

While the announcement of the program in *The American Trotter* gives an adequate explanation of entries, purses, and rules of the meet, it affords no conception of the enthusiasm of the enormous crowds, the glamour of the betting, the thrilling races, or the record-breaking exhibitions. The special prizes of \$2,500, offered for the reduc-

tion of world records, attracted "fleet nags from the Golden Gate to Passamaquoddy Bay." Some of the most famous horses in America were seen in action, such as Margrave, Monbars, Direct, Mascot, Guy, Alix, Roy Wilkes, and Manager.

No doubt the climax of the occasion was the race of Nancy Hanks, Allerton, and Margaret S. for the championship of five-year-old trotters. Thousands were at the track all morning. Five hundred tickets for this race were sold at Dubuque alone. A stream of hungry mortals besieged the lunch counters and the demand for coffee and sandwiches led one to suspect that the entire audience was on the verge of famine. Nancy Hanks won in three straight heats though closely pressed by Allerton all the way.

On the Monday following the last race a few hundred owners, drivers, and personally interested people gathered at Rush Park to see some of the stars lower their marks. Owners and drivers welcomed such opportunities, and the results proved valuable both to horse and track alike. Thus, it may be recalled that the first trotter to negotiate a mile in 2:30 or better was Lady Suffolk in 1844. By the close of 1891 no less than 5,808 trotters and 1,665 pacers had entered this distinguished company.

Almost a fourth — 1,294 trotters and 414 pacers — entered the standard list in 1891. Of these, 231 made their records on Iowa tracks, more than in

INDEPENDENCE DRIVING PARK ASS'N.

AUGUST 24, 25, 26, 27, 28 and 29.

\$90,000

STAKES AND PURSES,

More by Twenty-Two Thousand Dollars than has ever been given by any Association for one meeting. The colts and horses entered in our stock farms of America & Canada.

656 Horses and colts are now entered in stakes closed and when the number of entries in class races to close Aug. 10, are added to this number there will no doubt be over 800 horses entered.

To be trotted and paced over the celebrated Kite-Shaped Track, acknowledged by all to be the fastest on earth. Without doubt many of the now fastest records will be broken during this week and perhaps all of them.

THIS WILL BE THE GREATEST TROTTING AND PACING MEETING MAN HAS YET SEEN.

MONDAY, AUGUST 24.

Yearling Stake for Trotters, (156 entries).....\$5,000
Pacing Stake for 3-year-olds and under, eligible to 2:30 class April 1. (25 entries).....1,000
2:21 Class for trotters.....1,500

TUESDAY, AUGUST 25.

Two-year-old Stake for trotters, (113 entries).....\$5,000
2:30 Stake for Pacers, (27 entries).....5,000
Three-year-old Stake for trotters, eligible to 2:40 class April 1; (74 entries).....1,000
Free-For-All, for pacers, to pole.....1,500

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 26.

Three-year-old Stake for trotters, (50 entries).....\$5,000
2:35 Class for trotters.....1,500
Four-year-old Stake for trotters, eligible to 2:30 Class April 1. (32 entries).....1,000
2:20 Stake for Pacers, (23 entries).....5,000

THURSDAY, AUGUST 27.

Four-year-old Stake for trotters, (16 entries).....\$5,000
Five-year-old Stake for trotters, (11 entries).....5,000
Free-For-All Pace.....2,000
Two-year-old Stake for trotters, eligible to 3:00 class April 1. (87 entries).....1,000

FRIDAY, AUGUST 28.

2:20 Stake for trotters, (17 entries).....\$5,000
2:25 class for trotters.....1,500
2:17 " " ".....1,500
2:23 " " pacers.....1,500

SATURDAY, AUGUST 29.

Free-For-All for trotters.....\$2,000
2:17 class for pacers.....1,500
Trotters to pole, (Belle Hamlin and Justina barred).....1,500
2:30 Stake for trotters, (25 entries).....5,000

IN ADDITION TO THE ABOVE PROGRAMME, WE OFFER

\$2,500

In cash for yearling trotter to beat the yearling record of - 2:29 3-4
In cash for 2-year-old trotter to beat 2-year-old record of - 2:18
In cash for 3-year-old trotter to beat 3-year-old record of - 2:10 1-2
In cash for 4-year-old trotter to beat 4-year-old record of - 2:10 1-2
In cash for double team to beat the double team record of - 2:13
In cash for 3-year-old stallion to beat 3-year-old stallion record of 2:12
In cash for stallion to beat the stallion record of - 2:10 3-4
In cash for any trotter to beat the trotting record of - 2:08 3-4
In cash for 2-year-old pacer to beat 2-year-old pacing record of 2:18 1-2
In cash for any pacer to beat the pacing record of - 2:08 1-4

Should any of the above records be lowered before the hour of starting, the new record will be the one required to beat. In case of tie the money will be divided equally. No entrance fee will be charged in these specials, but all owners of horses and colts must notify the secretary of this association, not later than August 1, of their intention of competing in these specials, giving name and breeding of horses and colts to be started.

We are the first association in this country adopting the five per cent entrance for all class races. All of the above class races, namely: 2:21 trot, 2:35 trot, 2:25 trot, 2:17 trot, free-for-all trot, trotters to pole, 2:23 pace, 2:17 pace, free-for-all pace, pacers to pole, will close Saturday, August 10th, and the entrance fee is as per above, five per cent.

Five entries to fill and four to start in all class races.

Money divided sixty, twenty-five and fifteen per cent,

Right reserved to change the order of any or all of the above stakes and classes.

To be trotted and paced under the rules of the American Association.

C. W. WILLIAMS, Sec'y, Independence, Iowa.

A weekly advertisement in *The American Trotter* for 1891

any other state or Canada. Had it not been for the kite track at Rush Park, however, Iowa would have ranked tenth or below, for 175 of the 231 new performers (132 trotters and 43 pacers) entered that class at Independence. This was 35 more than the combined totals of the famous tracks at Stockton, California, and Lexington, Kentucky. It was one-tenth of the total entries in the United States and Canada. Truly, it was no idle boast that the "Fastest Track on Earth" was located at Rush Park in Independence, Iowa.

Jubilant over the success of the August meet, the Independence Driving Park Association held a racing carnival from October 19th to October 31st. Hundreds of horses entered, the attendance was good for that season of the year, and scores of horses entered the 2:30 list.

The salutary effect of the large purses, progressive futurities, liberal entrance fees, and long meets did not go unregarded, for horsemen throughout the country warmly praised the efforts of Williams and his Rush Park programs. According to the *San Francisco Post*, "The breeder of Axtell and Allerton is to be congratulated on his enterprise and the horsemen of America owe him a debt of gratitude, for he has done more to elevate the trotting turf and make the racing of the harness brigade profitable than all other men who have aspired to manage the trotting meetings of the world. In the short space of three years or less

he has resurrected trotting and pacing racing from a state of torpor, and raised it to an equal with the style in which the running of thoroughbreds is conducted at Coney Island, Brooklyn and Westchester."

To increase the earning capacity of the trotter, Williams offered \$200,000 in stakes, purses, and specials for the great summer meet of 1892. The opening was marred by a soaking rain which postponed the more important races. When the sun finally appeared the \$5,000 stakes and special races monopolized attention. Brilliant performances were executed by Conformation, Kentucky Union, Silicon, Flying Jib, Martha Wilkes, Mascot, Manager, Roy Wilkes, Online, Belle Acton, Jay-Eye-See, Lord Clinton, and a score of others. Hardly a day passed that a new record was not established.

Nancy Hanks was there at the height of her glory. Her dazzling speed, her purity of gait, and her sheer grit made her supreme in her day. A rhymester paid this tribute to the reigning queen.

Some men invest their money,
Some stow it in the banks,
But I have found a safer place;
I bet on Nancy Hanks.

The peerless daughter of Happy Medium seemed to warrant such faith as Budd Doble trotted her down the stretch at the "dainty pace" she affected when paraded before a crowd. The

ancient runner, Ned Gordon, driven by Charles W. Williams, and Abe Lincoln, driven by George Starr, appeared behind her. Thus the stage was set.

A thousand watches clicked as Nancy got off on the second score as true as an arrow. The runners were after her like scared rabbits. She reached the quarter in 30 seconds, the half in 1:01, the three-quarter post in 1:34 with Doble holding her well in check. "The runners came close and the game mare seemed to lengthen her long, gliding stride," an eye-witness declared. "She laid close to the ground and with the drivers of the two thoroughbreds urging their horses with yells that would have made the hair of an Arapahoe turn white, her eyes seemed to fairly blaze with excitement and determination as with a grand rush of speed she passed under the wire at better than a two minute gait, having trotted the mile in 2:05 $\frac{1}{4}$." Nancy Hanks the "invincible," the "unbeaten," the thrice crowned queen of the turf had eclipsed all trotting records by three full seconds and put the mark opposite the pacing record of the world where it was placed by Hal Pointer only a fortnight before. Many years had passed since a trotter had equalled the time of a sidewheel horse.

Within the space of two short weeks more records fell at Independence than were lowered "in the same length of time at all the tracks in the

world." After the meet of 1892 the following records were held by the kite track.

<i>World Record</i>	<i>Horse</i>	<i>Time</i>
Trotting	Nancy Hanks	2:05 $\frac{1}{4}$
Trotting in race	Martha Wilkes	2:09 $\frac{1}{2}$
Pacing in race	Flying Jib	2:07
Yearling pace	Belle Acton	2:22 $\frac{1}{2}$
Two-year-old pace	Online	2:16
Three-year-old pace	Manager	2:11 $\frac{1}{2}$
Stallion pacer	Direct	2:06
Five-year-old stallion trotter	Allerton	2:09 $\frac{1}{4}$
Fastest living stallion	Allerton	2:09 $\frac{1}{4}$

Beside these, the kite track held the fastest yearling race record ever made east of California, the fastest three and four heat races ever trotted, the fastest four and five heat races ever paced, and several other world records of minor importance. "Where on the footstool of the Almighty," demanded *The American Trotter*, "is the course that can beat it?"

Not content with this great showing the Independence Driving Park Association advertised a fall meeting to run from October 10 to November 5, 1892. Owners were urged to bring their horses to the "safest and fastest track in the world" to win money, to win races, and to obtain records. There seemed to be no limit to the operations of the enterprising owners of Rush Park. But sud-

INDEPENDENCE - DRIVING - PARK - ASSN.

LAST CHANCE IN 1892

To Win Money, to Win Races, and to Obtain Records over the

SAFEST AND FASTEST TRACK IN THE WORLD!

Three Races Every Day for Four Consecutive Weeks.

A Class Every Three or Four Days for Every Colt, Filly, Stallion, Mare and Gelding in America.

It Costs Only Ten Dollars to Start in Each of These Races.

The Track is located within half a mile of the city, and Electric Cars run directly by the entrance. First-class hotel accommodations for all, and at reasonable rates.

From *The American Trotter*, August 18, 1892

denly, in 1893, there came a sad reverse of fortune.

It was not merely the panic of 1893 that stifled activity at Rush Park. A combination of circumstances — the popularity of the bicycle, the invention of the bicycle sulky, high stallion fees, overproduction, too many breeders who did not support the stakes and class races, lack of interest in light harness horses, the practice of owners bidding on the stock consigned by them to public sales, and the exorbitant prices demanded by trainers for working horses— had caused a pronounced reaction in the trotting business. The editor of *The American Trotter* cautioned his readers early in 1893 not to put all their money in horses unless they had considerable experience with them, for fortunes were easily lost by the over-enthusiastic.

After Charley Williams left Independence a hundred citizens, who determined that the "Lexington of the North" should not crumble in ruins without an effort to save it, organized the Independence Driving Club, leased the kite track, opened generous stakes, and held races during the last week of August in 1894. Meetings were held each year until 1899 and every purse was paid in full. The largest meet occurred in 1898 when the free gate system was adopted. But the good old days before the hard times did not return to Rush Park — the guiding hand of the master builder clearly had been lost.

Early in January, 1899, the Independence Driving Club joined the newly organized Great Western Trotting Circuit, comprising ten associations. The club offered \$40,000 in stakes but the entry lists failed to fill. The death knell had sounded. An abortive effort to stave off the inevitable was made in 1904 when the greatest field of running horses ever assembled at Independence attracted a large and enthusiastic crowd. But the following year the grandstand was converted into a gigantic barn. The oft-repeated prophecy that Rush Park would one day be a pasture has come true, but memories still kindle a spark in the eyes of those who lived in those exciting times.

A solitary building now stands as a mute reminder of the days when teeming thousands swarmed the grounds to watch Allerton, Alix, Nancy Hanks, Jay-Eye-See, Manager, Margaret S., Mascot, Martha Wilkes, and a score of others valiantly strive for the title of reigning monarch of the turf. The youth of today may pause in tribute as an unsteady hand traces out for him the dimly visible path of the old kite track. Nor need he be surprised should he hear in imagination faintly, above the story of the "Williams Boom" when Independence was the "Lexington of the North" and Rush Park had the "Fastest Track on Earth," the dull thud of hoofs, the rumble of high-wheeled sulkies, the crack of whips, the sharp call of the drivers, and the wild roar of the

crowd as Doble, Starr, and Williams flash their phantom flyers down the long home stretch.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

