

A Real Collectors' Item

How long would a copy of the September, 1980 *Saddle & Bridle* last on eBay if it was hyped even halfway right? Not long, if bidders knew just this fraction of what it offers:

A gorgeous Leon "Sarge" Sargent cover of Don Harris on Imperator. The horse was newly crowned Five-Gaited World Grand Champion at Louisville, Harris fresh from his first Five-Gaited World Grand Championship win there. We're told by inside text that this is considered the most beautiful photograph ever made of a Saddlebred Horse.

Two important historical pieces by Lynn Weatherman, then editor of *S&B*. One was about Saddlebreds in the Civil War, the other a profile of the unforgettable Easter Serenade and her owner, Temple Stephens of Moberly, Mo., and her fabled exhibitor, Welch Greenwell of Shelbina, Mo.

The departure of two people long prominent on the Saddlebred scene: Ruth Laurel Hansen, (1904-1980) of Iowa, and Virginian Lance Phillips (1900-1975).

Other diverse material that would increase the value of this magazine to anyone who cherishes the

was only beginning; another good shot of Charles Crabtree winning a second Fine Harness World Grand Championship with La La Success. We were informed that two renowned multi-world champions and stablemates, Sea Of Secrets, Three-Gaited Gelding, and Five-Gaited Mare, Belle Elegant, had been retired together at Louisville. Their long and distinguished careers were set forth in detail, an interesting aspect being the number of big-name trainers who had played some part in their lives. This pair came from the Franklin N. Groves Family Farm in Wayzata, Minn.

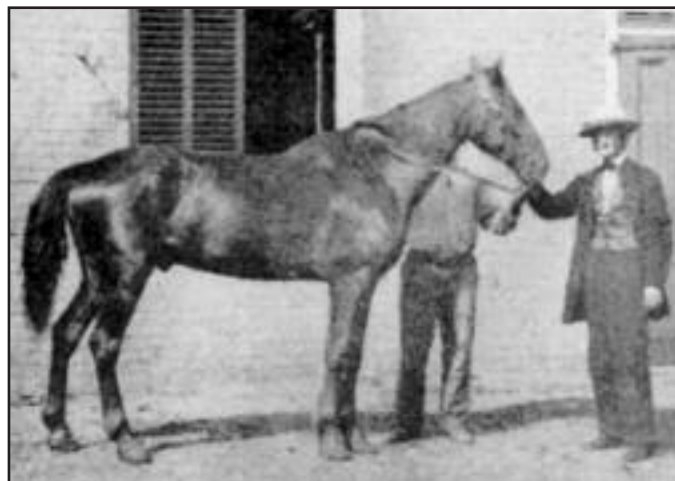
But now to flesh out the biggest stories:

From present day perspective, we know that Imperator's saga was far from peaked in 1980. We learn here that his sire was Supreme Sultan, his dam Empress Wing, a 17-hand daughter of Wing Commander. Imperator's name meant "Supreme Commander" or "Absolute Commander". An inner page showed us one of his owners, Dr. Geraldine Meanor of Glen Ridge, N.J., kissing his nose after the momentous show. In another picture, Harris and his late wife Roz, with the owners (the other was Judge Curtis Meanor) and Imperator's caretaker, Thomas Heron, form a happy lineup of their own. The official report of the Louisville show gave us quite a lot more Imperator history that should be noted and preserved, and lyrical accounts of his way of going and his disposition.

As for the Weatherman work, we have new generations now which probably are unaware of the Saddlebred's role in the War Between



Imperator and Don Harris.



Cincinnati.

breed: a superb photo of Dick Wallen, Sioux City, Iowa, winning the Three-Year-Old Five-Gaited Stake at Louisville on Bermuda Triangle, whom he had trained and taken to a prominence that



Robert E. Lee and Traveller.

the States. History has always told us that these animals were one of the Confederacy's great assets. Because the South had, largely, created this breed and fancied it madly, a great many Rebels went to war on their own horses, big and tough, and typically honed by constant interaction with their owners, to body-extension levels of responsiveness. Weatherman carefully pointed out that many people in the Union also loved and used Saddlebreds and that the South had no real corner on good horsemen, but it seems to be a fact that the way of life there provided more need and opportunity for being competent on a horse than the North's. And Saddlebreds are credited in history with many notable wartime feats. It is accepted that Robert E. Lee's famous Traveler was a Saddlebred (at that time just called Kentucky Horse or Kentucky Saddler) and that Lee's Union counterpart, Ulysses Grant, rode a Saddlebred named Cincinnati. Both these horses are pictured in the article as are Little Sorrel, ridden (and if stories are true, often slept on) by Stonewall Jackson. Weatherman gives us many such remarkable stats as this: the war caused one million, two hundred thousand equine fatalities, most from disease or misuse. There are many incredible accounts of endurance by Saddlebreds, some most unpleasant to contemplate.

But there is the positive fact that when the armistice was signed, Grant — probably due to his own great love of horses and possibly at Lee's request — did not confiscate enemy horses as legitimate loot, the usual act of a victor in war. He allowed the Rebels to take their horses back home with them, for whatever role they could play in restoring farms, businesses, and breeding in the South. Had Southern horses been absorbed into Union survivors, their precious genes would probably have been so widely diluted and dispersed as to never be concentrated again into the horses we have today.

And Easter Serenade: she was a beautiful and talented little mare (only 15 hands), beloved of a memorable man named Temple Stephens, who created a dynasty of highly successful grocery stores in his area, north central Missouri. Stephens was a small man who did not feel he could show his cherished mare to her best advantage, though he had shown her to many wins. He suddenly, in the midst of a show at which he'd won fourth with her in the mare's stake, asked the genius exhibitor Welch Greenwell, to

show her back for him. Greenwell, well aware of Stephens' attachment, said he would do it only on condition that Stephens "leave her alone ... not even coming to pet her in her stall." He covered her stall at the show, the better to rest her and he put her in the hands of his most talented caretaker, Tom Welch for cleaning up and soothing. He said that he, himself, never having ridden her before, sat on her back for only about two minutes to "get the feel of her mouth." When they went into the ring together, he says "she ate it up" and won. Greenwell took this talented mare on, and they did illustrious work together, but he had a running battle to keep Stephens away from her at shows. The owner would usually appear to check out Easter Serenade's shoes or some other detail he never felt anyone else could do quite right for his darling. Stephens refused to let Greenwell have her for more than a few days before shows and rode her himself every day. Despite this obstacle, Greenwell won some of the country's most distinguished prizes with Easter Cloud. Few horses could best her record. Greenwell said that the coming of World War II, with its stultifying effect on horse showing, kept him from ever knowing exactly what Easter Serenade might have achieved. He had lost only one class on her in five years and pronounced her "probably the greatest Five-Gaited Saddlehorse who ever lived."

One nice thing to remember about Temple Stephens is that he had a fine and professionally trained singing voice. In one interview, he said that he loved to sing while he rode his horses. Who can say what effect this had on their spirits?

The distinguished deaths: Mrs. Hansen of Iowa, who had been associated with *Saddle & Bridle* for 22 years as correspondent, sales rep and section editor, and Virginian Lance Phillips, longtime breeder and avid showman who immortalized his experiences in a book called *People I Knew and Horses They Rode*. Mrs. Hansen had exhibited Saddlebreds in almost every way they can be exhibited, being considered an especially effective whip. She had taught riding and operated a public stable and had, among other things, managed two clothing stores. The account of her lifetime activity is almost unbelievable.

As to the Phillips book, if you are young or new to the breed and interested in being fully informed, or in building up a good Saddlebred library, then this is a reference source you should

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be sure to track down and buy. It has facts and dates, but also humor and rich nuggets of human interest data that you will find nowhere else. Locating this book will not be easy, for it was privately published, and probably not in great quantity.

In addition to these highlights, the September 1980 issue of *Saddle & Bridle* had, of course, results of the year's most important shows and assorted priceless bits like this: the Boone County Fair Horse Show, first held in 1835, was the first on record for Missouri.

