



When The Horse Was King

In 1900, Robert A. Fairbairn provided local devotees of the sport with a decade of good harness racing by building Fairacres, a half-mile track and stables on the Charles Marsh farm, back of the old Elizabethtown road (Benson Place). Here matinee meetings were held on Saturdays and holidays throughout the summer season.

A friend and student of the horse since boyhood days, when he lived on New Providence Road, Robert Fairbairn owned and raced many fast trotters and pacers on the Grand Circuit. Among his winners were the mare, Margin (2:17 $\frac{1}{4}$), Farrell (2:12 $\frac{1}{4}$) and Paul, a pacer (2:07 $\frac{1}{4}$). He owned, also, Robert J. (the first pacer to go a mile in 2:01 $\frac{1}{4}$), after his racing on the Grand Circuit was over and used him for matinees.

His race with C. H. K. Billings, on the Harlem River Speedway, was the talk of the Big Town, in '98. Billings then had one of the finest stables in the country and his horses were seldom beaten. But this was not to be his day. The young horseman from Westfield matched his tried campaigner, Paul, against Billings' favorite pacer, Bumps (2:04 $\frac{1}{4}$), and won by nearly a length. It was a fine speedway race before a large crowd. In describing it, the New York Herald said, "Fairbairn was happier over beating Billings than McKinley was over beating Bryan."

In the colorful days of the tallyho, coach-and-four and other brilliant equipages, at the Old Madison Square Garden Show, Mr. Fairbairn was a familiar figure in the judges'

stand. He was long a director and, for two terms, president of the show. He was also president of the International Livestock Show, Chicago; owned a stock farm at New Market, N. J., where he bred Clydesdale draft horses, which were champions at the International Livestock and other shows. Some twenty years ago, he became interested in Thoroughbreds, and yearlings from his stock farm, at Winchester, Ky., have topped the sales at Saratoga for several years—among them, Galahadion, winner of The Kentucky Derby, in 1940. He is a steward of The Jockey Club.

An able and forthright business man, always interested in the progress of his town and state, he has served on the Board of Education and various committees to promote local enterprises. Governor Larsen appointed him to the Holland Tunnel Commission, in 1929, and he remained a member of that governing body until it was absorbed by the New York Port Authority. He is a member of the Executive Committee of the National Biscuit Company and a director of the Westfield Trust Company.

Happily, Robert Fairbairn was born into a world of opportunity, an expanding, creative world. Turn back the calendar to the years of Victorian affluence and you will find him seated in the company of those substantial, conservative country squires who delight in their herds and flocks and in the chase. Consider them well, for it will be a long time before their like will be seen again.