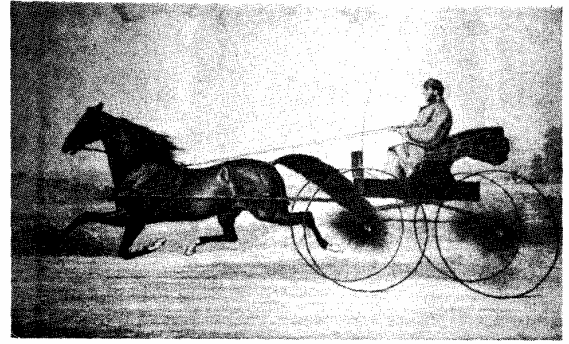


The Story of Ethan Allen of Long - Gone Days

By Everett L. ("Percy") SMITH

Reprinted from the Foremost Trotting

Journal of the East, Dec. 21, 1927



Beyond a doubt Ethan Allen 2.251/2 was as popular an early day stallion performer during his turf career as lived. He was champion stallion for a brief moment, yielding his title to George M. Patchen 2.231/2 For purity of gait and all-round attractiveness Ethan Allen stood out among his contemporaries, although he was never a race horse in the strict sense of the word, since, after having reached 2.25 to 2.28 he apparently could not defeat the higher-class trotters that he met. Still, horses have their limits of reserve prowess.

As an eighteen year old veteran Ethan Allen, hooked with a running mate, defeated Dexter 2.17 1/4 over the old Long Island Fashion Course in 2.15, 2.16, 2.19 on June 21, 1867, in a match for \$1,000 a side. He then belonged to "Eph" Simmons, brother of William L. Simmons, owner of George Wilkes 2.22. Ethan was out before Goldsmith Maid and her set, and he never met George Wilkes. He raced George M. Patchen, however, two or three times and distanced him on one occasion in 2.28 in the first heat. This was on October 28, 1858, and Patchen drew a wagon. It was over the Union Course, \$1,000 a side. Patchen defeated Ethan over the same track on May 16, 1860, for \$1,000, in 2.25, 2.24 (a new stallion record to that date), 2.29. A week later, matched for \$1,000 a side, both to trot to wagons, Patchen again won, the time being 2.27 1/4, 2.26, 2.31. These races attracted large crowds, as the stallion championship was to be decided.

With natty Flora Temple he always was very gallant, never defeating the little lady in their several engagements. She bested him over the old South- End Course, Boston, on October 23, 1856, for a purse of \$1,000 in 2.32 1/2 2.36 1/2. It was a half-mile track. McMann drove Flora, and Orville Roe, I think, had Ethan in charge. Ethan was then seven years old, the mare eleven. Over the Fashion Course on May 31, 1859, to wagons \$1,000 a side, Flora again won, the time, 2.25, 2.27 1/4, 2.27 1/2. This was as good a race likely as Ethan trotted. On December 1 of that same year at Baltimore, Miss Flora defeated Ethan in 2.27 1/4, 2.26 1/4, 2.25 1/2 to harness, which was pretty fast winter- season trotting.

At Kalamazoo the following September Flora beat Ethan in 2.30 1/4 2.25 3/4 2.23 for a purse of \$1,000. I cannot seem to find anything descriptive of these heats in my old "spirits." It was a rather fast heat, that 2.23 trip, and maybe Ethan was up pretty close. If so he would have trotted faster than was his record of 2.25 1/2 Over the Fashion Course he met the little mare on July 25, 1861, this time with his running mate, Charlotte F., as a helpmate, and defeated Flora in 2.21 1/4, only to be shut out in 2.20 1/2 in the second heat, which was, I believe, the second fastest mile Flora Temple ever trotted.

In all, Ethan Allen won eleven heats in harness below 2.30. By way of comparison, as among those that he met in that long-gone day, George M. Patchen won thirty four heats in 2.30 better and Flora Temple won ninety- nine. But Ethan was in the stud for somewhat extended periods and was raced after hasty preparations in order to earn his oats, for throughout his long race career his owners were minded to "get the dollars." He was foaled in 1849, the same year as were Hambletonian 10 and George M. Patchen, and, incidentally, when gold was discovered in California. Bred by Joel W. Holcomb of Ticonderoga, N. Y. Ethan Allen was sired by Vermont Black Hawk 5, son of Sherman Morgan, he by Justin Morgan, the founder of the famous old-time Morgan tribe, and once very prominent here in the East.

Ethan Allen's dam was a grey mare, bred by John Field, Springfield, Vt., and by Robin, or Red Robin, as some called him, a horse owned by Moses G. Bates, also of Springfield. His second dam was a brown mare bred by a Mr. Bemis, Baltimore, Vt., and she always was considered a Morgan. Her sire was unknown. The third dam was chestnut and was brought to Chester, Vt., by Dr. Chandler of that town, who purchased her in Tunbridge of a man who was unable to accurately state that she was by Justin Morgan, although claiming that version as the locally- accredited paternity, and, too, she was a good one. That is all really known concerning the breeding of Ethan Allen.

He stood about fifteen hands, was a very attractive little horse and always clever and easily kept as well as a universally popular horse. Holcombe and Roe sold him in 1862 to Frank Baker of New York, who advertised him, together with Honest Allen, in the "Spirit", I have found, and Mace and "Dun" Walton purchased him. In 1866 J. F. ("Ned") Maynard, stable- keeper in the West-End section of Boston, Bowdoin Square, opposite the old Revere House (now gone its way), bought Ethan and used him pleasantly on the old-time Boston roads. In 1866 and again in 1868 Maynard stood the little horse at one hundred dollars the season. Maynard once sold the horse to "Eph" Simmons, but repurchased him soon thereafter, but in 1868 finally sold Ethan Allen to Col. H. L. Russell, the colonel standing him at Mystic Park in 1869-1870 at two hundred dollars the season.

The late B. D. Whitcomb, Hopeful's breeder, sent a Drew mare that he owned to Ethan and she foaled a beautiful chestnut filly, that Mr. Whitcomb bred several seasons to his Volunteer horse, Kohinoor 2925, and finally sold her to the late Eugene V. R. Thayer, brother of Col. John E. and Bayard Thayer, all three grand and glorious sport lovers and patrons. This Ethan mare, as we always spoke of her, was the grand dam of several, including Pilot Bird 2.16 1/2. She was the last foal got by Ethan Allen in Massachusetts, as soon after begetting her Col. Russell sold the horse to Sprague and Akers, and he was shipped to Kansas, where in the town of Lawrence Mr. Akers of the firm had extensive ranch holdings. Here in September 10, 1876, when in his twenty-eighth year, Ethan Allen died. For him Gov. Sprague and his partner paid Col. Russell \$7,500 on October 17, 1870, consequently he was twenty-one years old at the time, so the figure was a fairly high one. It must be remembered that when Hambletonian was a young horse, Rysdyk advertised him for sale in the "Spirit" at \$10,000. Doubtless Ethan Allen sired a few foals when kept temporarily at Gov. Sprague's private stable in Providence prior to leaving the East, but he was bred to but few mares.

He was buried at the entranceway of the old Lawrence (Kans.) track and a slab erected over his grave. The late W. H. Marrett, once an editorial writer on the Breeder—1890-1893— and earlier a staff writer, non de plume of “Vision,” on Wallace’s Monthly, fancying it would be a public service to learn authoritatively as to Ethan Allen’s “box-joint” hocks, had the remains exhumed and examined by veterinarians in the late ‘80’s, after which the skeleton was articulated and appropriately mounted, today, being located in the rooms of the museum of Natural History, Lawrence, Kans. Many claimed Ethan to have been spavined. Mace always said: “If he is, he has two, but I did not consider him spavined.” Marrett told me, when we had desks alongside one another at the old State Street offices of the Breeder at a time when he was located in Boston (1891-92), that Ethan had “prominent spavin joints,” although both were alike. Maynard told me years ago that he never hopped when starting to jog, and while his hocks were a little coarse he never thought they were exactly spavms. And he was so beautifully gaited! Everyone who saw him described him as a wonderfully impressive trotter at any gait. Hooked to cutter, few trotters could live a brush pitted against him. Also he was a splendid pole trotter, having frequently been driven with Honest Allen 2.331/2, his chestnut son, when Frank Baker owned them. “Dun” Walton, who passed away a few years ago out at Wakefield, Mass., was intimate with Simmons, Mace and all of the old-time horsemen, and to him is always given the credit for hooking Ethan and Charlotte F. so as to relieve the stallion of much of the weight. Walton told me that Ethan’s hocks were rough, but not exactly blemished.

He had a hind leg that was not pronouncedly straight, according to a very exceptional and rare life photo that George Ford Morris used when he illustrated turf papers so ably, and any one fortunate enough to possess the Horse Review Portfolio that was brought out about World’s Fair year readily may see the plate made from Morris’ reproduction of this photo that I mention, and there by gain an accurate idea as to Ethan Allen as he really was. The New York painter, Atwood, made a far-fetched portrait of Ethan that was reproduced on steel and that can be seen in various old publications, also in Wallace’s Monthly. I never saw Ethan Allen, but on comparing Morris’ drawing and the Marsden painting, reproduced and presented herewith, it is evident at a glance that the Atwood painting was far from a lifelike piece of work. The photo that Morris used I think was taken at Mystic Park where Maynard or Col. Russell stood Ethan there. Anyway it was from life. The painting reproduced and used herewith long hung in “Ned” Maynard’s old stable office and was among the better can vases painted by that self-taught, humble painter, the late Theodore Marsden, who pioneered in his branch of the art and who died about 1895. Unaided by the lightning camera, Marsden painted from life always. All he needed was a stable floor, decent light and a man to hold the horse till he secured the pose in outlining, then he did the rest from day to day, winter or summer, right alongside the horse’s box, so as to have at all times the subject in order to study color shadings, etc.

McKinney Bros., out Brighton way, own a photograph of the “Ned” Maynard canvas, and it hangs prominently displayed among their many photographs and color types of famous trotters at their stable. My good friend George Lamson, owner of a farm at Framingham where he keeps his twenty to thirty saddlers, hunters, show jumpers, etc., kindly lent me his photograph, a replica, and, too, the only copy I have seen of McKinney Bros. rare photograph. So, fortunately, I secured my half-tone here presented for the enjoyment (I trust) of my many Breeder friends. I would like very much indeed to possess a life photograph of Ethan Allen at rest, but other than the plate reproduced in the superb Review portfolio, I doubt as to any being extant in our day.

Many years ago, Wallace’s Monthly asked me to go to the Hill Farm, Bridgeport, Vt., where years before my visit Vermont Black Hawk, the sire of Ethan Allen, was owned and stood at service during most of his life, and there I saw the little black horse’s old pen-like box stall. Daniel Lambert of course, was Ethan’s foremost son, and I often saw him. John Sheppard’s pretty bay trotter, Joe Clark 2.37 that he drove several years on Boston’s old roads from about 1876 to 1881 and then presented to the late Albert C. Hall, Woodburn Grange,” Stamford, Conn., was an Ethan Allen, and in his day Clark was a top brush horse in the Sheppard stable. Hotspur 2.24 (Col. Maynard), once owned by a Mr. Hartshorne, who lived on Tremont Street, South End, directly opposite Chickering’s piano factory, I well remember. Budd Doble raced him, but as to whether he then was Mr. Hartshorne’s or H. N. Smith’s property I cannot now say, although I am almost certain that H. N. Smith owned him when Doble raced him. Hotspur raced rather successfully, winning forty-one heats in standard time. Billy Barr 2.23 was Ethan’s fastest performer by the mere quarter of a second, but Barr won comparatively few heats — 16, to be exact. Barr’s dam was untraced. Hotspur’s dam was by True John, son of Harris’ Hambletonian 2, and he was by Bishop’s Messenger, out of the old Munson mare by Messenger, so, as old-time breeding went, Hotspur ranked pretty high.

Harris’ Hambletonian, bred by Isaac Munson of Wallingford, Vt., was foaled in 1823, before organized trotting started, yet he sired the grey pacer, Hero 2.20½, record made in 1853, Lady Shannon 2.81/2 Green Mountain Maid 2.28 and moreover none mentioned was traceable on its dam’s side. In addition Harris’ horse sired the dams of little Annie G. 2.28 (Dictator’s first performer), Major Edsall 2.29, Nelly Holcomb 2.28, John Morrow’s old Sea Foam 2.241/4 that “Jock” Bowen and Jack Trout raced in the ‘70’s, Jack Stewart 2.30 and Panic 2.28. Harris’ Hambletonian 814, a son of the Harris horse sired that good trotter and race horse, Joker 2.221/2, winner of forty-one heats in 2:30 or better.

Probably the handsome mare, young Pocahontas, although raced as merely Pocahontas, record, 2.263/4, that Dan Mace marked and that was Out of the old-time pacing queen, Pocahontas 2.173/4 to wagon, had she been further handled before Mr. Bates sold her to Robert Bonner, would have given Ethan Allen unusual prestige as a sire for in Mr. Bonner’s ownership she turned Fleetwood Park in 2.171/4 and Mr. Bonnet drove her a half there to wagon in 1.04. For her he paid the unusual sum of \$40,000 six or seven thousand more than he gave for Dexter 2.171/4 Pocahontas never proved pregnant and died at Bonner Farm in the ‘70’s. She was a very pleasant little mare, sentimentally, to Mr. Bonner, yet rather an expensive luxury.

Robert Bonner’s never-to-be-forgotten brother, grand old David Bonnet of glorious reputation, every way viewed, frequently told me that while Peerless showed 2.23 1/2 to wagon and though Hiram Woodruff and “Sim” Hoagland both pronounced her as brushy as Dexter he had ridden faster behind young Pocahontas he thought than behind any among his famous brother’s star trotters other than the Auburn Horse (Sorrell Dapper 2.28 ¼), a remarkable old-time wagon trotter, the first, I think, of the Champion family to become prominent. He took his record in 1865 and Mr. Bonner shortly afterward purchased him. Dan Mace gave young Pocahontas her

record in 1866, and I think she trotted over the old Saugus track, now out of commission, but still there, down on the marshes, the only mile track of the old-time Boston group that remains. Readville was built in the latter '90's, so is not at all an old track. I ought to add, re young Pocahontas, that Reuben S. Denny owned Pocahontas 2.17 1/2 and bred the younger mare, although she was usually known as "the Bates mare."

Benjamin E. Bates and R. S. Denny were intimate and owned several horses, I believe, in partnership. The sister of Pocahontas 2.26 3/4, old blind May Queen, produced May Morning 2.30, she the dam of Revenue 2.22 1/4, that John Splan gave some work and accused of always wanting to "get in and ride" when he reached the long lane for home. Revenue wanted to pace and carried quite some weight to keep him balanced. He was a Smuggler and his famous sire was shod in heavy shoes and wore the heaviest toe weights possible to fashion. Revenue's great granddam, old Pocahontas 2.17 1/4, as above, doubtless could not trot a mile in ten minutes, but she paced a half mile in 58 or 59 seconds, according to tradition, when hooked to her cumbersome old high-wheel skeleton wagon that "Dun" Walton told a group at a Garden sale twenty years or so back must have weighed in the neighborhood of 130 or 140 lbs. It was rather fast 58 or 59 seconds back in 1855, and it always seemed to me that some mistake must have been made in timing it. I know one should not disturb such things as traditions and ghost stories, still I never can believe that anything back in 1855, pulling a straight-arm axle wagon so wide that it was necessary to go well out of the turns, accomplished that feat. Beyond possible doubt old Pocahontas could have paced a straightaway half that fast, and her remarkable influence shows her to have been a truly wonderful mare, anyway considered. She was terribly surly. She produced but five foals, dying before her unborn foal to George Wilkes' cover came into being. These foals all performed, sired or produced one hundred per cent, and Pocahontas was just about the first of our premier producers.

Just before she took her record, Pocahontas was pregnant, and she foaled Tom Rolfe 2.33 1/4 in 1854, and he died in 1877 at Beacon Park. He sired young Rolfe 2.21 1/4, the sire of Nelson 2.09 and others. Bred to Ethan Allen, Pocahontas produced young Pocahontas 2.26 3/4 in 1859 and May Queen, a sister that was blind, as above, yet that produced May Morning 2.30, the dam of Revenue 2.22 1/4 and Boston Boy 2.30 1/4. Bred earlier to Myles Standish, son of Black Hawk 5, the old mare produced May Day, she the dam of handsome little 14.3/4-hand Nancy 2.23 1/4 and of Blanche Jefferson, a fast Dexter-marked Thomas Jefferson mare that trotted fast on Huntington Avenue for Mahlon P. Spaulding, her owner. Blanche Jefferson was the dam of the brothers, Mahlon 2.133/4 and Arthur Cleveland 2.23 1/2, and to the cover of All So 2.203/4 she produced a fast pacing daughter, name forgotten. Bred to Black Hawk Telegraph, he by Vermont Black Hawk 5, Pocahontas produced Strideaway 2.31, said to have trialed in 2.15 1/4 for "By" Shumway just prior to the \$10,000 stallion race at Mystic Park that Smuggler won in 1874. Strideaway sired Pratt 2.28 and the dam of Greylight 2.161/2 and Duke of Wellington 2.20 Young Daisy, her name and, too, Young Daisy was the grandam of Axworthy, 3, 2.151/2 dwell on Pocahontas when writing of Ethan Allen merely to show that when bred to well-bred or fast mares of parts he was a very good speed sire. There were, however, but comparatively few such mares in his day in New England. Unfortunately Mr. Bonner never tried his famous road-trotting mares as broodmares till he finally retired them after they had given him their last ounce on the road. Grained, as they were, over a long period of their lives and more or less kept in training through either actual track work or road brushing, nearly all proved "shy" breeders. In her nineteenth year, as I recall it, young Pocahontas was being worked, and I know that she trotted rather fast miles at the ripe age of eighteen. Mr. Bonner himself publicly stated that she could beat 2.20.

Today we breed them far earlier in life. Recently \$10,700 was paid at auction for Iosola's Worthy, 3, 2.033/4, and she went to Walnut Hall Farm to join the matron band there. Maud S. 2.083/4 was trained late in life and never proved pregnant, when finally retired and bred to several horses. Sunol 2.08 1/4 after leaving the heirs of Mr. Bonner did produce a few foals, and his one-time celebrity, beautiful Lady Stout, 2.29 at three and then a champion of her tender age, produced Cart ridge 2.143/4, and he was a promising trotter. But Mr. Bonnet did not especially care to breed. It was too slow.

But I must not go so far away from Ethan Allen. Often as I look back to Boston's glorious years of road brushing out over the several old roads, and to pleasant evenings at Warner & Richardson and John T. Manson's old South End Stable offices, where always gathered veteran and active roadites, breeders, trainers or just enthusiasts, well I remember the many reminiscences where in was mentioned little Ethan Allen when those veterans were well thawed out, all hands, however they may have regarded him as a race horse or sire, acknowledged him as the one perfectly gaited trotter and a horse that could not go to a break. Of perfect manners always, a lady could drive or safely handle him. None handsomer in harness had ever been shown on road or track, and his critics were able horsemen.