RANCHO DEL PASO, THE WORLD’S LARGEST THOROUGHBRED FARM

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Department of History
Abstract
of
RANCHO DEL PASO, THE WORLD’S LARGEST THOROUGBRED FARM
by
Hilary N. Steinmetz

Historians have generally ignored James Ben Ali Haggin, even though he represented one of the wealthiest and most influential entrepreneurs in West. And those who have written about Haggin have offered at best a cursory view of his Rancho Del Paso, which he developed into the world’s largest thoroughbred breeding farm. Located in Sacramento, California, the Rancho began as a rich man’s avocation, an expensive self-indulgence inspired by his own family’s racing experiences in his native Kentucky as well as by the examples offered by numerous affluent men of the age who used horse breeding and horseracing to broadcast their immense wealth. In California, Leland Stanford, George Hearst, Theodore Winters, Elias “Lucky” Baldwin, Alvinza Hayward, Marcus Daly, and other “nabobs” joined Haggin in establishing the “sport of kings” in the Golden State.

My thesis argues that Haggin, particularly, had a significant impact on the thoroughbred horse racing and breeding industry during the second half of the nineteenth century. His horses won the premier stakes races in the world, and his breeding program produced numerous successful racehorses. The Rancho Del Paso property presented Haggin with an opportunity to create a premier, state-of-the-art thoroughbred breeding and racing facility. Sacramento became recognized as a major center of the thoroughbred breeding and racing industry largely because of Haggin’s efforts. Although this stature was relatively short lived, Haggin’s dominance in the industry revealed his commitment to purchase, breed, and race only those animals that demonstrated superior physical qualities. In the horse business, Haggin demonstrated the same entrepreneurial and managerial acumen that he manifested in his many successful enterprises, including mining, real estate development and speculation.

This essay is based on a variety of primary sources, especially the Breeder and Sportsman, the thoroughbred industry’s trade paper; the New York Times; Sacramento’s two major newspapers, The Bee and the Union; auction house records from the Bancroft Library; the Manuscript Census; and a number of secondary materials on horseracing.

______________________, Committee Chair
Joseph A. Pitti

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Date
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my grandfather and my mother for instilling me with a love of history and horses. Both of them loved to tell me stories of the old days and both encouraged my riding. I sat on a horse before I could walk and learned to ride bareback at the age of five under my grandfather’s direction. The first saddle I rode in belonged to his father as a child, my great-grandfather, C.W. Jones. When I was ten my mother gave me English riding lessons at a nearby stable and I was hooked for life. I do not think I could live without a horse or two in my life. Nothing compares to the joy and freedom riding gives or the lessons in patience and perseverance horses teach.

I would also like to express my gratitude for the continued love and support of my husband, Patrick. I appreciate his comments and editing. Thanks to J.C. Hamilton at the office for his editing. Also I want to thank to my daughters, Flavia and Ashleen, for their support of my efforts. I want to express my gratitude to all the people who were willing to review this work and offer me suggestions for improvement, especially Dr. Pitti and my second reader, Dr. Castaneda.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Historians have generally overlooked the contributions made to the world of horseracing and thoroughbred breeding by James Ben Ali Haggin.\(^1\) To be sure, his contemporaries noted his outstanding accomplishments in mining, land speculation, and other financial pursuits, and this enormously wealthy man was well known in Sacramento, San Francisco, and New York for his business dealings.\(^2\) Turf writers with historical interests and students of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century likewise recorded his contributions to the world of thoroughbred racing.\(^3\) But outside of Northern California the public is generally unaware of Haggin, and what he accomplished in the early days of Sacramento. Steven Avella in his history of Sacramento, *Indomitable City*, mentions Rancho Del Paso in passing, but not as a breeding center. However, Joseph A. McGowan acknowledges Haggin’s accomplishments with four paragraphs in his three volume *History of the Sacramento Valley*. Because of McGowan’s emphasis on farming and ranching in the Valley, the inclusion of Rancho Del Paso as a famous horse facility was essential. Avella only

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1 Kevin Starr, noted California historian, in *California*, only acknowledges Haggin’s business enterprises.

2 Haggin’s whereabouts were regularly reported on by the press. The *New York Times*, *The Sacramento Bee*, and the *San Francisco Examiner* frequently mentioned his activities. He was also included in the Who’s Who of the times.

3 Kent Cochran, a California turf writer, and Mary Simon, librarian, editor and writer for the California Thoroughbred Breeders Association, both wrote about the impact of Haggin’s thoroughbred breeding business on the sport of racing.
mentions the Rancho in terms of its subsequent development after Haggin left California for Kentucky.

Throughout history, horses have played a crucial role in human society. As Sandra Olsen notes in *Horses Through Time*, a compilation of essays done for the Carnegie Museum of National History:

In the history of humankind there has never been an animal that has made a greater impact on societies than the horse. Other animals were hunted much more or domesticated earlier, but the horse changed the world in innumerable ways with its tremendous swiftness.4

Farmers used horses to plow, till, and harvest crops. With horses, the production of food crops increased, allowing populations to grow. With horsepower, people turned to their

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pursuits of creating civilizations and culture. Without the use of the horses, and especially after the invention of the stirrup, the Mongols and other armies would not have been able to move great distances and conquer foreign lands. Horses provided the means of travel for the Crusaders to the Middle East during the Middle Ages. The Plains Indians based their culture on horses, which increased their ability to move swiftly across the prairies. The horse has been both beast of burden and history maker. Cavalries, prior to World War I, determined the outcome of national and international conflicts. Humans have been dependent on horsepower longer than they have had the machines that replaced them.\(^5\)

Horses have also provided entertainment and sport. Even prior to the Ancient Greeks, horse racing proved a popular sport. The earliest recorded evidence of racing is found in the records of the Scythians, who raised horses solely for competition.\(^6\)

Prior to the advent of the automobile and self propelled mechanized farm implements, horses were the primary mode of transportation in rural areas and provided a means of employing farming implements. Horse racing has long offered a popular form of entertainment, attracting large numbers of spectators. Although live attendance at horse racing events declined after the mid-twentieth century and continues to decline today, thoroughbred horse racing still commands the attention of hundreds of thousands of fans throughout the world. The close connection that people have had with horses reveals itself in our conversations. Instantly recognizable expressions like “hold your


horses,” “get off your high horse,” “putting the cart before the horse,” and “do not beat a dead horse” are everyday terms. They represent a lost connection with our past contact with horses in everyday life. The author of *Horses Through Time*, summarizes the significance of the horse in history:

> It is hard to imagine what history would have been like without the horse. Without raiding armies of nomads on horseback, many of the great ancient civilizations would probably still be flourishing. The grass lands of the world might still be teeming with herds of wild animals, and human population would be isolated as physical and cultural entities adapted to their local environments. Without the horse the diffusion of people, culture, and technologies all would have been much slower.⁷

In the United States in the late nineteenth century and beyond, the gentry and nouveaux riche alike enhanced their status by their interest in racehorses, particularly thoroughbred racehorses. On the East Coast during the late nineteenth century, the Vanderbilts, Rockefellers, Belmonts, and Mellons counted themselves among the elite group of thoroughbred horse owners.

In the West, too, successful businessmen turned to the pursuit of thoroughbred horseracing to increase their social stature. Men such as James Ben Ali Haggin and his business partner, Lloyd Tevis, as well as Theodore Winters, George Hearst, Elias “Lucky” Baldwin, Marcus Daly, and Leland Stanford, were among those who used their considerable fortunes to become racing enthusiasts. While Stanford is perhaps the most familiar of these names, in the last decades of the nineteenth century and during the

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⁷ Ibid., 101.
beginning of the twentieth century, all these men ranked among the wealthiest and most powerful men in the West.\textsuperscript{8}

Wealth and business interests connected these men. Wanting to be perceived as gentlemen, they turned to the most prestigious pastime available to the elite—the breeding and racing of thoroughbred horses. Indeed, nothing signified gentility more than involvement in what was dubbed the “Sport of Kings”—a phrase that recalled horseracing’s long association with royalty.\textsuperscript{9}

James Ben Ali Haggin represented arguably the most successful participant in the elite world of thoroughbred horseracing during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Indeed, his Rancho Del Paso proved to be most successful breeding and racing operation in the world, contributing in important ways to the history of American racing.

Today, remnants of Haggin’s Rancho, particularly the Haggin Oaks golf course, can be seen from the Capital City Freeway (Business 80). While these grounds are now groomed for playing golf, it is easy to imagine the horses grazing there in their green pastureland. Likewise still visible on the left side of the Sacramento Regional Transit Light Rail at the end of the line on Watt Avenue is an old barn with the name “Barbara

\textsuperscript{8} Norman Tutorow, \textit{The Governor: The Life and Legacy of Leland Stanford}, 2 volumes (Menlo Park, CA, Pacific Coast Publishers, 1971), provides detailed information on Stanford’s horse-related activities.

\textsuperscript{9} James I of England introduced the race course at Newmarket in 1605. In \textit{Horses Through Time}, James I and Charles I are credited with importing the Royal Mares to England for the purposes of developing a “light” athletic horse with speed and stamina. All thoroughbreds trace back to three stallions imported into England in the late seventeenth century and early eighteenth century. The connection between the British royalty continues today, as Queen Elizabeth II breeds and trains horses for the racetrack.
Worth Stables” painted on the roof that would have been situated in the heart of Haggin’s vast thoroughbred breeding operation. Today’s light rail follows Haggin’s own rail line used for transporting his breeding stock to auction or his racehorses to meets. Driving through the once grand avenues of Del Paso Heights, many streets bear the names of Haggin’s racehorses, including Firenzi and Woodburn. The bronze statue of Haggin’s Kentucky Derby winner, Ben Ali, a recent addition, stands in the center divider of Del Paso Boulevard, which along with Del Paso Road honor the famous Rancho. Additionally, Haggin Oaks and Haggin Avenue pay tribute to the owner of the former Mexican land grant. Overlooked now by the countless cars whizzing by on Business 80, this area once represented the world’s largest thoroughbred breeding farm.

Shortly after the American takeover of California, Haggin had secured control of the 44,000-acre rancho, converting it during the next half century into a breeding farm that was unparalleled on the globe for the quality and quantity of thoroughbreds. His endeavors to find breeding stock from all parts of the world, combined with the hard work of the Rancho’s staff and propitious climate of the lower Sacramento Valley, allowed Haggin to garner international acclaim and mark Sacramento as one of the premier equestrian centers on the planet. The purpose of this essay is to describe how Haggin attained national and worldwide attention for himself and for his Rancho del Paso, on the northern fringes of Sacramento.
Chapter 2

HAGGIN AND TEVIS

After learning about the discovery of gold in California, Lloyd Tevis traveled from Missouri to California in 1849. James Ben Ali Haggin, a native of Kentucky but a resident of Mississippi, followed a year later. Like most Argonauts, they were looking for economic opportunities. Although drawn by the news of the gold strikes, both men soon recognized that mining was not the only avenue to wealth in California. Trained as lawyers, Tevis and Haggin settled in Sacramento and engaged in money lending and land speculation. In 1854, the two men married sisters who hailed from Mississippi. They remained partners until Tevis’ death in 1899.

Among Californians who made names for themselves in land speculation and mining operations, Haggin and Tevis stand out. Their partnership made them millionaires, and they were the first to build mansions in the exclusive Nob Hill neighborhood of San Francisco. Their business holdings ultimately included hugely profitable silver, copper, and gold mines all over the western part of the United States and in Mexico. They owned vast holdings of land throughout California, particularly in the San Joaquin Valley, and were major figures in banking, transportation, and oil.

Haggin and Tevis acquired the Rancho Del Paso land grant in 1862 through a delinquent loan. Tevis remained a silent partner as Haggin turned the 44,000 acres into

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10 Ronald Parsons, “The Irish Khan and His Empire: James Ben Ali Haggin and His Associates” (MA Thesis, California State University, Sacramento, Fall 2002), 9.

one of the most successful thoroughbred breeding and training operations the world had ever seen.

In 1844, Eliab Grimes had acquired the rancho as a Mexican land grant in exchange for a promise of support of the governor of California, Manuel Micheltorena, against a rebellious uprising led by Pío Pico.12 After Eliab’s death in 1848, his nephew inherited the Rancho. Hiram Grimes, in turn, sold the property to Samuel Norris two years later for $8,000.13 In the meantime, Eliab Grimes’ other heirs contested Hiram’s right to the Rancho, and the U.S. Supreme Court ultimately decided the matter in 1860.14

To fend off the lawsuit against him, brought by the Grimes heirs, Norris needed cash. He secured a $65,000 loan on the property from James Ben Ali Haggin and Lloyd Tevis.15 By some accounts, Haggin and Tevis swindled the land away from Norris by charging exorbitant interest rates and then calling in the loan.16 Other versions state that Norris needed funds to defend his claim to the Rancho, and he simply failed to pay off his loan and Haggin and Tevis acquired the Rancho by legal default. 17


13 Ibid., 1.


16 Eugene Hepting Collection, Binder #7, 85/24/5638-5997. Sacramento Archives and Museum Collection Center, hereafter as SAMCC.

17 Eugene Hepting Collection.
After a few unsuccessful attempts to subdivide the land, and the granting of a right-of-way to the Central Pacific Railroad, Haggin assumed full management of the Rancho while Tevis pursued other interests. Like other wealthy men, Haggin soon began dabbling in the breeding and racing of horses. Perhaps it was natural that Haggin—a native Kentuckian—would choose to breed and raise horses. In fact, Haggin’s own grandfather, John Haggin, had started the first racetrack in Kentucky near the town of Harrodsburg.

After beginning with harness horses, James Ben Ali Haggin switched to raising thoroughbreds and hence inaugurated one of the most successful endeavors in breeding and racing history. Although harness racing was popular among the masses in the nineteenth century, it never acquired the status of thoroughbred racing. This made perfect sense, since harness horses were readily available and were never connected to royalty. Ronald Parsons and Barbara Austin, in their work on Haggin and his horses, speculate on the reasons for his switch from harness horses to thoroughbreds. A man of Haggins’ financial and social stature, they conclude, would naturally prefer the elitist breed of the thoroughbred horse to the homespun, standard breed, with its humble beginnings and connections.

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18 Parsons, 5.
19 Parsons, 5.
20 Harness racing reached its peak in the nineteenth century and was known as “the sport of the people.”
21 Austin and Parsons both claim that John Mackey influenced Haggin in the latter’s decision to turn the Rancho into a breeding facility.
Perhaps one might surmise that Haggin did not want to compete with Leland Stanford, whose horse farms—first in Sacramento and then at Palo Alto—were quickly emerging as the state’s leading harness racing operations. But Haggin’s decision to raise and race thoroughbreds may have derived even more from his desire to assert his Southern identity. An influencing factor could be that since Haggin originated from the Kentucky, participation in horse racing helped to identify him as a gentleman.\(^{22}\) Whereas New York, the home of Leland Stanford, represented the epicenter of harness racing, Kentucky and Tennessee had surpassed Virginia and South Carolina as the bastion of thoroughbred racing in the early years of the nineteenth century. At the same time, Andrew Jackson and other breeders and racers helped to make the thoroughbred and the man on horseback icons of the Antebellum South. On the eve of the Civil War, when Californians proudly chose sides in the sectional dispute, Haggin might have declared his cultural loyalties by deciding to model his Rancho Del Paso after his family’s thoroughbred horse farm in the Blue Grass State. But the absence of autobiographical records prevents the historian from ever knowing the exact reason for Haggin’s decision to turn the hard-pan lands into a horse ranch.

According to all sources, Haggin was worth millions and could easily afford to invest in a thoroughbred breeding operation and finance racehorses. If he hoped for a small return on his investment, his bigger goal involved pursuing an exciting avocation

that would enhance his social status. As Dixon Wecter noted regarding the status of wealthy men interested in thoroughbred horses, “It was the mark of a gentlemen to participate in the sport of horse racing.”

As Haggin was developing Rancho Del Paso into a world-renowned thoroughbred breeding facility, he and his family lived in a mansion on Nob Hill in San Francisco. The 1870 federal census lists Haggin and his wife, Eliza, along with their five children, as residing in the Fourth Ward of San Francisco, which encompassed Nob Hill. The enumerator also counted the family’s four servants. Two of the latter were born in Ireland, one was born in France, and the other was born in the West Indies. Their positions within the household are not known.

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The 1880 census reveals that the Haggin family had shrunk to three—James, his wife, and one daughter, Margaret, aged twenty-five. The census taker identified Haggin’s occupation as “capitalist.” The domestic staff had expanded from four to eight. Their positions within the household were now listed. Irish-born George Irwin topped the list as the steward, followed by his wife Rebecca, who was the laundress, and then their daughter Mary, aged nine, who was born in California. In addition, the Haggin servants

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26 U.S. Census, 1880.
included a French cook, a Chinese cook, a waiter, a lady’s maid from Schleswig-Holstein, an Irish chambermaid, and a Swiss gardener. The household was truly cosmopolitan in make-up.

Haggin had risen to the top social circles through his wealth, and acquiring the accouterments of a gentleman required participating in activities of the wealthy. Horseracing afforded a connection to royalty, and provided the rich an opportunity to devote their time and money to leisure activities. In part, Haggin was able to fully engage in his hobby because he could always count on his friend and associate Lloyd Tevis to handle their many business enterprises.

Indeed, Lloyd Tevis remained the silent partner in the horse breeding and racing operation. Doc McLean confirmed that Tevis never visited Rancho Del Paso. Haggin had full control over the Rancho and its activities. Tevis concentrated on business matters, mining, and real estate. He never influenced or seemed interested in the Rancho’s horse business. Tevis acquired business interests in transportation companies and became the president of Wells Fargo Express Company, moving the company headquarters to the West Coast. He also served as the president of the Southern Pacific Railroad and he held large quantities of stock in that firm.\(^27\) His estate was valued at $20,000,000 at the time of his death in 1899.\(^28\) Therefore, while the business partners and brothers-in-law acquired Rancho Del Paso together, its development and management as a thoroughbred breeding operation was Haggin’s alone.


\(^{28}\) Ibid., 25 July 1899.
In California’s emergent aristocracy, Haggin was not alone in pursuing this particular avocation. Theodore Winters, for instance, had established a successful thoroughbred breeding operation in 1865 on the present-day site of the town of Winters (later he moved his horse farm to the current site of the Sacramento International Airport and called it Rancho del Rio). Other wealthy California businessmen engaged in the same pastime. George Hearst at Rancho Del San Simeon; Elias “Lucky” Baldwin at his Southern Californian Santa Anita stud farm; Marcus Daly, a partner of Haggin’s in the Anaconda Mine along with Hearst, at his Bitterroot Stock Farm in Montana; and Leland Stanford at Palo Alto Stock Farm—all joined Haggin in operating horse farms.

While Hearst’s property was greater in size, over 50,000 acres, no one surpassed Haggin in the number of stallions standing, and mares, and foals residing at his rancho. According to many sources, including the leading California breeder’s publication, The Thoroughbred of California, at the Rancho’s peak, Haggin had over thirty stallions and 562 mares at Rancho Del Paso. No one else in the world has ever come close to the sheer numbers of stallion standing at one place, or the numbers of mares and foals gathered in one spot for a single purpose—breeding successful horses for the racetrack.

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Haggin’s Rancho Del Paso was so successful that Eastern stables had to take notice. As early as 1884, the growing accomplishments of the Western stables were recognized by the *New York World*:

The success of California stables in the most prominent feature of the several meetings [a nineteenth century term for horse races] and as that success has been amply sustained here in the East by the running of western horses, due credit must be given to the magnificent climate and the superiority of Pacific Coast during the winter months for the building up and development of horses for racing purposes.33

One of the best decisions Haggin made in the beginning of this new endeavor was to hire a manager expert in the field of breeding and training racehorses. Indeed, John Mackey played a major role in making the rancho into the premier facility that it became. He supervised Haggin’s breeding and racing operation and represented his frequently absent employer from 1880 until he died suddenly in April 1913.34

Born in Ireland in 1837 as self-reported in the 1900 Federal Census, and raised on a farm, Mackey began his career in Sacramento as a trainer of harness horses.35 Mackey managed a stable on Seventh Street in Sacramento behind the Golden Eagle Hotel before he first went to work for Haggin in 1873.36 By 1880, Mackey had assumed full charge of the rancho. In the late 1890s, the *Sacramento City Directory* listed him as Haggin’s farm

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33 Quoted in Kent Cochran’s, “California’s Original Breeding Industry,” *The Thoroughbred of California*, XXXVI, Number 6, (June 1962), 604


35 Austin, 2.

manager and superintendent of Rancho Del Paso. At first, the Irish horse trainer encouraged Haggin to begin his farm operation at Rancho Del Paso with harness horses. Eventually, however, the harness horses were phased out in favor of thoroughbreds.

Within a few years after Mackay began his employment, Haggin began to advertise the Rancho Del Paso stallions for service. For example, an advertisement in the January 26, 1884 issue of the Breeder and Sportsman listed the horses available for stud services at Rancho Del Paso. The stallions advertised were Imported Kyrle Daly, a bay, sired by Artillery, out of Colleen Rhue by Gemma-di-Vergy, one hundred dollars due at time of service; Longfield, a chestnut, by Monarchist out of Dame Gourlay by Planet, fifty dollars due at time of service; and Jim Browne by Foster, out of Flush by Hiawatha, fifty dollars due at time of service. The advertisement also noted that the breeding season for thoroughbreds commenced on February 10 and would continue through July 1. Mares were boarded for six dollars a month during the season, and ten dollars a month after the season. In an added caveat, the rancho’s listing refused to accept any responsibility for a horse’s escape or accident. Along with the thoroughbred stallions advertised, several harness horse stallions—Echo, Algona, and Alaska—were likewise listed as available for breeding.

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37 Breeder and Sportsman, Vol. 4 (26 January 1884), 60.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
In 1890, Rancho Del Paso housed its extensive thoroughbred population in twenty-six separate barns.\textsuperscript{40} The Rancho was self-contained, operating without assistance from outside resources. A training track for preparing the horses that would race was also available. An area along the banks of the American River, south of present day Fair Oaks Boulevard between Watt Avenue and Arden Way, referred to as the “Bottoms,” housed the more important thoroughbreds.\textsuperscript{41} A railroad line, called the “Ben Ali” after Haggin and his eldest son, ran along today’s Marconi and Auburn Boulevards, paralleling the present light rail line. This railroad provided access to the outside world for transport of Haggin’s horses to the auction yards and to racetracks located throughout the world.

Horse breeding operations have remained similar in their procedures for centuries. Stallion owners market their stallions and charge a price for “covering a mare” in accordance of the expected value of the offspring. Mares in estrus are sent to the stallion farm for breeding and are boarded until it is certain that the breeding was successful. Then the mare either returns home or remains on the premises until the foal is born.

Today, ultrasound technology quickly detects an embryo. In the days before ultrasound, however, mares were checked manually for pregnancy or until signs of estrus abated.\textsuperscript{42}

To understand who resided on the Rancho, the censuses are valuable research tools because they provide a snapshot in time of where people were living, where they

\textsuperscript{40}The Sacramento Bee, “Rancho Del Paso,” 22 November 1890, 1/2.

\textsuperscript{41}Gunn, 1707.

\textsuperscript{42}Mina C. G. Davies, Equine Reproductive Physiology, Breeding and Stud Management (New York: Cabi Publishing, 2008), 155.
and their parents were from originally, what their occupations were, and if they were wealthy. As the census takers went from house to house, a picture developed of not only each household but of whole neighborhoods and areas. In the case of Rancho Del Paso, the census records reveal the numbers of workers who lived on the rancho and all the different occupational skills that were needed to run a horse-breeding facility in nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century California.

John Mackey is listed in the 1880 Federal Census as a farmer along with his wife, Annie. At this time, the Mackey family was living in San Francisco and not yet on the outskirts of Sacramento. Later in the 1890-96 Sacramento City Directories, Mackey was listed as the Superintendent of Rancho Del Paso. Annie, whose name was derived from Hannah, was born in Leitram, Ireland in 1833 and married John Mackey in 1861. They had two children in New York before coming to California, where two other children were born. Most references to the Mackey household mention only daughters, but in the 1880 Census, a twelve-year-old son is listed, with the initials of J.K. The 1870 census confirms this boy, then two-years-old, as well as the other Mackey children.

According to the 1910 Census, the Mackeys were still living in Sacramento but now Mackey’s occupation had changed from farmer to “retired capitalist.” Nellie was still the only child living with Mackey and his wife at the time of this census. Whereas the census had previously described Nellie’s occupation as “schoolteacher,” in 1900 it

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listed her as a “stock raiser.” Annie Mackey preceded her husband in death, dying in 1911. She is buried at East Lawn Cemetery in Sacramento.45

In 1900, the census enumerator counted four other horse trainers besides John Mackey at the Rancho. In order to care for the growing number of horses on the Rancho, a veterinary surgeon—P.J. Hayden, born in Kentucky, aged 29—boarded on the premises. Clearly, the demands of the Rancho’s operation required a live-in veterinarian.

Because the 1890 files of the manuscript census were destroyed in a fire, the 1900 Census provides the best snapshot of the people working on the Rancho.40 The Census lists the employees working for Haggin, including four farriers, four cooks—all from China, a maid, six hostlers, and five day-laborers.41 With 19 workers, including Mackey, Rancho Del Paso represented a major employer in North Sacramento. The three Chinese cooks prepared meals for everyone working on the ranch, possibly with the exception of the Mackeys who had their own personal cook. The farriers took care of the horses’ feet; the veterinary surgeon took care of injured or sick horses and supervised the breeding along with John Mackey. The day laborers and the hostlers did most of the heavy labor related to the care and feeding of the horses.

By 1900 the busy facility not only contained twenty-six barns and paddocks for turnout of the horses, but the Rancho’s fields of grass hay and oats were furnishing enough fodder for the horses. Although much of Del Paso’s land was undesirable hardpan, Haggin’s successful agricultural output demonstrated the productive capacity of the rich bottomland near the American and Sacramento Rivers. Earlier in the Rancho’s

45 FamilySearch.org.
history, the previous owners had raised livestock and developed farming grasses to provide for the cattle.

In January 1941, the *Sacramento Bee* interviewed one of the veterinarians who had worked at Rancho Del Paso. At the time of the interview, Dr. McLean was 81.\(^{46}\) “Doc,” as he was known, had graduated in 1883 from veterinary school.\(^{47}\) He explained in his interview with reporter Harry Bagley how he had first arrived at Rancho Del Paso.\(^{47}\) Haggin, it seems, had purchased a stallion and asked one of Doc’s professors for someone reliable to accompany the stallion to California. Once the stallion was delivered, Haggin and Mackey asked McLean to stay on as a vet.\(^{48}\)

McLean was a trusted employee for the Rancho Del Paso and another vital asset to the operation’s success. Indeed, Haggin consistently made good choices in the people he hired to run his horse business. Doc, for instance, was entrusted particularly with the care of yearlings, and he sometimes traveled with them to the sales auctions.\(^{49}\) To cite one example, McLean, in 1893, accompanied forty-two colts taken to England for sale.\(^{50}\) Haggin knew he would have to ship his stock to where buyers could be easily located.


\(^{47}\) McLean told Bagley that he thought that Watercress had been the finest stallion at Rancho Del Paso. He also commented that although Salvador and Golden Garter were fine racehorses, neither stallion produced any colts worth anything.

\(^{48}\) Ibid., 3/C2.

\(^{49}\) The interview verifies the documentation of the workers at the Rancho as detailed in the federal Census. By the time Doc started working on the Rancho, twenty men worked there. Doc listed jockeys, trainers, hostlers, blacksmiths (farriers), gardeners, and other workers living on the ranch.

\(^{50}\) Ibid., 3/C3.
Using the railroads, in particular the Ben Ali Railroad Station on the Southern Pacific Railroad Line that bisected the Rancho, he shipped bloodstock to San Francisco and to New York City annually for auctions. But that was not all he did.

By 1886, Haggin had one hundred horses in training, three different trainers, and three different jockeys. As the *Sacramento Union* noted in June 26, 1890, Haggin’s expenses exceeded his winnings.\(^{51}\) While John Mackey supervised the activities at Rancho Del Paso, Haggin entered the world of thoroughbred horseracing. He was highly successful in this endeavor. His blue and orange silks were seen worn by his jockeys in tracks all across the country throughout the 1880’s and 1890’s. Haggin’s efforts bore good results on the track if not in his financial ledgers, as evidenced by the *Breeder and Sportsman*. An article in 1884 in the magazine reported that Haggin’s horses starred at a Chicago race meet.\(^{52}\) Two years later, the racing industry’s bible noted that Haggin’s horses won thirty-seven firsts, nineteen seconds, and thirteen show (third) places.\(^{53}\) Clearly, by 1890, Haggin was sending his horses to major tracks across the country, demonstrating his earnestness in not only producing fine racing stock but in winning races with his horses. But as Haggin readily admitted to the *New York Times* in 1905, the expenses of training and shipping his racehorses far outweighed the profits that could be made by racing. In fact, by this point, Haggin had already begun the process of selling off his Rancho Del Paso horses.

\(^{51}\) *The Sacramento Union*, 26 June 1890, 1-2.

\(^{52}\) *Breeder and Sportsman*, 5 July 1884, 3/2.

\(^{53}\) *Breeder and Sportsman*, 11 December 1886, 364/2.
Chapter 3

OTHER BREEDERS IN CALIFORNIA

As mentioned earlier, other successful businessmen pursued breeding thoroughbreds in nineteenth-century California. These businessmen, once they were financially secure, pursued a venture that offered much risk and little return. Expenses usually exceeded the gain. Establishing a breeding facility required suitable land, expenditures for fencing, barns, pasture, storage for hay and grain, plus the necessary workers to tend to the land and the horses. Likewise, the element of risk in breeding racehorses needed to be weighed, for there was, and still is, no guarantee that one stallion and one mare, however extensive the pedigree, will produce offspring able to outrun a fat man going downhill. Yet these businessmen were willing to gamble and try their hand at breeding and racing thoroughbreds. Thoroughbreds not only provide race fans with entertainment, but ownership of these magnificent animals allows admission to an exclusive club—a step up in the social strata.

Theodore Winters represented the first Californian in the American Era to engage in horse racing and horse breeding. Born in Illinois in 1823, his family operated a stage line. When gold fever struck, Winters’ father and brothers headed west, leaving Theodore behind to dispose of the family business. After marrying in 1848 and having a son, he left Illinois for California, arriving in 1849. In their new home, the family worked at different occupations, including mining, farming, and hauling freight to the gold camps in the
California foothills. The family extended its freight business from Placerville to Nevada, when miners discovered gold and silver in that neighboring state. The lucrative venture made the Winters’ family wealthy, enabling it to acquire real estate in Nevada and California that eventually exceeded more than 18,000 acres. After Theodore Winters developed an interest in racing, he built a racetrack in Carson Valley, Nevada.55

In 1865, on a business trip to Missouri, Winters bought Norfolk, sired by Lexington, for $15,001. Norfolk, the most successful and most celebrated of his thoroughbreds, launched Winters into a successful racing career that included the construction of racetracks in Yolo and Solano counties, midway between the racetracks in the Bay Area and Sacramento. Eventually he organized his first breeding operation at Rancho Del Arroyo, near the present-day town of Winters, producing a number of successful race horses.56 Winters’ rival, Judge Charles Bryan, campaigned a horse named Lodi. Hoping to determine the top horse in the West, Winters and Bryan agreed to a face off between Lodi and Norfolk at San Francisco’s Ocean House Course in 1865. Norfolk bested Lodi in that contest as well as in two subsequent matches, the last in Sacramento.57

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55 Ibid., 2.
56 Mary Fleming, A History of the Thoroughbred in California (Arcadia, California: The California Thoroughbred Breeder’s Association), 2.
57 Ibid., 2.
In the breeding shed too, Norfolk produced winners, siring among others, El Rio Rey, The Czar, King of Norfolk, and The Emperor of Norfolk.\textsuperscript{58}

In time, Winters left Solano County and moved his operations to Sacramento County. Near the Sacramento River, he established Rancho Del Rio (today the site of the Sacramento International Airport). After Norfolk, Winter’s premier stallion, died in 1890, Joe Hooker emerged as Winter’s foremost mount. Joe Hooker, in turn, sired the outstanding mare, Yo Tambien, who won 44 races and over $89,000 in purses.\textsuperscript{59}

In 1902, Winters got out of the racing business, selling his stock off in Chicago. Kendall Stables had purchased Yo Tambien earlier for $17,000. The prized mare was in foal when she hurt herself in a paddock and had to be destroyed in 1896.\textsuperscript{60}

Elias “Lucky” Baldwin, born in Ohio in 1823, became one of the “Bonanza Kings,” when he struck it rich at the Comstock Lode in Nevada.\textsuperscript{61} A day laborer in San Francisco, Baldwin never discovered ore himself. Rather, he accepted shares of the Ophir mine as payment for a debt. When the mine proved to be hugely lucrative, he sold it for $5 million and then parleyed his bonanza into yet a larger fortune by investing in real estate. Once an owner of livery stables in San Francisco, Baldwin held a strong interest in

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 3.

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 3.


raising and breeding thoroughbred horses. Baldwin hence acquired 8,000 acres in the San Gabriel Valley, part of the original Santa Anita Mexican land grant, and then later added 55,000 more acres. Santa Anita Race Track subsequently would be built on the property, opening in 1934. Baldwin began his breeding career in the 1870’s by importing two stallions from the East Coast, Rutherford and Grinstead. While his breeding program produced many winners, he was not above buying stock from others. Baldwin purchased the Emperor of Norfolk from Theodore Winters and successfully campaigned the colt, which won 21 out of 29 races. The Emperor also sired many stakes winners, proving Baldwin a good judge of horseflesh. At one point, Baldwin’s stable ranked as the largest in the United States. Lucky Baldwin is remembered today for the Santa Anita Race Track, and the cities of Baldwin Hills, and Baldwin Park.

Adolph Spreckels, son of the man who founded the sugar company, also bred racehorses in Napa. His most famous mount was Morvich, the first California-bred horse to win the Kentucky Derby in 1922. Adolph’s older brother John D. was similarly involved in thoroughbred racing and helped develop the racing industry in Southern

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63 Fleming, 5.

64 Ibid., 6.


66 Haggin’s horse, Ben Ali, winner of the 1886 Kentucky Derby, was bred in Kentucky by Daniel Swigert.
California and Tijuana in the early twentieth century as well as the Tanforan racetrack at San Bruno.\textsuperscript{67}

Haggin’s long-time business associate George Hearst, after settling at his Piedra Blanca Rancho, the site of the present-day San Simeon, began breeding thoroughbreds in the 1880’s. Tournament, the winner of the Realization Stakes, proved to be his most famous horse. Tournament was sired by Haggin’s Sir Mordred.\textsuperscript{68} Hearst’s rancho raised other breeds of horses as well, including working cow horses.\textsuperscript{69}

Marcus Daly was yet another nouveau riche gentleman who ventured into the world of thoroughbred horse breeding in the late 1880’s. A partner of Hearst and Haggin in the Anaconda mine in Montana, Daly owned some of the richest mines in the world. Although Daly had not lived in California, upon his death his livestock was sold off at public auction in San Francisco by auctioneers used by Haggin.\textsuperscript{67}

A review of existing records allows the historian to determine those California capitalists who seriously pursued the breeding and racing of thoroughbreds. Clearly, Hearst never gave the sport serious attention. But Haggin, Baldwin, Winters, and Daly devoted considerable energy and large fortunes to raising fine racing stock. Each sought out breeding stock suitable for producing prize thoroughbred racehorses. None, however, surpassed James Ben Ali Haggin.

\textsuperscript{67} Bernice Scharlach, \textit{Big Alma: San Francisco’s Alma Spreckels}, (San Francisco, Scottwall Associates), 1990.

\textsuperscript{68} Mrs. Fremont Older, \textit{George Hearst, California Pioneer} (Los Angeles: WesternLore Press, 1966),174.

\textsuperscript{69} Mrs. William R. Hearst, Jr., \textit{Horses of San Simeon} (San Simeon: Hearst Publishing 1985).
Chapter 4

THE RANCHO’S OPERATIONS

This new industry in California was by no means a fluke. Many others besides Haggin had created breeding farms and entered into horseracing. The climate in California was milder than the climate on the East Coast. There were ample tracts of land to raise horses, and every town had a race track for the sport. All the industry required were individuals willing to take raw land and develop it into a suitable place for raising horses. Haggin set about creating a facility like no other. He and other California breeders proved highly successful.

If one standard of success for any breeding facility is the size of the operation, then the Rancho del Paso deserves top ranking. A comparison of the advertisement for the Rancho Del Paso stallion to a similar advertisement for Belle Meade, a famous thoroughbred breeding facility in Tennessee, demonstrates significant differences in quantity. Despite having to compete with a breeding facility that had started in 1807, breeders in California went head to head with the Tennessee brood farm as well as with other long-established operations.

For instance, in the February 23, 1884 issue of the Breeder and Sportsman, Belle Meade advertised four stallions to Rancho Del Paso’s three thoroughbred and three standard-bred stallions. Moreover, in an another issue a month later, an advertisement

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70 Breeder and Sportsman, 23 February 1884.
announced that Haggin’s stallion Kyrlie Daly was booked up completely for the breeding season and “no more mares will be accepted.”\(^{71}\) Regardless whether others requested Kyrlie Daly’s services more than the Belle Meade stallions, the fact that Haggin had to print a notice informing mare owners that his stallion’s book\(^ {72}\) was full is an indication of Haggin’s success in standing studs in California. A review of *Breeder and Sportsman* issues beyond the date of that advertisement finds no such statement for the Belle Meade Plantation. It would have been expensive for California horse owners to send their horses east, so they depended on Haggin.

An article from the *Breeder and Sportsman* published in 1885, titled, “California Occupies a Prominent Position at the Present in the Racing World,” suggests that California could compete with the older Eastern barns because the climate was milder and horses could spend more time outside. In addition, more land and open spaces facilitated the raising of horses. The disadvantage was in the distance between the West Coast and the East Coast. The East, too, had all the important stake races. While California certainly had many racetracks, the East Coast offered an established racing circuit. Haggin redressed these handicaps by building his own railroad line on the Rancho Del Paso to ship his horses back east for auction and for racing.

One misconception of horse breeding in California repeated by previous writers such as Barbara Austin on Rancho Del Paso involved the claim that the length of the

\(^{71}\) Ibid., 29 March 1884, 204.

\(^{72}\) The stallion’s book refers to the schedule of mares to be bred to a particular stallion during a breeding season.
breeding season was longer in California because of the state’s balmy weather. In fact, the heat cycles of mares are determined by the length of daylight, rather than by mild climate. Most mares stop their estrus cycles with the advent of the shorter days of winter and, once the days become longer in the spring, return to their normal estrus cycles. Austin claims that because the climate is generally so mild in California, the majority of foals are born near the official birthday of thoroughbred horses, which is January first of every year. This is significant because each registered thoroughbred horse becomes another year older with the passing of January first. Since horses compete in races based on age, an advantage exists to having foals born in the beginning of the calendar year. Thus three-year-old colts competing in the annual May running of the Kentucky Derby would be more mature if born earlier in the year.

However, a review of the records left behind in the auction and sales pamphlets of the time tell a different story. In the sales catalog of thoroughbred mares sold at public auction on Friday, November 23, 1888, in San Francisco, California, thirty-eight mares are listed for sale. Twenty-five mares were in foal and the expected foaling dates were

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73 Barbara Austin asserts the notion that Haggin’s California operations allowed horses to be born closer to their official January birthday than horse facilities elsewhere.


75 The gestation period for horses is eleven months.

76 “Colt” is a generic term for a young horse under the age of four, regardless of sex. However, strictly speaking, “colts” are male.

77 *Catalogue of TB Mares* from Public Auction, Friday, 23 November 1888, (published by Killip and Co., 22 Montgomery Street, San Francisco, Auctioneers), Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
given. Only three foals were expected to arrive in February and none in January. Most
mares listed in the catalogue were scheduled to foal in March and April. This meant that
the breeding had taken place eleven months earlier in the months of the preceding spring,
which would be normal for any mare, anywhere in the United States. The earliest
possible breeding then took place in March, at a time during the year when the daylight
hours have lengthened enough to trigger estrus cycles in mares.

A review of pedigrees today reveals that most thoroughbred horses are born in the
springtime. An analysis of the sales catalogue of Haggin’s horses shows that most foals
were born in April, with March having the second largest number of births. In 1903, the
Sheepshead Bay Race Course Auction catalogue for James Ben Ali Haggin listed 125
yearlings for sale. Sixty-two of those youngsters offered for sale were born in the month
of April.78 Examinations of other sales catalogues provide similar results. No indications
exist that California horses have a decisive advantage of early birthdays over other horses
bred in colder climates, though California breeding facilities do offer milder climates for
the horses to be outside exercising and growing. In New York, Kentucky, and Virginia—
other states famous for their thoroughbreds, the winters come earlier than in California,
last longer, and provide more severe weather conditions. Even though California afforded
racehorses greater opportunities to run and exercise outside, Haggin and other California
breeders triumphed in the thoroughbred breeding business because of their zeal in

78 Catalogue of annual sale of Elmerdorf Stud, thoroughbred yearlings, property of Mr. James B.
Haggin, Lexington, Kentucky, Public Auction, Sheepshead Bay, New York, 1904 (published by Fasig-
Tipton Auctioneers), Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
examining pedigrees and because of their impeccable judgment in acquiring good breeding stock.
Chapter 5
FAMOUS HORSES FROM THE RANCHO

In January of 1885, the *Breeder and Sportsman* stated that “California occupies a prominent position at the present in the racing world.”\(^79\) Much of this reputation was attributable to the efforts of James Ben Ali Haggin and his Rancho Del Paso. Many fine horses were bred at Rancho Del Paso by Haggin along with the ones he bought from elsewhere. A couple of the horses he purchased went on to fame and glory as racehorses while some became progenitors of fine racehorses. One of the horses purchased from Daniel Swigert’s Elmendorf Farm in Kentucky, Ben Ali, named after Haggin’s eldest son and himself, won the Kentucky Derby in 1886. The other horse that was not bred at Rancho Del Paso but achieved greatness was Salvator, again bred by Daniel Swigert in Kentucky.\(^80\) He would hold that record for many years.

Haggin’s wealth enabled him to travel great distances to purchase bloodstock for his Rancho Del Paso operation. According to the *Breeder and Sportsman* in 1892, Haggin imported horses from New Zealand, Ireland, England and Australia.\(^81\) In 1890, Haggin visited the island of New Zealand and purchased one of the foremost racehorses of his day, Sir Mordred. Foaled in 1877 at the Middle Park Stud, he was sired by

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\(^79\) *Breeder and Sportsman*, 3 January 1885, 9.
\(^80\) Ibid., August 28, 1890, 9.
\(^81\) Ibid, January 23, 1892, 83/2.
Traducer, out of the mare Idalia by Cambuscan.\textsuperscript{82} A formidable racehorse in his first career, Sir Mordred won New Zealand’s Canterbury Derby, the Canterbury Cup, and the Metropolitan Stakes, all important stakes races. In his second career based at Rancho Del Paso, the imported stallion became a leading sire in California, with his offspring winning a good number of stakes races. In 1894, for instance, Sir Mordred’s offspring ranked as the top earners in the state. The New Zealand stallion ultimately sired a Belmont Stakes winner, a champion three year old, a champion sprinter, a Champagne Stakes winner, and the dam of Rubio.\textsuperscript{83}

Haggin imported other horses as well. Darebin arrived in 1886 from New Zealand, Maxim followed in 1892, and St. Gatien came in 1894. Darebin’s greatest accomplishment as a stallion was to sire Emma C., the dam or mother of Commando. \textsuperscript{84} In 1901 Commando won the Belmont Stakes. Haggin purchased Golden Garter in England for $72,000 in 1899. Bred at the Royal Stud, Hampton Court, the English horse stood at stud for many years at Rancho Del Paso, siring a number of successful runners.

In 1893, Green B. Morris, an American horse race owner, purchased a colt named Star Ruby in England and shipped him to the United States to race. After Star Ruby’s retirement from the track, Haggin purchased him for Rancho Del Paso as a breeding

\textsuperscript{82} Mark Simon, ed., \textit{The Thoroughbred Times Racing Almanac} (Lexington, KY Thoroughbred Times Company, Inc., 2003).


stallion. Star Ruby sired Cairngorm, a Preakness Stakes winner, and Africander, who won the Belmont Stakes in 1903. Perhaps Star Ruby’s greatest accomplishment in the breeding shed was as the sire of Rubio. In England, in 1908, the last mentioned horse won the Grand National, a steeplechase run over a distance of four miles, with over thirty jumps, and considered to be one of the most difficult venues in racing in testing the fearlessness of the jockeys and the jumping abilities of the horse.\textsuperscript{85} Many entries do not finish the race.

In 1885, Haggin’s horse, Ben Ali, triumphed at the Hopeful Stakes. The \textit{Breeder and Sportsman} reported that “Californians [had] pulled off another rich plum . . . with Ben Ali . . . .”\textsuperscript{86} This stakes race for two year olds was used by horsemen as a prep race for the Kentucky Derby. And, indeed, the following year the Kentucky-bred colt won the prestigious derby at the Churchill Downs racetrack. But, embroiled in a controversy with the track stewards over betting on the race, Haggin was denied the right to bet on his own longshot horse. After Ben Ali’s remarkable victory, Haggin swore he would never enter another horse in a Kentucky Derby, a promise that he kept.\textsuperscript{87}

In 1885, Haggin’s horse Tyrant also won the Withers Stakes and the Belmont Stakes—the latter by an impressive 3 1/2 lengths. Tyrant’s victory at Belmont marked a major upset over his chief rival Tecumseh, strongly favored by the bettors. Purchased as a

\textsuperscript{85} Margaret Marande, “The horse that pulled a bus wins the Grand National…” \textit{Daily Mail, United Kingdom}, 05 April 2008.

\textsuperscript{86} \textit{Breeder and Sportsman}, 18 July 1885, 34/2 & 3.

\textsuperscript{87} Debbie Arrington, \textit{Sacramento Bee}, 2 May 2008.
yearling in Lexington, Kentucky for a mere $300 Tyrant, like an increasing number of Haggin’s mounts, featured a foreign pedigree. Tyrant’s grandsire was King Tom, a stallion located in Great Britain. 88

After these victories by Tyrant, Breeder and Sportsman, in an article titled “Notes of the Belmont—The Golden State Rules the Day,” asked Haggin about what he thought about California as a breeding center for thoroughbreds. Optimistically, Haggin responded:

If we had such studs here as they have in New York, Kentucky and Tennessee, Roancocas, Elmendorf, Woodburn, Belle Meade, etc. - we would have the finest racehorses in the world, and the time will come when we will have them. 89

The most remembered Haggin horse was Salvator, again bred in Kentucky but purchased by Haggin as a youngster. On August 8, 1890, Salvator set a world record for the mile at the newly constructed Monmouth Park, located in New Jersey (a straight track90) in a race against the clock. Salvator ran one mile in 1:35 1/2, a record that held up for twenty-eight years. In 1890, Salvator participated in a match race against a bay colt named Tenny that attracted intense interest throughout the United States. Haggin’s colt won the exciting race, and poet Ella Wheeler Wilcox commemorated the contest in verse.

88 Breeder and Sportsman, 369/3.

89 Ibid.

90 Racetracks are all now oval; straight tracks such as the one where Salvator won his fame have disappeared.
Her poem, “How Salvator Won,” declared the Tenny-Salvator contest the match of the century.91

ILLUSTRATION 3: Currier and Ives Print depicting match race

But not only did Salvator hold the record for running a mile for nearly three decades, he was twice named American Horse of the Year. The Eclipse Award, which honored an eighteenth-century English racehorse, was first given out in 1887 and honored a colt named Hanover of the Dwyer Brothers Stable. The following year, Lucky Baldwin’s Emperor of Norfolk received what has long been considered the highest honor given in thoroughbred racing. Then Salvator captured the award in consecutive years for his many achievements, including setting the world record for a mile and beating Tenny in the showdown race. Trained by a former jockey—Matt Byrnes, Salvator compiled an outstanding lifetime racing record, winning 16 out of his 19 career races, after only losing

his first two races. He earned purses totaling $120,365 for Haggin.\textsuperscript{92} In fact, Salvator was out of the money only once in his entire career. Few horses have ever reached such a stellar record. Not surprisingly, Salvator earned a distinguished place in the National Museum of Racing and Hall of Fame\textsuperscript{93} where his accomplishments are displayed along with his portrait by Currier and Ives (See Illustration 3).

Haggin even sent horses to race as far away as England. The \textit{Sacramento Union} carried a story about Haggin’s entries for the upcoming English Derby in 1888.\textsuperscript{94} The article ran on February 14, 1887, and reported that Haggin had submitted thirty nominations for the race. The \textit{Breeder and Sportsman} added that the usual owner submitted two or three entries, explaining: the race’s purse “is worth only £600 with a £50 entry fee—half of that is forfeited if the horse does not get in so Haggin’s forfeit alone is worth £750 or 12% --good wishes of the American [T]urk will be given to Haggin.”\textsuperscript{95}

As mentioned above, another outstanding Haggin-bred horse—Rubio, won the grueling Grand National Race, a steeplechase held in England in 1908. Sired at Rancho Del Paso by the English stallion Star Ruby, Rubio claimed an impressive pedigree. Nevertheless, he was destined for the show ring until he was injured at the age of five and

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\textsuperscript{92} Eugene Hepting Collection, Binder \#7, 85/24/5638-5997, SAMCC.


\textsuperscript{94} Sacramento Union, 14 February 1887, 3/3.

\textsuperscript{95} Breeder and Sportsman, April 1887.
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was then successfully retrained to race over fences. Purchased and raced by Col. F. Douglas-Pennant, Rubio won the English Grand National, a remarkable achievement by any standard.  

But Star Ruby had another equally famous son, Africander, bred at Rancho Del Paso. Foaled in 1900, Africander’s dam was LaToquera, sired by Haggin’s other great stallion, Sir Mordred. Africander was sold at an auction and was most noted for winning the 1903 Belmont Stakes, although he won other stakes races such as the Brooklyn Handicap and the Suburban Stakes. Africander was owned by the Dwyer Brothers, who raced under the name of Hampton Stables.  

One of Haggin’s homebred horses by an English stallion, Watercress, was the colt Waterboy. Foaled in 1899 at Rancho Del Paso, Waterboy—the legend has it—was so ugly that Haggin could not sell him at auction and so kept him and raced him. The colt proved his worth by winning his first two starts, although he broke his pelvis in a crash as a three-year old. Once recovered, he continued to race successfully. Waterboy placed behind Africander in earnings. In 1904 at the Brighton Beach track, after two defeats earlier that year, Waterboy, carrying a weight of 126 pounds, beat out his chief rival,  

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96 Margaret Marande, “The horse that pulled a bus wins the Grand National…” *Daily Mail, United Kingdom*, 05 April 2008.


99 Ibid., 34.

Broomstick.\textsuperscript{101} The appearance of these rivals substantially increased the expected attendance at the track that day and helped redeem Waterboy’s career.

Another horse that established a name for Rancho Del Paso and Haggin, although like Ben Ali and Salvator not bred there, was the mare Firenzi. Purchased from Elmendorf for a mere $2,600, she earned a place in the National Museum of Racing’s Hall of Fame.\textsuperscript{102} Trained by Matt Brynes, she regularly raced against the colts and beat them. Firenzi was a champion filly and mare for four consecutive years, earning $112,471 in her lifetime. In 1981 she was inducted into the Hall of Fame in Saratoga Springs, New York. In the Del Paso Heights neighborhood of Sacramento, there is a street named in her honor.

Another Hall of Famer connected to Haggin was the African-American jockey, Issac Murphy, who rode not only Firenzi but was also abroad Salvator during the match race against Tenny. Murphy holds the distinction of winning three Kentucky Derbys and for being the first jockey inductee into the Hall of Fame in 1955.\textsuperscript{103} Not long after his success, he and other black jockeys were banned from the sport.


\textsuperscript{102} National Museum of Racing, available from: \url{www.racingmuseum.org}, (accessed on 7 April, 2009).

\textsuperscript{103} National Museum of Racing, available from: \url{www.racingmuseum.org}, (accessed on 7 April 2009).
Chapter 6

THE AUCTIONS

Haggin bred and raced horses and apparently spared no effort to be the finest at both endeavors. Interviewed by the *Breeder and Sportsman* in June of 1885, he was asked the question of what he thought about California as a site for breeding racehorses. Haggin responded that the climate allowed horses to be outside eight months of the year and that if Californians had the studs (breeding facilities) as they did in New York, Kentucky, and Tennessee, ―we would have the finest racehorses in the world.‖

Haggin’s Rancho Del Paso sought not merely to breed fine thoroughbred horses and enter them in the highest levels of competition throughout the country. To ship his trained steeds from Sacramento to Bay Area tracks or to more prestigious racing venues back east, Haggin devised a highly efficient and cost effective system of transportation that required intimate coordination with the Southern Pacific Railroad. Additionally, the Rancho sought to sell its horses at auction in order to generate sufficient income for the Rancho and offset the inordinate costs of Haggin’s expensive avocation. To ensure successful marketing of his horses, Haggin insisted that the animals he put up for auction possess superior pedigrees that would impress the horse-buying public. And, too, he offered only swift, powerful horses that would attract betters at the tracks. Haggin’s

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104 *Breeder and Sportsman*, 13 June 1885, 369/3.
remarkable auction sales ultimately helped to advertise the name of Rancho Del Paso throughout the world.

Since San Francisco was already a major population hub and had three racetracks, a lot of interest existed in thoroughbred horses. Haggin started auctioning his bloodstock\textsuperscript{105} in the 1880’s. The records of these auctions still exist as sales catalogues. These catalogues list all the horses available for sale and include information about breeding, date of birth, color, and breeder.

Haggin had begun selling his stock in 1881. The \textit{Sacramento Union} ran an advertisement for the second annual sale that took place at Rancho Del Paso on April 16 and 17 of 1882.\textsuperscript{106} Advertised for sale were thoroughbreds, trotting colts and fillies, harness, work and draft horses along with male donkeys or Jacks, mules, and Shetland ponies. Killip and Company of San Francisco conducted the sale. During the first few years for Haggin and Mackey, thoroughbred horses had not been the sole focus of Rancho Del Paso. Years earlier, Haggin had even imported sheep from Australia for the Rancho.\textsuperscript{107} Over the course of the next few years, however, Haggin and Mackey sold off all the harness horses, workhorses, mules, and ponies to concentrate exclusively on thoroughbreds.

After 1882, Rancho Del Paso held regular auctions of the stock. The first ones were held near the present day Arcade Station. The sales catalogue listed 142 horses for

\textsuperscript{105} Bloodstock - refers to pedigreed horses for sale.

\textsuperscript{106} \textit{The Sacramento Union}, 17 April 1882, 34.

\textsuperscript{107} B. Austin, \textit{History of Rancho Del Paso}, 2.
Soon Haggin sent horses to San Francisco and New York for auction. In 1888, sixty-four Rancho Del Paso yearlings were offered for sale, bringing in a total of $112,775. The average price for a yearling at that sale would be $1,952.

The following list demonstrates the success of the breeding program at Rancho Del Paso:

- 1889 - sold 96 thoroughbreds for $113,775
- 1890 - sold 96 thoroughbreds for $115,850
- 1891 - sold unknown quantity for $80,000 (a bad year for the horse market)
- 1892 - sold 138 thoroughbreds for $159,525
- 1894 - sold unknown quantity for $130,425
- 1895 - sold 95 out of 147 thoroughbreds for $70,250
- 1897 - sold 130 thoroughbreds for $51,150
- 1898 - sold 133 thoroughbreds for $62,725

In 1898 and 1899, he shipped horses to England for sale. Eventually, Haggin realized he would have to ship his stock to prospective buyers if he wanted to sell more of them. So in 1888, Haggin began shipping stock to sites where his horses would stand the best chance of being purchased. Specifically, he shipped them

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109 Ibid., 10.
110 Ibid., 10.
to San Francisco and New York. Haggin continued to hold these sales annually for the next seventeen years.\footnote{Ibid., 12.}

The catalogue from the November 23, 1888 public sale\footnote{Catalogue of Thoroughbred Mares of JB Haggin, Esq., Rancho Del Paso, At Public Auction, November 23, 1888 (San Francisco, Killip and Company), Berkeley, Bancroft Library, University of California} for instance contains data on the stallions that were standing at stud at Rancho Del Paso and details of their breeding. The auction took place at the Railroad Stables at eleven o’clock on Friday morning on the corner of Turk and Steiner Streets in San Francisco. Thirty-eight mares were listed for sale that day. Descriptions and details of the Rancho’s stallions are given. None of the seven stallions referenced were bred by Haggin at this point. But two of them, Darebin and the aforementioned Sir Mordred, were imported from Australia and New Zealand, respectively.\footnote{Ibid., 3.} Haggin’s wealth allowed him to travel great distances to purchase bloodstock for his breeding endeavor. Darebin was imported to California in 1886 from Victoria, New South Wales and bred by a Mr. S. Gardiners. Sir Modred was imported a year earlier in 1885 from the Middle Park Stud Company, New Zealand. Haggin’s buying trips also included visits to Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Kentucky, where he purchased stallions. During these buying trips, the following stallions were purchased: Hyder Ali came from Pennsylvania, Warwick from New Jersey, and Longfield from Kentucky.\footnote{Sales Catalogue, Killip and Company, 3.}
The purpose of this San Francisco sale was the auctioning of the mares and their foals, bred at Rancho Del Paso. The pedigrees of these mares were impressive. However, the mares were not exclusively bred at the Rancho yet. For example, the first mare listed, Annie Laurie,\textsuperscript{115} bred by JB Chase in California, and was in foal to Haggin’s stallion Warwick and due in April 1889.\textsuperscript{116}

In addition to sending his horses to nearby auctions, Haggin himself acquired horses from other auctions. In the *Breeder and Sportsman* of June 27, 1885, an article titled, “Additions to Rancho Del Paso,” reports that Haggin had purchased fillies and colts at an auction held at Madison Square Garden on June 16, 1885, the most expensive of which was $5,100. This was a brown colt by Spendthrift, who was the sire of Fair Play, who in turn sired the great Man O’ War. Spendthrift was also the sire of the mare Touché Pas, a grandmother of Rubio, winner of the English Grand National,\textsuperscript{117} so the purchase of this colt was worth the price as his sire produced many good racehorses.

If 1892 represented Haggin’s most successful year at the auction block, the severe economic depression known as the Panic of ’93 virtually brought the horse business to a standstill, as the Rancho failed to sell even a solitary nag in 1893. Despite a solid upswing the next year, the nation’s ongoing economic doldrums ensured that Haggin’s sales would wane dramatically in the second half of the decade. Overall, however, the

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., 4.

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., 4.

auction sales catalogues show that Haggin’s breeding program was extensive. Yet, given the scale of Haggin’s pursuit of breeding horses, the size of Rancho Del Paso, and the amount of manpower required to maintain the operation, it is doubtful that Haggin ever made a profit. Instead, his success is based on the sheer numbers of the horses bred there and the quality of the horses that later went to the track. On the basis of the Rancho’s success at the auction table and the many victories at the track for Haggin’s horses, John Mackey particularly deserves recognition for his acumen as an administrator and as a masterful judge of horses. He helped to make Del Paso one of the world’s epicenters of horse-breeding and horse-racing.118

118 Many newspaper and magazine articles ran features on Haggin and his horses. The New York Times, recognizing the California’s significance in the racing business, frequently reported on Haggin’s sales as news items, even when the auctions were taking place across the country in San Francisco.
Chapter 7
HORserACING’S IMPoRTANCE

In Colonial America horseracing was highly informal, with races frequently run through the streets of a community. People would travel great distances for a chance to witness the popular spectacle. Wagering on the outcome was of course a major attraction. With few options for sport and entertainment available in American society until the era of urbanization in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, horseracing remained the most popular pastime. And until World War I, the horse remained a vital constant in the lives of most Americans. Both as a source of transportation and as an essential ingredient in the nation’s agriculture, this animal represented a crucial presence in the life of an average American.

Since the 1920s, railroads, automobiles, trucks, airplanes, and tractors have usurped the horse’s historic role. Only the continued popularity of horseracing recalls for us the animal’s traditional importance as a source of entertainment for countless Americans. At the same time, horse breeding, always a necessity for the development of sturdy work animals, prompted a new fascination with the introduction of the first thoroughbreds, or blood horses, to the New World. Owners and trainers of these fine steeds, together with the jockeys who guided their mounts around the race course, assumed iconic status by the middle of the nineteenth century.
Californians were no different. Even before the gold rush, horse races served as a popular source of entertainment in a dominantly pastoral society that highly valued equestrian skills. In *Two Years Before the Mast*, Richard Henry Dana describes one such competition on the Santa Barbara beach in 1835. However, the development of an overwhelmingly male society after 1849, which appeared intent on wagering away its hard-earned gold dust on a variety gambling activities, fostered the growth of a horseracing industry. In 1852, Pío Pico and José Sepúlveda wagered $50,000 on a race between their prized steeds.—Sarco, a California horse belonging to Pico and Black Swan, an Australian mount owned by Sepúlveda. The latter won by 75 yards.

Within a decade and a half after Statehood, each county and each big city in California had horse racing tracks. San Francisco alone claimed at least four racing venues, including Pioneer Course (the first American track laid out in the state in 1850), Union Park, George Hearst’s Bay View Park racetrack built in 1863 and located near the present-day site of Golden Gate Fields, and A. J. Bryant’s Ocean View Park near the ocean and opened in 1865. Bryant, Theodore Winters, and Natham Coombs later organized the Pacific Jockey Club. In the 1870s, Lucky Baldwin and Leland Stanford proposed a state-wide board to regulate horseracing and in 1891 horsemen formed the

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121 William HP Robertson, *The History of Thoroughbred Racing in America*, 112.
122 Ibid., 112.
Pacific Coast Blood Horse Association, which became the governing body for horseracing in California.123

But racing represented a major source of popular entertainment throughout the state, not merely in the Bay Area. Sacramento’s Brighton Track opened in 1851 and Agriculture Park in 1854 as horseracing venues.124 Even Grass Valley, a gold mining town that boasted a population of 40,000 at the height of the gold rush, claimed two racetracks, Watt Park and Glenbrook Park. Throughout California, every county held fairs and every fair featured horse races.

The 1894 Goodwin’s Guide listed the sites of “racing meetings” throughout California, including Angel’s Camp, Arcata, Baker City, Bakersfield, Burlingame, Chico, Concord, Ferndale, Gilroy, Greenville, Hollister, Hueneme, Ione, Lompoc, Los Angeles, Los Gatos, Modesto, Monterey, Napa, Red Bluff, Riverside, Sacramento, Salinas, San Andreas, San Diego, San Francisco, San Jose, San Luis Obispo, San Luis Rey, Santa Ana, Santa Barbara, Smith River, Stockton, Susanville, Ukiah, Vacaville, Vallejo, Willows, Woodland, and Yreka.125 Horseracing meets were popular events in even the most remote areas of California. An advertisement in the Breeder and Sportsman for July

123 Pacific Coast Blood Horse Association was formed in 1891 at a time when California could boast of having over forty tracks.

124 Ibid., 87.

125 Ibid., 123.
1882 announced the sixth annual meeting of the Plumas, Lassen, Sierra and Modoc Agriculture Association at Greenville, Plumas County to start September 28, 1882.\textsuperscript{126}

The ad states that “This is the Finest Track in the Mountains,” and promised twenty-one races for trotters and runners.\textsuperscript{127} Likewise, other ads promoted meets to be held at the Santa Cruz County Agriculture Fair Association, the Stockton Fair, and the Petaluma Fair, just to mention a few of the many of the local and regional events. The number of announcements and advertisements support the fact that horseracing was popular entertainment for Californians.\textsuperscript{128}

From the early days of the country, match races enthralled crowds of people who traveled from the surrounding countryside to view a test of champions. Perhaps, the most famous match race was between Boston and Fashion in 1842. The match took place at the Union Course on Long Island and was billed as the North versus the South. The racetrack and the town were packed that day, filled with people eager to see who would be the winner. An eye-witness description of the commotion that preceded the race captured the popular excitement:

\textit{At an early hour on the morning of the race our streets were filled with carriages of all descriptions, wending their way to the Ferries, while thousands upon thousands crossed over to the cars of the Long Island Rail Road Company. After eleven o’clock the conductors found it impossible to convey to the Course the immense crowd which filled and surrounded the cars, though the agents continued to sell tickets after they were fully sensible of the fact! Indeed, from the first, the arrangements of the Company were an imposition! It charged the most extravagant price for the transportation of passengers, and the preparations were}

\textsuperscript{126} Breeder and Sportsman, 28/3.
\textsuperscript{127} Ibid., 28/3.
in no way equal to the occasion; above all, its agents continued to sell tickets after they knew that several thousand more persons had purchased them than they could transport. A train bearing over two thousand passengers, did not reach the Course until after the first heat, and hundreds who had purchased tickets, despairing of reaching the Course on the cars, started on foot and reached it before them.\textsuperscript{129}

Contemporary observers estimated that fifty thousand people attended this race on Long Island. Similarly huge crowds flocked to match races throughout the nineteenth century. An estimated 20,000 people were present to watch Salvator beat Tenny. And an even bigger crowd of 30,000 people came to watch a match race between Katy Pease and Thad Stevens in 1874 in California.\textsuperscript{130} In 1938, millions of people listened to the radio broadcast of the match race between the victorious Seabiscuit and War Admiral.\textsuperscript{131}

What started out in America as friendly rivals racing their best horses through the streets of town grew into a multi-million dollar industry. From the desire to breed the next Kentucky Derby winner, acres of land and millions of dollars have been spent on thoroughbred horses. Auctions have seen sales of yearlings go beyond a million dollars. Plus thousands and thousands of dollars have been wagered on racehorses, and millions of dollars have been recouped in the form of taxes to provide revenue for government. Today horse racing persists as a multi-million dollar industry for the state of


\textsuperscript{130} Robertson, \textit{History of Thoroughbred Racing in America}, 116.

\textsuperscript{131} Laura Hillenbrand, \textit{Seabiscuit, An American Legend} (New York, Random House, 2001), xi.
In fact, the 2007-2008 California Horse Racing Board Annual Report states that it collected “$35,868,519 from all parimutuel sources” as revenue for the state. In 2005, the American Horse Council released an economic impact study on the horse industry. Nationally, those involved with horses (for pleasure or racing) generated $35 billion each year, with over $1.9 billion in taxes paid to the government. In California alone, the horse industry “produces goods and services valued at $4.1 billion.” In this state, according to the study, over 311,000 people were involved with horses, and 698,000 horses were counted in California. California has the second largest horse population in the nation, behind only Texas.

However, as the entertainment choices have increased, the venues for horseracing have diminished. The number of racing fans and racing tracks keep decreasing and the past is lost. People forget the impact that the horse has had on our lives, for transportation and for sport. Clearly, the golden days of the California thoroughbred industry, which featured Haggin prominently, are behind us.

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133 Ibid.


135 Ibid.

136 Ibid.
Chapter 8

END OF AN ERA

Haggin’s first wife died in 1896. A year later, Haggin married for a second time to Margaret Voorhies, a niece of his wife and twenty years his junior. This event precipitated his permanent move from California to Kentucky. From then on Rancho Del Paso was doomed to be dismantled and the horses sold. Haggin’s purchase of the 1,000-acre Elmendorf Farm in the Bluegrass from Daniel Swigert sealed the fate of the Sacramento breeding operation. Although he and his new bride built a fine manor house named Green Hills on their new but much smaller estate, the aging Haggin lacked the energy and resolve that he had once displayed at Rancho Del Paso. If he continued to breed horses and other livestock, he never came close to duplicating his California feats.

Haggin’s departure from California left a hole in horseracing industry. At the same time, the anti-gambling sentiment, with wide public support, was gathering steam in the early days of the twentieth century. By 1909, laws against gambling were passed in California.137

The new bride appears to have changed the old man, or maybe he changed on his own. The couple built a new house on Fifth Avenue in New York City. The federal census for 1910 showed Haggin residing there with his young wife. The census reveals

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that although his children had grown up and moved away, twelve servants lived at the residence.\textsuperscript{138}

The final dispersal of the Rancho’s livestock took place in New York City in 1905. In an interview with the New York Times before the sale, Haggin declared that none of the Rancho’s horses would be shipped to his Kentucky farm. All of them, he vowed, would be sold off. Nevertheless, Haggin did end up buying back some of his own choice stallions to stock Elmendorf’s breeding stable.\textsuperscript{139}

\textsuperscript{138} Thirteenth Census of the United States 1910 (Washington, D.C: Bureau of the Census, 1910).

The Fasig-Tipton Company conducted the final auction for the Rancho Del Paso stock in New York City. Founded in 1898, and headquartered at Madison Square Garden, this firm proved the perfect choice for this auction.\textsuperscript{140} Used to selling high class racing stock that would command huge bids, Fasig-Tipton took over four days to complete the sale of the Rancho Del Paso’s equines. The auction company sold off thirty stallions, along with various broodmares, colts and fillies in training, and yearlings for a total of 409 head. Watercress, the premier stallion at Haggin’s ranch, brought in $71,000.\textsuperscript{141} After a fierce bidding war with Harry Payne Whitney—emerging as one of the foremost breeders of thoroughbreds in the world—Haggin himself purchased the stallion for his Kentucky stable. Ready to leave behind California and Rancho Del Paso, Haggin clearly was not quite ready to stop breeding fine thoroughbreds. Haggin also purchased Star Ruby and a number of other stallions from Rancho Del Paso for his new endeavor in Kentucky.\textsuperscript{142}

Perhaps Haggin’s departure from California had something to do with the rise of the anti-wagering and anti-gambling fervor that had been making strong headway since the 1890s and that augured potential destruction of the thoroughbred racing and breeding

\textsuperscript{140} History of Fasig-Tipton, \url{http://www.fasigtipton.com/about-us/history.asp}, accessed on April 14, 2009.

\textsuperscript{141} “Stallion Watercress is Sold for $71,000,” \textit{The New York Times}, 5 December 1905.

\textsuperscript{142} Ibid.
industry. Closely entwined with the burgeoning Progressive Movement, moral reformers undertook to cleanse society of its vices, including drunkenness, prostitution, and gambling, which often helped fuel corrupt political machines in places like San Francisco and Sacramento. Few doubted that in the world of horseracing cheating occurred. Like any financial endeavor, racing had its dark side. Races were fixed and jockeys paid off by unscrupulous owners and trainers trying to enrich themselves. And even if no one ever accused Haggin or Mackey of fixing races or engaging in any other form of cheating, their involvement in a tainted sport deemed them guilty by association. Zealous reformers everywhere demanded the end to parimutuel racing.

In light of Haggin’s immense wealth and prestige, he might have had some influence in countering the reform effort if he had continued to reside in the Golden State. Instead, in 1909, the Otis-Walker Anti-Racetrack Act—one of a plethora of anti-gambling laws passed in virtually every state in the Union during the era of Progressive reform—outlawed wagering at all race tracks in California. By 1910 no racetracks operated in the state, and only a handful remained open throughout the country, down from 314 in 1897. Parimutuel racing remained illegal in California until 1933, and Tijuana, Mexico emerged in the 1920s as the major attraction for horseracing fans in the

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Golden State. The sport that had held such popular interest fell silent for a time. The breeders and track operators had no choice but to bide their time and wait for the anti-gambling wave to pass.

Removed from the world of the thoroughbred he had loved so much by the dramatic legal assault by reformers—even in Kentucky—and by his advancing age, Haggin lived out his final years in luxury. On September 12, 1914, with his wife in attendance, James Ben Ali Haggin died at Villa Rosa, his sumptuous Newport, Rhode Island mansion, at the age of 91. While obituaries noted Haggin’s extensive business interests, they particularly called attention to his horse breeding and horse racing exploits that extended his fame to several continents.

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Chapter 9
OTHER WRITINGS ABOUT RANCHO DEL PASO

Rancho Del Paso has been the subject of articles, chapters in historical works, and even two other M. A. theses. Periodicals dedicated to the promotion of horseracing, including the *Thoroughbred of California*, have featured James Ben Ali Haggin and his impact through breeding and racing on American horseracing.

Lois Elaine Mahoney, a master’s candidate at San Francisco State, wrote the first thesis on Haggin in 1977. She focuses on the business relationship between Haggin, Lloyd Tevis, and George Hearst in San Francisco, where the three moguls had their homes and business offices. Haggin and Tevis, for instance, had their law offices on Montgomery Street, in the heart of San Francisco’s commercial district. In particular, Mahoney firmly establishes the importance of the “triumvirate” in transforming San Francisco into the financial and mining center of the West.

Ronald Parsons completed the second M.A. thesis on Haggin in 2002 at California State University, Sacramento. Largely ignoring Tevis, Parsons focuses his attention on Haggin’s Kentucky roots, the entrepreneur’s extensive mining and real estate activities throughout the West, and the “Irish Khan’s” contribution to the triumph of irrigation in the San Joaquin—particularly as demonstrated by the landmark case of *Lux v. Haggin*. Parsons likewise recognizes the contributions by Haggin’s Rancho Del Paso

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to the world of horseracing, though his coverage of the subject is comparatively slight because of the broad scope of his study.

The *New York Times* frequently featured Haggin’s activities, including the sale of his racehorses, and at his death, his obituary. Newspapers in the Sacramento area, especially *The Sacramento Bee* and *The Sacramento Union*, and the Bay Area’s *Call, Chronicle, Examiner* frequently ran articles and stories about Haggin and Rancho Del Paso. One nineteenth-century trade journal, *the Breeder and Sportsman*, provides an excellent source of information on Haggin’s racing activities. In view of the number of newspaper articles about Haggin and Rancho Del Paso, his name and reputation should be more widely recognized by the public.

In 1983, the California Thoroughbred Breeders Association (CTBA) published a book by Mary Fleming, titled, *A History of the Thoroughbred in California*. Using the reference materials available at the CTBA’s library, she spent five years researching and writing her book. The book contains a chapter on James Ben Ali Haggin and another on Haggin’s most successful racehorses, Waterboy, Africander and Rubio. Fleming’s work spotlights the early days of racing, particularly breeding in California, and documents the establishment of Rancho del Paso. Winters’ breeding efforts, as well as the development of Lucky Baldwin’s Rancho Santa Anita. Perhaps influenced by the location of the CTBA offices directly across from the current-day Santa Anita Racetrack, she devotes a full chapter to Lucky Baldwin—although Haggin arguably contributed more to the worldwide recognition of early California breeders than Baldwin did. In fact, one of her

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arguments in her chapter on Haggin admits his considerable influence. Once Haggin moved from California to Kentucky and New York, horseracing in California succumbed to the anti-wagering sentiment that had overtaken New York. Without Haggin to boost the sport in California, the California Legislature successfully stopped horseracing for a time. 150

In 1969, Barbara Austin (later Highley) wrote a brief article on the horses of Rancho Del Paso for Golden Notes, the quarterly publication of the Sacramento County Historical Society. In 1983, the historian and museum curator for McClellan Air Force Base, Raymond Oliver, composed a history of Rancho Del Paso as part of the story of the military installation that was situated on what had been Haggin’s property. Oliver’s history relies heavily on the work of Barbara Austin. Indeed, he repeats the misconception stated by Austin regarding the ability of mares to conceive earlier in milder climate of California than back East. And, as mentioned before, the breeding season of mares is determined by the length of daylight available and has nothing to do with climate. However, Oliver describes the Rancho under Haggin and offers a few new facts. In addition to detailing the exact location of the railroad on the property, he explains how Arcade Boulevard got its name from the grove of trees there and describes the large number of barns and stalls located on the ranch. He includes a number of maps of the area, one of which was the map used by the Sacramento Valley Colonization

150 Fleming, A History of Thoroughbreds in California, 16.
Company to advertise the land in 1910. Although brief, Oliver’s report is concise and easily digested.

In 2006, the City of Sacramento Department of Parks and Recreation dedicated a new park located in Del Paso Heights to John Mackey, Haggin’s ranch superintendent. Three years later, the North Sacramento business group, the Del Paso Boulevard Partnership, commissioned a statue of Ben Ali, Haggin’s colt that won the Kentucky Derby in 1886. The statue was dedicated on May 1, 2008 on the Boulevard named for Haggin’s Rancho. As a result, Ben Ali now serves as a symbol of pride for the area. The executive director of the Partnership noted that even though “Some old-timers were a little familiar with it” [the story of Haggin’s racing success], “this is a big deal, having a Derby winner from Del Paso. Even Seabiscuit, as great as he was, he didn’t win the Kentucky Derby. It’s our heritage.”

At last, some recognition has been given for a horse owned by Haggin. Although Ben Ali was not bred in California, he was trained at Rancho Del Paso and raced in several prep races before entering and winning the Kentucky Derby in 1886.

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152 Quoted in Debbie Arrington, “Long Ago Kentucky Derby Winner,” Sacramento Bee, 2 May 2008, 1C.
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