

Rex McDonald ...As He Was

By Lynn Weatherman

In 1881, Lan B. Morris of Mexico, Missouri, went to the Lexington, Kentucky horse show to find a stallion from which he could "raise the finest horse that ever looked through a bridle."

Morris bought a five-year-old black stallion, Black Squirrel, from James C. Graves, Versailles, Kentucky, for \$1,000.

On the trip to Missouri, the train carrying the horse was wrecked near East St. Louis, and caretaker Joe Stanup, was killed.

Black Squirrel was injured by a piece of 2 x 6 which pierced his side. Morris collected heavy damages from the railroad company, and Black Squirrel was left in the railroad's care with all expenses paid, until it was determined that he would live.

He had recovered sufficiently by breeding season so that in 1882 Lan Morris collected \$1,120.00 in breeding fees, and there were 56 foals in the crop of 1883.

It is claimed that over the six years Lan Morris owned Black Squirrel and the horse stood in Mexico, Missouri, he sired over 700 foals. This is hard to believe, but there is no way of disputing the claim as there was no American Saddlebred registry at the time. 187 of Black Squirrel's get were eventually registered.

Working for Morris was a farmer-horseman named Joseph McDonald, and it was he who showed Black Squirrel for Lan Morris most of the time. After Black Squirrel's injury,

Editor's Note:

Rex McDonald was a black stallion who reigned supreme from the Gay '90's and into the first decade of the 20th Century. But why write a feature article on this horse today? Over the years he has been the subject of numerous articles.

Rex McDonald was a living legend, and legend is one of the reasons for this work. Romantic exaggerations about Rex McDonald have been accepted as fact over the years, and this horse doesn't need that. He stands by himself.

For example - the historical marker at Mexico, Missouri, reads, "With his last owner, B. R. Middleton, riding him, de-

feated every horse ever shown against him." This is true as far as it goes, but the fact is that when Rex McDonald was owned by Ben Middleton, they never competed in a horse show!

No longer does the name Rex McDonald appear on the five generation pedigree of the registration certificate, but twenty years ago it was not at all unusual to see his name on the back line. We would guess that one would be hard pressed to find an extended pedigree today without the name Rex McDonald somewhere on it, and it would be a safe wager to say that was almost an impossibility.

his show career was checkered, but he once beat the great stallion, Montrose.

In 1888, Thomas S. Harrison and his brother, Jack, who owned Montrose and kept the horse at their Montrose Stock Farm located near Auxvasse in Callaway County, Missouri, purchased the show stallion, Rex Denmark, from W.W. Adams, Lexington, Kentucky, for \$1,600.00.

Planned Parenthood?

Whether or not Rex McDonald was the result of a long range planned breeding program is a matter of speculation.

Curtis P. "Jumps" Cauthorn of Mexico, Missouri, a prolific writer and cousin of Lan Morris, maintained that after Harrison Brothers bought Rex Denmark, Joe McDonald told Jack Harrison he was going to raise a mare sired by Black Squirrel to breed to "Rex Denmark that will produce the best show horse the world has ever known."

This story has become an endearing part of the Rex McDonald legend.

However, the mare Joe McDonald was referring to had already been foaled. She was Lucy Mack.

Jack Harrison is very positive in his recollection of dealings with Joe McDonald. He wrote that in 1889 Lucy Mack was brought to breed to Montrose, but his book was full. Harrison encouraged McDonald to breed to Rex Denmark. If McDonald was not satisfied with the foal he would not be charged a stud fee. This story seems authentic.

An interesting sidelight is that Star, the dam of Lucy Mack, had been bred to Montrose in 1888. This mare was sold in McDonald's dispersal for \$156 to C.S. Harrison of Mexico. He named the mare Belle Harrison, and she went on to become a top show horse. She was acquired by Col. John T. Hughes, who bred her to Rex McDonald.

Whether or not Rex McDonald

was a product of planned parenthood or scientific breeding, he was the result of the old adage, "breed the best to the best and hope for the best."

Lucy Mack

The dam of Rex McDonald was definitely "McDonald breeding" all the way. Her dam, Star, was sired by Star Davis, a saddle-type stallion brought to Missouri in 1872 by Stephen Power of Bracken, Kentucky.

Foaled in 1863, Star Davis was described as a dark bay, standing 15.1 and had been a show ring winner in northern Kentucky. Powell sold him to Joe McDonald, who in

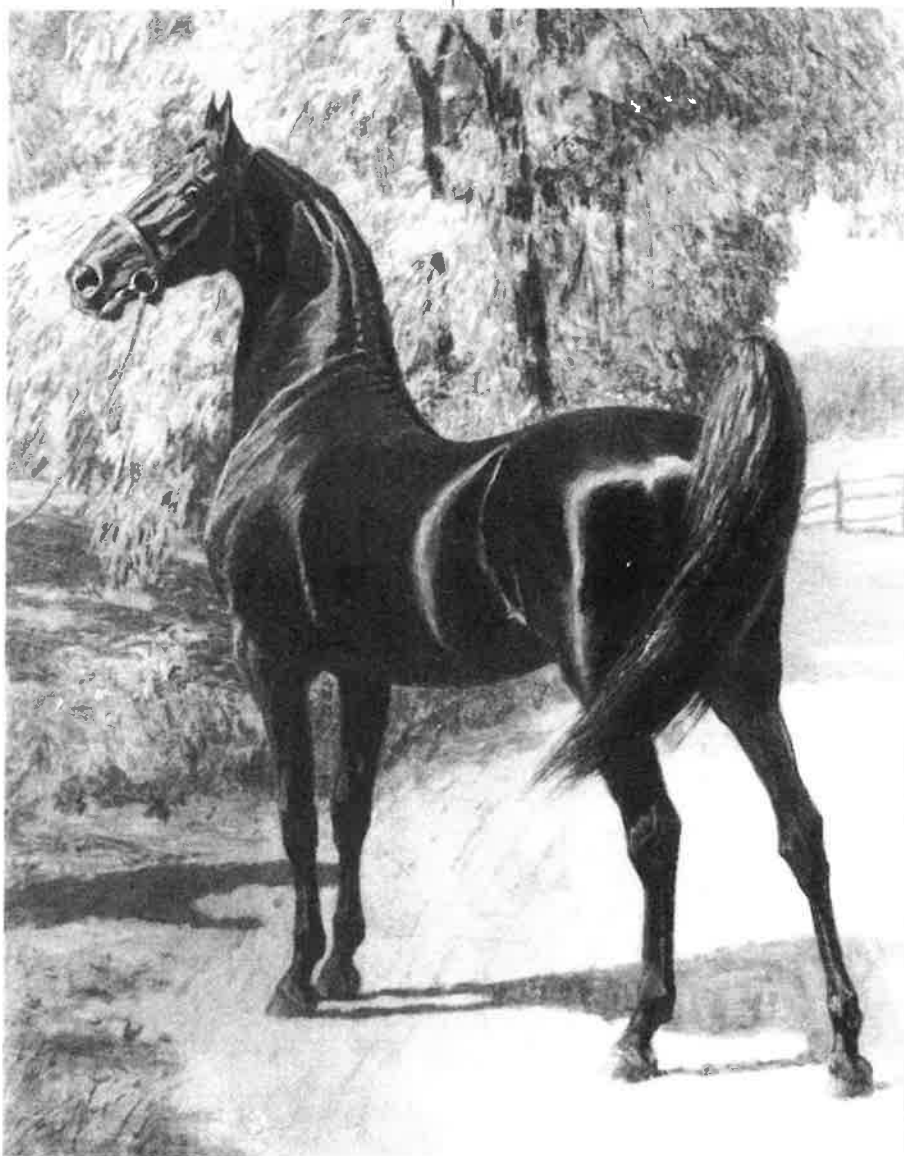
turn sold him to W. H. "Bill" Davis, Fulton, Missouri, who showed him extensively.

Star Davis was sired by the Thoroughbred stallion, Star Davis, who was referred to as Old Star Davis.

Old Star Davis was by the famous Boston, also the sire of Lexington, another important Thoroughbred ancestor of many Saddle Horses. The most famous son of Old Star Davis was Day Star, winner of the Kentucky Derby in 1878.

Old Star Davis' contribution to the development of the American Saddlebred Horse may have been more important than most of us have realized. He is also on the

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This George Ford Morris portrait of Rex McDonald is considered by many to be GFM's masterpiece.

REX MCDONALD

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extended pedigree of the great mare, Annie C., the dam of Bourbon King. He was the grandsire of her fourth dam. An ancestor so far removed has been discounted by most breeders, but new knowledge of genetics is revealing that this can be important in the complicated make-

thought by some to be a draft horse because of his name. He was described as standing 15.3 and weighing 1150 pounds and was said to have had heavier bone than most of the stallions in the area. This certainly does not make him a draft horse, although he may well have been used to pull a plow. He was definitely used as a saddle horse because he was said to be a "square

mare standing 15 hands. She was owned by Joe McDonald's wife, Lucy, whose father was Sam Martin. When the McDonalds were wed in 1866, the mare went with Lucy McDonald. She was really not an Indian pony but a daughter of a Thoroughbred stallion, Little Red, a son of the noted sire, Bertrand. Little Red was owned by A.W. Turner, Columbia, Missouri. The dam of Lucy McDonald's mare was unknown, but the mare herself could do a "fine running walk."

Star was bred to Black Squirrel in 1885. Lan Morris did not charge Joe McDonald a stud fee on condition that the foal be the property of McDonald's son, W.D. "Pony" McDonald. Lucy Mack was foaled in 1886.

Lucy Mack, named for Joseph McDonald's wife, grew to 16 hands. She was said to have been a rangy chestnut mare with superb carriage. She was never worked as a show horse.

Rex Denmark

Rex Denmark was a brown stallion standing 15.3, foaled in 1882. He was a great doing horse and a big winner in Kentucky before being purchased by the Harrison brothers. He was champion at the St. Louis Fair for the Harrisons in 1890 and 1892. Rex Denmark was said to have had an excellent disposition and could be faulted only on the length of his neck.

His sire was Crigler's Denmark, an unregistered stallion originally thought to have been sired by Washington Denmark 64 by Gaines' Denmark. However, research by Jesse Shuff and Susanne in 1930 confirmed the fact that Crigler's Denmark was sired by Denmark Chief, an unregistered son of Gaines' Denmark. This version of Rex Denmark's pedigree was accepted by the American Saddlebred Horse Association in the 1940's.

*Affidavit
Ludlow, Ky.*

This is to certify that I owned Pat, or Denmark, Jr., later known as Crigler's Den-



Head portrait of Rex McDonald by George Ford Morris.

up of an individual. This might account in part for the phenomenal success of the cross of Bourbon King on daughters of Rex Peavine by Rex McDonald - the Golden Cross of Saddlebreds.

Lucy Mack's dam, Star, was out of a strawberry roan mare named Mollie. Mollie was sired by Sam Martin's black stallion named Farmer, generally called Martin's Farmer. He was

trotter and a very fleet racker." The sire of Martin's Farmer was "the Johnson Horse," and his dam was said to have been a very fine mare of Black and All Black (Othello) Thoroughbred stock brought to Missouri from Virginia in the early 1800's.

Rex McDonald's fourth dam has been described as an "Indian pony." She was a stocky-built blue roan

mark. Pat, or Denmark, Jr., was sired by Joseph Lail's Denmark Chief, and not by Washington Denmark. I sold Pat to Mr. T.J. Wallace, of Bunceton, Mo.

Sworn to before me and subscribed in my presence by Dr. F.D. Crigler, this nineteenth day of June, 1930.
Notary Public in and for Kenton County, Ky.

Callaway County

In 1890, Joe McDonald was dying of tuberculosis, so his hired man, Fred Cowles, was the first human to see the black colt foaled by Lucy Mack in the McDonald barn on May 20.

In subsequent years, Rex McDonald was embraced by Audrain County and the town of Mexico as their own, and in a sense this is true. Rex McDonald will always be identified with Mexico, Missouri.

However, horsemen in Callaway County, located to the south and east, have never had a fair shake in being identified with equine greatness. Callaway County was home to the immortal Stonewall King, but because of circumstances he was buried on the Boone County Fairgrounds in Columbia and is a Boone County horse in the minds of many.

Today, Callaway County is recognized as the home of CH Will

Shriver and Callaway Hills Farm, but in the late 1940's and early '50's when there was a resurgence of interest among Saddlebred people in Rex McDonald, the people of Callaway resented the claims that Audrain County was the foaling place of the great stallion.

An article in "Horse World" in 1950 innocently gave Audrain County as the birthplace of Rex. The people of Callaway have been noted for their independence since the Civil War, when they seceded from the Union and Confederacy and set up the "Kingdom of Callaway." The article spawned a number of letters.

The matter was finally concluded with publication of this affidavit sworn by Anna Belle McDonald who married Fred Cowles, the hired man.

State of Missouri, County of Callaway, ss.

I, upon my oath, state:

1. My maiden name was Anna Belle McDonald, and I am a daughter of the late Joseph McDonald, Jr.

2. In the year 1890, when I was a girl fifteen years old, my father owned and with his family lived on what is still called the Joe McDonald place, located approximately five miles northwest of the town of Auxvasse, in Callaway County, Missouri.

3. Though my father's farm included adjacent land in which lies Audrain County, Missouri, our house, barn and other improvements were located in Callaway County, about one-fourth of a mile south of the Audrain line.

4. In the spring of that year a colt was foaled in our barn. The colt was named Rex McDonald and he became a noted saddle show horse.

5. The colt got the Rex part of his name from his sire Rex Denmark, and the McDonald part from his dam, Lucy Mack, a mare bred by my father and named for my mother.

Anna Belle Cowles

Subscribed and sworn to before me, a Notary Public for Callaway County, Missouri, this sixth day of September 1950. Edgar Mottaz

Lucy Mack's black colt was at first a disappointment, a perfect example of why it is so very difficult to judge a foal.

Lucy Mack and her foal were "roaded" back over to the Harrison Farm so she could be bred on the ninth day. The Harrisons agreed with McDonald that the foal was "about as poor a specimen of a colt of fine blood as one ever saw."

Because of Joe McDonald's disappointment, the Harrisons gave him a season for Lucy Mack to the stallion of his choice. He chose Star Rose by Montrose.

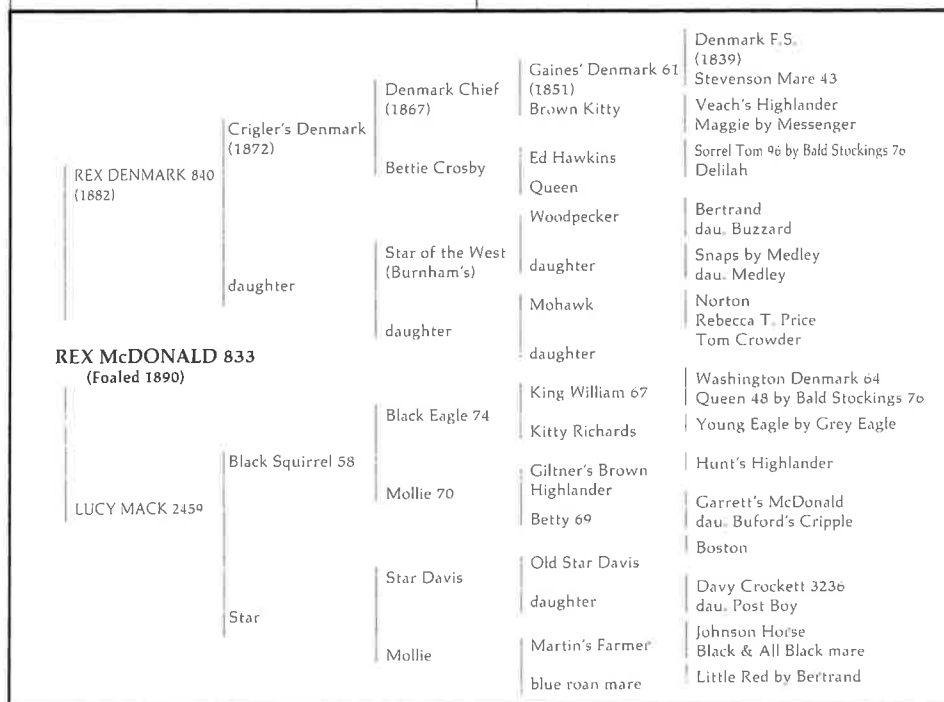
A month later Joe McDonald and his family were guests of the Harrisons, and they inspected Lucy Mack and her colt who were still there. By that time, the youngster had done a complete about face and Joe McDonald declared, "Boys, we have made a mistake, for this colt is far the best I have yet seen."

First Sold

Unfortunately, the "consumption" was now ravishing Joe McDonald, and that fall he was forced to sell his horses.

Lucy Mack was bought by R.T. Freeman & Son of Mexico for \$250. When it came time to sell her black colt, legend has it that Joe McDonald made the following speech.

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REX MCDONALD

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"Gentlemen, you now have the opportunity to obtain at your own price the benefit of my lifetime of study and experience. I have predicted this colt will make the best horse we have ever known, and if he is properly cared for and managed, I think you will remember my prediction."

The sales pitch was apparently ignored, and Freemans bought the colt for \$105.00. They were offered \$150 for him immediately after the sale, but refused, and priced him at \$250 with no takers and he went up the road to the Freeman establishment.

In the spring, Lucy Mack had her colt by Star Rose. He was proclaimed to be outstanding, but was killed by lightning when just a few months old.

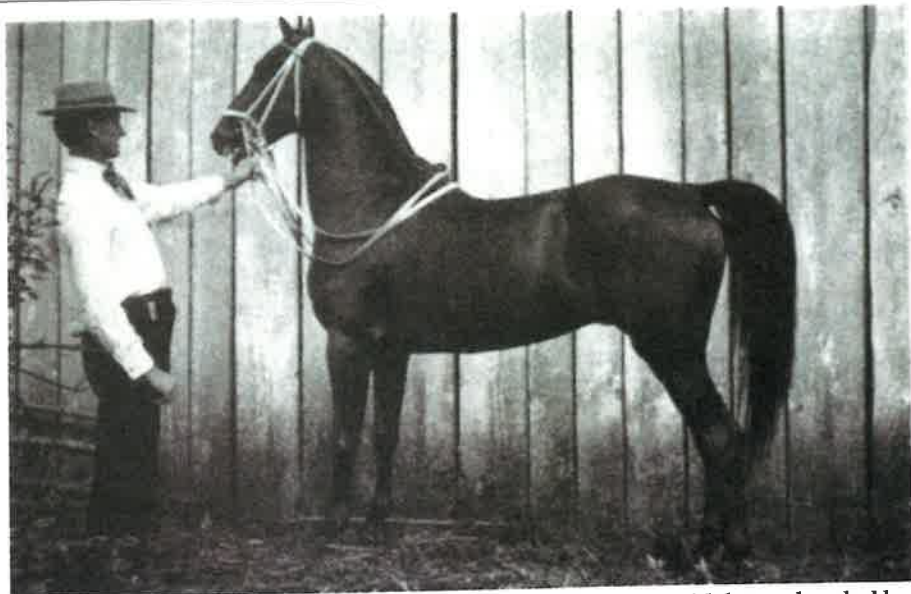
They named the black colt Rex McDonald, as has been previously stated, for his sire Rex Denmark and his breeder Joe McDonald, who succumbed to tuberculosis not long after his sale.

Rex Makes His Debut

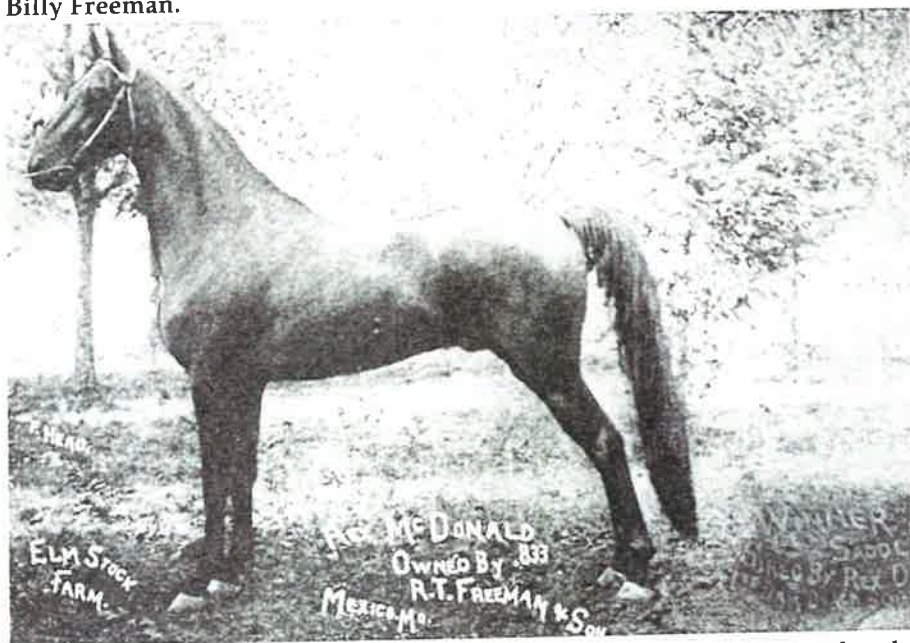
Rex McDonald made his first public appearance as a two-year-old in April, 1892, when he was shown in hand at the annual spring stallion showing on the streets of Mexico. Freemans also took him to the stallion showing in Fulton. They kept getting offers for Rex McDonald who was now recognized as a promising prospect, but they kept raising the price, said to be "worth the money," but no one would buy.

W.B. "Billy" Freeman, the son of R.T. Freeman, began working Rex under saddle in the fall of 1892 and first showed him at Wellsville, Missouri, near Mexico, in the early summer of 1893.

Rex McDonald was registered with the American Saddlebred Horse Association in 1893, his ability to do the "saddle gaits" was certified by George Lee and Joseph Potts, both



An extremely rare photo of Rex McDonald as a two year old, being headed by Billy Freeman.



This rare picture of Rex McDonald was taken at the St. Louis Fair when he beat his sire in 1893.

of Mexico. He was registered number 833 in the second stud book published by the National Saddle Horse Breeders Association.

Rex McDonald was not a winner in his first competition. The winner at Wellsville was Star Rose, then owned by John H. Wayne of Mexico. Rex did beat Little Ortiz and Top-Top, two well known area show horses. Billy Freeman also showed him at Monroe City, where he was a winner. He was then turned over to W.H. "Bill" Davis of Fulton, a notable master horse trainer. Davis is said to have campaigned Rex

McDonald at the county fairs over the course of the summer, showing him 14 times and winning 14 classes.

St. Louis Fair

The St. Louis Fair, first held in 1856, was considered the world's championship horse show in that day and age, attracting the best show horses from around the country. One of the most prominent exhibitors was Colonel John T. Hughes, Elkton Farm, Lexington, Kentucky. One of the most interesting episodes in the story of Rex

McDonald was about the stallion stake at St. Louis. Herbert Krum wrote about it in 1910, when Rex McDonald was still living and the memory of the incident still fresh.

"It was in 1893 that Col. Hughes was standing near the archway which formed the entrance to the show grounds. He was in the company of his friends, Jack and Thomas Harrison, the owners of Rex Denmark, the sire of Rex McDonald.

"Standing with this party was an elderly gentleman with whom Col. Hughes was not acquainted, but who seemed to know the Harrisons very well, and who joined in the general conversation concerning horses from time to time. As they moved away from where they had been standing, they saw Mr. William H. Davis come in on a black three-year-old colt that presented a gangling, long-waisted, weedy appearance."

Col. Hughes remarked, "Well, this is the first time I ever saw Bill Davis ride a shoestring."

The elderly gentleman accompanying the party said, "You will probably like that shoestring a little better after you see him work."

"The show was on and when Davis began to work the colt, people who saw the exhibition went wild. The lights and music thrilled Rex through and through and he went through his paces as he had never done before."

"Col. Hughes was so surprised and amazed at the performance that he could not sit still, and rising to his feet exclaimed, 'Well, Davis will win this ring with his shoestring!' which caused a general laugh."

But the further they went with the show, the more apparent it became that Davis' mount was going to carry things with a high hand, and finally Col. Hughes said to Harrison, "Tom, you have showed the old horse (Rex Denmark) once too often, that black colt is going to beat him."

"And this proved to be true, for Rex McDonald fairly electrified the judge, James Maxwell, as well as the audience, and when the award was made Tom Harrison turned to Col. Hughes and said, "You do not need to console us, for the colt that has just won this ring is a son of our horse." The elderly gentleman who had accompanied them remarked that it "was a pretty good show for a shoestring," and then explained he was R. T. Freeman, the owner of the black colt. Col. Hughes immediately apologized for the

deprecating remark, and they all followed the colt out of the ring. Col. Hughes immediately tried to purchase the horse, but Mr. Freeman placed a price on him which was prohibitive."

Rex McDonald had beaten Ike, Grey Squirrel, Pott's Artist, and others, in addition to his own sire. The Freemans did not push their luck, and Rex McDonald was not shown back in the sweepstakes, which was won by the beautiful grey mare, Miss Rex by Rex Denmark, shown by Tom Bass for Joseph Potts.

Continuing under the guidance of Bill Davis, 1894 was a banner year for Rex McDonald, who had matured from a shoestring to become Davis' "black bull."

At the Audrain County Fair in Mexico, Rex McDonald met Col. Hughes' famous mare, Lou Chief, for the first time. She was shown by the noted trainer, Cardy Neagle. Rex was the winner and went on to the Callaway County Fair at Fulton to win the championship.

Rex McDonald met his stiffest

son as they were watching the class, "Rex has got Lou Chief beat."

Rex McDonald Sold to Kentucky

Cyrus Clark was vice-president of the Southern Bank of Mexico and the brother-in-law of Joseph Potts. They built the "big barn on the boulevard," today Arthur Simmons Stables. It was as a banker that Clark played a devious role in one of the most important transactions in Saddle Horse history.

Col. John T. Hughes came to Mexico sometime after the St. Louis Fair on the pretext of buying horses, when in reality he had made up his mind to purchase Rex McDonald from R. T. Freeman & Son.

The Freemans were asking \$5,000 which no one would pay. Col. Hughes had previously offered a huge sum, \$1,800, and was prepared to go higher.

Joe Potts had bragged that when "all the other fellows get through

"The first time I saw him I was so little my father still held my hand in public. I remember the sound of his voice, 'Here he comes, Johnny. This is the big horse, Rex McDonald!'"

My father lifted me up on the railing for a better look, and I shivered, because the black stallion was surely the grandest sight in the world. He kicked dust in my face. I could smell him as he went by and hear him blowing and hear his leather creak and make out what his rider was saying to him." John T. Hook

competition at St. Louis where he beat Monte Cristo, Jr., owned and shown by J. T. "Jake" Crenshaw of Shelbyville, Kentucky. Others in the stallion stake were Highland Denmark, Kentucky Blue Eyes and Diamond King.

In the sweepstakes Rex again defeated Lou Chief in a controversial tie. Three judges were called in to pick the winner. They were Col. Lewis Clark, Louisville, Kentucky, Joseph Maxwell, St. Louis, Missouri, who voted for Rex McDonald, and General John B. Castleman, President of ASHA, from Louisville, Kentucky, who cast his vote for Lou Chief. Col. Hughes told Jack Harri-

making bids on that horse, I'll be the man that owns him."

When Hughes made his trip to Mexico, R. T. Freeman was in Kansas City being treated for cancer of the eye which would ultimately cause his death.

Rex McDonald was at the Freeman stable, and Billy Freeman worked the horse for Col. Hughes. Hughes then made a legitimate offer of \$3,050.00 to Mrs. Freeman. The fifty dollars on top of three thousand was to prevent any other prospective buyer from getting him, and to allow the Freemans to truthfully say they had refused an offer of

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more than \$3,000 for Rex McDonald if they did not sell.

Col. Hughes returned to the hotel in Mexico and was approached by Cyrus Clark, who began to interrogate him. At first Hughes gave Clark the cold shoulder. Then he got fired up and told Clark his affairs were none of his business and that he was being nose-y so he could report back to Joe Potts what had been offered for Rex McDonald.

Clark became apologetic and explained to Col. Hughes that **he knew** Joe Potts would not give **more than** \$1,500 for Rex.

However, the Southern Bank held a mortgage on Rex McDonald, and the bank wanted Freeman to sell the horse if the horse would bring what Freeman felt he was worth.

Hughes then told Cyrus Clark of his offer, which at that time was incredible. Clark said he would telegraph Freeman in Kansas City and demand that he sell Rex to Hughes at that price.

Col. Hughes declined to have Clark put pressure on Freeman to sell the horse and returned to St. Louis, where he stayed at the Lindell Hotel. Clark disregarded Hughes' request and pressed Freeman. The next day Col. John T. Hughes received a wire from R. T. Freeman, saying he could have Rex McDonald at the price he had offered.

In The Bluegrass

The rivalry between Kentucky and Missouri for Saddlebred supremacy was tremendous, and it is said that "Kentuckians were indignant to the extreme over Col. Hughes' purchase of Rex McDonald."

Shortly after Rex arrived at Elkton Farm (located a short distance from the Kentucky Horse Park), in early spring of 1895, Col. Hughes invited all his friends and neighbors to come the next Sunday morning to see, "the greatest racking horse in the world."

When the black stallion absolutely

refused to hit a racking step, the large crowd could not disguise its displeasure, and Col. Hughes was called all kinds of a "sucker."

He immediately contacted Bill Davis, who told him that Rex's front show shoes were the lightest possible - 4 to 5 ounces. As this story was repeated over the years, it would seem that the Freemans intentionally had the horse shod with "heavy" shoes because of the "forced" sale.

However, this was not the case. Rex McDonald had been let down for the winter and was simply shod with keg shoes which weigh about 12 ounces to keep his show shoes from wearing out and to give his feet more protection.

Col. Hughes followed Davis' instructions in having Rex re-set, and the next Sunday the neighbors returned to see the Colonel himself ride Rex McDonald "racking like a horse running away." Most admitted that Col. Hughes hadn't gone crazy after all.

Rex McDonald bred 96 mares his first season in Kentucky and a high percentage got in foal. His fee was set at \$40. He was then turned over to Lewis S. Ellis to be conditioned for the show season. Ellis was inventor of the tail set (Rex McDonald never wore a tail set), and had owned Coleman's Eureka, one of the origi-

nal Saddlebred foundation sires.

When he was ready to show, he was turned over to Howard Ball, Versailles, Kentucky, who was considered one of the great showmen of the day. Ball showed Rex McDonald successfully at the Kentucky Fairs, and he was undefeated in stallion stakes. However, he was beaten in harness at Paris, Kentucky, by a horse named Dude, a son of Harrison Chief. Ironically, a few years later, Bourbon King would meet his only defeat at the Bourbon County Fair at Paris, losing in harness to Star McDonald, a son of Rex McDonald.

Col. Hughes asked one of the townspeople watching the class, "Who is the driver of the winning horse?"

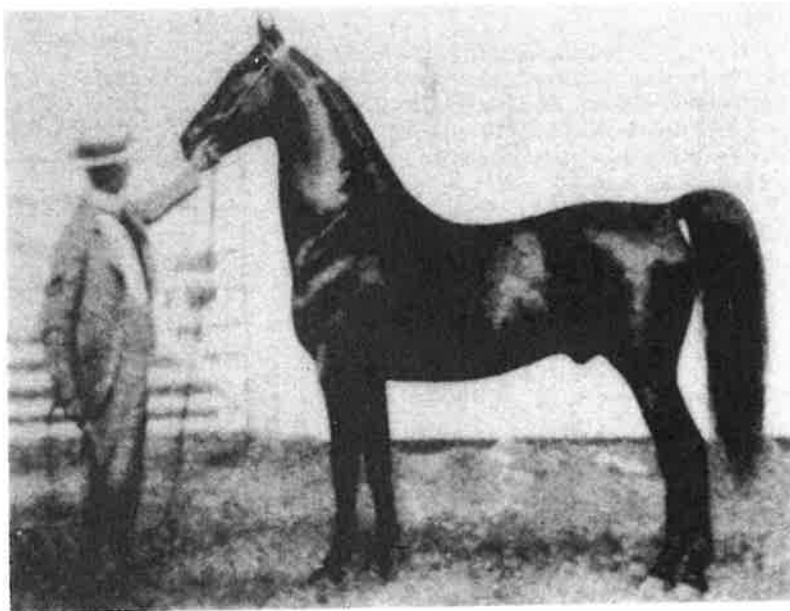
"The wife of the mayor," was the reply.

"I see," mused the Col., "and who is the judge?"

"Our town marshal."

Cardy Neagle showed the horse at Winchester, Kentucky, where he won about everything, but was beaten in one class won by a walking horse, because Rex could not do the running walk.

Howard Ball took Rex back to Missouri, but because of interstate politics he engaged Bill Davis to show him. Rex McDonald won at



Black Squirrel, sire of Lucy Mack, the dam of Rex McDonald.

Mexico and Kansas City. At the St. Louis Fair, he not only won, beating Thornton's Star, The Kid, and again his sire, Rex Denmark, but was acclaimed the best horse on the grounds by popular vote.

In 1896 the stud fee on Rex McDonald was dropped to \$30 because of "horses having become very cheap," but he had a heavy season at stud. Col. Hughes again sent him to Lewis Ellis, and then Rex McDonald was turned over to Will Roberts, Ft. Garrett, Kentucky, for the upcoming campaign. Roberts is best remembered for his sensational three-gaited gelding, Poetry of Motion, the first American Saddlebred to be exhibited in Europe.

Roberts showed Rex at Florence, Kentucky, where he beat Monte Cristo, Jr., who had won the five-gaited championship there so many times the show began to suffer for lack of entries. At Florence, Rex was defeated in the model class. He also showed and won at both Lancaster and Lawrenceburg, Kentucky.

Rex McDonald then returned to Missouri, where he swept all before him at the St. Louis Fair.

Out Of The Money

That year the Kansas City Horse Show first offered the Stilwell Stake, sponsored by Arthur Stilwell and offering \$1,000 in cash and a solid silver trophy. Every top horse in America showed up, and 27 head entered the ring.

Howard Ball was engaged to ride Rex McDonald in this important event. It has been alleged that the horse was shod extremely heavy to produce extreme action. However, this seems highly unlikely considering Col. Hughes' experience with the horse refusing to rack.

At any rate, eye witness accounts say that Rex McDonald hit the ring like a whirlwind, and no one had ever seen him look better.

Tom Bass, who was aboard Miss Rex for Col. F.S. Fulton of Kansas City, recalled, "I knew it would be a long show, and I just took it easy. The first half of the show was all



Rex leads the band and the competitors down the track at the Audrain County Fairgrounds for the five gaited stake.

Rex McDonald's, but finally he had gone too fast and too hard, too long. I saw him drop his tail and that's when I lit in. My little mare was just warmed up good."

An hour and forty minutes later the judges came to their decision and Bass stated, after he had won with Miss Rex, "I beat Rex McDonald honestly, but the class was too big and it took the judges too long."

The most remarkable thing about the whole affair was that it was the first and only time in his life that Rex McDonald would be tied out of the money, and it was the only time he was ever defeated by a mare.

After Miss Rex came Thornton's Star, shown by C.S. "Charlie" Sandidge, Miss Bartle, also owned by Col. John T. Hughes and shown by Prof. E.J. Snider, Ike, owned and shown by Joseph Potts, and Rose Denmark, owned and shown by Jeff Bridgeford. Other notables out of the money along with Rex McDonald were The Verdict with Mat Cohen, up, Emily, owned and shown by General Castleman, Monte Cristo, Jr., Highland Denmark, Missouri Artist, and Indian Boy.

For the next two years, Rex McDonald was unbeaten throughout Kentucky and Missouri and was champion at the St. Louis Fair. Col. Hughes became blasé about his stallion's winnings at the St. Louis Fair of 1898 he was watching a diving act

while Rex was winning the championship.

Bill Lee, a noted horseman from Mexico, Missouri, observed Col. Hughes' complacency and approached him about purchasing the stallion. Lee had recently gone to work for Frederick Wilhelm Blees, a German ex-patriot who had used his family fortune derived from mining operations in Prussia to establish himself in Macon, Missouri. Blees had gone into a number of businesses and built a huge German-style military academy just south of town.

Lee was to provide horses for the cavalry troop at the school. He was not sure that Blees would want to buy a high powered show horse like Rex McDonald, but when he asked Blees said, "I want a horse, the best horse in the world, so when I ride down the street everybody will say, 'Who is that sonofabitch?'"

And so for \$5,000, Rex McDonald went from St. Louis to Macon, Missouri, rather than back to Kentucky.

Rex McDonald In Macon

During the time Rex McDonald was owned by Col. Blees, he was variously stabled in town, at the academy and at the fairgrounds. He

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was campaigned along with other Blee's show horses and his name used to promote Blee's Military Institute. It was said the cavalry mounts at the Blee's academy were finer than those in the U.S. Army.

From the fall of 1898 until the winter of 1900, Rex McDonald had two outstanding show seasons with Bill Lee showing him. He was said to have been "at the zenith of his career."

He was barred from competition at the St. Louis Fair in 1899 and 1900 because it was said his presence would discourage others from showing. In fact, many show bills of the day said, "Rex McDonald Barred." He was always invited to give a special exhibition at St. Louis, and Col. Blee's graciously accepted.

At the rival St. Louis Horse Show, Col. Blee's was vice-president, Rex McDonald was champion in 1899. Old records are sometimes confusing because the St. Louis Horse Show, which eventually succeeded the St. Louis Fair, was started in 1896. It was held shortly after the Fair, and many horses competed in both events.

When Col. Hughes had sold the horse, Rex McDonald had acquired the bad habit of wringing his tail.

Hughes saw him win that year at the St. Louis Horse Show and asked Bill Lee, "How did you do it, get him to quit wringing his tail?"

Lee replied, "Colonel, I just took off my spurs."

During the breeding seasons of 1899 and 1900, only 14 foals sired by Rex McDonald were registered, seven of them by Col. Blee's. Apparently his stud fee of \$50 cash in advance was too high in a bad economic time.

Rex McDonald won the sweepstakes at Kansas City in 1899 and also put on a special exhibition there, along with Miss Rex shown by Tom Bass, and his two-year-old son, Rex Blee's, presented by Robert Potts.

"The finest military academy in the West," was a great success and in 1900, 100 young men were enrolled. Col. Blee's' other interests had become too great, and he decided to sell the show horses, including Rex.

Bill Lee immediately let friends in Mexico know the horse was for sale, and Robert E. "Bob" Hisey and Luther B. "Splint" Barnett notified millionaire grain broker Ralph Orthwein of St. Louis. Orthwein agreed to buy the horse only if Bill Lee would come to St. Louis and show the horse.

Two versions of the sale price

have been published. One was that Orthwein paid Blee's \$5,000; the other was \$6,500. Apparently Col. Blee's got \$5,000 and Bill Lee got \$1,500 for coming with Rex. The deal was completed after the show season of 1900.

Back In Mexico

During the time Rex McDonald was owned by Ralph Orthwein, he was kept at the Hisey Stable in Mexico which was located near downtown along the railroad tracks. He was shown by Hisey and a number of times by Ralph Orthwein, but for the most part his rider was Splint Barnett.

The last time Rex McDonald met defeat was at Jefferson City, Missouri, in 1901. He won the stallion stake and the championship but made a poor show in the combination class and was beaten by Thornton's Star. He went on to the Illinois State Fair and was entered in ten classes and won them all.

In 1902 he was undefeated.

He was unbeaten in 1903 and was shown again at the last St. Louis Fair, where he was crowned "Champion Saddle Horse of America." It had been ten years since he first made his mark at the same show by beating his sire in the stallion class.

Rex McDonald went into retirement and was not shown in 1904. He had been barred from competition almost everywhere including the St. Louis Horse Show. He was criticized for not competing at the great St. Louis World's Fair where Montgomery Chief was crowned champion for Howard Ball. Realistically, it would have been folly for Ralph Orthwein to have pitted his 14-year-old horse who had not been shown that season against a talented and fresh, young champion.

Rex had been criticized earlier for not showing against Forest King or Gypsy Queen (he did beat her once), but he couldn't because he had been barred. Knowledgeable horsemen said Rex McDonald had nothing to prove. Charles Railey of Lexington, Kentucky, who had been one of the

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"More years ago than I care to remember, in company with my Dad, I attended the Old St. Louis Fair. At that time the St. Louis Fair was a veritable Mecca for the outstanding Saddle Horses of the nation, and until a horse had won at St. Louis, he didn't stand a chance of being accorded championship honors. This first visit to a big time horse show left an indelible impression on my mind.

"I can remember quite vividly the fact that Dad could look over the fence at the horses on parade, but I had to be satisfied with what I could see under the fence. Shortly after noon, a man rode by on a gorgeous black horse that seemed to hit the ground as if it were hot, and the crowd went wild.

"Dad picked me up, and when I was firmly established on his shoulders he said, 'Son, that's Rex McDonald, the greatest Saddle Horse that has ever lived.'

"That event transpired a long time ago, and up to now I have never seen fit to question my father's judgment. The rider of the champion that day was the redoubtable "Splint" Barnett."

Lon Cox

judges at the St. Louis World's Fair of 1904, said when he heard the critics, "The black Rex McDonald is the greatest of all saddle stallions, and no living horse could beat him."

The old horse came out of retirement one more time, a nostalgia trip back to the old St. Louis Fairgrounds, the scene of his greatest triumphs. The St. Louis Horse Show of 1905, which was normally held at a downtown coliseum, was moved back to the fairgrounds that year. Rex won the model class, and with Ralph Orthwein in the saddle he was awarded the blue in the stallion

class. J.T. Crenshaw's new chestnut horse, Kentucky Artist, was second.

Hail Columbia

Ralph Orthwein had consistently refused all offers on Rex McDonald, including \$10,000 from Bob Hisey, reported in detail in the Mexico Ledger. In 1905, Orthwein's fortunes reversed and he decided to sell the stallion.

Ben Middleton tried to buy him, but couldn't meet Orthwein's price, and it is thought that Col. Hughes also showed interest in buying Rex back.

However, Rex McDonald became the first American Saddlebred stallion to be syndicated. He was purchased for an undisclosed price by the Rex McDonald Horse Company, headed by Dr. R.E. Graham, Columbia, Missouri. Other syndicate members were O.J. Mooers, James Batterton, Dr. R.B. Tilly, Tilford Murray, and Joe Cason.

Joe Cason was the father of D. Murray Cason who became famous as the owner of Stonewall King, and it is quite likely that Murray Cason was named for Tilford Murray.

Rex McDonald was moved to Columbia, Missouri, and put in the care of Tom Chandler. Standing at the same stable was the Morgan-Standardbred horse, Charles Reade, (Continued on next page)



Bill Lee aboard Rex when the horse was in show prime.

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REX MCDONALD

(Continued from previous page)

a great sire of both roadsters and Saddle Horses. Another famous stallion there was Forest King.

R.P. Glenn said that he remembered visiting the stable when he was a teenager and seeing Rex McDonald. He was more impressed with Forest King. He said Forest King could be led to a flat wall and place his face against the wall and the horse could swan his neck so that his breast also touched the wall.

In 1909, Governor Hadley of Missouri rode Rex McDonald through the streets of Columbia following commencement exercises at the University of Missouri.

While Rex was owned by the Rex McDonald Company, complete records were kept on all the mares he bred, and an annual report was published in catalogue form.

Example: In 1906 Rex McDonald served 92 mares who produced 64 live foals and two dead, for a 73 percent conception rate. From that 1907 crop there were 36 fillies and 28 colts, 32 foals were the color of their dams. There were 14 blacks, 17 chestnuts, 28 bay, 5 brown, and the seven grey mares bred did not have one grey foal. The mares came from five states.

Using figures compiled up until 1910, Herbert Krum calculated that with Rex McDonald having been used at stud for 16 seasons, he felt it

would be conservative to estimate that the horse had sired an average of 40 foals a season, and his total get up to that time would have been about 640. He deplored the fact that only 183 horses were registered at that time. Perhaps his urgings did some good, because 87 horses foaled prior to that time were subsequently registered.

Dr. Graham, the largest stockholder and manager of the Rex McDonald Horse Company, became ill and died in March, 1910. Rex McDonald, now 20 years old, was again on the market.

Manipulations

According to a verbal agreement made when the syndicate first acquired the horse, Ben Middleton, who had tried to buy him, was to have first right of refusal if Rex McDonald was ever again offered for sale. Before his death, Dr. Graham reiterated this agreement to his wife.

In the last week of April, Col. John T. Hughes traveled to Columbia, Missouri, ostensibly to purchase Charles Reade. However, it is said that he had actually purchased Rex McDonald from a stockholder James Batterton for \$2,500, contingent on approval of the rest of the shareholders.

This started a battle of wits between Middleton and Hughes who were both trying to buy the horse. Middleton had called the company and asked them not to dispose of the horse until he arrived in Columbia. There were private interviews and secret meetings, and the tension was high. It is said that when Hughes learned there had been another offer on the horse, he raised his bid to \$2,700. Middleton then raised the price to \$2,750.

At that point, Mrs. Graham accepted Middleton's offer because of her late husband's promise to Ben Middleton on first right of refusal and because he told her that he hoped Rex McDonald would spend his last years in Missouri.

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Final Days in Mexico

One of the biggest celebrations in the history of Mexico, Missouri, came on April 30, 1910, when Rex McDonald was paraded through the streets led by his first trainer, Billy Freeman. Flags waved and bands played and speeches were made. Rex McDonald had come home.

Legend has it that Mexico was on the route of volunteers headed for Texas during the Mexican War, and someone placed a sign on the road pointing in the right direction. It simply said "Mexico" and that is how the town got its name.

The last years of Rex McDonald were extremely busy. He bred a large number of mares and 85 more live foals were entered in the Saddle horse Registry.

Rex was always a feature of any holiday in town - the 4th of July, etc., and he usually led the parade.

He was idolized by the public and thousands of people from across the nation visited Ben Middleton's stable on East Liberty Street to get a glimpse of the old champion. Middleton was always obliging, and Lon Cox estimated that had Middleton kept a guest book it would have rivaled that of Man o' War. Rex was always brought out for admirers to see and pet and often worked up to four times a day. And anyone who claimed he could ride was often given the chance. Among the dignitaries who visited were Teddy Roosevelt and William Howard Taft and William Jennings Bryan. They also visited Tom Bass, who was nationally known as a horse trainer.

Another part of the Rex McDonald legend that is not true is his association with Tom Bass. Bass never trained or showed Rex McDonald. It is possible that he did ride him but never in the show ring.

Rex Est Mortuus!

Even in death, the stories of Rex McDonald are conflicting. The monument at Mexico gives the date of

his demise as November 10, 1913 and the Mexico Intelligencer concurred. However, both Jack Harrison and Jumps Cauthorn wrote that the horse died November 13, 1913, and were very specific about it, pointing out the coincidence of the number 13.

The Mexico Ledger attributed his death to pneumonia, but other sources cited the cause as colic. All agreed every effort was made to save him, including calling in the M.D.'s of Mexico as well as every available veterinarian.

One version has the horse being humanely destroyed by giving him a lethal capsule; another version says the capsule was medicine.

The city went into mourning, and a public funeral was held, complete with eulogies and a procession to the Audrain County Fairgrounds where he was to be buried.

Exactly what transpired then will probably never be known, but it is known that Rex McDonald showed up shortly thereafter as a stuffed horse in the lobby of the Ringo Hotel in Mexico.

A fire in April, 1918, scorched the stuffed animal, so it was moved to the attic. Another fire in 1919 burned the hotel, but Rex McDonald was saved by fire fighters who were startled to discover a horse in the blaze.

Tom Bass then took the mounted remains to his stable where it occupied a stall across from his great high school mare, Belle Beach, until 1931. Then, the scorched stuffed horse was then taken to the fairgrounds again and buried again. The grave was marked in 1944. At that time, the Missouri congressional delegation tried to get the U.S. Post Office to issue a Rex McDonald stamp, but the effort was unsuccessful.

In 1948, the Audrain County Fair Horse Show was held in honor of Rex McDonald, and an estimated 55,000 people attended. Missouri Governor Phil Donnelly dedicated a historical monument placed on the grave. Art Simmons won all three

(Continued on next page)

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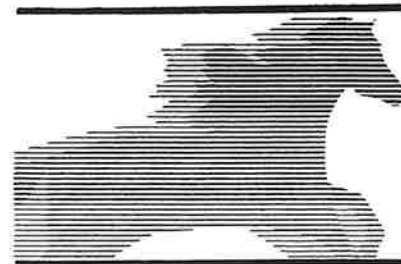
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REX MCDONALD

(Continued from previous page)

stakes at that show: five-gaited with Ann Rutledge; three-gaited with Papillon and fine harness with Meadow Princess.

The marker and monument were moved to the grounds of the American Saddle Horse Museum at the Audrain County Historical Society in 1970, where they may be seen today.

The Legacy of Rex McDonald

The legacy of Rex McDonald could be said to be the entire breed of American Saddlebred Horses. He was apparently a five-gaited show horse far ahead of his time, and there is no doubt his contribution to the popularity of the breed was extremely important in an era when the utility of the horse was falling victim to the internal combustion engine. Horses such as Rex McDonald and the great pacer Dan Patch proved there would always be a place in America for equine heroes.

Rex McDonald sired 405 foals who were registered, 176 colts and 229 fillies. None of them were as good as their sire in the show ring, but many were top show horses.

Star McDonald was the only

horse to beat Bourbon King in a disputed tie in a harness class. Grand McDonald was probably the best showing son of Rex. Shown by John Hook, he defeated Red McDonald, a son of McDonald Chief who was champion at the Kentucky State Fair in 1908. Grand McDonald also beat Edna May and Golden Glow, both sensational daughters of Rex Peavine.

Sons of Rex McDonald were great breeding horses, and his daughters were good producers. His three outstanding sons were Rex Peavine, Rex Monroe, and McDonald Chief.

Rex Peavine was the five-gaited champion at the Kentucky State Fair of 1903. He spent his entire breeding career near Richmond, Kentucky. He sired five Kentucky State Fair five-gaited winners: Edna May, who became the dam of Edna May's King; Hazel Dawn, Liberty Girl, Mass of Gold, and Dark Rex.

Rex McDonald's contributions to the breed through his son, Rex Peavine, are incalculable. Daughters of Rex Peavine were one half the "Golden Cross" when bred to Bourbon King. The dam of King's Genius, who figures so prominently in the breed today, was sired by a son of Rex Peavine. The dam of Stonewall King was by Rex Peavine.

Sons of Rex Peavine included Kalarama Rex, Jean Val Jean, Moreland

Peavine, Oklahoma Peavine, Red Rex, Mercer Rex, and many others.

McDonald Chief was not a show horse but was a great sire of show horses. He was the sire of Red McDonald, Jack Barrymore, both Kentucky State Fair champions, plus Easter Cloud, the first Five-Gaited World Grand Champion in 1917.

Noted breeding sons of McDonald Chief included Lee Rose McDonald, sire of Sweetheart On Parade, and My McDonald who sired McDonald's Majesty, who in turn was the sire of Silver Mc and Halleliua Mc.

John Hook called Independence Chief by McDonald Chief the greatest breeding stallion that ever lived for having sired World Champions Chief of Longview, Lady Jane, and Night Flower.

Today, McDonald Chief sire lines are nearly gone.

Rex Monroe was raised by Hiram Greenwell in Missouri but sold for a big price to Kalarama Farm, Springfield, Kentucky. He was sire of the great three-gaited mare, Jonquil, but more importantly, one of the great broodmare sires of all times. Daughters of Rex Monroe included Kathryn Haines, Nancy Thurman, Jean Acker, and Mary Dall, all familiar names on the pedigrees of quality Saddlebreds.



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Ben Middleton and Rex McDonald shortly before the horse died.

Impact Today

What is the status of the Rex McDonald line in the breed today?

Some people question the importance of sire lines. This is not to dispute the importance of the mare, but a stallion can certainly exert a more profound influence on the entire herd than the mare. And sire lines are easier to keep track of than female lines, although computerization is changing this. At any rate, in a pioneering effort, Stephanie Wright, programmer for ASHA, has by computer identified ALL active stallions living today who trace directly at the top of their pedigrees to Rex McDonald.

There are a number of stallions in service today who trace directly to Rex McDonald on the top line of their pedigree, but the number seems to be diminishing. The major lines are through Society Rex, Kalarama Colonel and Vanity's Sensation of Crebilly and a few others. It is interesting to note that a large number of golden and spotted stallions trace directly to Rex McDonald.

Breeders should take note of the fact that while not endangered at this time, this important blood could be in the near future, if current trends continue.

A FIVE-GAITED HORSE AHEAD OF HIS TIME....

"He was a horse that in motion had that cat-like, creeping suppleness and grace. He never made a slow motion nor an awkward one. In walking he stepped with exaggerated action as though he scorned the earth. The rack was his especial glory. He had the most remarkable speed and a fairly dazzling brilliancy of motion. Rex would rack as if it was the most natural thing in the world for him to do." Herbert Krum, 1910

"I've seen a lot of horses since his day who could go as high and as fast as Rex McDonald, but he was something special. He could electrify a crowd. He is hard to describe. I think the greatest thing was his hock action. This is what makes a top horse, and in his time Rex McDonald was the first to have great hock action." Ed Bright, St. Louis, 1963

Could Rex McDonald Have Passed An AHSA Drug Test?

Since the inception of the American Horse Shows Association testing program for forbidden substances in 1962, the testing has become more and more sophisticated in order to keep up with sophistication in pharmacology.

In 1943, the great Emily Ellen Scharf who wrote under the pen name Susanne, compiled articles from the old **Farmers Home Journal** into two rare volumes on *Training and Gaitting*. The first article which really attracts the reader is an ano-

nymous little story of "How Rex McDonald Was Shod."

The article was probably submitted by the Mexico, Missouri, farrier Joseph D. Pratt, who worked on Rex during much of his career. The time was either 1893 or 1894, when Rex McDonald was owned by R.T. Freeman and his son, Billy, but under the direction of W.H. "Bill" Davis of Fulton, Missouri.

We are pleased to present the article in its entirety:

How Rex McDonald Was Shod

"As everyone knows, the Freemans showed Rex McDonald to some extent as a youngster, and he was very successful at the county fairs. He so outclassed others that he could make occasional mistakes and go on to win. Later on he was placed in charge of that

(Continued on next page)



Rex McDonald on parade down the streets of Mexico, Missouri.

REX McDONALD

(Continued from previous page)

great showman, William H. Davis.

"On one occasion I met Mr. Davis, and he asked me to go with him to his stables. We went into a stall where he explained that Rex had been bruising his quarters and had become sensitive to concussion. He had gradually grown worse. Mr. Freeman had gone back to his shoer at Auxvasse, Missouri, several times to have this corrected, but finally the shoer had given it up, saying: "I have done everything that can be done. There isn't a man in this world that can stop that horse from over-reaching!" (This remark left an idelible impression on my mind.) My brother had his shoeing tent on the grounds so we took the horse over there and reshod him. (I also remember that in those days no one would dare think of going into a show ring with boots of any kind on a horse.)

"Now, do not get an idea of any crooked legs, joints, et cetera, for it is all due to unbalanced feet-the result of improper shoeing. He had on a long shoe, too much ground bearing surface from heel to toe, a surplus growth of toe, and low at heels. We shortened

the toes, saving his heels. Now, of course, the shoe was too long for his foot. We heated and stoved, then heated and hot rasped. Then the shoe was lighter in toe, heavier at heels. This shortened and quickened his stride, making him roll and fold higher. He was low on outside, especially back at quarters without side branch of shoe too short. We shortened hind feet, lowered inside, especially at toe. Then we welded the outside heel calk down, stretching to lengthen, then we welded on a flat calk building up the outside heel and quarter. Then we straightened insided toe of shoe back and hot rasped all the corner off inside from heel to toe, rounding it down to a feather edge. The inside toe of hoof extending over shoe slightly was rounded with fine side of rasp, a cross-firing shoe.

"As the time was limited it was necessary to work fast. We took Rex to his stall and ran cold water bandages on his front feet, then put a packing in the soles or bottom of his feet. Then I advised Mr. Davis to get some iodine and glycerine. This we applied to bruised and sore parts and around coronary band and before exercising we saturated his quarters with laudanum to alleviate the pain resulting from concussion while working

out. This was done to restore his confidence while racking. The results need no further comments for the horse world knows the rest. As I watched that show I was no doubt the most interested of all the spectators, and I watched with the more interest because I felt my reputation as well as that of Rex McDonald was at stake. While he was racking I was holding my breath for fear of what might happen if he should strike one of those tender quarters.

"It was my father who shod the noted horses from Kentucky in the earlier days--Star Davis, Montrose, Hopeful, Mark Diamond, Diamond Denmark, Pat Dolan, and others."

Had the AHSA drug inspectors been at that horse show of long ago, Rex McDonald in all likelihood, would have flunked his drug test.

Bill Davis would have been barred.

The anonymous farrier would probably have been arrested by Federal narcotics agents as a dope pusher, along with Davis as a buyer.

For you see, laudanum is a derivative of opium, from which morphine

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and heroin also come. An effective pain killer, it is absorbed into the body where it could be traced in blood and urine.

Had he tested 'ol Rex, he would have sure given the testers something to talk about! □

Sources used in this compilation of *Rex McDonald . . . As He Was*

Short Stories About Famous Saddle Horses
Volume 1, Number 2 May 1910
Herbert J. Krum, Lexington, Kentucky

The Missouri Saddle Horse
Missouri State Board of Agriculture
October 1913
Columbia, Missouri

Rex McDonald
Saddle and Bridle 1930
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Kansas City, Missouri 1946
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September and October 1950
Des Moines, Iowa

Who's Who and Where in Horsedom
John Hook's Life Story 1958
Ransom Publishing
Lexington, Kentucky

Plus the author's personal knowledge gained from extensive reading and interviews with Ed Bright, R. P. Glenn, Fred W. Holkamp, and others.



Classic Stonewall Dies in Accident

Classic Stonewall, an intensely Cline bred Stonewall King stallion, died in a freak accident at the Mel Cady Stables, Omaha, Nebraska, in the early morning hours of Christmas Eve.

He had been turned out in his paddock for customary morning exercise. Fog apparently obscured his vision, and he ran into the fence and went over it. Loose, he ran onto a highway and was hit by a truck and killed.

The black stallion was sired by Stonewall Premier by Stonewall King, who was rated number one on *Saddle and Bridle's Sire Rating* in 1971, 1972, and 1973. His dam was the grey show mare, Duke's Wild Honey by Duke of Stonewall by Stonewall King. Duke of Stonewall was also the sire of such show stars as Stonewall's Duke of Dixie, Miracle Mike, Crime Doctor, and Georgie's Miracle.

Classic Stonewall was 21 years of

age at the time of his death, but was said to have been in excellent physical condition.

He was twice rated among the top 25 sires of futurity colts on *Saddle and Bridle's Rating* and in 1982 was the high point living sire of colts in the Iowa Futurity. He was the sire of Country Classic, winner of the National Challenge of the Breeds in St. Louis in 1984.

Classic Stonewall was becoming a broodmare sire of note. In 1986 his daughters produced the two-year-old winner at the Iowa, Kansas, and Nebraska Futurities.

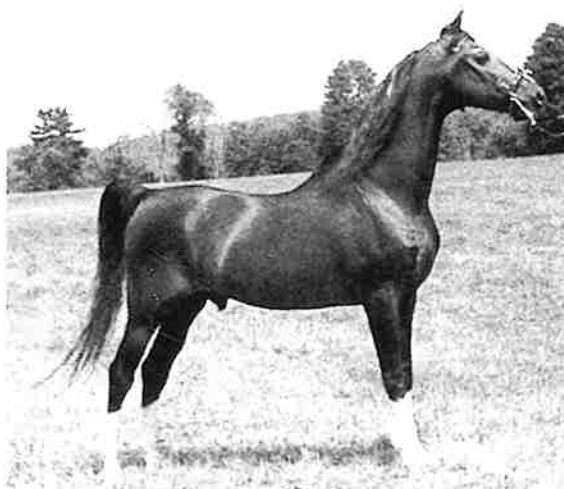
He was bred and raised by the late Fred Teigler, Fremont, Nebraska. His show career was ended by injury, but he was used sparingly at stud until the age of ten. He was owned at the time of his death by Anne Teigler Boschult of Fremont. A number of mares in foal to Classic Stonewall are due this spring.

HIGHLAND'S BOURBON CHIEF 53581

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Dam: Rose Lee Bourbon by Rex Lee Bourbon

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Snapshot at age 26