

FORGOTTEN HISTORY OF THE FOX TROTTING HORSE

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The MFTHBA Rule book contains a paragraph pertaining to the origins of the Missouri Fox Trotting Horse. This paragraph states in part "Bloodlines can be traced from the horses of early settlers...". But who were these settlers and who were their horses? It's time to shine the light on some of these horses and the people who owned them.

In 1899 two brothers by the last name of Tuck from Brighton, Polk County, Missouri went to Kentucky by horseback in order to buy two mares. Kentucky had the reputation of having the finest saddle stock available, and they wanted to obtain some of that bloodstock. Lester Tuck was born in 1871 and his brother Joseph, a couple of years earlier. In those days if you weren't able to take a train, you only had three other options for transportation. You either had to walk, ride a horse or drive a buggy. Their intention was to buy two bred mares and ride them back. In the spring of 1900, one of these mares foaled, the other did not. The mare that foaled soon died, and her foal was raised an orphan. This foal became known as Peacock Chief. He was a chestnut with two hind socks. It was written he got the name Peacock Chief because he was so proud. Being an orphan, Peacock Chief wasn't a large horse. He never got more than 15 hands tall. But he stood out in a class of horses with the style and grace of the best of horses. He was known as a "Big, little horse. He set up big, deep in the heart, with a big chest". He was exhibited at all the big shows including the American Royal, winning under saddle and fine harness. When he was crossed with the local mares of Cedar and Polk Counties, he became one of the leading sires of his time. He produced stylish, natural fox trotting using horses. The late Kenneth Morrison of northern Polk County was well known in the fox trotting world both in breeding and training. Even though Peacock Chief had probably died years before Kenneth was born, there were still some of his descendants scattered around the area. Kenneth was so impressed with these remaining Peacock Chief bred horses that he took it upon himself to write to the American Saddle bred Association to obtain a copy of his papers. In a 1984 interview Kenneth stated, "I mention these horses out of Peacock Chief because even though they trace to the turn of the century breeding they had the way of traveling we are breeding for eighty-five years later".

The blood that Peacock Chief carried had both a probable impact and a possible impact on the fox trotting breed. James A.M. Lanier was born in Union County, Alabama in 1857. He made his way to Springfield, Missouri while still a young man. Somewhere along the way he obtain the mare Mollie L., American Saddle bred Association registered number 4020. She was sired by Cadmus Chief who was also the sire of Peacock Chief. This made her and Peacock Chief paternal brother and sister, and therefore they carried related blood. When Mr. Lanier decided to breed Mollie, he first bred her to the stallion Greatland, American Saddle bred Association registered number 1408, foaled May 1, 1898, who stood in the Springfield area. There will be more about Greatland siring fox trotting horses later. He first raised a filly, Stella Lanier, foaled in 1910. then he raised her full sister Lottie Lanier, in 1912. Evidently he wasn't satisfied with this cross, so in 1915 he switched to a stallion standing in the Strafford, Mo., area named Chester's Last, American Saddle bred number 3283, who was foaled April 1, 1905. On the fifth day of July, 1916 Mollie produced a horse foal. Mr. Lanier was so pleased and excited about this foal that he enclosed a letter to the American Saddle bred Association when he sent in his colt registration papers. This letter reads in part, "This is by far the best colt I have raised from Mollie L. He is larger, handsomer, and goes every gait I ever saw a trained horse go. I look for him to develop into something fine". Mr. Lanier's prediction became true.

As time went by, Knial Kissee heard more and more stories pertaining to the greatness of Cadmus Dare from other area horsemen. He decided that he wanted to make up his own mind about the horse so he made the trip to see him, and he wasn't disappointed. He had searched a long time to find the right horse to breed his favorite mare to, a mare he called Pet, and he thought he had found him in Cadmus Dare. Pet was known to be a Black Squirrel bred mare. Black Squirrel was foaled in 1876 so she most likely was a granddaughter. What we describe as "rhythm" today in a horse, the old Kentucky horsemen used the word "animated". Black Squirrel was written to be "animated, very stylish and perfectly going". He had as much animation and possibly more animation than any stallion of his time. The famous show horse, Rex McDonald, was out of a Black Squirrel daughter. Pet apparently inherited many things from Black Squirrel, including his animated way of going. B. Mills, breeder of Nancy Ann F-166, had this to say about Pet. "Knial Kissee had Old Ted's mother and she was

a good mare. She was a fox trotting mare. I rode her and she was a good mare", Willie Hedgepeth, owner of Ozark Golden King, had the following to say, "Knial Kissee owned Old Pet, mother of the Kissee Ted horse. When she went down the road, ah, there wasn't much better. She was a fox trotting mare". When Knial crossed Pet to Cadmus Dare the result was Ted, one of the most influential stallions of the fox trotting breed. He is the horse named as our Foundation Sire. Ted so pleased Knial that he raised two full sisters to him; Pet II foaled in 1933, and Red Hot K foaled in 1934. Ted's most famous son was the Knial Kissee Old Fox. By MFTHBA records Old Fox was either out of his mother, Pet; or he was out of one of Ted's full sisters. Knial did breed Ted to his mother at least once. The filly Sally Walker, foaled in 1940, is recorded in TWHBA records as being sired by Ted and out of Pet. People need to realize that close to 20 years had past before the MFTHBA registry had started and when these horses were around. Memories get dim on remembering what mare a horse is out of. Especially when your looking at a mother-daughter combination and both of their names is Pet. Pet II must have really favored her mother, Pet, for Knial to give her that name. It could be easy to see that Pet II would also be called a "Black Squirrel" mare.

About the same time as the Knial Kissee's Old Fox, Knial's brother, Ellis, had a stallion that he also called Old Fox. According to Ellis's son Richard; this is the way he remembers how the Ellis Kissee Old Fox came about. "There's two stories about how Dad got Old Fox. One is that he came by rail car with a load of horses to the Springfield Stockyards. That was in 1924 and he mouthed to be 11 years old. The other story is that he came from somewhere around Bolivar, Polk County, Missouri". Either of these two stories has the same chance of being true. If the horse did come from Polk County, the Ellis Kissee Old Fox fits the description of horses sired by Peacock Chief. If Old Fox was 11 years old in 1924, his mother had to be bred in 1912. This would have been during the prime breeding age for Peacock Chief. If this second story is the true story, then it could be conceivable that the Ellis Kissee Old Fox WAS included in a load of horses that were coming from the neighboring Counties of Polk and Cedar Counties. In that case, BOTH STORIES about where the Ellis Kissee Old Fox came from would be true. This is the possible impact mentioned earlier that Peacock Chief could have had on the fox trotting horse.

Over the years Knial had several opportunities to sell Ted but he always refused. It wasn't till Ted became an aged horse and Knial was more interested in promoting Ted's son, Fox that he decided he might sell him. Around this same time, Walter Esther had acquired the Ted daughter Nancy Ann F-166. Nancy Ann became Walter's personal riding mount, and everyone who seen this mare either wanted her, or one just like her. It wasn't until Mr. Bill Smith who was Walter Esther's brother-in-law and the Uncle to Kinder, Dale and Dean Esther; offered him a price for Ted that Knial couldn't turn down. Ted was then re-located to Laclede County. At one time many people considered Laclede County as being the Fox Trotting Horse Capital of the World as many good horses came from there. It was only fitting that the horse who had done so much for the fox trotting breed; was able to live out his remaining years in a location that appreciated fox trotting horses.

The Knial Kissee Old Fox sired Blankenship Diamond who was one of, if not the top breeding horse from southeast of Ava, Mo., to Protom Mo., to northern Arkansas on the other side of the White River Valley. Before the lakes were impounded the White River Valley was prime crop ground. Though he was raised by Knial Kissee, he was owned for most of his life by Elmo Blankenship. That's how the horse became known as Blankenship Diamond. Elmo was born in Taney County, Mo., in 1911. Blankenship Diamond's mother was the Knial Kissee owned mare, Betty Fox. Betty Fox was also the mother of Golden Governor. Golden Governor was sired by Ozark Golden King who in turn was sired by the Knial Kissee Old Fox. This made Blankenship Diamond and Golden Governor a little more than half brothers. Betty Fox's sire was Deacon, and his sire was Rex Shepard. "Shepard" is how the name is spelled on all MFTHBA registration papers on the horses he sired. But the correct spelling is "Rex Sheppard" and he was sired by Rex McDonald. Rex Sheppard was owned by Ben Sheppard, and Ben was born in 1888 in rural Greene County. Mr. Sheppard was a cattle buyer and like the Kissee's, he traveled from Greene County to Protom, Mo., and areas of Arkansas just south of the White River Valley bottoms. It was mostly open range then so you weren't always bound by roads. Ben needed a tough mount and a horse that could cover the distance at a fox trotting gait that was easy on both horse and rider. That was one reason why he rode a stallion. The other reason he rode a stallion was he realized that sometimes just a few dollars determined if he made the purchase or not. By throwing in a stud fee or two sometimes made all the difference.

Betty Fox was out of a mare named Nan, and she was sired by the Lambeth Horse, who was owned by Jesse Lambeth. Jesse's family migrated from North Carolina to Laclede County, Mo. Jesse was born in Laclede

County in 1874, and sometime later in life he moved to Brown Branch, Taney County, Mo. It is unknown if he brought the horse from Laclede County to Taney County, but he stood him in Taney County.

Carl Locke was an early trainer of fox trotting horses and he broke and rode horses for Knial Kissee. In a 1984 interview, Carl explained how the first MFTHBA World Grand Champion, Sandy, came about. "Sandy's sire wasn't a saddle horse but he was palomino. His mother was a Knial Kissee mare that was sired by Cadmus Dare and out of a Kissee mare. This mare was also an approved walking horse like we used to approve early fox trotting horses". According to early Tennessee Walking records, Knial raised two full sisters who was sired by Cadmus Dare which he also had approved as walking horses. Since the mare Carl was talking about was sired by Cadmus Dare, then she had to be either one of these two sisters. This means theoretically Sandy carried the same amount of Ted Blood, since he was out of Ted's full sister, just as if he was sired by him. This would then mean that the 1960 WGC Sandy; the 1962 WGC Lucky Strike; the 1964 WGC Red Warrior and the 1966 WGC Golden Rawhide all carried strong Ted blood. Lucky Strike, Red Warrior and Golden Rawhide were all out of Ted daughters. Lady Ann, the mother of Zane Grey, Missouri Traveler and SunDust E was out of a Ted daughter. Ted sired the Knial Kissee Old Fox, who was the sire of Blankenship Diamond and Ozark Golden King, who in turn sired Golden Governor. Knial Kissee thought so highly of Ted that he took the time and trouble to raise two full sisters to him. Both of these two full sisters Knial registered by performance into the newly established Walking Horse Association. But, he never registered Ted into the Walking Horse Association when he had every opportunity to do so. Why not? Could it be because Ted didn't do the running walk, he Fox Trotted! And that must have been his favorite, most natural gait. Ted's influence on the history of the fox trotting horse has been immense.

Now back to the stallion Greatland. He was a chestnut, foaled 5/1/1898 and his registration number in the American Saddle bred Association was 1408. One of the stallions he sired was the horse Punch. Punch was a chestnut, foaled in 1909, and his registration number in the American Saddle bred Association was 3804. He was out of the mare Gypsie James. Her registration number was 1910. Her sire was Tom Hal Jr.; and he was sired by Hal (Luna's); and he was sired by Tom Hal (Gibson's). In the book BIOGRAPHY of the TENNESSEE WALKING HORSE, by Ben A. Green; the Hal horses were described as "These Hal horses with flat bones, good feet and legs, and hind legs not too straight. They had good tail style, arched neck, big kindly eyes, smart well set ears and good conformation. They would carry any load put on them. Hal horses were docile and gentle, weight-carrying horses". These Hal horses sound more like fox trotting horses and probably most of them did. It was also stated in this book that "About one-half the Foundation Sires in Volume 1 of the Tennessee Walking Horse Registry carry Gibson's Tom Hal blood". These Hal horses lived around the Civil War times. Punch sired many fox trotting horses which included the mare Mamie (Blair mare), who was the mother of the fox trotting stallion Charley, (Burr Quick Saddle). Mamie was owned by William Blair who came from Kentucky but lived in Taney County, Mo. William Blair was born in 1888. Burr Quick was born at Protem, Taney County, Mo., in 1897. His wife was a Clarkson, and she was an Aunt to Roland Clarkson. Roland used to advertise in the early MFTHBA Celebration books. Roland's business was selling broke horses; and matched teams for buggies. It has been estimated that he kept around a hundred fox trotting horses at all times in order to put matched teams together. Punch sired Prince, the (Dola Pride stud). Dola Pride was born in 1882 in Taney County; and Prince was reported to be a good breeding stallion with foals scattered all over the White River bottoms into Arkansas. One of Punch's most well known sons was Fox, or Hodges Fox. This horse is not to be confused with either Knial Kissee's Fox; or the Ellis Kissee Fox. The Hodges Fox was not related to either one. The ninth horse registered in the MFTHBA is the mare, Dixie F-9. She is sired by this Fox stallion. Dixie was foaled in 1929 so she was an aged mare when the registry was formed. She was owned by Ralph Hodges and he felt that if any horse was good enough to be registered in the new fox trotting horse registry, then she was. Dixie was the mother of Danney Boy F-177. In the 1964 Show and Celebration Catalog Ralph Hodges has an advertisement on his stallion. He states "Danney Boy was the sire of two of the top five mares out of a large class at the horse show at Ava, 1963". During the time he lived, Punch was a top sire of fox trotting horses. Horsemen have a saying that every good stallion is out of a good mare. The Hal blood that Punch's mother carried is a testament that the Hal horses could very well have been fox trotting horses.

There were four unfortunate chain of events that prevented the recordings of our early breeders and their horses. The first being that soon after the MFTHBA was formed, a fire completely destroyed the records they had on file. Then, they didn't re-organize for several years after that. Other things were going on and the MFTHBA wasn't at the top of their priorities. The second was this area of Missouri was going through severe

drought in the early 1950's. People didn't have the feed and water sources like they do today. Livestock had to be sold to reduce their numbers and in many instances the horses were the first to go. This was another reason why the MFTHBA didn't do much after the records were destroyed. The third was the impoundment of the lakes. Protem, Mo., in the late 1800's and early 1900's was a bustling town. It had two cotton gins, feed stores, blacksmith shops, cafes, dry goods stores, hotels and banks. Protem's trade area went north to Springfield, and an equal distance south into Arkansas. At that time there was a big demand for good fox trotting horses for transportation across the White River bottoms and elsewhere. I was told that a Springfield bank owned one of the banks in Protem. A banker from the Springfield bank would ride horseback to Protem, get a room at one of the hotels, work in the Protem bank for a week, and then ride back to Springfield. He would do this every few weeks weather permitting. The distance from Omaha, Arkansas to Protem across the White river bottoms was just nine miles. An easy ride for a fox trotting horse to make. But when the dams were built, there was a mass exodus of families leaving the bottoms. Many families had to re-locate several counties away. Taking with them valuable family, and valuable horse history. Fourth, Arkansas had a fox trotting horse registry of their own. Their stud books could have provided a valuable, written record of the early fox trotting horses in their area. However, when the Arkansas Association merged with the Missouri Association, these stud books were lost.

There has been fox trotting horses since the Narragansett and Canadian Pacer days. The late Elmer Hicks once told me, "If they can pace, they can do something else". There has always been men who preferred to ride the fox trotting gait above all others. Fortunately they concentrated themselves in the Missouri Ozarks. With out a doubt, the stallions I mentioned could all be considered fox trotting horses. As with many horses that came before them the fox trot was their natural gait. Early fox trotting horses carried the best of blood and should not take a "back seat" to any gaited breed.

Information in this article provided by the Missouri Fox Trotting Horse Registry; the American Saddle Bred Registry; the Tennessee Walking Horse Breed Registry; the Biography of the Tennessee Walking Horse by Ben A. Green; Fox Trot Trackings book by Nadine I. Moeller and various interviews.