

DISASTER AT WOODBURN FARM: R. A. ALEXANDER AND
THE CONFEDERATE GUERRILLA RAIDS OF 1864-1865

William Preston Mangum II

The Old Frankfort Pike stretches northwest from Lexington, Kentucky, to Frankfort through Fayette, Woodford, and Franklin counties and passes through the heart of Kentucky's famous Bluegrass region, an area steeped in tradition and history. The pike is among the oldest roads in Kentucky and closely follows the course of an old buffalo trace. Along it lie picturesque fields and pastures belonging to the oldest and richest thoroughbred horse farms in the United States, which have produced some of the most famous names in racing history: Longfellow, Ten Broeck, Richard "Dick" Singleton, Early Light, Maud S., Enquirer, and Versailles. Early Kentucky Derby winners Apollo, Baden-Baden, Fonso, Joe Cotton, and Cannonade, the 1974 winner, were bred and foaled in this region. From a single source, the Idle Hour Farm in Fayette County owned by Colonel Edward Riley Bradley, have come Derby winners Broker's Tip, Bubblin Over, Burgoo King, and Behave Yourself. There is also Airdrie Farm, home of the world's record-holding stallion Rich Creme, sire of the 1985 Super Derby, Jockey Club Gold Cup, and Belmont Stakes winner Creme Fraiche out of Likely Exchange.

The Bluegrass region and its inhabitants played a significant historical role during the bloody years of the Civil War. With the

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exception of two battles in 1862, the Battle of Richmond in August and the Battle of Perryville in October, no large battles were fought in Kentucky, although numerous skirmishes occurred between Federal troops and the Confederate guerrillas who raided towns, railroads, and farms. The horse farms were essential to the guerrillas' survival since they supplied fresh stock to replace their war-weary mounts.

At the intersection of the Old Frankfort Pike and Highway 62, the Midway Road, is Shadowlawn Farm. Across the intersection stands an old, white, wooden-and-brick structure once called the "Black Horse Tavern" which was later sold to Frank Harper of Nantura Farm. The birth of Zerelda (Cole) James, mother of Frank and Jesse James, in this house had a significant influence on events that occurred in this area during the Civil War. Stories from his mother provided Frank James with knowledge of the terrain, the location of towns and farms, and the names of prominent people of the region. During the Civil War Frank James visited the countryside where his mother was born, not as a tourist but as a member of a Confederate guerrilla band led by the notorious William C. Quantrill.

Frank and his brother Jesse had joined Quantrill in the beginning of the struggle prior to his infamous raid on Lawrence, Kansas. Quantrill had already gained notoriety by his exploits and, according to Frank James in a magazine interview in 1914, people:

knew he was not a very fine character, but we were like the followers of [Pancho] Villa or [Victoriano] Huerta: we wanted to destroy the folks that wanted to destroy us, and we would follow any man that would show us how to do it. Besides, I was young then. When a man is young his blood is hot; there's a million things he'll do then that he won't do when he's older. There's a story about a man at a banquet. He was offered champagne to drink, but he said; "I want quick action. I'll take Bourbon whiskey." That was the way I felt. That's why I joined Quantrill: to get quick action. And I got it too. Jesse and I were with Quantrill until he was killed in Kentucky.¹

1 Julian Street, "The Border Land," *Collier's Magazine*, 26 September 1914, pp. 18, 19, 24, 26; telephone interview with Carl Breihan, 30 December 1994.

Frank's knowledge of the area undoubtedly proved to be very useful to the guerrillas and gave them an indisputable advantage over the uninformed Federal soldiers chasing them.

Less than a mile west up the pike is a stretch of the road known as Shady Lane, undoubtedly one of the most beautiful places in Kentucky. Huge old trees of many types grow on each side forming a green canopy over the lane. Ancient stone fences line the road on both sides and lead the way to a magnificent mansion called the Woodburn House or Woodburn Manor, built by the Buford family. The Bufords purchased the land in 1811, and the house was built in the first half of the nineteenth century. Woodburn House was originally a much smaller structure, but many additions through the years have created a large and impressive residence.²

Woodburn House was once part of Woodburn Farm, the 6,500-acre, sprawling estate owned by Robert Aitcheson Alexander. Alexander never lived in Woodburn House. Records show that he lived in the house built by his father, part of which is believed to have burned in the 1920s, on part of the original land grant across the road from Woodburn House on what is now the Lanark Farm, the home of Mr. and Mrs. James E. Bassett III.³

It was down Shady Lane and through the front gate of Woodburn Farm on the rainy Thursday evening of 2 February 1865 that Confederate guerrilla leaders William Clarke Quantrill and Sue Mundy rode, followed by two columns of twenty-three men. Their

Although some believe that there was a family connection between the Jameses and Quantrill, there is no evidence to support that claim. See "Mrs. Samuel's Will," *Liberty* [Missouri] *Tribune*, 17 February 1911, p. 3.

2 Dan M. Bowmar III, "Gen. Abe Buford Made Reputation as a Kentuckian-Soldier," *Lexington Leader*, 19 August 1970; Autobiographical sketch, 1877, by General Abraham Buford, Woodford County Historical Society, Versailles, Kentucky; "Gen. Buford's Unhappy End," *Turf, Field and Farm* [New York], 13 June 1884, p. 455; William E. Railey, *History of Woodford County* (Versailles, 1968), 90-93; "Gen. Abraham Buford," *Woodford Sun*, 4 May 1989, p. A 9; Susan Rhodemyre, "Woodburn Stud," *Thoroughbred Record* [Lexington], 7 January 1981, pp. 34-36.

3 Rhodemyre, "Woodburn Stud," 34-36.

mission was to replace their exhausted mounts with fresh horses from the farm's famous thoroughbred and trotting stock. This guerrilla raid, the second such raid made at Woodburn, was a disaster for Woodburn Farm and its owner.

R.A. Alexander was a small, slender man with a high forehead, thinning hair, and a "hue approaching a light brown." He had blue eyes with a fair complexion. His face was "a compromise between the humorous and the grave" and "his light whiskers gave a fullness to his cheeks." Alexander's plain clothing made him appear "small and more Quaker like," and he wore a black felt hat "pushed back from his brow." His step was light and his movement was easy and graceful; everything about him was "plain to simplicity," but there was "nothing austere in his bearing." Although Alexander frequently suffered from bouts of ill health, he was extremely active and energetic.⁴

Alexander's many interests forced him to travel frequently. Since he was away from the farm for long periods of time, he delegated the day-to-day operations to those dependable men who had earned his trust. However, Alexander personally handled the breeding selections and made all important decisions about finances and other business matters.

Before the Civil War, R.A. Alexander had built Woodburn Farm into a great breeding establishment of both thoroughbred and trotting horses. He founded his thoroughbred stud in 1856 with the purchase of Lexington for \$15,000, which at that time was the highest price ever paid for an American horse of any breed.⁵ In 1855 R.A. had collected his broodmare band. In 1856 he began to collect his trotting stud. He published his first stock catalog in 1857, the first known American stock-farm catalog. It was devoted

4 "Robert Aitcheson Alexander," *Turf, Field and Farm*, 16 November 1867, p. 312.

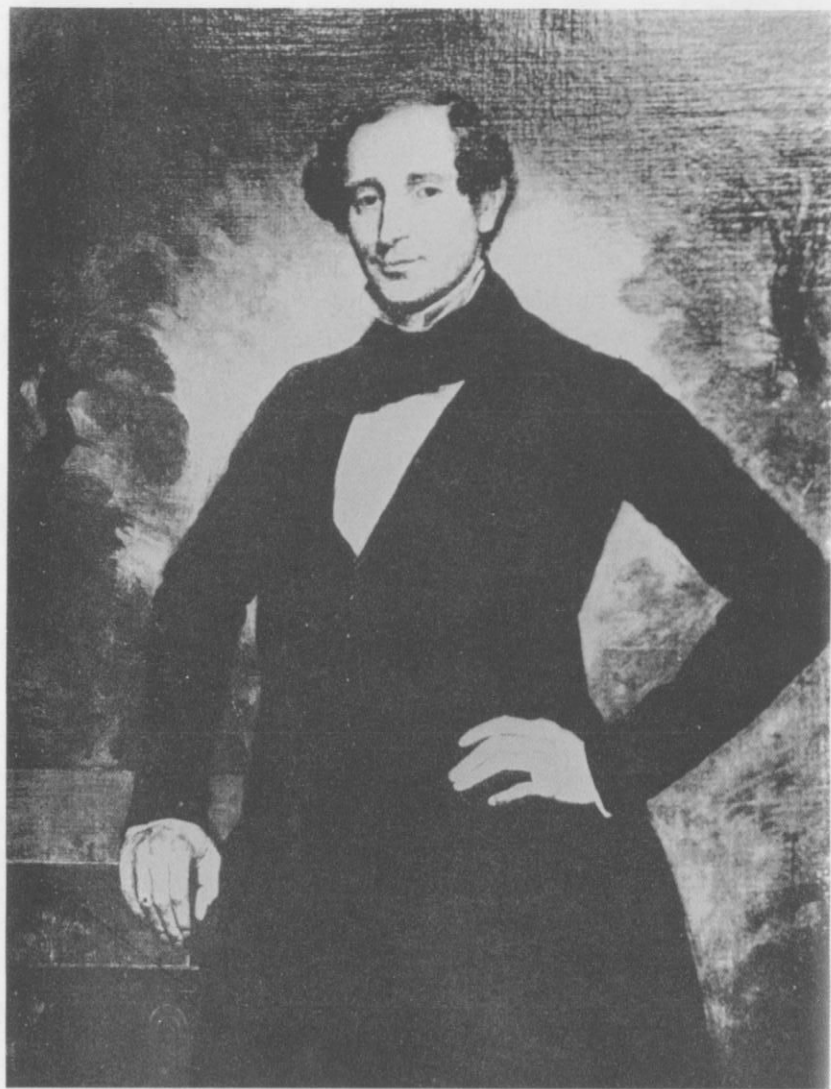
5 Contract, 1857, between R.A. Alexander and Richard Ten Broeck. The contract is in the Woodburn Farm Records at Woodburn Farm, Lexington, Kentucky (hereafter Woodburn Farm Records, Woodburn Farm). "Robert Aitcheson Alexander. His Claim to Rank as America's Most Successful Breeder," *Thoroughbred Record*, 21 May 1938, p. 334.



R.A. Alexander

Keeneland Library, Lexington, Kentucky

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include the trotting horses Abdallah, Edwin Forrest, Norman, and Pilot Jr. There were seventy-two brood mares, twenty-nine of which were fillies reserved for breeding purposes, leaving forty-three actual matrons. The catalog also listed forty head of colts and fillies. According to this listing, Alexander owned 116 head of trotting stock, more than had ever been assembled under one ownership up to that time.⁷ One of the most famous of his horses was the English import Scythian, who had won the Newmarket Stakes, Dee Stakes, the Goodwood Stakes, the Chester Cup, and a half-dozen other races and was hailed by the *London Times* as "one of the best stallions ever produced in Great Britain."⁸

Alexander's decision to invest in trotters showed his independence and courage, since most Kentucky "hardboot" horsemen looked at trotters as a "Yankee sport" and considered

6 John Hervey, *The American Trotter* (New York, 1947), 293. Hervey was the dean of American turf writers, a competent judge of racing and breeding, and a recognized historian and authority on American horse racing. According to Hervey: the principal authorities for the history of the Standard breed of American light-harness horses were the official U.S.T.A [United States Trotting Association, formerly *Wallace's Register and Year Book*], of which 35 volumes of the former and 58 of the latter have been issued. Supplementing these the most important are the files of the turf journals of past years, beginning with the first to be published in America, the *Turf Register* (1829) and coming down to date, of which those principally useful have been *Wallace's Monthly*; *Spirit of the Times*; *Turf, Field and Farm*; *Horseman*; and *Horse Review*. For data upon the Thoroughbred breed, the official *American Stud Book*, in 18 volumes, is the standard authority, the periodicals above-named being also indispensable. ...It is to be understood that in all cases the statements made rest upon carefully checked authorities and that where conflicts of evidence have supervened the data accepted were thoroughly examined and tested and the temptation to incorporate an attractive legend or tradition rather than a more prosaic fact steadfastly abjured.

7 Hervey, *Racing in America, 1665-1865* (New York, 1944), 330; Hervey, *American Trotter*, 295; Robert Aitcheson Alexander, *Woodburn Stud Farm 1864 Catalogue* (Lexington, 1864), 37-45.

8 "Arrival of Fine English Cattle and Blood Stock," *Porter's Spirit of the Times* [New York], 22 November 1856, p. 193; "The Stallion Scythian," *ibid.*, 29 November 1856, p. 208.

them "an anathema."⁹ Alexander's decision to build a trotting stable caused great resentment among Kentucky breeders, but his wealth and social status allowed him to ignore their narrow opinions and lack of foresight.¹⁰ Determined to add a trotting stable to his Woodburn Stud, "he set energetically about collecting brood mares and stallions with the ranking of his thoroughbred class."¹¹

Alexander was an innovator who experimented to develop and improve various breeds. Through selective crossbreeding, he improved the American standardbred racehorse. His practice of breeding thoroughbreds with brood mares, which produced notable trotters as well as Morgan horses and other horses which showed trotting traits, resulted in increased speed. Alexander advanced the introduction of the standardbred into Kentucky and helped to secure its place in racing and breeding. To develop and improve his brood-mare stock, Alexander made the first attempt of any breeder to purchase only brood mares that had produced notable trotters.¹² Alexander selected his trotting mares by the same criteria used in selecting his thoroughbred mares. He purchased only those mares who were "proven producers, proven performers or sisters or half-sisters to proven producers and performers."¹³ One of his first selections was Madam Temple, the dam of Flora Temple ("The Bob-Tailed Mare" made famous by the Stephen Foster song, "Camptown Races").¹⁴ In 1859 the Lexington Trotting Club was organized, and Alexander was elected its first president.¹⁵

9 Alexander Mackay-Smith, *The Race Horses of America, 1832-1872, Portraits and Other Paintings by Edward Troye* (Saratoga Springs, New York: The National Museum of Racing, 1981), 221; Hervey, *American Trotter*, 294-95.

10 Hervey, *American Trotter*, 294-95; Mackay-Smith, *Race Horses of America*, 221; "Aurelius" (pseudonym), "Woodburn Farm and Thoroughbred Blood," *Wallace's Monthly*, June 1890, pp. 241-47.

11 Hervey, *American Trotter*, 294-95.

12 Ibid., 293, 295.

13 Mackay-Smith, *Race Horses of America*, 221; Hervey, *American Trotter*, 295-96.

14 Mackay-Smith, *Race Horses of America*, 221; Hervey, *American Trotter*, 92, 295.

15 Mary E. Wharton and Ellen F. Williams, *Peach Leather and Rebel Grey*,

Woodburn Farm truly earned its title, "Mother Farm of the Standardbred," and Alexander lived long enough to see Kentucky horsemen place the trotting-horse breed in an honored position.¹⁶

Although born a British subject, Robert Alexander, Robert Aitcheson Alexander's father, became an American citizen in 1791 and while still in Virginia obtained, "sight unseen," the original land grant in Kentucky that would later become Woodburn Farm. He purchased the land from the estate of General Hugh Mercer, a hero of the French and Indian War, who had been given this property through a military land grant. Robert met and married Eliza Richardson Weisiger of Frankfort and from this marriage came four children: Robert Aitcheson, Alexander John, Mary Belle, and Lucy.¹⁷

In 1811 Robert Alexander sold a portion of his estate, the land where Woodburn House stands today, to William Buford. In the years between 1796 and 1826 Robert sold other tracts of his estate, totalling about 1,900 acres. This reduced his estate to 921 acres.¹⁸

R.A. Alexander attended college in England and lived in Scotland with his uncle and later guardian, Sir William Alexander. Sir William had gained a high reputation as an equity and real property lawyer, and he was "raised to the head of the Court Exchequer, being constituted Lord Chief Baron (Chancellor) of the Exchequer of Britain on January 9, 1824, and thereupon made a Privy Counsellor and knighted." Sir William was also a member of Parliament for two years.¹⁹ In 1831 Sir William gained a "large accession to his fortune" when iron ore was discovered on his estate at Airdrie. His property included the extensive estates of Airdrie House and Cowden Hill and the profits from their mining operations. Sir

Bluegrass Life and the War 1860-1865 (Lexington, Ky.: Helicon Company, 1986), 21; Ken McCarr, *The Kentucky Harness Horse* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1978), 117.

¹⁶ Mackay-Smith, *Race Horses of America*, 221.

¹⁷ Z.F. Smith, *History of Kentucky* (Louisville, 1886), 544; Rhodemyre, "Woodburn Stud," 34.

¹⁸ Rhodemyre, "Woodburn Stud," 34, 36.

¹⁹ "The Alexanders of Woodburn," *Woodford Sun*, 21 September 1983.

William never married. R.A. graduated from Trinity College at Cambridge University and returned to America.²⁰

R.A. later named his properties and businesses after the Airdrie House estate in Scotland, including Airdrie Mill in Montgomery, Illinois, Airdrie Mill, and the Airdrie Ironworks in Muhlenberg County, Kentucky; Airdrie Stud Farm on the Old Frankfort Pike gets its name from the same source.²¹

In 1842 Sir William died, and young Alexander inherited the family estates of Airdrie and Cowden Hill in Scotland. In order to acquire this inheritance, however, he had to return to Scotland, renounce his American citizenship, and become a British subject. He changed his name legally to Robert Spruel Crawford Aitcheson Alexander. He was a British citizen for the rest of his life.²²

R.A. began buying back much of the land which had been sold by his father as well as other nearby tracts. One of his major acquisitions was the tract owned by the Bufords where Woodburn House stood. Under the Buford ownership Woodburn House had been called Free Hill Farm and was also referred to as Tree Hill Farm. William Buford had married Harriet Walker Kirtley, and their son Abraham was born in Woodburn House on 18 January 1820. Sometime between 1855 and 1860 R.A. purchased Woodburn House and the land from the Buford family. As part of the purchase agreement, Mrs. Harriet Buford was allowed to live in Woodburn House until her death in 1866. Alexander took possession of the house in September 1866.²³

20 Ibid.; It is not known when he returned after graduation. He returned permanently in 1849 or 1850. Rhodemyre, "Woodburn Stud," 34.

21 Samuel M. Wilson, *History of Kentucky from 1803-1928*, vol. 2 of *History of Kentucky* (Chicago, 1928), 72-73.

22 Original receipt, 17 April 1857, between R.A. Alexander and Richard Ten Broeck for the purchase of Lexington: "Received of R.S.C.A. Alexander Esq. by the hands of Lees and Waller the sum of Seven thousand and five hundred dollars being balance due me on the Horse Lexington, \$7,500." Woodburn Farm Records, Woodburn Farm. See also Rhodemyre, "Woodburn Stud," 36.

23 Telephone conversation with Dr. A.J. Alexander, Lexington, Kentucky, 18 November 1992; letter of R.A. Alexander, 19 July 1866, Woodburn Farm Records.

At the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, Alexander made a brave attempt to carry on his breeding operations. Although Kentucky proclaimed its neutrality, many Kentuckians chose allegiance by county.²⁴ On 19 January 1861, the *Daily Commonwealth* [Frankfort] printed a notice from the people of Woodford County which had been sent to Congress expressing their loyalty to the Union.²⁵ This pro-Union stance was not adopted by all in Woodford County, but the sentiment of the majority made the county vulnerable to Confederate raids.

Since it was commonly known that Alexander was a British subject and that the sympathy of Great Britain early in the war was with the Confederacy, R.A. believed that Woodburn Farm would be safe from raids by Confederate forces.²⁶ Legend recounts that he flew the Union Jack at the farm. But in any case his British citizenship ultimately proved ineffective.²⁷ Compared with other farms in the region, however, Woodburn was unusually fortunate in the early years of the war, but this would change dramatically as the war continued.

There is some evidence that R.A. Alexander did have a confrontation with Confederate guerrillas early in the war. "One Arm" Sam Berry and his band were well known in the region, and it is generally believed, although not proved, that Berry attempted a raid on Woodburn Farm. Allegedly Alexander thwarted the raid

Special Collections, Margaret I. King Library, University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky (hereafter Woodburn Farm Records, King Library).

24 "The Cincinnati Press on the Position of Kentucky. Kentucky Neutrality," *Frankfort Commonwealth*, 30 April 1861, p. 2.

25 "Memorial, to the Senate and House of Representatives in the Congress of the United States," *Daily Commonwealth* [Frankfort], 19 January 1861, p. 3.

26 Dan M. Bowmar III, *Giants of the Turf* (Lexington, Ky.: The Blood Horse, 1960), 15; Hervey, *Racing In America*, 329.

27 Bowmar, *Giants of the Turf*, 15; Wharton and Williams, *Peach Leather and Rebel Gray*, 88; Hervey, *Racing In America*, 321-24, 329; Abram S. Hewitt, *The Great Breeders And Their Methods* (Lexington, Ky.: Thoroughbred Publishers, Inc., 1982), 21.

and drove the guerrillas away, but not before he had shot Berry in the heel.²⁸

Woodburn was considered a safe haven by Kentucky breeders. Throughout the war, Woodburn served as a refuge for several valuable horses which were believed by their owners to be in danger from Confederate guerrillas or from Federal forces. Among the most notable horses sent to Woodburn for safekeeping were Australian, owned by A. Keene Richards,²⁹ and the celebrated saddlehorse progenitor Gaine's Denmark 61, owned by Willis Field Jones.³⁰

Alexander's belief in his immunity from Confederate raids led him not only to continue operations at the farm but to enlarge their scope. In spite of mounting hostile action in the area, both branches of the stud were enlarged whenever Alexander was presented with the opportunity to acquire first-class stallions and mares. During the war the thoroughbred part of the stud grew to 113 head, while the trotting part grew to 116, making a total of 229 horses on the farm.³¹

During the last two years of the war, when Kentucky was almost entirely in Union control and Union victory seemed imminent, a revival of horse racing was undertaken on a grand scale. Alexander participated in this revival and organized a racing stable, placing a slave trainer named Ansel Williamson in charge. It is not known how Ansel acquired the name Williamson; Ansel had been owned

28 "Stories of Maj. Warren Viley," *Woodford Sun*, 30 January 1902, p. 1.

29 "Death of Imported Australian," *Kentucky Live Stock Record* [Lexington], 18 October 1879, p. 248; Hervey, *Racing In America*, 329. The *Kentucky Live Stock Record* later became *The Thoroughbred Record*, also published at Lexington.

30 "Breeding of Mambrino Patchen," *American Saddlebred Registry*, vol. 4 (1930, revised series), viii-xii; Wharton and Williams, *Peach Leather and Rebel Gray*, v, vi, 20, 67, 88, 158, 159; Herbert T. Krum, *Short Stories About Famous Saddle Horses* (1910), 371; Louis Taylor, *The Horse America Made* (Louisville, 1944), 9, 10, 12, 74, 235; Susanne Emily Ellen Scharf, *Famous Saddle Horses* (Louisville, 1932), 45, 46, 49, 50.

31 Hervey, *Racing In America*, 330.

by a T.B. Goldsly of Alabama and had been sold to A. Keene Richards in 1855.³² Prior to the war, Richards had "loaned" Ansel to Alexander. Ansel is credited with training Alexander's Norfolk and the colt Ansel (named for his trainer) as well as Nellie Gray and Hollywood for General Abe Buford, owner of Bosque Bonita, which today is part of William Farish's Lanes End Farm on the Midway-Versailles Road.³³ Alexander's racing stable:

swept through the campaign almost invincibly, with two unbeaten sons of Lexington, Asteroid and Norfolk, at its head. Norfolk and several other horses were sold, and Asteroid and the remainder returned to Woodburn with flying colors.³⁴

In January 1866 Ansel returned to A. Keene Richards as a free man to assist Richards in rebuilding his racing stable.³⁵

As the war began to draw to an end, however, Confederate guerrilla operations increased in central Kentucky. Alexander seemed unperturbed, although the guerrillas displayed a thorough knowledge of farms around Midway and Versailles and constantly harassed other breeders. Many breeders suffered severe losses from their depredations.

And then the aura of invulnerability was broken. On Saturday, 22 October 1864, during the middle of the day while Alexander was at his meal, an alarmed black woman came running into the house to report that "there was a great commotion at the stables, a party of men being engaged in seizing and carrying off the horses."³⁶ Since it was daylight and guerrilla raids against the horse farms usually took place after dark, Alexander could not believe at first that a raid was in progress. His doubts were quickly dispelled when a boy ran into the house to confirm the report.³⁷ Apparently the guerrilla

32 Mackay-Smith, *Race Horses of America*, 224.

33 "Death of Ansel Williamson," *Kentucky Live Stock Record*, 25 June 1881, p. 409.

34 Hervey, *Racing in America*, 330.

35 "The Georgetown Stable," *Turf, Field and Farm*, 6 January 1866, p. 9.

36 "The Stealing and Recovery of Asteroid," *Wilkes' Spirit of the Times* [New York], 19 November 1864, p. 185.

37 *Ibid.*

leader and six of his men had walked into the training stable and seized the prize racers, Asteroid and Bay Dick by Lexington as well as three of the "choicest" two-year-olds sired by Lexington.³⁸

Alexander and his employees hurried to the stables only to find the guerrillas and five valuable thoroughbreds gone, including the unbeaten colt, Asteroid. Alexander, his employees, and several neighbors pursued the guerrillas as far as the Kentucky River.³⁹ At the river some ten miles from the farm the guerrillas halted, and the groups exchanged shots. Alexander's party made a charge "which threw them [the guerrillas] into confusion," causing them to scatter.⁴⁰ One of the raiders (believed to have been the leader), riding Asteroid, plunged into the river. The colt swam across the river under a hail of bullets. The pursuit continued and five of the horses were recovered.⁴¹

Newspaper reports of the raid varied as to the number of horses taken, but Woodburn accounts listed only five thoroughbreds. Daniel Swigert's notes on each horse in his 1864 *Woodburn Stud Catalogue* also indicate that at least one trotting mare was taken, which would bring the total to six horses.⁴² The *Spirit of the Times*

38 "Fine Weather and Exciting Sport Mark Morris Park," *Turf, Field and Farm*, 25 October 1902, p. 1026; "Stories of Maj. Warren Viley," *Woodford Sun*, 30 January 1902, p. 1; "Asteroid Stolen by Guerrillas," *Wilkes' Spirit of the Times*, 5 November 1864, p. 156; "The Story of Woodburn," *Lexington Morning Herald*, 27 January 1898, p. 3; Bowmar, *Giants of the Turf*, 16.

39 "Stories of Maj. Warren Viley," *Woodford Sun*, 30 January 1902, p. 1; "Stealing and Recovery of Asteroid," *Wilkes' Spirit of the Times*, 19 November 1864, p. 185.

40 "Stealing and Recovery of Asteroid," *Wilkes' Spirit of the Times*, 19 November 1864, p. 185.

41 "Asteroid Stolen By Guerrillas," *ibid.*, 5 November 1864, p. 156.

42 R. Aitcheson Alexander, *Woodburn Stud Farm 1864 Catalogue* (Lexington, 1864), 45, property of Dr. A.J. Alexander, Lexington, Kentucky. This catalog was published annually, the first of its kind in the country. In Swigert's own copy he made handwritten notes and comments on the horses. As farm superintendent, it was his job to keep track of what happened to the horses. See also "Kentucky's Most Famous Breeder Living in Obscurity in a Lexington Log Cabin," *Louisville Courier-Journal*, 23 December 1900, p. 9.

reported that the raiders at Woodburn had been led by the Confederate guerrilla Sue Mundy.⁴³

After the skirmish at the river, R.A. gave up the chase and returned to Woodburn with the five recovered horses. The pursuers later reported that they had wounded the guerrilla leader, but there is no evidence to support this claim. It is significant, however, that Alexander later offered "one thousand dollars for the return of Asteroid, and five thousand dollars for the capture of Mundy," since the horse was worth at least \$30,000!⁴⁴ Clearly, Alexander wanted to avenge his loss.

Alexander's neighbor Major Warren Viley (the title "Major" may have been honorary or one earned in the state militia) volunteered to pursue the guerrillas and attempt to rescue Asteroid. He and his father, Willa Viley, were not only neighbors but were considered Alexander's close friends. Warren Viley was "regarded as one of the county's most dependable and upright citizens" and was the owner of Stonewall Farm near Woodburn Farm.⁴⁵ He was also recognized as one of the early breeders of thoroughbreds and had raised Capitola by Vandal, the dam of Uncle Vic and King Alphonso, who was later sold to Woodburn Farm. Other horses bred at Stonewall Farm included Hospodar, Miss Naylor, Miss Gallop, Bab, W. Overton, Tenpenny, Silurian, and Commissioner Foster. The farm stallions were Imported Meltonian, Belvidere, and Linden.⁴⁶ It was also Warren Viley who had given the famous mare Black Bess to General John Hunt Morgan.⁴⁷

43 "Rebel Outrages by Guerrillas in Kentucky - Murder of John Harper [actually Adam Harper]-Asteroid Recovered," *Wilkes' Spirit of the Times*, 12 November 1864, p. 169. Sue Mundy's name is found in several references, including *The War of the Rebellion; A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, spelled as Sue Munday.

44 "A Patch of Rumor - Horse Stealing for Some Purpose," *Chicago Tribune*, 31 October 1864, p. 1.

45 Rayley, *History of Woodford County*, 76.

46 Thomas A. Knight and Nancy Lewis Greene, *Country Estates of the Bluegrass* (Lexington, Ky.: Henry Clay Press, 1973), 160; "Death of Warren Viley," *Turf, Field and Farm*, 24 January 1902, p. 79.

47 "Black Bess Given to Morgan," *Woodford Sun*, 4 May 1989, B, 2 found in

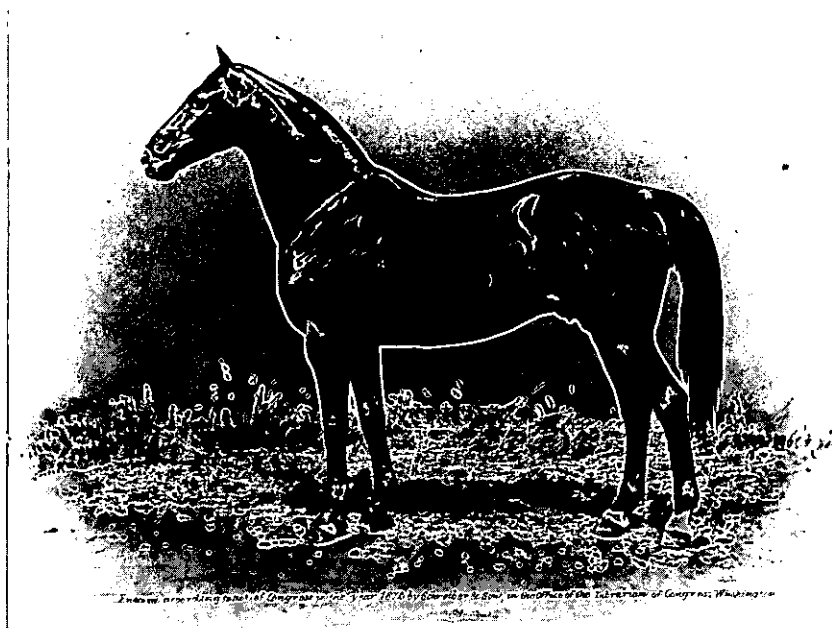
Therefore, it is not surprising that R.A. authorized Viley to ransom the famous colt at any price. At dawn the next morning, 23 October, Major Viley was joined by Zachariah B. Henry and Colonel "Zeke" Clay as he rode through Versailles. The three men followed the raiders for nearly forty miles⁴⁸ and finally overtook them near Bloomfield in Nelson County.⁴⁹ As a ploy to elicit information more readily about the whereabouts of the men they were pursuing, one of the men claimed to be "the uncle of the man who had been wounded who much desired to see him."⁵⁰ The three weary men soon happened upon two mounted guerrillas and quickly recognized that one of the them, believed to have been Mundy, was riding Asteroid. In response to Major Viley's salutation, both guerrillas immediately drew their pistols and, for a moment, it appeared that the long chase would end in tragedy. But then Viley began to parley with Asteroid's rider, telling him that the horse he was riding had been a pet and asking him to relinquish it. The guerrilla stoutly refused, "declaring the horse to be the best he ever rode, but finally, not knowing the colt's value, agreed to release it for \$250" (or \$300 depending on which account one reads), which was the approximate value of the horse that the guerrilla had lost, "on the condition that Major Viley would later furnish him with another horse" which was to be as good a mount. Viley wrote the man a check, and, surprisingly, the guerrilla turned Asteroid over to Viley unharmed. Viley later identified the man as Sue Mundy.⁵¹

48 Bowmar, *Giants of the Turf*, 16; "Fine Weather and Exciting Sport Mark Morris Park," *Turf, Field and Farm*, 25 October 1902, p. 1026.

49 "From Louisville," *Chicago Tribune*, 2 November 1864, p. 1.

50 "The Stealing and Recovery of Asteroid," *Wilkes' Spirit of the Times*, 19 November 1864, p. 185.

51 Bowmar, *Giants of the Turf*, 16; "Stories of Maj. Warren Viley," *Woodford Sun*, 30 January 1902, p. 1; "Story of Woodburn," *Lexington Morning Herald*, 27 January 1898, p. 3; Hervey, *Racing In America*, 330; "The Stealing and Recovery of Asteroid," *Wilkes' Spirit of the Times*, 19 November 1864, p. 185. The article entitled "Stories of Maj. Warren Viley" states that it was Sue Mundy who came to Stonewell Farm to collect the horse Viley had promised him after the recovery of Asteroid. Then the guerrillas rode to Nantura Farm and killed Adam Harper that same night. See also "Rebel Outrages by Guerrillas in Kentucky — Murder of John [actually Adam] Harper



Asteroid

Keeneland Library, Lexington, Kentucky

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— Asteroid Recovered," *Wilkes' Spirit of the Times*, 12 November 1864, p. 169; "Fine Weather and Exciting Sport Mark Morris Park," *Turf, Field and Farm*, 25 October 1902, p. 1026; "More Guerrilla Atrocities — Southern Finale of the Period of Prompt Retaliation," *Chicago Tribune*, 5 November 1864, p. 1.

⁵² Bowmar, *Glants of the Turf*, 16; "Stories of Maj. Warren Viley," *Woodford Sun*, 30 January 1902, p. 1; "Rebel Outrages by Guerrillas in Kentucky - Murder of John Harper — Asteroid Recovered," *Wilkes' Spirit of the Times*, 12 November 1864, p. 169.



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was \$10,000, but many considered him to be worth much more than that.⁵³

Aware of the danger that continued to hover around the farm and committed to protect his horses, Alexander decided to post armed guards. In March 1865 Alexander referred to the raid, subsequent recovery of Asteroid, and preparations against future raids in a letter to Henry Charles Deedes, who had married Alexander's sister Mary Belle and resided in England:

I believe you heard of the first guerrilla raid made upon me by five rascals who took a no. [sic] of my horses, who were pursued and from whom we took all but my racehorse, Asteroid. I got a couple of my neighbors, very resolute men, to go into the hills and get the horse which was alone with little cost, though at some risk; my friends paying the price of a good hack for my horse which the rascals had stolen.

On that occasion, all of the horses had been recovered, but Alexander had:

armed my men and kept six armed watchmen, besides the laborers who could be called into service making in all eighteen to twenty well armed men when all collected. My watchmen were placed at three points to give the alarm, two at the stables, my training stable and stallins [stallions] stable and two at my house.⁵⁴

Shortly after Mundy's raid on Woodburn the infamous William Clarke Quantrill, who had been in hiding in Missouri since General Sterling Price's raid and subsequent retreat on 2 December 1864, decided to regroup his guerrilla force and leave Missouri. Some believe that Quantrill's purpose for leaving Missouri was to travel to Washington to assassinate President Lincoln, but others believe that he realized that the war was lost and went to surrender with General Robert E. Lee.⁵⁵ However, most historians believe that these claims

53 "From Louisville," *Chicago Tribune*, 2 November 1864, p. 1.

54 R.A. Alexander to Henry Charles Deedes, 4 March 1865, Woodburn Farm Records, King Library.

55 William Elsey Connelley, *Quantrill And the Border Wars* (New York: Pageant

are romantic embellishments and that his move and subsequent exploits in Kentucky were simply his continuation of the guerrilla war in a different theater.⁵⁶

Quantrill led his contingent of forty-eight raiders,⁵⁷ which included Frank James, Jim Younger, Dick Burnes, Bud Pence (all of later outlaw fame), and A.D. "Donnie" Pence⁵⁸ (who later became the sheriff of Nelson County) into Kentucky. The guerrillas wore Federal uniforms and passed themselves off as part of the Fourth Missouri Cavalry (a fictitious unit) which had been sent to Kentucky to hunt guerrillas. Quantrill, posing as a "Captain Clarke,"⁵⁹ was dressed in the captain's uniform. Quantrill had killed a Captain Clark of the Second Colorado Cavalry in 1863 and had stolen the commission.⁶⁰ By 1863 the Union uniform had been standardized; with minor alterations one cavalry captain's uniform could easily be substituted for that of another cavalry company.

Book Company, 1956), 457-58; Mark Mayo Boatner III, *The Civil War Dictionary* (New York: David McKay Company, 1976), 669-71, 675; Jay Monaghan, *Civil War on the Western Border, 1854-1865* (Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown and Company, 1955), 346; Richard S. Brownlee, *Grey Ghost of the Confederacy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968), 230, 231.

56 Albert Castel, *William Clarke Quantrill - His Life and Times* (Columbus, Ohio: The General's Books, 1992), 201.

57 "Guerrilla Quantrill," *The Daily Capital* [Topeka, Kansas], 14 April 1881, information provided by the manuscript department of the Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, Kansas.

58 Letters of A.D. Pence, 14 December 1887 and others not dated to William W. Scott, written from Samuels Depot, Kentucky, Regional History, Manuscripts Collection 75, Box 2, folder 57 (not dated) and folder 14a (1887), Kansas Collection, University of Kansas, Topeka, Kansas (hereafter Kansas Collection).

59 Castel, *William Clarke Quantrill*, 203; Account of Ben R. Kirkpatrick, Hodgenville, Kentucky, 10 October 1936 describing "The Career of William Clark[e] Quantrill in Kentucky and His Ending," manuscript collection, miscellaneous, "Kirkpatrick," Kansas State Historical Collection, Topeka, Kansas. In *The War of the Rebellion; A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Harrisburg, Pa.: The National Historical Society, 1971 [hereafter O.R.]), Quantrill is identified as "Clarke." Among many specific references, see "Report of Gen. Hobson, written by Lieutenant and Acting Assistant Adjutant-General Thomas A. Howes," O.R., Series I, Vol. XLIX, Part 1, pp. 17-18, 612, 634-35. See also James Wakefield to William W. Scott, 13 June 1888, Manuscripts Collection 75, box 2, folder 21, Kansas Collection.

60 "Quantrill The Guerrilla," *Louisville Courier-Journal*, 29 April 1874, p. 2.

On 1 January 1865 the small force crossed the Mississippi River near Devil's Elbow, sixteen miles north of Memphis. The band then traveled through Big Creek, Portersville, Covington, Tabernacle, Brownsville, Bell's, Gadsden, Humbolt, Milan, McKenzle, and Paris; finally it crossed the Tennessee river into Kentucky. The Kentucky route of the guerrillas took them through Cadiz and Hopkinsville, and by 28 January they had reached Chaplinton (Chaplin).⁶¹ On 29 January at 9:00 a.m. Quantrill with thirty-five of his men entered Danville on the Houstonville Turnpike to raid the town for horses and supplies and to destroy the telegraph office. Several of them wore:

new Federal overcoats and the leader had a regulation coat with two bars on the shoulder under his overcoat. . . while Captain Clark[e] (for so he called himself) was in the saloon, his men still sitting in line on their horses talked freely with citizens - They said they were Missouri troops, I think they said "The 3d Missouri Cavalry" [actually the 4th].

When Quantrill was accosted by Lieutenant Thomas P. Young:

Clark[e] opened his overcoat and pointing to his shoulder straps answered "are they not enough?" "No," replied Young, "any damned guerrilla could wear shoulder straps, let me see your papers." Captain Clark[e] smiled quaintly and after glancing at Young in a pitying way called out to one of his men, "John, come here." John obeyed. When Clark[e] said, "This gentleman wants to see our papers," John lifted out a very long revolver from under his overcoat and shoving the business end of it in Lieut. Young's face, said "God damn you, here's our papers." Just then Capt. Clark[e] gave a command in a loud tone, when all his men dropped every bit of their amiability, drew their pistols, and savagely ordered all the citizens into line - Captain Clark[e] then addressing Young said, "Behave yourself, Sir and you will not be harmed, but I will have no more of your foolishness. . . ." He came to where the citizens were in line and said, in a well modulated pleasant voice, "We are not guerillas [sic] gentlemen, we are Confederate troops and our object is to get quietly out of the state; if any of my men take anything from you report him to

61 J.A. Dacus, *Illustrated Lives And Adventures of Frank And Jesse James And The Younger Brothers, The Noted Western Outlaws* (New York and St. Louis, 1882), 70.

me. . . ." It was then, that Mr. McMurray approached your correspondent [Alex Anderson] and whispered, "Do you know who commands these men? It is nobody but Quantrill, I have seen him often in Missouri."⁶²

One account of the raid described how the guerrillas, "helped themselves to boots and shot several of their own horses."⁶³ Quantrill then ordered the telegraph office destroyed. The band left on the Perryville Pike at 11:15 a.m. and then headed north pursued by "Captain [James H.] Bridgewater, with seventy or eighty Federals who overtook them about four miles from Harrodsburg in Mercer County, where a fight occurred." During the skirmish that night, twelve of the forty-eight original raiders were killed or captured.⁶⁴

Having lost part of the original contingent, Quantrill resolved to "quit playing Federal," and Quantrill's band dropped all pretense and no longer claimed to be the troops of the Fourth Missouri Cavalry. Aware that Mundy was in the area, he inquired about him, and the farmer who had been harboring Quantrill during this time agreed to negotiate a meeting with Mundy the next morning, 30 January, at Taylorsville.⁶⁵

The rolling countryside of Spencer and Nelson counties enabled the guerrillas to hide easily. Towns in these counties were really villages. These counties were also favored by the guerrillas because they contained pockets of Confederate sympathizers who protected them and gave them information, food, and other assistance necessary for their survival.

Guerrilla activity continued to increase in the area, and heavy action was reported throughout January. Although guerrilla actions were viewed as independent, random raids, the guerrillas were well organized and were working cohesively with a large-scale

62 Letter of Alex Anderson, Danville, Kentucky, 10 July 1888, box 2, folder 24, Kansas Collection.

63 "Guerrilla War in Kentucky," *Chicago Tribune*, 1 February 1865, p. 2.

64 *Ibid.*, 2; "Report of Thomas A. Howes to Mahoney," O.R., Series I, Vol. XLIX, Part 1, p. 612; "Report of Capt. William L. Cross, Assistant Superintendent, U.S. Military Telegraph," *ibid.*, 18; "Report of Gen. Speed S. Fry," *ibid.*, 612.

65 "Quantrill The Guerrilla," *Louisville Courier-Journal*, 29 April 1874, p. 2.

plan. Although it may never be clear exactly what objectives the guerrillas pursued, it is clear that the numerous raids led Federal troops away from the Quantrill-Mundy band, permitting it to attack Woodburn Farm without interference.

Quantrill was spotted again on 1 February teamed up with Sue Mundy who had been operating in the area of northern Shelby County and southern Henry County. All civility gone, Mundy and Quantrill launched small raids on the unsuspecting countryside in the area of Smithfield. There were a few, brief skirmishes. The hit-and-run tactics indicated that the primary objective was not to engage the enemy but to move quickly toward their target at Woodburn. The guerillas rode at night to avoid being seen.

Toward evening on 2 February, it began to rain lightly. The Quantrill-Mundy guerrillas continued to ride toward Georgetown. Colonel Simeon B. Brown reported from Mount Sterling that squads of guerrillas had ridden through Georgetown early that evening and were believed to be headed for Pond Gap.⁶⁶ Breaking up into squads was a frequent guerrilla tactic. Riding in squads made it harder for the Federals to track them because it made them separate their larger forces, thus making it easier for the guerrillas to reach their objective.

News reports identified the guerrillas as bands led by "Quantrill, Sue Mundy and [Henry] Magruder . . . [which] had been driven from Georgetown by the Federal forces."⁶⁷ The guerrillas had not been driven from the town. Even after being sighted at Georgetown, they slipped away from the Union forces again. The terrain around Georgetown consisted of wooded hills and hollows, sinkholes, and ravines crossed by winding roads. This rough landscape continued southward to Versailles and beyond; it provided good cover.

66 "Report of Simeon B. Brown," *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XLIX, Part I, p. 634.

67 "Affairs In Kentucky," *New York Times*, 5 February 1865, p. 1; "From Kentucky," *New York Daily Tribune*, 4 February 1865, p. 1; "From Kentucky," *Chicago Tribune*, 5 February 1865, p. 2.

Federal soldiers had no idea what Mundy, Quantrill, and Henry Magruder were planning. It was not until after the raid that it became clear that they were seeking fresh horses and heading for Woodburn Farm:

Feb 2 — 25 guerrillas under Capt. Sue Mundy (i.e. [alias] Jerome Clarke) and Quantrill dash into Midway, Woodford co. [sic], rob the citizens, and burn the railroad depot; thence visit the farm of R. Aitcheson Alexander, robbing him of 15 fine blooded horses.⁶⁸

All the precautions initiated after the first raid proved ineffectual when two files of soldiers "clad in federal overcoats," whom Alexander had "presumed" to be Union soldiers, rode into the kitchen yard of the main house and started toward the stables on the evening of 2 February. A watchman had given the alarm in time for the house to be secured and windows bolted, but Alexander was caught unprepared by the duplicitous game of cat-and-mouse by which the disguised men had gained access to his valuable animals.

With "gun in my hand and pistol in my belt," R.A. walked to the kitchen doorway and cried "halt" just as the column had ridden halfway past the door. They halted at once, and Alexander asked, "What will you have, gentlemen?" At first they pretended to want only "provender for 200 horses." Alexander protested that it was a "pretty large order" and that although he had provender, he did not have a "place to feed so many horses." Realizing that the ploy would not work, the guerrillas changed their story.

The men then identified themselves as a detachment that had been sent to "press" horses, but Alexander then asked the men to show him their orders. Upon his request the captain and the entire line drew their pistols, and the captain said, "This is our order." It was then that R.A. recognized the men as guerrillas.

R.A. was not a man accustomed to taking orders even when staring at the barrels of the raiders' guns. He was willing to risk his

68 Lewis Collins, *History of Kentucky* (2 vols.; Frankfort: Kentucky Historical Society, 1966; first published in 1874), 1: 154; "Guerrilla Warfare in Kentucky," *Richmond Daily Examiner* [Virginia], 8 February 1865, p. 1.

life to protect his horses and farm; he began to stall for time and continued this tactic during the raid.

Alexander first threatened the men with a fight with his own handful of watchmen by telling the captain, "Well, I suppose if you are bound to have the horses there is no necessity for a fight about it, but if you are disposed to have a fight, I have some men here and we will give you the best fight we can." Unknown to R.A., however, the guerrillas had planned the raid carefully and had a card of their own to play. The guerrillas had a hostage with them — Captain Willa Viley. Sue Mundy knew about the Vileys' relationship with R.A. since the ransom of Asteroid by Warren Viley in November, so they took him hostage to ensure that R.A. would surrender his horses without resistance.⁶⁹

During the ride through the Midway area prior to the raid at Woodburn, the guerrillas had stopped at the home of Thomas Payne and had taken Payne's buggy horse from the stable. Captain Willa Viley, who had been visiting Payne at the time, was "exasperated at the outrage as he deemed it (then seventy-six [actually seventy-seven] years of age), he mounted a horse bareback in his morning-gown and boldly went in pursuit."⁷⁰

By 1902 the Viley hostage story had been greatly embellished and, according to the apocryphal legend printed by the *Woodford Sun*, the high-tempered Viley:

had flown into a rage when the guerrillas stole a valuable mare from his farm. It was stated that Viley with supernatural strength, got out of his deathbed, put on his clothes and a pair of bedroom slippers, forced the lid of his desk open with a gun stock [his wife had secured his guns to keep him at home because he would "die in the road from sheer weakness"], secured his pistol, went out and mounted his Grandson's pony that was hitched at the door with a child's saddle on its back and started after the guerrillas.

69 This description of the final raid on Woodburn is derived almost entirely from a letter from R.A. Alexander to his brother-in-law Henry Charles Deedes, 4 March 1865, Woodburn Farm Records, King Library.

70 "Willa Viley," *Kentucky Live Stock Record*, 2 April 1875, pp. 136-37.

Viley rode from Scott County to Woodford County and "finally overtook the horse thieves who agreed to surrender the horse if Viley showed them the way to the Kentucky River."⁷¹ According to Wilkes' *Spirit of the Times*:

Captain Viley, a venerable and respected gentleman of upwards of seventy five years of age and a member of the turf for a very long period, interposed. Viley told him [R.A.] that the Captain [Viley identified the commander as "Captain" since Quantrill was wearing a federal captain's uniform] had agreed to take but two horses and Mr. Alexander consented to this.⁷²

Viley, who had "always shown himself my friend," begged Alexander to surrender the horses, telling him, "Alexander, for God's sake let them have the horses. The Captain says he will be satisfied if you let him have two horses without a fight or any trouble."⁷³ Realizing the situation was to his disadvantage and that his friend's life was in danger, Alexander gave his word to surrender two horses and shook hands with the captain, who gave his name as "Marion," a fictitious name.⁷⁴ Alexander's account of the raid strongly suggests that "Captain Marion" was Quantrill.

The use of Viley as a hostage by the guerrillas appears to confirm that Mundy was at the Woodburn Farm raid, and *War of the Rebellion* records reveal that Mundy and Quantrill had joined forces by the evening of 2 February.⁷⁵ Therefore, one can deduce that Quantrill and Mundy rode together to the farm that night. The total number of guerrillas in the Magruder, Quantrill, and Mundy bands at the time of the raid is not known, but reports of "squads of guerrillas riding through Georgetown" suggest that all the guerrillas under the three leaders were in the area. Only Quantrill and his

71 "Stories of Maj. Warren Viley," *Woodford Sun*, 30 January 1902, p. 1.

72 "Another Raid on Mr. Alexander's Farm — Nannie Butler and Fourteen Other Horses Carried Off," *Wilkes' Spirit of the Times*, 18 February 1865, p. 393.

73 Alexander to Deedes, 4 March 1865, Woodburn Farm Records, King Library.

74 "Story of Woodburn," *Lexington Morning Herald*, 27 January 1898, p. 3.

75 See footnotes 65, 71, 72, 73, and O.R., "Report of H.M. Buckley," Series I, Vol. XILX, Part I, pp. 625, 635; "Report of P.T. Swaine to J.S. Butler," *ibid.*, 626; "Report of E.H. Hobson," *ibid.*, Series I, Vol. XILX, Part I, pp. 615-16.

men, accompanied by Magruder and Sue Mundy, actually rode to Woodburn. The rest may have acted as a rear guard as they waited for Magruder and Mundy to return to Midway. Mundy's previous visit to the farm could explain how the guerrillas knew so much about the Woodburn horses.

Other evidence that Quantrill and Mundy had raided Woodburn together came at the twenty-sixth reunion of the survivors of Quantrill's band on 14 September 1923, at Wallace's Grove near Kansas City, Missouri. George N. Noland was quoted as saying: "After the war they disfranchised us, so for years I registered at Independence as 'George N. Noland, one of Quantrill's horse thieves.'"⁷⁶ All of the Nolands (Bill, Henry, and Ed) rode with Quantrill's guerrillas and were with Quantrill in Kentucky in 1865. Bill and Henry Noland were killed during the skirmish at Harrodsburg, thirty-five miles from Woodburn, only four days before the raid. By 1923 the Woodburn raid had become famous, and George Noland's "horse thieves" statement was a boast that insinuated that he rode with Quantrill to Woodburn that night.⁷⁷

Seeing that the "scamps" had every advantage and determined to get out of the scrape as best he could, Alexander agreed to Viley's request. He offered to "shake hands in the bargain" and walked through the first rank and shook hands with Quantrill to confirm the agreement. As Alexander climbed the steps to return to the kitchen, however, Quantrill demanded that Alexander march out his men and deliver up his arms.

Alexander asserted that they had made a bargain, and if "I am to give you two horses, you shall have the horses, but I will neither march out my men or give up my arms." R.A. explained that he needed his arms for his own protection but offered to have them

76 "Survivors of Quantrill's Band," *Confederate Veteran Magazine*, November 1923, p. 438.

77 "Quantrill The Guerrilla," *Louisville Courier-Journal*, 29 April 1874, p. 2; Connelley, *Quantrill and the Border Wars*, 461; O.R., "Report of G.W. Alexander," Series I, Vol. XILX, Part 1, p. 18; "Report of E.H. Hobson," Series I, Vol. XILX, Part I, pp. 615-16; "Guerrilla War in Kentucky," *Chicago Tribune*, 1 February 1865, p. 2.

moved into the house. Quantrill warned R.A. that if a shot was fired, he would burn up the "whole place." Alexander replied that "if a gun should be fired, it would be his [Quantrill's] fault."

Only then did R.A., Daniel Swigert, the servants in the house, and the watchmen lay down their arms. As R.A. returned to the kitchen door Quantrill asked, "Where are those horses? I am in a hurry." Alexander pointed to the stable that was near the house and replied, "They are in the stable there." He then accompanied Quantrill and the band to the stable nearest the house which held only "a pair of thoroughbred mares well broken to harness, a thoroughbred horse . . . used as a saddle horse . . . and some 2 or 3 others of less value."

Upon arriving at the stable, R.A. told Quantrill that he would find one of the horses that he proposed to give him. Quantrill inquired if it was a "good one," and Alexander responded, "Yes, as good as could be found." Quantrill, however, was not fooled by R.A.'s offer of his lesser stock. He had obtained some detailed knowledge from Sue Mundy of Alexander's bloodstock, for he asked specifically for the "bald horse, meaning a horse with white in his face."

Alexander said that he had several such horses, and then Quantrill said, "I mean a horse known as the bald horse." R.A. saw at once that the "rascal" was "well informed." Alexander could see that he had been bested by Quantrill. In spite of his protestations that "the *bald horse* was a trotting horse . . . valuable to me but of comparatively little use to him" and that he had twenty horses better suited to his use, Quantrill demanded the horse. Alexander again argued that the horse was valuable only as a trotter "for which I could get a good price as a fast trotting horse." Quantrill, however, insisted, saying, "If the horse is valuable to you, he is valuable to me."

Alarmed, Alexander discovered that Quantrill had every intention of stealing his racehorses as well. Afraid of being taken hostage and held for ransom as he had been warned in a letter sent

to him "some two or three weeks before," Alexander directed the men to his trotting stable on a nearby hill.⁷⁸ Alexander claimed that F.V.R.L. Hull, one of his men, had the key and volunteered to go to search for it. Leaving the guerrillas at his riding stable he went directly to the crib house where his men stayed and found Hull there.

Hull, a native of Albany, New York, was the man who had driven Almont in the only two races the great sire ever ran.⁷⁹ Hull came to Woodburn in 1859 and worked in the trotting-horse stable under H.S. Avery, who was its superintendent in 1860.⁸⁰ Hull was later promoted to superintendent after Avery, and his *1864 Woodburn Farm Catalogue* is now in the collection of the Keeneland Library in Lexington. In an interview at Woodburn in 1898, Hull also described firsthand the events of the raid.⁸¹

Alexander hurriedly explained to Hull that Quantrill had asked for the bald horse and was so insistent on having him that he feared that they would "be obliged to give him to them." R.A. then instructed Hull that if it was possible he should give them any other horse in his place. The two then entered the kitchen yard, and Hull started for the stables shouting to R.A. that "Henry" had the key to the trotting stable. In reply Alexander stated that he would "look up Henry" and headed toward the main house. It is believed, although not proved, that this "Henry" was H.S. Avery.

Alexander passed two of the raiders sitting on their horses outside the kitchen door in the yard holding two other horses with empty saddles. They did not speak, but R.A. realized that the two empty saddles indicated that two of the guerrillas had entered the

78 Alexander to his brother "Alec" J. Alexander, 27 January 1865, Woodburn Farm Records, King Library. Also he mentions this letter in the 4 March 1865 letter to Henry Deedes, Woodburn Farm Records, King Library. The person who wrote the letter was not identified.

79 "Story of Woodburn," *Lexington Morning Herald*, 27 January 1898, p. 3.

80 Bowmar, *Giants of the Turf*, 9; "The American Stud Book-New 'Spirit' and Stock Agency-Purchasers from New York and Other Parts — Visit to Capt. A. Buford's-Zeb. Ward's-Jas. Ford's-Etc.," *Spirit of the Times*, 7 July 1860, p. 255.

81 Hull interview in "Story of Woodburn," *Lexington Morning Herald*, 27 January 1898, p. 3.

house. R.A. assumed that they had gone inside for some water and, hurrying by the two mounted men, entered the kitchen. He proceeded up the long passage from the kitchen to the dining room, where he found one of the soldiers with a cocked pistol standing at the fireplace next to Mrs. Daniel Swigert, who was holding an infant in her arms. Daniel Swigert and his family had been staying with Alexander at Woodburn since the earlier raid.

The other occupants of the room were a nurse, who also had a child in her arms, and "little Mary Swigert." The other soldier was standing at the far end of the room and had already collected a number of guns from throughout the house, including the rifle of Alexander's father. According to R.A., the guerrilla "seemed quite loaded down with guns." The women were "nearly frightened to death" by the soldiers, and when R.A. heard the man order Mrs. Swigert to get the rest of the arms he stepped into the room. R.A., standing between the two men, turned and faced the man with the pistol and firmly stated, "The Captain says, if I give him two horses without a fight or any trouble, I can keep my arms and I am going to keep them."

In response, the man turned and presenting his pistol at Alexander's breast and said, "Damn you, deliver up the rest of those arms or I'll shoot you." R.A. knocked the pistol away from his body and struggled with the man even though he could tell that the man was drunk and capable of anything. He tried to push him into the hall so that he could bolt the kitchen and hall doors, but when Alexander tried to trip him, both men fell into the hallway. Alexander pinned the guerrilla to the floor. As the guerrilla tried to free himself from Alexander, he called for his companion to shoot Alexander for "he was killing him." In answer the fellow replied, "He is not armed. He cannot hurt you much." As the two men rose together, Alexander retained his hold "encircling him just at the elbow joint so as to pinion him."

During the guerrilla's efforts to get away he again called out to the other man to shoot R.A. The second guerrilla then called out, "Let him go Mr. Alexander." Alexander protested, "I will not let him

go. He will shoot me as I have no arms." Realizing that the man could get away Alexander struck out, "giving him the benefit of my knee a second time."

As two men fell again to the floor, the soldier's pistol went off when his hand struck against an iron safe in the hall.⁸² The man yelled out that he had broken his arm, but this was not the case. Alexander could not hold the guerrilla down, and the two rose again. As they gained their feet, the second man said, "Let him go!" The guerrilla gave Alexander his word that he would protect him. Alexander reluctantly let the man go, but as he did so he gave him a shove so that "he [the guerrilla] went through the door towards the kitchen." The second guerrilla, still carrying "two guns and four pistols," stepped between the two men and kept the other guerrilla moving towards the kitchen.⁸³

As they disappeared from the passageway, R.A. followed quickly and bolted the two doors in the hallway. He returned to the dining room and told Mrs. Swigert not to open the door "on any account . . . if the fellows should return and inquire for me . . . say that I had gone out." Having done this, R.A. went to the front part of the house and out to the upper part of the garden. He hoped that from this vantage point he could see where the guerrillas were. It had begun to grow dark; R.A. could see that they had built a fire in front of the trotting stables and were removing the horses. He raced to the remote stable where his prized Lexington was housed and told his man to remove the most valuable horses. He also dispatched a boy to the training stable to tell Ansel, the trainer, to remove Asteroid and other prize horses:

82 Telephone conversation with Dr. A.J. Alexander, Lexington, Kentucky, 27 June 1983. There is a family tradition that the gun was discharged during the struggle.

83 "Another Raid on Mr. Alexander's Farm - Nannie Butler and Fourteen Other Horses Carried Off," *Wilkes' Spirit of the Times*, 18 February 1865, p. 393.

After the guerrillas [Frank James among them] entered the trotting stable, they informed Hull, who had just arrived at the barn after leaving Alexander in the kitchen yard, that they were going to be taking some horses, and if he had any objection they would kill him.⁸⁴

The guerrillas took their pick of the valuable horses while Alexander's men stood by helplessly. The trainer and others pleaded in vain with the man who took Abdallah to select another horse since:

Abdallah, at the time, was fat, bare footed, and only a few days before his feet had been trimmed and pared down. No horse on the place could have been selected so little fitted to endure a long hurried ride over flinty roads. But the more Mr. Hull tried to convince his unwelcome visitors of this fact the more determined were they, to take the stallion which they did and rode the magnificent son of Katie Darling to his death.⁸⁵

Considerable money was offered by Alexander's men to protect the horses; Quantrill was offered \$10,000 not to take Bay Chief, but all offers were refused.⁸⁶

Before the boy could reach the training stable with the message, the guerrillas had already removed four horses. At the stable one of the guerrillas asked for Asteroid by name. Because it was dark the shrewd trainer Ansel pulled a switch and substituted an inferior horse. The substitution was a brave act because the guerrillas demanded the horses at gunpoint,⁸⁷ but in Alexander's words Ansel's actions had "saved the best horse in the stable."⁸⁸ The "counterfeit" horse was the 1862 colt by Star Davis out of Lindora.⁸⁹

Although Asteroid had been saved by the quick-thinking trainer, the guerrillas removed two colts and two other horses, including the three-year-old colt Norwich, a full brother to Norfolk, the

84 "Story of Woodburn," *Lexington Morning Herald*, 27 January 1898, p. 3.

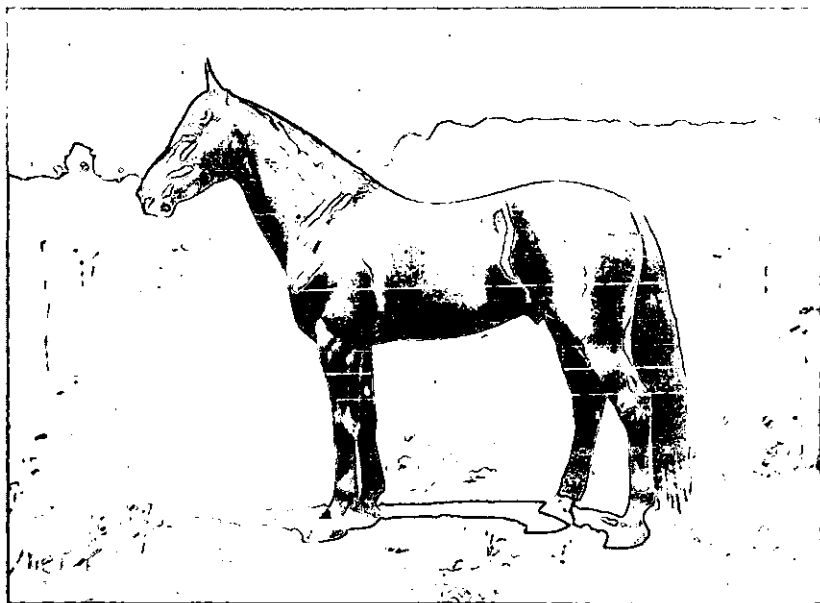
85 Ibid.

86 "Quantrill The Guerrilla," *Louisville Courier-Journal*, 29 April 1874, p. 2; Thomas Shelby Watson, *The Silent Riders* (Louisville, Ky., 1970), p. 35.

87 Bowmar, *Giants of the Turf*, 16.

88 Alexander to Deedes, 4 March 1865, Woodburn Farm Records, King Library.

89 "Mr. Alexander's Horses," *Wilkes' Spirit of the Times*, 18 March 1865, p. 41.



Abdallah

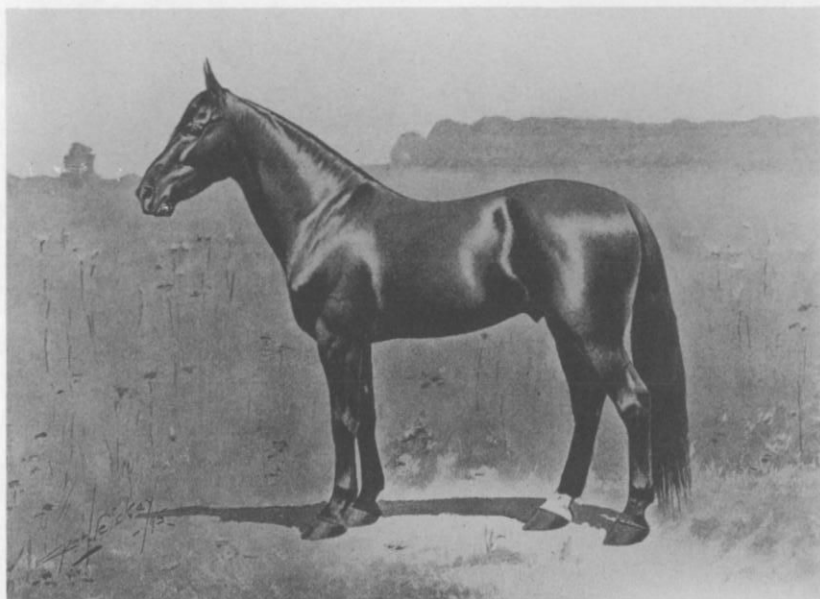
Keeneland Library, Lexington, Kentucky

three-year-old filly Nannie Butler by Lexington, and an unidentified four-year-old mare. They also removed four horses from the trotting stable, four from the riding horse stables, and three more "from various places, making 16 horses in all."⁹⁰

Having robbed Woodburn of its valuable horses, the guerrilla band headed to Midway on their fresh mounts, taking Viley with them. When it reached the farm of F.P. Kinkead, listed as Cane Spring on the 1861 map of the Midway area, the exhausted Viley fell from his horse.⁹¹ The guerrillas left him where he fell and rode

⁹⁰ Alexander to Deedes, 4 March 1865, Woodburn Farm Records, King Library.

⁹¹ "Willa Viley," *Kentucky Live Stock Record*, 2 April 1875, pp. 136-37; "Topographical Map of the Counties of Bourbon, Fayette, Clark, Jassamine, and Woodford, Ky. From actual Surveys and corrected by E.A. & G.W., Hewitt Published by Smith, Gallup & Co., N.Y." (1861), original at the Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort, Kentucky.



Abdallah

Keeneland Library, Lexington, Kentucky

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on.⁹² Viley was:

carried to his son's home [Stonewall farm]. He died a short time afterward [on 18 March 1865 shortly after his birthday at age seventy-eight], his death being hastened by the exposure of that ride.⁹³

The guerrillas burned the railway depot and the telegraph office at Midway to delay pursuit. While these buildings burned, the guerrillas robbed stores and citizens on the streets, taking their watches and money. They then started down Versailles Pike (Highway 62) at a full gallop, riding past Stonewall Farm.⁹⁴

Since Quantrill and Mundy were able to leave Georgetown, raid Woodburn, and burn the Midway depot and telegraph office unmolested, it is obvious that the Federals had no clear idea where the guerrillas were or what their plan of action might have been. Meanwhile, a messenger had been sent from Woodburn Farm to Lexington to sound the alarm and to report the stolen horses. Learning that guerrillas were in Midway, a company of the Twelfth Ohio Cavalry, which was encamped in Lexington adjacent to the old Lexington Association racetrack, gave pursuit.

Official correspondence reveals in detail what then occurred.⁹⁵ After the raid at Midway, Mundy and Quantrill rode through Versailles and headed in the direction of Lawrenceburg, probably taking the Lawrenceburg Road for a few miles and then cutting

92 "Another Raid on Mr. Alexander's Farm," *Wilkes' Spirit of the Times*, 18 February 1865, p. 393.

93 "Stories of Maj. Warren Viley," *Woodford Sun*, 30 January 1902, p. 1.

94 "Affairs In Kentucky," *New York Times*, 5 February 1865, p. 1; "From Kentucky," *Chicago Tribune*, 5 February 1865, p. 2; "Guerrilla Warfare in Kentucky," *Richmond Examiner* [Virginia], 8 February 1865, p. 1.; G. Glenn Clift, "The Events of the Civil War In Kentucky, Woodford County, 2 February 1865," unpublished manuscript arranged by counties, 1961, Kentucky Historical Society; Lewis Collins, *History of Kentucky*, I: 154; O.R., "Report of Brigadier General Hobson, written by Thos. A. Howes," Series I, Vol. XILX, Part I, p. 634-35; *ibid.*, "Report to Commanding Officer Crab Orchard from Brigadier General E.H. Hobson," Series I, Vol. XILX, Part I, p. 633; *ibid.*, "Report to Major Mahoney, Lebanon, Ky.," Series I, Vol. XILX, Part I, p. 635.

95 Bowmar, *Giants of the Turf*, 16.

across country into Anderson County to avoid the Union scouting parties which were on the lookout for them. Efforts to track them were in vain, and, indeed, at times their efforts appeared comical since unit commanders seemed unable to decide where reinforcements were needed; but the chase continued.⁹⁶

General Edward Henry Hobson, commander at Lexington, assumed that the guerrillas would probably "return through the country to Bloomfield" and sent the Twelfth Kentucky from Eminence to intercept them.⁹⁷ He then ordered the commanding officer at Crab Orchard to take part of his mounted force to move "to Danville since [the guerrillas] moved in the direction of Versailles" and to pick up troops from different points along the way.⁹⁸

One reason the raiders eluded capture was that soon after the raid on Woodburn, the Quantrill-Mundy band had split up to quell bickering and fighting among its members. One of Quantrill's men, Peyton Long, left with Sue Mundy and Magruder and was later killed in a skirmish with Captain Bridgewater's forces at Beulahville in Meade County. Although it is not quite clear where the guerrillas separated, it is believed that the break occurred in the vicinity of Lawrenceburg or Versailles and that they broke up into several groups.⁹⁹

96 O.R., "Report to Commanding Officer Crab Orchard from Brig. Gen. E.H. Hobson," Series I, Vol. XILX, Part I, p. 633; *ibid.*, "Report to Brig. Gen. Speed Smith Fry," Series I, Vol. XILX, Part I, p. 633; *ibid.*, "Report of Brig. Gen. Hobson to General D.W. Lindsey," Series I, Vol. XILX, Part I, p. 633; *ibid.*, "Report to Lt. Col. J.G. Rogers," Series I, Vol. XILX, Part I, p. 635; *ibid.*, "Report to Maj. Mahoney," Series I, Vol. XILX, Part I, p. 635; *ibid.*, "Report of Brig. Gen. Hobson, written by Thomas Howes," Series I, Vol. XILX, Part I, p. 635.

97 O.R., "Report of Brig. Gen. Hobson, written by Thomas A. Howes to Lt. Col. Rogers," Series I, Vol. XILX, Part I, p. 634.

98 O.R., "Report to Commanding Officer at Crab Orchard from Brig. Gen. E.H. Hobson," Series I, Vol. XILX, Part I, p. 633.

99 Connelley, *Quantrill And the Border Wars*, 464; "Quantrill The Guerrilla," *Louisville Courier-Journal*, 29 April 1874, p. 2; O.R., "Report of Brig. Gen. Hobson, written by Thomas A. Howes to Lt. Col. Rogers," Series I, Vol. XILX, Part I, p. 634.

The guerrillas moved swiftly through the rolling countryside and managed to go underground for the night. Speed served them well, at least temporarily. Quantrill made camp about twelve miles from Woodburn in the area of Lawrenceburg and spent the night on the "farm of Mr. Bush in a rough and hilly country."¹⁰⁰ Shortly before morning on 3 February, the band was attacked by the Woodford County Home Guards in Anderson County.¹⁰¹ Quantrill managed to mount Bay Chief and quickly became a "conspicuous mark for Federal bullets during the skirmish." The result was that Bay Chief was shot:

through the muzzle, through both thighs and one hock. In this condition he carried his rider two miles in the retreat, when the horse was so weakened by loss of blood, that a Federal cavalryman overtook them. His [pistol] being empty, the soldier aimed a blow at [Quantrill], but missing him lost his balance and fell from the horse. The guerrilla leader quickly saw his opportunity, jumped from Bay Chief, mounted the soldier's horse and escaped.¹⁰²

Four of Alexander's horses were recaptured after the skirmish, including Bay Chief. Bay Chief was so severely wounded, however, that he died about ten days later despite all efforts to save him.¹⁰³ Abdallah was also in this fight, but his rider escaped by plunging

100 Bowmar, *Giants of the Turf*, 16.

101 Krum, *Short Stories About Famous Saddle Horses*, 370-71; *American Cultivator* [Boston], 11 July 1865; "Story of Woodburn," *Lexington Morning Herald*, 27 January 1898, p. 3; Joseph Battell, *The American Stallion Register*, (Middlebury, Vt., 1909), 170; O.R., "Report of E.H. Hobson," Series I, Vol. XLX, Part I, pp. 650-51; S.W. Parlin, "The American Trotter," *American Horse Breeder*, 19 July 1904, p. 670.

102 Krum, *Short Stories About Famous Saddle Horses*, 370-71; "Quantrill The Guerrilla," *Louisville Courier-Journal*, 29 April 1874, p. 2. Alexander reported that Bay Chief suffered another wound in his back. See Alexander to Deedes, 4 March 1865, Woodburn Farm Records, King Library. See also McCarr, *Kentucky Harness Horse*, 82 and Hiram Woodruff, *The Trotting Horse of America* (New York, 1868), 73.

103 "Another Raid on Mr. Alexander's Farm," *Wilkes' Spirit of the Times*, 18 February 1865, p. 393; K.M. Haralambos, *The Byerley Turk* (London, England: Kenilworth Press Limited, 1990), 48.

him into a nearby river. Abdallah was left at Lawrenceburg where he was later found.

In his report to D.W. Lindsey, inspector and adjutant general, General Hobson took relish in the news that the guerrilla raids had been finally halted, and he hoped soon to have the men "killed or scattered."¹⁰⁴ Hobson had already been informed about the fight in which Bay Chief was shot from under Quantrill and Abdallah had been forced to swim across the river.

The victory was pyrrhic, however, for by 6 February it was reported that the "Press Williams' gang of guerrillas" had visited Leitchfield in Grayson County a few days before, and the following morning "twenty to thirty of Quantrill's mounted men" under the command of "Captain" Sam Jones had ridden into Leitchfield where "they appropriated a quantity of boots and shoes and whiskey, but left without doing much damage."¹⁰⁵

Quantrill with "about fifty men" were spotted about 10:00 a.m. at Saint Mary's station in Marion County moving toward Campbellsville.¹⁰⁶ Guerrillas, including Frank James, Magruder, Bud Pence, John Ross, and William Hulse, were involved in an attack on the road leading from Lebanon to Campbellsville in Taylor County.¹⁰⁷

Alexander's lengthy description of the events in his letter to Henry Charles Deedes leaves little doubt that the raid had a devastating effect from which he never fully recovered:

I have become careless in almost everything that requires exertion. Ill health and the condition of affairs in Kentucky had

104 O.R., "Report to D.W. Lindsey — Inspector and Adjutant General from Brig. Gen. E.H. Hobson," Series I, Vol. XILX, Part I, pp. 650-51.

105 "Guerrillas in Kentucky," *New York Times*, 7 February 1865, p. 8.

106 O.R., "Report of Major Mahoney," Series I, Vol. XILX, Part I, p. 676; *ibid.*, "Report to Col. F.N. Alexander from J.S. Butler," Series I, Vol. XILX, Part I, p. 677. In fact, the number was much smaller than fifty.

107 Watson, *Silent Riders*, 36, 37, 54, 62.

so depressing affect on me that I feel little interest in any sort of business and unless I am obliged to attend to it I generally try and trust the duty to someone else.¹⁰⁸

The horses represented a large investment, and their loss resulted in a financial setback. The "Bald Horse," Bay Chief, which Quantrill took was by Alexander's account worth at least fifteen thousand dollars and thus represented the greatest single loss. This was the price he had paid for Lexington. Alexander later stated that Bay Chief "was worth fully as much as any horse I own except Lexington himself . . . I doubt if I would have touched fifteen thousand dollars in greenbacks for him."¹⁰⁹

Abdallah 15 was the second most valuable trotting stallion taken. He was the first son of Hambletonian 10 to go to Kentucky¹¹⁰ but died before a single one of his offspring appeared on a racetrack. Abdallah was recovered at Lawrenceburg but died only days later. There are several accounts of Abdallah's death, and it is still not clear from the surviving accounts what happened. Therefore, all the accounts must be considered, since some of the information in each story is true. The most factual account states that Abdallah and Bay Chief, and likely the other Woodburn horses, were involved in the fight in Anderson County with the Home Guards of Woodford County. To make his escape, Abdallah's rider forced his hot and steamy mount to swim across an icy river. Abdallah was ridden as far as Lawrenceburg, just south of Frankfort and about sixteen miles from Woodburn, where he finally gave out. Hull was quoted as saying that Abdallah "was left in a deplorable condition . . . in a barn where there were sixteen other horses exhausted from being over ridden."¹¹¹ This account adds to the evidence that Abdallah was discovered with other horses in the barn and not by the roadside as many writers have claimed.¹¹² When Abdallah was

108 Alexander to Deedes, 4 March 1865, Woodburn Farm Records, King Library.

109 Ibid.

110 Hervey, *American Trotter*, 295.

111 "Story of Woodburn," *Lexington Morning Herald*, 27 January 1898, p. 3.

112 Ibid.

found, his hooves were bruised and bleeding, but he might have recovered if he had not been so hot when he swam the river. Pneumonia set in, and he died on 6 February 1865 in "Mr. Bush's barn" where he had been found.¹¹³ He was thirteen years old. Abdallah's loss was one of the "heaviest losses the breed of American trotter ever sustained. Despite his tragic early death, his blood is carried today by the majority of our best harness race horses."¹¹⁴ Abdallah was the peer of the best stallions this country has produced, and his needless loss was a great tragedy.¹¹⁵ Abdallah was "one of the most prepotent males that the standard breed has ever produced, a victim to the horrors of war."¹¹⁶

According to Alexander the third most valuable horse taken was the bay gelding, Norwich, a full brother to Norfolk, foaled 1862 by Lexington.¹¹⁷ At the time R.A. wrote his letter on 4 March 1865, Norwich "was still in the hands of the guerrillas when I last heard from home."¹¹⁸ Norwich was finally recovered on 3 June at Shelbyville.¹¹⁹ On 4 March Alexander reported that, "Six horses and mares are still missing including two which are dead and their value is not less than \$32,000."¹²⁰

On the other hand, Alexander's losses were not as great as they might have been, since Lexington, who eventually "led the American sire list an unsurpassed 16 times and stands with Stockwell and St. Simon in England as the greatest stallion in the nineteenth century," had been spared.¹²¹ If the raiders had "chanced to loot the thoroughbred stable and not the trotting stables, it might have

113 Bowmar, *Giants of the Turf*, 16; Hervey, *American Trotter*, 92; Parlin, "American Trotter," 670.

114 Hervey, *Racing In America*, 331.

115 "The Lessons of Twenty Years at Woodburn Farm, Kentucky," *Wallace's Monthly*, May 1879, p. 248.

116 Hervey, *American Trotter*, 92.

117 H.G. Crickmore, *Racing Calendars 1866, 1867* (New York, 1901), 30.

118 Alexander to Deedes, 4 March 1865, Woodburn Farm Records, King Library.

119 "Story of Woodburn," *Lexington Morning Herald*, 27 January 1898, p. 3.

120 Alexander to Deedes, 4 March 1865, Woodburn Farm Records, King Library.

121 Rhodemyre, "Woodburn Stud," 44.

been Lexington and Australian instead of Abdallah and Bay Chief that perished — a loss that would have staggered computation."¹²²

Lexington had become blind by 1856, and this saved him from the raiders. Even though Alexander had escaped the war with considerably more for which to be thankful than most southerners, the deaths of Abdallah and Bay Chief represented more than a financial loss but the loss of two great breeding stallions as well. We can agree, however, with Alexander when he observed: "We can console ourselves with the idea that it might have been far worse."¹²³

There can be little doubt that the mistreatment of his horses upset Alexander as much, if not more, than his financial losses. He was so distressed that he immediately decided to move his remaining stock to Illinois and Ohio. He decided to seek a safe haven for his horses in Illinois because he owned land and flour mills there — Black Hawk in Aurora and Airdrie Mills in Montgomery, both on the Fox River. The land and mills would provide for the basic needs of his horses.¹²⁴

During February 1865, Alexander sent Pilot Jr. and forty-two head of trotting breeding stock to Montgomery. He shipped the horses secretly by night on the Lexington and Frankfort Railroad from Spring Station which was a little over a mile from Woodburn Farm.¹²⁵

122 Hervey, *Racing In America*, 331.

123 Alexander to Deedes, 4 March 1865, Woodburn Farm Records, King Library.

124 For deeds to the property, see Kane County Recorder's Office [Geneva, Illinois], Book 80, p. 220; Book 89, p. 52; "Story of Woodburn," *Lexington Morning Herald*, 27 January 1898, p. 3; "Proposed Sale of Mr. Alexander's Horses," *Wilkes' Spirit of the Times*, 15 April 1865, p. 105; *ibid.*, "A Large Number of Thoroughbred and Trotting Horses For Sale," 15 April 1865, p. 109.

125 A farm ledger (used as a journal) kept by Alexander records a trip he made to Illinois in 1861 which includes his hand-drawn maps of some of the farms he visited. The ledger is in the Woodburn Farm Records, Woodburn Farm; "Story of Woodburn," *Lexington Morning Herald*, 27 January 1898, p. 3. Alexander's affairs "extended to Chicago, where he was the owner of a very considerable landed estate, which under the advice of his brother-in-law, Mr. [James] Breckenridge Waller of Lake View, he had from time to time acquired." See "Death of an Useful Man," *Chicago Tribune*, 6 December 1867, p. 2.

On 30 April Alexander shipped Lexington, Australian, and forty-eight to fifty of his best thoroughbred breeding stock to a farm near Williamsville, Illinois, in Sangamon County north of Springfield. Alexander shipped over one hundred horses to Illinois, his racing string (stable) to the Buckeye Race Track in Cincinnati, Ohio, and yet another group of horses to "maternal relatives" in Ohio. This left only his less valuable horses and young stock at Woodburn.¹²⁶

The runners sent to Cincinnati included Asteroid, Asterick, Bay Flower, Ansel, Bay Dick, Netty Viley, Merrill, Lancaster, Norway, and others which made up Alexander's racing string for the summer of 1865. He continued to race his stable throughout the 1865 season from May to October. These racers as listed in the 1865 *Racing Calendar* ran at tracks in St. Louis, Missouri; Louisville, Kentucky; Cincinnati, Ohio; Paterson, New Jersey; and Lexington, Kentucky. R.A. ended his racing season at Louisville with a string of sixteen horses led by Asteroid.¹²⁷

It is not known exactly how or when Alexander's horses were returned from Illinois and Ohio to Woodburn Farm, but it is generally believed that most of the breeding stock were returned in August 1865 by Daniel Swigart.¹²⁸ Alexander had done everything in his power to protect his horses. Although outlaw bands of ex-guerrillas still existed, Alexander did not apparently fear future raids. He no doubt took into consideration that winter was approaching and wished to move the horses before the first snows.

By the summer of 1867 Alexander's health began to alarm his friends and family. He had been a slender, somewhat frail-looking

126 Hervey, *Racing In America*, 331; "Story of Woodburn," *Lexington Morning Herald*, 27 January 1898, p. 3; "Mr. Alexander's Horses," *Spirit of the Times*, 18 March 1865, p. 41.

127 "The Fall Meetings of 1865. Horses Up In Training In Kentucky," *Turf, Field and Farm*, 9 December 1865, p. 89.

128 Alexander to "Alec" J. Alexander, 5 August 1865, Woodburn Farm Records, King Library.

man all his life, although he "never spared himself and was incessantly active."¹²⁹ He had begun to lose his health by 1865.¹³⁰ He seems to have become depressed; his spirit had been broken. The stress of the war, the worry of the raids, the loss of his prize horses, and the financial anxiety of moving the horses to Illinois and Ohio and back to Kentucky began to take their toll. It would later be reported that:

for two years past his friends have seen a marked change — never well, but still on the move. He seemed absorbed in his pursuits, and he followed them with an unsparing energy, as if life was too short to reach the goal he had assigned himself. He seemed to be aware, and often said, that his life would not be a long one, and that he would never reach fifty, and he seemed anxious to crowd within its short space all he desired to do. He never spared himself, always on the move¹³¹

In November 1867, he became seriously ill and died suddenly on 1 December at his beloved Woodburn Farm at the age of forty-eight. He was reported to have died of "no disease . . . but of prostration." His last words were reported to have been: "There is nothing true, but Heaven."¹³² He was laid to rest in the beautiful family plot in the Frankfort Cemetery which overlooks the river at Frankfort, Kentucky. A.J. Alexander inherited Woodburn Farm in accordance with the "express dying wish of his brother," and Daniel Swigert, his cousin by marriage, purchased a division of his racing stable.¹³³

¹²⁹ Hervey, *Racing In America*, 332.

¹³⁰ Alexander complained about poor health in his letter to Deedes, 4 March 1865, Woodburn Farm Records, King Library.

¹³¹ "Robert Aitcheson Alexander," *Turf, Field and Farm*, 14 December 1867, p. 369.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ "The Woodburn Programme," *ibid.*, 28 December 1867, p. 408. Swigert had been farm superintendent since 1862. R.A. Alexander's will is a highly detailed document. See Will of Robert Spruell [Spruel] Crawford Aitcheson Alexander, 21 March 1860, Scottish Record Office, Edinburgh, Scotland, record number, ref: SC70/4/116, pp. 680-713; inventory number, ref: SC70/1/140, pp. 449-64. In addition to the spellings given above, Spruel also appears in some documents as Spreul and Spreule.

Although he had never married, he still left a heritage that has endured through his breeding of racehorses. He had worked long hours on a reliable compilation of thoroughbred genealogies, which ultimately became the official *American Stud Book*. The first double volume of the *American Stud Book* was dedicated to him when it appeared in 1873. The dedication read:

As an Humble Mark of Respect/ For the /Improvement of the
Blood Horse/ and who/ Earnestly Strove to Place the Sports of
the Turf Above Reproach/ this/ Work, That has Required the
Labor of a Lifetime/ Is dedicated / To the Late Robert Aitcheson
Alexander/ of Woodburn, Kentucky.¹³⁴

He was also the founder of *The American Trotting Horse*, although no surviving issues can be located at the Harness Racing Museum in Goshen, New York.¹³⁵

R.A. Alexander was an innovator with concepts of breeding which were ahead of his time and far advanced compared with breeders of the era. If he had lived longer, it is possible that "his advanced ideas . . . would have demonstrated their soundness and safety before all the world."¹³⁶ Perhaps, too, Woodburn's influence would have been more far-reaching, but Alexander still left Woodburn as one of the largest, most successful, and most influential breeding establishments in America.

Alexander was described as courteous, kind, polite, gentle, and modest. He was always a gentleman in victory as well as defeat.¹³⁷ He was:

one of the purest-minded and kindest hearted of men. He was
one that could not well be spared because his influence was

134 Hervey, *Racing In America*, 328; Sanders D. Bruce, *The American Stud Book* (33 vols.; New York, 1873), Vol. I, "Dedication."

135 Temple Bodley and Samuel M. Wilson, *History of Kentucky* (4 vols.; Chicago and Louisville, 1928), 3: 79.

136 "Woodburn Farm and Thoroughbred Blood," *Wallace's Monthly*, 16 June 1890, p. 242.

137 "Memories of Distinguished Kentucky Turfmen — R. Aitcheson Alexander," *Kentucky Live Stock Record*, 23 April 1875, p. 185.

calculated to promote the best interest of the country . . . He bred with judgement and care —the prosperity and high standing of the American turf today are largely due to his influence.¹³⁸

Today the trophy presented to the winner of the Preakness Stakes is the famous Woodlawn Vase, the oldest trophy in American sports. Alexander had buried the vase on the grounds of Woodburn during the Civil War to keep it safe from marauders.¹³⁹ The vase is one trophy that remained hidden from the raiders Quantrill and Mundy that rainy night at Woodburn.

Benjamin G. Bruce, founder of the *Thoroughbred Record*, was deeply moved by Robert A. Alexander's death and wrote of him at his passing:

Of great will and determination, whatever met the approval of his judgment was undertaken with a will, and his whole soul entered with enthusiasm into its accomplishment. He never waited to be led by others; he led the throng himself. By his actions and his works he should be judged, and it will be found that he has left his mark upon the age as her greatest breeder, a mark only for good. Some men pass through life like meteors and leave as slight an impression, while others seem to impenetrate themselves with the living and identify themselves with the future. This is eminently the case with Mr. Alexander, for his name is indelibly stamped with all the future stock in this country.¹⁴⁰

138 "Death of Robert Atcheson Alexander," *Turf, Field And Farm*, 7 December 1867, p. 360. An eloquent tribute to him appeared in the *Chicago Tribune* which concluded that he was "the soul of integrity and honor." See "Death of an Useful Man," *Chicago Tribune*, 6 December 1867, p. 2.

139 "Woodlawn Association - Challenge Vase, On Bits In Sporting Circles," *Wilkes' Spirit of the Times*, 18 May 1861, p. 232; "The Woodlawn Vase," *Thoroughbred Record*, 17 March 1917, p. 159; "The Woodlawn Vase," *ibid.*, 23 March 1918, p. 151; *ibid.*, "Wilson Adds Woodlawn Vase to Preakness," 7 April 1923, p. 335; *ibid.*, "The Preakness And the Woodlawn Vase," 3 May 1930, p. 490; *ibid.*, "A Well-traveled Vase," 17 May 1986, p. 2477; "Woodlawn Vase," *Turf, Field and Farm*, 25 October 1902, pp. 1026-27; "A Challenge Vase For The Woodlawn Spring And Fall Meetings," *Wilkes' Spirit of the Times*, 18 May 1861, p. 232; "A Challenge Cup," *ibid.*, 30 June 1860, p. 269; "A Challenge Vase For The Woodlawn Spring and Fall Meetings," *ibid.*, 10 November 1860, p. 153; "Awards of Endearment," *Town And Country Magazine*, March 1988, pp. 207-210.

140 "Robert Atcheson Alexander," *Turf, Field and Farm*, 14 December 1867, p. 369; Hervey, *Racing In America*, 332.

Alexander was a man who "labored earnestly and hard to elevate the condition of the best types of the animal kingdom, believing that their elevation would have a refining influence upon mankind."¹⁴¹ In his efforts he:

did more to elevate racing not only in Kentucky, but throughout the United States, than any other. . . . He was, certainly, the brightest star in the racing firmament . . . One of the purest, best men whose presence ever graced a race track."¹⁴²

On 4 July 1993 Robert Aitcheson Alexander was inducted into the Immortal Room of The Harness Racing Museum & Hall of Fame at Goshen, New York, being recognized for helping to introduce the trotting horse into Kentucky and for his important breeding contributions to the trotting-horse breed. A photograph of his portrait will soon hang in the Hall of Fame.¹⁴³

American racing (both the standardbred and the thoroughbred industries) is forever indebted to Robert Aitcheson Alexander; his important influence is still felt today. For those who love the sport of the turf and the breeding of racehorses, we should remember this man who in adverse times and in a relatively short life contributed so much to the excellence of the breeds he loved.

Woodburn Farm no longer stands as a great breeding establishment; however, its heritage still survives. All of the 2,700 acres in Robert Alexander's original land grant continue to be owned and occupied by his descendants. And so it is that Robert Aitcheson Alexander's dream did not die with him but burned brightly in the decades following his death, settling into a gentle flickering flame that abides today among the gently rolling pastures of the Bluegrass.

141 "Death of Robert Aitcheson Alexander," *Turf, Field And Farm*, 7 December 1867, p. 360.

142 "Memories of Distinguished Kentucky Turfmen — R. Aitcheson Alexander," *Kentucky Live Stock Record*, 23 April 1875, p. 185.

143 *Trotting Horse Museum News*, Summer 1993, p. 3. I had the honor to submit R.A.'s name for induction.