

The Harvester

Inducted 2011

It was the winter of 1908; the occasion the sale of a consignment of young harness bred stock from the famed Walnut Hall Farm in Kentucky. Included in this consignment was a three year old colt sired by Walnut Hall 2:08 $\frac{1}{4}$, a young sire which had raced to his record as a member of the farm stable; his dam, Notelet, daughter of Moko, head of the stud at Walnut Hall and famed as a sire of futurity winners. The colt was named The Harvester and he had been particularly well publicized by the famous retired trainer and reinsman John Splan who was close to the management of Walnut Hall. Although a practically unbroken colt, his breeding, individuality and natural speed made him the attraction of the sale and under the hammer he was sold for \$9,000, the successful bidder August Uihlein of Milwaukee in whose ownership he was to develop into one of the great trotters of all time.

At that time the veteran E. F. "Pop" Geers was rated as tops among trainers and drivers and The Harvester was placed in his stable, then in training at Billings Park, Memphis, Tennessee. The veteran trainer was in no hurry with the colt; he just worked him along carefully, pointing him towards the classic Kentucky Futurity at Lexington which he easily won, trotting to a record of 2:08 $\frac{3}{4}$ and he was never extended to his limit in any of his races. That he could have been beaten the three year old trotting record of 2:06 $\frac{3}{4}$ was the general belief but at that time records governed eligibility and his record of 2:08 $\frac{3}{4}$ left him eligible to the 2:09 trots of the following year.

In 1909 as a four year old The Harvester made another sensational campaign in the Geers stable. He won stakes at Windsor, Ont., Detroit, North Randall, where he trotted to a record of 2:06 $\frac{3}{4}$, at Buffalo; met the sensational Bob Douglas in the classic \$10,000 Charter Oaks at Hartford and won; won stakes at Syracuse and Columbus and won two heats in a stake at Lexington but was withdrawn on account of sickness, his only losing race in three seasons of campaigning.

In 1910 The Harvester won at Detroit, trotting in 2:04 $\frac{1}{4}$, beat the great Sonoma Girl in 2:03 $\frac{1}{4}$ at North Randall. At the Fort Erie track, across the river from Buffalo, he won the first two heats of his race easily, then in the third the management asked Mr. Geers to show them a really fast mile. The veteran driver was willing, drove the stallion far in advance of the field all the way and at the finish he was timed in 2:02 to establish a new world's record where he trotted in 2:03. At Syracuse he was started to beat his own 2:02 record and again established a new worlds record for stallions by trotting in

2:01 $\frac{1}{4}$. At Columbus he started against time and this time trotter in 2:01 to establish a new stallion record which remained as the best for six years.

C.K.G. Billings of Chicago, a wealthy amateur reinsman at that time, owned the two sensational trotters Uhlan 1:58, champion trotting gelding, and Lou Dillon 1:58 $\frac{1}{2}$, champion trotting mare, and he desired to acquire the champion stallion. The deal was finally made, the Chicagoan paying Mr. Uihlein \$50,000 for the great stallion, which later accompanied the Billings stars in a trip through Europe.

At the Moscow exhibition, the trotting-horse men of Russia looked upon The Harvester as a miracle of breeding, an imperial horse with whom they were ill-disposed to part. The Tsar's government, a patron of trotters, offered for him from the state treasure chest seventy-five thousand dollars. The offer was not accepted. The outflow of America's prime trotting horses to European stock farms and race tracks had by this time assumed proportions sufficient to arouse conservative American horsemen, anxious to maintain the quality of the standard-bred trotter in the land that had produced him, to the need of building dams against it. Mr. Billings, therefore, for patriotic as well as personal reasons refused to sell The Harvester at any price that might be named.

The Harvester was later installed at the head of the Virginia farm of Billings on the James River, Curles Neck Farm, where he was in the stud for several years. Deciding to retire from the breeding of horses Billings sent the majority of his stable, including The Harvester, to Madison Square Garden in New York to be sold in June, 1917, and after spirited bidding the great stallion was knocked down to the \$30,100.00 bid of Paul Kuhn of Terre Haute who owned the Forest Park Farm near that city. The Harvester sired a long list of fast performers, having a total of 207 trotters and 51 pacers to take standard records. The fastest of these are Abe Harvester 2:03 $\frac{3}{4}$, Bertha McGuire 2:04 $\frac{1}{4}$, Emma Harvester 2:04, Darvester 2:04 $\frac{1}{4}$, and Happy Harvester 2:05.

Nominated by Wayne Moldenhauer & Diane Kleinsteiber