



THE ROCKEFELLER MORGANS

*Turns out two families, one human, one animal
—each descended from a singularly indelible patriarch—
are intertwined in American history.*

BY SUE GREENALL

On occasion, visitors to Acadia National Park or the Rockefeller State Park Preserve might see a pair or four-in-hand of lovely bay Morgans out on the carriage roads. The turn-out will be impeccable and the horses well mannered and eye-catching, making on-lookers wonder just who they are?

They are the Rockefeller Morgans.

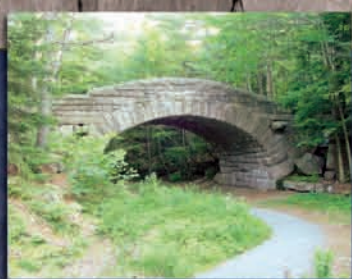
John D. Rockefeller, Jr. was considered an expert horseman and preferred driving horses to automobiles. His love of horses spurred the carriage road project on Mount Desert Island, Maine (Acadia National Park) which resulted in over 50 miles of road specifically designed for carriage travel graded to allow for easy pulling by horses, almost all of which is still maintained and used today. The carriage roads are part of the National Park and open to the public for hiking, biking and horse activity, with additional carriage roads, open to horses only, recently opened on Rockefeller family land. The stables at Seal Harbor, Maine,

built by John D., Jr., still house Rockefeller horses when the family is in town during the summer.

The most notable feature of the Rockefeller State Park Preserve, located in Pocantico Hills in Westchester County, New York, is the system of carriage roads built by John D. Rockefeller, Sr. and John D. Rockefeller, Jr. The venue's website describes the trails' sensitivity to their setting: "designed to complement the landscape, the carriage roads wind through wetlands, woodlands, meadows, and fields and past streams, rivers, and lakes. They traverse wood and stone bridges, including the first triple arch bridge in America, and are open to the public for hiking and horse activity."

"We have always had Morgans to drive," recalls David Rockefeller, the youngest of John D. Rockefeller, Jr.'s children and at 94, still driving his Morgans. "I believe my father became interested in the breed as driving horses and since they are such wonderful horses, we kept that tradition." That tradition has been embraced by others through

The collage of photos above illustrates the intertwining of the Rockefellers and Morgans in American history: Background details from the Rockefeller family seat Kykuit; in the mid-ground David and Peggy Rockefeller driving a Morgan pair; in the foreground, left, a sign post, a distinctive feature of the carriage roads the Rockefellers have established in a number of the nation's parks and land preserves; right, David Rockefeller, the last surviving member of "the Brothers' Generation" and the primary subject of this interview.



(Above) The John D. Rockefeller, Sr. family seat (Kykuit) in Westchester County, New York. (Inset, left) A garden at Kykuit. (Inset, right) One of the many carriage roads and bridges in Acadia National Park, Maine (Photo by Jan Dronzell). (Right) Scenes from a drive: David Rockefeller, with daughter Eileen, driving Victory's Propha-sea and Salem Willpower at Pocantico Hills, New York. Coachman Sem Groenewoud is in the red jacket.

the generations: David Rockefeller's late wife, Peggy, was an avid horsewoman; as was his nephew, Rodman Rockefeller; and Eileen R. Growald, David's youngest daughter, also drives Morgans.

"My first memory of driving horses was in Hot Springs, Virginia, and I was quite young," recalls Mr. Rockefeller. "I didn't drive that much until my wife, Peggy, developed a strong interest in the horses and she drove just about every day. She was so good I let her do most of the driving." Driven by her enjoyment of sharing her love of horses with others, Peggy Rockefeller organized several invitational drives at Hudson Pines, the family estate. An invitation meant a morning of driving along the Pocantico Hills carriage roads followed by a luncheon where drivers and guests could share their experiences of the day.

Peggy owned a number of Morgan horses that she both rode and drove. Petalbrook Yosemite, Sugar Cube, Beau Geddes and Dancer Of Kerry were past mounts. Millie McGibbon, whose husband Charlie was Peggy's first coachman at Hudson Pines, carried on her husband's duties after he died. Millie has fond

memories of the horses. "One of my favorite horses was Beau Geddes, a true example of the stout Morgan who always went true and gave us wonderful years of driving. He was quite the horse in harness." Most of the Morgans at Hudson Pines were already there when Millie came and she assumes that Peggy found and bought them. Others arrived while she was there. "We learned of a very nice horse, Sugar Cube, in Ohio and bought him sight unseen and never regretted it. We counted on Morgan folk to give good references and they always did." Millie continues, "Peggy found a horse, Petalbrook Yosemite (Petalbrook Sigmalect x Broadwall Medallia), aka 'Sam,' who she purchased from Cecil Ferguson. He was much greener than the rest so we put a lot of time into him and he turned out just fine. Peggy had a good eye.

"We were kept pretty busy as either Mr. or Mrs. Rockefeller drove every day even if they were at their apartment in New York City. We would get a call in the stable to have the horses ready, and we knew we had to hurry when we heard Mr. David's helicopter coming over from the city," cited Millie. "Off we would go for

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Dossier: A Bullet Point Reference

Compiled by Stephen Kinney

An historic fact revealed in the accompanying article: Chauncey Stillman, first secretary of the Morgan Horse Club and incorporator of the American Morgan Horse Register, and John D. Rockefeller, Sr., both of whom had offices in New York City, had the same great grandfather! Coincidence? Perhaps, but the family and the breed are intertwined in American history.

John D. Rockefeller, Sr. (1839–1937)

1855 – Rockefeller goes to work as a junior clerk in a Cleveland, Ohio office. He records in his ledgers his first donation of a nickel from his paycheck to a church.

1870 – Rockefeller founds Standard Oil, creating one of the first modern corporations, virtually monopolizing the U.S. supply, production and distribution of oil and gasoline. Within 15 to 20 years he will accumulate one of America's greatest private and corporate fortunes.

Prior to the 1910s Rockefeller was "...exhilarated by speed, racing his trotting horses down Euclid Avenue..."

Titan, The Life of John D. Rockefeller, Sr., by Ron Chernow



(1885)

John D. Rockefeller, Jr. (1874–1960) —Senior's only son

1888 – The American Baptist Education Society is formed marking the beginning of Rockefeller's extraordinary contribution to equalizing educational opportunities particularly in the South and West. Its secretary, Reverend Frederick Gates, is for decades a valued advisor to the Rockefellers on the subject of charity.



(Photo by Underwood & Underwood, ca. 1915)

1890s – John D. Sr. withdraws from the daily operation of Standard Oil and invests much of his life to what he refers to as the "Difficult Art Of Giving," creating one of history's most prolific philanthropies. Rockefeller initially channels donations through the Baptist Church to health care and education.

1897 – John D. Jr. joins the family business but quickly concentrates his efforts on the Rockefeller philanthropies, broadening their scope and reach and increasing the professional nature of the various family foundations and trusts. Philanthropy becomes John D. Jr.'s lifelong vocation and avocation. His personal interest in historical preservation and land conservation would add new projects to the family's legacy.

"I was taught at the age of eight to drive a horse, and to drive him just as carefully as a man could. I remember very well the instruction of my father— 'My son, hold very carefully going down the hill. Don't let him stumble. When you are on the level road, let him trot right along.' And I never shall forget that."

John D. Rockefeller, Jr., 1904, to a Baptist Bible Class

1902 – The General Education Board is founded, with Rockefeller funding. The concept is the result of family travels in the South and the observation of the disproportionately poor opportunities available to African Americans at the time.



Sugar Cube and Petalbrook Yosemite driven by Peggy Rockefeller with David and friends at the Glenrock Carriage Drive, 1984.

a one or two hour drive before they returned to New York.

"On occasion we took the horses to shows," recalls Millie. "We had to borrow a show harness from John Greenall when we showed at the Mid-A Morgan Show in Lebanon, Pennsylvania, as all we had was well used working harness. John helped us with all of the appointments and we had a very successful show."

"Peggy Rockefeller called me to ask if I would help her organize a pleasure drive at Hudson Pines," tells Greenall. "It was a cold, rainy day when I went there to help map out the route but Peggy pulled on her boots and off we went. When the Jeep bogged down in an especially muddy section of road, we had to hike back to the house. Oh, we weren't done, a few phone calls and that Jeep was back and we finished the task!"

Millie also remembers the Rockefeller children, Abby, David and Eileen, coming to the barn to ride. "They learned their riding skills on our Morgans who were just as good saddle horses as they were carriage horses. Abby always rode bareback; she was quite the rider."

After Peggy's death in 1996, David had a carriage trail named after her called "Peggy's Way." At the last invitational drive, held in his wife's memory, the whips drove the trail and saluted Peggy for the avid horsewoman that she was. Her Morgans, Salem Willpower and Salem Eveready, driven by David, led the way.

Since then, David has taken up the reins and drives just about every day. "We think it is the best of things for him to do," say the Rockefeller children. "It has kept him young." Indeed, at age 94, David Rockefeller is still very proficient at the reins and drives for several hours giving commentary on the horses, the carriage roads and life in general.

Steve Holm worked for Mr. & Mrs. David from June of 1989 to July of 1993 and was instrumental in developing the current carriage collection housed at Hudson Pines and bringing the horses to the show ring. "When I arrived at D.R.'s, there were two Morgans, registered names Sugar Cube and Pedalbrook Yosemite (Sam)," Steve tells. "Sam very much looked like the old time classic Morgan. If I remember right, I believe he had some Lippitt blood in him. Mrs. David liked him a great deal."



Dunraven Charisma and Dancer Of Kerry driven by Charlie and Millie McGibbon at the Mid-A show in Pennsylvania, 1980.

“I had no direction of where to buy horses, I was free to buy wherever I found what I was looking for. The first Morgans I bought were of Peggy Alderman’s breeding. I believe Mr. R is still using Salem Willpower aka ‘Willie.’ The other horse was Salem Eveready aka ‘Ben.’ I showed Ben a bit and he was the overall champion of the Devon drive a couple of times and champion single horse of the Devon drive several times,” tells Holm. Steve also drove Ben in the parade of carriages at the World Pairs Driving Championship at Gladstone, New Jersey. Ben is now retired at Hudson Pines.

“What I was looking for first of all was a disposition that was suitable for the D.R.’s. Second thing was size. I was trying to get horses that were at least 15.2 hands. Barry Dickinson suggested that I contact Mary Woolverton in Colorado, and I bought several horses from her over the years,” tells Steve. All four Victory horses were sired by Saddleback Sea King. “When I named my foals, I made sure ‘sea’ was part of the name,” explains Mary. “That way I could easily keep track of them. Victory’s Propha-sea’s birth was filmed and shown throughout the country by PBS and CNN, so he was a star from the start. Both geldings were mounts for members of my youth club before being sold to the Rockefellers. I did visit once at Steve’s invitation and we drove Proph and Willie

Dossier, cont’d

1909 – The Rockefeller Sanitary Commission for the Eradication of Hookworm (sometimes referred to derogatorily as the “laziness germ,” but is actually a parasitic infection found in populations who work barefooted) is funded with an initial grant of \$1 million, virtually eliminating the disease in the Southern workforce.

1911 – Rockefeller far surpasses the nearest competitor, Andrew Carnegie, as the richest man in America, if not the world.

1911 – The dissolution of Standard Oil is court-ordered. The company is broken up into 34 separate corporations, such as Standard Oil of New Jersey (Exxon), Standard Oil of New York (Mobil), Standard Oil of Indiana (Amoco), Standard Oil of California (Chevron), etc. The court decision and much of U.S. anti-trust and interstate commerce legislation is the result of John D. Sr.’s unprecedented monopolistic practices.

1913 – The Rockefeller Foundation is formed.

1913–1933 – John D. Jr. financed, designed, and directed the construction of a network of carriage driving trails throughout Acadia National Park. Cut granite stones placed along the edges of the carriage roads act as guard rails and are locally known as “coping stones” to help visitors cope with the steep edges. They are also fondly called “Rockefeller’s teeth.” In all, John D. Jr. donated \$44.4 million to the creation of Acadia National Park in Maine and the Grand Teton National Park in Wyoming.



The carriage road “coping stones” today and a vintage scene of horses and carriage on the Acadia National Park roads.

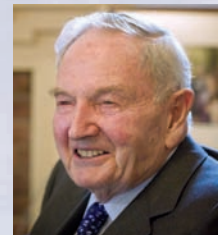
Photos © National Park Service; David Manski/NPS

1914 – Reeling from public outcry and a muckraking press regarding the ethics of monopoly and other issues facing the family, John D. Jr. engages consultant Ivy Lee, at a time public relations were still a novel idea for corporations and certainly for private individuals. One of Lee’s genius strokes was to convince John D. Sr. to go public with what had previously been a private gesture of the millionaire’s. From that time forward, the patriarch would carry with him a bag filled with nickels and award one to a golf caddy or to every member of a high school graduating class, admonishing them to save their money with the reminder that “a nickel represented one year’s interest on a dollar.” It is still considered one of the greatest image building campaigns in the annals of public relations.

David Rockefeller, Sr. (1915–)

1926 – John D. Jr. funds the restoration and development of Colonial Williamsburg.

1940 – The Rockefeller Brothers Foundation is formed to host the philanthropy of John D. Jr.’s sons, John D. III, Nelson, Laurence, Winthrop and David.



1959–1973 – Nelson Rockefeller, considered the leader of the Republican Party’s liberal wing, becomes Governor of the State of New York.

THE ROCKEFELLER MORGANS

Dossier, cont'd

1967–1971 – Winthrop Rockefeller becomes Governor of the State of Arkansas.



Winthrop Rockefeller being sworn in as governor.

1967 – The Rockefeller Family Fund is formed involving the next generation of descendants (referred to as the “Cousins Generation”). These two foundations—and others formed since—have been active in causes reflecting the interests of subsequent eras from the arts to global overpopulation to U.S.-Asian relations.



Nelson Rockefeller and Gerald Ford, 1975.

1974 – Nelson Rockefeller becomes Vice President under Gerald Ford.

1983 – The Rockefeller State Park Preserve, commonly known as “Rocky’s,” is designated in Sleepy Hollow, New York, from land donated over time by the family. Like Acadia National Park, it includes 20 miles of trails constructed by the family for the primary purpose of carriage driving.



The Rockefeller State Park Preserve carriage roads.

From then to this day forward, many Rockefellers—from the “brothers and cousins generations”—are equally avid about driving, often accessing the carriage trails put in place by the family from their adjacent homes and stables. Nelson’s son Rodman was famously photographed with his pair (*see complete photo, this page*); David’s wife Peggy was highly competitive in the carriage driving field and known for the carriage collection she assembled on her own; and David’s daughter, Eileen, is on the cover of this issue competing in a trotting race. The family’s chosen breed is the Morgan horse, and numerous Rockefeller descendants are members of the American Morgan Horse Association founded by their patriarch’s second cousin, Chauncey Stillman!



Rodman Rockefeller



Peggy and David



Eileen Growald

“One of the acts of hospitality offered by David Rockefeller to the many international guests he receives is a drive with his Morgans.”

Sue Greenall, “The Rockefeller Morgans,” in this issue

Sources include: the websites of the Rockefeller Archive Center and Acadia National Park; Wikipedia; and the definitive biography *Titan, The Life Of John D. Rockefeller Senior*, by Ron Chernow.



Rodman and Sascha Rockefeller with Bonnie Lee Romeo and Bonnie Lee Gran Duke, 1991.

around the beautiful trails on the farm. It was fall, the leaves were changing and this New Englander could not have been happier, as were her two horses.” Steve returned to Mary Woolverton for his last purchases, two mares, Victory’s Seacret and Victory’s Extasea.

Steve continues, “D.R. still uses Victory’s Propha-sea, aka ‘Victor,’ a wonderful horse. I give this horse credit for D.R. still driving today because of his stable disposition. I particularly liked Mary’s horses because of their disposition, size, and ability to stay sound,” explains Holm. Victory’s Odys-sea was very much a favorite riding mount as well as driving. “I thoroughly enjoyed working for the D.R.’s. It was a great experience and they both were, and are, truly remarkable people!”

“We think it is the best of things for him to do,” say the Rockefeller children. “It has kept him young.” Indeed, at age 94, David Rockefeller is still very proficient at the reins and drives for several hours giving commentary on the horses, the carriage roads and life in general.

Steve also drove horses for Rodman Rockefeller from June of 1989 to August of 1993. Rodman was introduced to Morgans by his wife, Sascha. “My wedding present to Rod was a beautiful Morgan named Arduns Great Gatsby (UVM Promise x Gladgay’s Heiress). Rod loved to ride this hot little horse, and later, when he became interested in driving, we bought a Morgan pair ‘Duke’ & ‘Romeo’ (Bonnie Lee Romeo, Bonnie Lee Gran Duke). Rod competed in a three day event in Gladstone with this pair.”

Other Morgans owned by Rodman and Sascha Rockefeller were Ledgemere Chieftan, Whippoorwillbosporus and Bonnie Lee Sara Lee. They purchased Dunraven Charisma from David and Peggy Rockefeller and bred her to Arduns Tutor Lee for Winterburn Jenisha and to Gallant Lee for Winterburn Satinstar.

David Rockefeller’s current coachman is Sem Groenewoud, a former World Champion level four-in-hand driver and renowned horseman. He, his wife Paula, and their son Patrick manage the

Morgan horses currently in the stable. “Will and Victor (Salem Willpower and Victory’s Propha-sea) are still our main horses,” says Sem. “I will switch Regency Gotta Have Class (‘KC’) in with either horse if needed. Mr. Rockefeller drives every weekend and takes control from the start. I never know where we are going. He has a very good feel for the horses, good contact but not too much. He is able to drive the horses and entertain his guests with little assistance from me.” Sem has also put together a four-in-hand of Morgans that he drives. “Will and Victor are the leaders with Victory’s Extasea and Bethesda Presley as wheelers.”

Eileen Growald, David’s youngest daughter, has also been an avid Morgan fan. She first purchased Ransomvale Samsation (Chivas Regal x Ransomvale Sue Allen) and DKS Malachy (Saddleback Salute x Stormcrest Melody) to drive as a pair. She bred Malachy to Saddleback Sea King (also the sire of her father’s horses) to produce Meg and then to Longview Sundance to produce Lucky Gem. Meg and Lucky are now going as a pair.

Eileen has distinguished herself by winning the half-mile trotting race at the Vermont Morgan Horse Association Heritage Days Morgan Show at Tunbridge, Vermont with Malachy. She also competed both Malachy and Meg at the annual Morgan Mile trotting races held at the same site in Brookfield, VT, where Justin Morgan, in 1796, distinguished himself. “Malachy has an amazing trot and when a friend gave me a light racing jog cart I got the idea of taking her to the races,” tells Eileen. “There was a half mile track nearby and we would take both mares and do match races with them. What fun! We decided to take both Malachy and Meg and between them entered all of the races, trotting under saddle, to a jog cart and to a wooden wheeled cart—a full day. Thanks to my friend, John Greenall, who loaned me his racing silks, I looked the part. It was for me and my horses, our first show ever. When Malachy won the Royalton Ashline Perpetual Trophy, it was a huge thrill.”

While discussing Morgans in the recent generations of his family, David Rockefeller



(From left to right) Eileen Rockefeller Growald driving her two homebred Morgans Meg and Lucky Gem at Shelburne Farms, Vermont; David Rockefeller introduces many influential friends and visitors to the Morgan breed. Here he is driving with Martha Stewart with the Hudson River in the background.

offers a reflection on the past which may come as a revelation to the Morgan community. There are many known connections between Chauncey Stillman, who incorporated the American Morgan Horse Register in 1920, and the Rockefeller family. David Rockefeller’s memory puts a more personal spin on the relationship: “My grandfather and Chauncey Stillman’s grandfather were brothers. I can remember going to their farm and seeing their horses but I do not know if the family’s first Morgan came from there.”

When some historian of the breed gains access to Chauncey Stillman’s sealed papers, perhaps more light will be shed on

this historic interaction. Given what we do know today, however, it is not a stretch to say that this association, more or less a century ago, presaged an ongoing and beneficial relationship between America’s first breed and this dynastic American family.

One of the acts of hospitality offered by David Rockefeller to the many international guests he receives at his homes adjacent to those visionary carriage trails, is a drive with his Morgans. In his true ambassadorial style, he has introduced many people to the Morgan horse for the first time. “If they ask me, I tell them about my horses as many have no idea what a unique breed the Morgan is. A true symbol of America.” ■

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