

# *Man and the Horse*

An Illustrated History of Equestrian Apparel

Alexander Mackay-Smith

Jean R. Druesedow

Thomas Ryder

*The Metropolitan Museum of Art*  
*Simon and Schuster*  
*New York*





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## Foreword

Man has always assigned a special place to the horse in the hierarchy of the animal kingdom. Esteemed for elegance of line and proportion, for speed, intelligence, and strength, this majestic creature has been, at least until this century, central to virtually all human occupations—agriculture, commerce, travel, and warfare—and even today is associated with many of our most beautiful sporting events and noblest ceremonial occasions. The physical alliance between man and the horse extends to a special symbolic relationship for, in mastering the art of equitation, man invests himself with precisely those attributes of grace and power for which horses are known.

Throughout history the splendor of equestrian attire has reflected man's desire to emulate the nobility of the horse. Unlike other costumes designed and worn to achieve a merely fashionable effect, riding clothes have always shared a unique quality, regardless of their place or period of origin. Because of the specific functions they serve, riding costumes require above all superior design, materials, and workmanship—a harmonious blend of efficient cut, durability, and meaningful decoration—the essence of true style. As they indicate social status and incorporate contemporary fashion, the clothing and accessories of the horseman make an important statement about the era in which they evolved.

In many ways the world of the horse constitutes the epitome of social decorum, not only in the age of chivalry to which the horse gave its name, or in the eighteenth century, when Beau Brummel turned the riding habit into high fashion for all gentlemen, but in our own time as well, when forms of dress traditionally associated with equestrian activity—the cutaway and top hat, the hacking jacket and high boots, the three-piece suit and blue jeans—are considered appropriately stylish even for those who have never sat upon a horse.

For each of the past ten years, Diana Vreeland, as Special Consultant to The Costume Institute, has selected key periods in the history of costume and fashion for the Museum's annual exhibition. That she should choose the theme of "man and the horse" is a natural extension of her lifelong commitment to the definition of style of the highest order. At every stage in the selection and preparation of costumes, accessories, and equipment, Mrs. Vreeland has had the support of lenders, many of them fine horsemen and horsewomen whose enthusiasm for the realization of this rich display has made the exhibition possible.

This publication has also benefited from the extensive knowledge of numerous individuals, foremost among them its three authors, Alexander Mackay-Smith, author and editor of many publications about horses; Jean

Druessedow, Associate Curator in Charge of The Costume Institute; and Thomas Ryder, editor of *The Carriage Journal* and an important contributor to the revival of the sport of coaching. Their essays, together with the abundant illustrations, provide the historical and social context for many of the costumes to be seen in the exhibition. Helmut Nickel, Curator in the Department of Arms and Armor, Walter Liedtke of our Department of European Paintings, who is the author of a forthcoming book on equestrian portraiture, and Mrs. Vladimir Littauer, with her profound knowledge of the historical aspects of horsemanship, have generously given their time to review the text. Merri Farrell, Curator of the Carriage Museum at Stony Brook, was extremely helpful in providing information and assistance, and Katell le Bourhis, Associate Researcher in The Costume Institute, played a key role in coordinating the illustrations in this book with the objects in the exhibition. I also wish to thank the editor of the publication, Barbara Burn, who brought to bear her own considerable knowledge in this field as well as her editorial skills.

The exhibition could not have been realized without the generous support of Ralph Lauren, whose appreciation for the world of the horse and of art will be shared by countless visitors.

Philippe de Montebello  
*Director*  
*The Metropolitan Museum of Art*

## Introduction

*Round-boof'd, short-jointed, fetlocks shag and long,  
Broad breast, full eye, small head and nostril wide,  
High crest, short ears, straight legs and passing strong,  
Thin mane, thick tail, broad buttock, tender hide:  
Look, what a horse should have he did not lack,  
Save a proud rider on so proud a back.*

Shakespeare, *Venus and Adonis*

Nothing is more marvelous than sitting at a little table in the gathering dusk in the Piazza di San Marco, the guest of the six golden-bronze horses prancing away—to paradise. Then you know you are in the presence of the most immaculately beautiful creature on earth.

Through the periods of history the horse has heralded the arrival of the great event. He has carried the hero of the hour—Alexander, Caesar, Washington, Bolivar—along the paths of discovery and conflict and together they have returned triumphant—and history continues. A man mounted on his horse is twice the man he is on the ground. Indeed, the Arabs tell us that one aspect of earthly paradise is to be astride a horse. Such a man holds the reins of power and progress in his hands, for the horse has been the basis of the mobility of culture.

The horse possesses the fluid power of the perfect athlete, gleaming in regal movements. The horse is the most sensitive piece of living beauty. The projection of the muscular jaw, the tension and arc of the neck, the sinuous line of the back, and splendid power of the leg—nothing is more enthralling than a well-loved horse. Man has long recognized the breeding of this animal. When a horse in ancient Arabia was seized in battle, the owner would present the conqueror with a pedigree so that, though himself vanquished, his horse might still receive the proper honors. Strength, stamina, size, spirit, power; it is the horse's splendid perfection that inspires man.

The history of horse and rider is the history of the intense regard each has for the other. Churchill said, "When you are on a great horse, you have the best seat you will ever have." It is said that Bucephalus, the favorite steed of Alexander the Great, was unmanageable and disagreeable to any save his master; Bucephalus would calmly kneel so that Alexander might more easily climb upon his sturdy back. We know that the saddest sight in all the world is the solitary, riderless horse in a state procession.

The horse has created for man a particular and glorious world; in turn men and women have created a world appropriate to the intelligence and *esprit* of this remarkable animal. Nothing is too good for a

horse. In the tackrooms of the great stables, everything is attuned to his needs. Sensing the completeness of the horse, man has sought to equal, in raiment and accouterment, that simple splendor, that physical ideal. The highly refined domain of the horse is a polished, highly stylized realm reflecting the glory and exhilaration he inspires.

That domain calls forth the inherent glory of man. Tailors, bootmakers, and hatmakers alike know that men and women will never look as good as they do in their riding gear. The fit of the boots, the white suede breeches and racing silks, the saddle blankets thick with embroidery, the silver, gold, and bronze spurs and bits oiled and polished—there is nothing haphazard about the equestrian world. It is not a theatrical world; one dresses down to perfection. One dresses not for display but to meet the inspiration of the ideal. The splendid attire of the world of the horse is the fulfillment of man's half of a covenant.

Diana Vreeland  
*Special Consultant*  
*The Costume Institute*



# Man and the Horse

## *The Evolution of Riding and Its Influence on Equestrian Costume*

**H**istorians have called the horse the noblest conquest of man, yet horsemen know that man is not the horse's conqueror but a partner in a relationship that has had a profound and far-reaching effect on the history of civilization. It was cavalry that made possible the extraordinary achievements of Alexander the Great in the fourth century B.C. and of the Mongol Genghis Khan in the thirteenth century A.D. When the Plains Indians of North America began acquiring horses during the seventeenth century, they gradually became a nomadic rather than an agricultural people, and it was a fine horseman, General George Washington, who led his colonial army to victory over the British in the American Revolution.

Although the image of horse and rider is one of the most powerful in the human mind, man did not learn to ride this magnificent animal until relatively late in his history. It is believed, according to evidence found in the Ukraine, that horses were domesticated by the middle of the fourth millennium B.C., but the earliest representations of ridden horses cannot be dated earlier than about 1900 B.C. Eventually, the horse would become man's most important means of transportation and source of power, remaining so until the advent of the steam engine in the early nineteenth century; even today, engine capacity is measured in terms of horsepower. And, although the horse has been largely replaced by motor-driven vehicles, we still revere this splendid creature, not simply for his beauty and spirit but also for his continuing role as our partner in some of our most pleasurable activities.

The techniques of riding, which until the Renaissance in western Europe was considered primarily a utilitarian skill for use in travel, warfare, and hunting, have evolved in accordance with the various tasks that horses have been asked to perform. As the training of horses became more sophisticated and riders were able to achieve harmony between themselves and their mounts—using their hands, legs, seat, and balance to promote rhythm of movement, mental understanding, and sympathy—equitation became more than a mere necessity but developed as a sport and, in courtly circles, as an art form. The clothes worn by the rider and the equipment (or tack) worn by the horse played a significant role in this evolution of riding, enabling riders to attain a high degree of horsemanship as well as serving the functional purposes of protection, security, and comfort.



This bas-relief from the palace at Nineveh of Ashurbanipal, king of Assyria (668 – 627 B.C.), shows a mounted archer drawing his bow. He is dressed for battle with a conical helmet and body armor (a cuirass) from which hang lappets that protect his legs. The horse is wearing a snaffle bridle and a pad held by two surcingles and resting on leather armor that covers most of the horse's body. Stirrups had not yet been invented, but the fact that this rider is using both hands to manage his weapon rather than his horse speaks well for Assyrian horsemanship. Although this horse is standing still, other reliefs show archers at a full gallop, but it is difficult to imagine that their shots were always on the mark.  
*Musée du Louvre, Paris*

This large stone tympanum, which originally capped a doorway, is from the Caucasus and probably dates from the early fourteenth century. As the costume indicates, this is not a soldier, a conclusion reinforced by the pacing gait of the horse. The relief possibly represents a courier carrying important dispatches for his sovereign.

*The Metropolitan Museum of Art*



Many types of material, from textiles to buckskin, have been used for riding apparel, and most articles of tack have been fashioned from leather, although wood has also been used in making saddle trees (frames) and certain kinds of stirrups. Because of the perishable nature of such organic materials, only a few examples of riding clothes and tack dating from before the seventeenth century have survived, although metal and bone (or antler) components of harnesses have been found dating back to the fifteenth century B.C. or earlier. Fortunately, however, the history of equestrian costume, tack, and riding styles is splendidly illustrated in works of art. This brief essay will reproduce a large number of such works—ranging in date from the seventh century B.C. in Assyria to the twentieth century in America—to help describe this colorful and dramatic history. In the essay various aspects of the development of equitation will be discussed, and the selection of plates that follows will be accompanied by specific comments on costumes and equipment.



The youth shown on this Greek, red-figured vase dating from the end of the sixth century B.C., is wearing Thracian boots, a Thracian cloak over a tonic, and a petasos, a type of hat designed for travelers. The pacing gait of the horse further emphasizes the fact that they are setting out on a journey. The horse is throwing up his head to escape the pressure of the snaffle bit; his rider is obviously heavy-handed.

*Staatliche Antikensammlung, Munich*

Because different styles of riding depicted in equestrian works of art have been adapted to the natural gaits of the horse, the viewer must be familiar with equine gaits, as determined by the sequence of footfalls, in order to understand these images. The two gaits common to all horses are the four-beat walk (right hind, right front, left hind, left front) and the three-beat canter or gallop (right hind, left front, and—simultaneously—left hind and right front, or vice versa). There are also three types of natural gait faster than the walk but slower than the canter: the diagonal two-beat trot (right hind and left front hitting the ground simultaneously, followed by left hind and right front, also hitting simultaneously); and the two lateral gaits, known as the pace (or amble) and the rack (or singlefoot). The pace is a two-beat gait in which the right hind and right front move together to hit the ground simultaneously, followed by the left legs; in the four-beat rack, the sequence is much the same as in the slower four-beat walk.

These intermediate gaits affect the rider in very different ways. In the diagonal trot, the horse's back rises and falls, whereas in the lateral gaits the back remains level, swaying slightly from side to side. Before

the introduction of "posting" (rising in the stirrups) in the middle of the eighteenth century, the trot was a decidedly uncomfortable gait, yet it provided a good deal of stability since at any given time the horse was balanced with one foot on each side placed on the ground. The lateral gaits, while less stable, were far more comfortable for the rider. Horses are naturally either diagonally or laterally gaited—few strains can perform both gaits—so the rider's selection of a horse was determined by the function he wished his mount to perform. For military service, where stability was more important than comfort, the rider would select a trotter; for travel or hunting, where comfort was desirable, he would select a laterally gaited pacer or racker. Although these differences may seem unimportant to us, patrons commissioning portraits were fully aware of them, and it is often possible to identify the role of a rider by observing the gait that the artist has been instructed to depict. A man seated on a trotting horse was most likely displaying his military prowess, as well as considerable horsemanship in remaining balanced and in harmony with the horse. A man on a pacer was likely to be playing a civilian role where less skill was required to achieve a comfortable seat.



The most famous equestrian portrait of the classical era, this large bronze depicts the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius (A.D. 121–180) sitting his horse with ease, his legs firmly held against the horse's flanks. He wears a ceremonial imperial costume—a short tunic girded with a military belt—and on his feet are short, laced sandals. In accordance with classical tradition, the horse's neck is raised toward the vertical and the head is overbent slightly because of the bit's pressure; he is trotting, the appropriate gait for the charger of a military leader. *Piazza del Campidoglio, Rome*



**I**n the history of riding, the first significant development was undoubtedly the invention of the stirrup, for it enabled riders to remain securely on their horses while carrying or using weapons, even at high speed. While its origin is unknown, the first evidence of rigid stirrups like those in use today are metal-sheathed wooden devices found in Chinese tombs of the fourth century A.D. It is likely, however, that soft, straplike stirrups existed before that time, probably among the nomadic horsemen of Asia and perhaps elsewhere, but no examples have survived. The first appearance of the stirrup in western Europe is a type similar to the Chinese and was uncovered in seventh-century Avar tombs in Hungary, leading scholars to suspect that the Avars, and possibly other nomadic tribes, brought the stirrup with them from the Far East across the grassy steppes of northern Asia. The stability provided by stirrups virtually revolutionized the history of warfare. Thanks to a cavalry equipped with stirrups, Charles Martel, ruler of the Franks, was able to consolidate his kingdom and, at a battle near Poitiers in 732, to defeat Abd-el-Rahman, ruler of Cordova, the last of the Muslims to lead an army to France.

Another important piece of horse equipment that appeared first in China was a saddle built on a wooden tree, with a pommel in front and a cantle in back to help keep the rider secure in his seat. For centuries the horse had been ridden with a saddle cloth attached by a surcingle (girth) passing under the belly; the addition of cushions and rolls or leather-covered metal arches in front and back, such as those used in ancient Rome, tended to increase comfort but did not give as much stability as the treed saddle, which made its appearance in Europe during medieval times. The heavily armored knight required a well-built saddle tree to support a high pommel and cantle to keep him in place as he charged with couched lance at a knight similarly armed.

Bits and bridles, used to control and guide the horse, have probably been in use since the first time man decided to use such a lively animal. The bridle is a set of straps, usually made of leather, which holds a bit in the horse's mouth on the flat gums between front and back teeth; in its earliest form, the bit was a straight metal bar or bone with a ring at each end to hold the reins. By 1400 B.C. this bar was constructed in two pieces, with a joint in the middle, virtually the same as the modern jointed-snaffle bit, which enables the rider (or driver) to apply pressure to various points in the horse's mouth. Many different types of bits have been used over the years, some of them exceptionally severe, since early riders, especially those carrying weapons and concentrating on their foes, had little time and no inclination to struggle with running horses in the middle of battle.

Stopping a horse was one problem, getting him to move quickly was another. Whips and spurs, developed as aids to the horseman's legs, seat, hands, and voice, are also of ancient origin. Iron prick-type spurs, which were attached to the heels of the rider's boots and applied to the flanks of the horse, appear in Celtic graves dating from about 400 B.C. These were gradually replaced by rowel spurs, which were equipped with wheels of radiating points, first found in Spain in the ninth century A.D. and still in use today throughout the world.

The history of ancient riding clothes is difficult to trace except through the evidence of works of art. As the Greeks and Romans had no stirrups or treed saddles and often rode bareback or on a simple saddle



The saddle in this painted pottery figurine of the Tang dynasty is clearly furnished with stirrups. It was found in the tomb of Princess Yung T'ai, who died in A.D. 706, although figurines of horses wearing saddles with stirrups occur as early as the fourth century. The bearded rider, whose coat with broad lapels and baggy trousers are typical of western Asian fashion, undoubtedly represents one of the many central Asian horsemen who served as retainers in the great Chinese households.  
*Szechwan Provincial Museum, China*

pad (the latter to prevent the horse's sweat from soaking the rider's legs), we find riders wearing everyday robes and sandals (or nothing at all). The earliest trousers seem to have been used by the Achaemenids, who ruled Persia from 550 to 330 B.C., but their use, and the wearing of boots, was most likely spread by the nomadic Asian tribes, who had to protect their legs and feet from severe weather, and it is from these steppe riders—the Huns, Alans, and Sarmatians of the Migration Period—that our modern riding costume of trousers and jacket derives. Certainly, ancient warriors had to protect themselves with armor, and this too had to be adapted for use on horseback, but it is unlikely that special riding clothes, as we know them today, were in common use until well into the Renaissance in Europe, when riding became an activity performed for its own sake as well as for the requirements of travel, hunting, and warfare.



With its high pommel in front and cantle behind, this elegant saddle of Hungarian origin dating from the first half of the fifteenth century is shaped like a practical war saddle, but its veneer of staghorn plaques, delicately carved with chivalrous scenes, suggests that it was most likely a decorative piece of fine equipment befitting a horseman of status.

*The Metropolitan Museum of Art*



This is one of seventy-two scenes on the Bayeux tapestry, woven about 1092, which tells the story of the Norman conquest of England. Here, William, duke of Normandy, leads his troops to victory over the Saxons. He is clad in a type of armor called a hauberk, with sleeves, hood, and leggings that reach below the knee. The armor is made of mail, which was developed by the Parthians and continued to be the primary means of protecting the body and limbs

through the thirteenth century A.D. Although the king is in battle, he is mounted on a pacing horse, the gait clearly indicated by the embroiderers' use of one color for the left legs and another for the right. Military horsemen often preferred trotters for stability, but pacers were far more comfortable to ride and more valuable because of the great demand for them. Kings would therefore be more likely to ride pacing horses even into battle. *Bayeux Cathedral*



From China the stirrup moved westward with nomadic horsemen across Asia. This late seventh-century Near Eastern silver plate shows a mounted archer at the gallop discharging an arrow at a lion. Thanks to his stirrups, the rider is in perfect balance with his horse and capable of aiming his weapon accurately. *Hermitage, Leningrad*



This plate, from Antoine de Pluvinet's book, *L'Instruction du Roy* (1625), shows the horse being trained between two pillars, a technique that Pluvinet popularized.

During the fourteenth century in Europe, chain mail was gradually replaced by plate armor, and by about 1450 armorers were fashioning complete steel-plate armor for horses as well as riders. The horse armor prompted a special vocabulary: chamfron for the head, crinet for the neck, peytrel for chest and body, and crupper for the hindquarters. The example illustrated here was made in about 1575 in the armory of the counts of Collalto, an ancient dynastic family of northern Italy. This type of armor was very expensive, but well-trained horses were valuable to the knights who rode them and worthy of protection. The armor worn by the rider is also Italian, dating from about 1575, but it shows the influence of Spanish fashion in the use of decorative etched stripes that imitate the seams of a Spanish doublet. The helmet was designed for use in the battlefield, although this set also has another helmet (not shown) suitable for use in tournaments.

*The Metropolitan Museum of Art*





François Robichon de La Guérinière, the eighteenth century riding master, was the first to describe and teach the lateral dressage movement known as the shoulder-in (*épaule en dedans*), which is illustrated in this plate (far left) from his book *L'École de Cavalerie*; the rider is said to be the author himself. The clothing seen here and in the Pluvinel plate was designed specifically for riding, adapted from the style of military uniforms.

When Louis XV became king of France in 1715, at the age of five, La Guérinière was given a royal appointment as riding master. This portrait of the king by J. B. van Loo and Charles Parrocel (the latter illustrated La Guérinière's book) shows Louis XV at the age of thirteen, mounted on a well-trained horse performing a stately trot or perhaps a *pièce* (trotting in place). His riding costume includes armor, as would befit a king, but the jacksboots are the same as those worn by La Guérinière and other horsemen of the time. *Musée de Versailles*

The only riding manual to have survived from classical antiquity was written by the Greek historian Xenophon in the fourth century B.C. While containing much valuable information regarding the training and care of horses, it was addressed to military horsemen, who considered riding a necessary skill rather than an art form. Not until the sixteenth century did riding become the art known today as "dressage" (from the French word for training). In 1550 a riding master named Federigo Grisone published a book entitled *Gli Ordini di Cavalcare* (*The Principles of Riding*) under the aegis of the king of Naples and Pope Julius III. Within seventy years, the book had appeared in sixteen Italian editions and fourteen editions in French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, and English. Thus Grisone first put the art of dressage into print and inspired subsequent riding masters and manuals. One influential follower was Antoine de Pluvinel, who founded an academy in Paris in 1594 and became director of Henri IV's *Grandes Ecuries* and later riding instructor to the dauphin, who would become Louis XIII. Pluvinel's treatise, *L'Instruction du Roy en l'exercice de monter à cheval*, was published in 1625, five years after the author's death, with engravings by the Dutch artist Crispin de Pas, and it became the most significant work of its kind to date from the seventeenth century. The ultimate text, *L'École de Cavalerie*, by François Robichon de La Guérinière, was published in Paris in 1733, with engravings by Charles Parrocel. The methods outlined by La Guérinière are still practiced today in their original form at the Spanish Riding School in Vienna and by the Cadre Noir at the French national riding school at Saumur.

The riding academies established by Grisone and his followers were much more than riding schools in the modern sense. They were courtly institutions in which formal refinement became the mark of a gentleman (indeed, commoners were excluded). Proficiency in *haute-école* riding became an essential element in the education of young noblemen and



The Lipizzan stallion ridden by this Spanish Riding School master is performing the *levade*, one of the "airs above the ground" in advanced dressage.



The French national riding school at Saumur in the Loire Valley is one of the few places where *haute-école* dressage is still performed as it was centuries earlier. This nineteenth-century illustration shows a horse performing a *capriole* between pillars, as described by Pluvinel; the costumes seen here are the same as those worn by members of the Cadre Noir today.

gentlemen, on a par with dancing, fencing, court tennis, and singing or playing a musical instrument. The equestrian art was designed to display rider and horse at their harmonious best, performing not only collected and extended forms of the ordinary gaits (walk, trot, and canter) and lateral movements such as the shoulder-in, but also the spectacular "airs above the ground," exercises in which the horse lifts the forehand alone, as in the *levade*, or leaps entirely off the ground, as in the *courbette* and *capriole*. Of all forms of riding, dressage is the most demanding; to reach the upper levels requires talent and temperament, on the part of both horse and rider, and years of patient and skillful training. Today it is one of the three equestrian disciplines of the Olympic Games.

From the middle of the sixteenth century, monarchs, noblemen, and other subjects of equestrian portraits could be expected to request one of three poses for the horse: standing still, trotting sedately, or performing a more difficult air above the ground, usually the *levade*, in which the horse rises on its hindlegs and remains motionless for a few moments. Because this pose requires considerable skill and control of the horse, the image of a ruler on horseback performing the *levade* not only conveyed to the viewer his mastery of the courtly art of riding but also served to symbolize his command over his subjects.

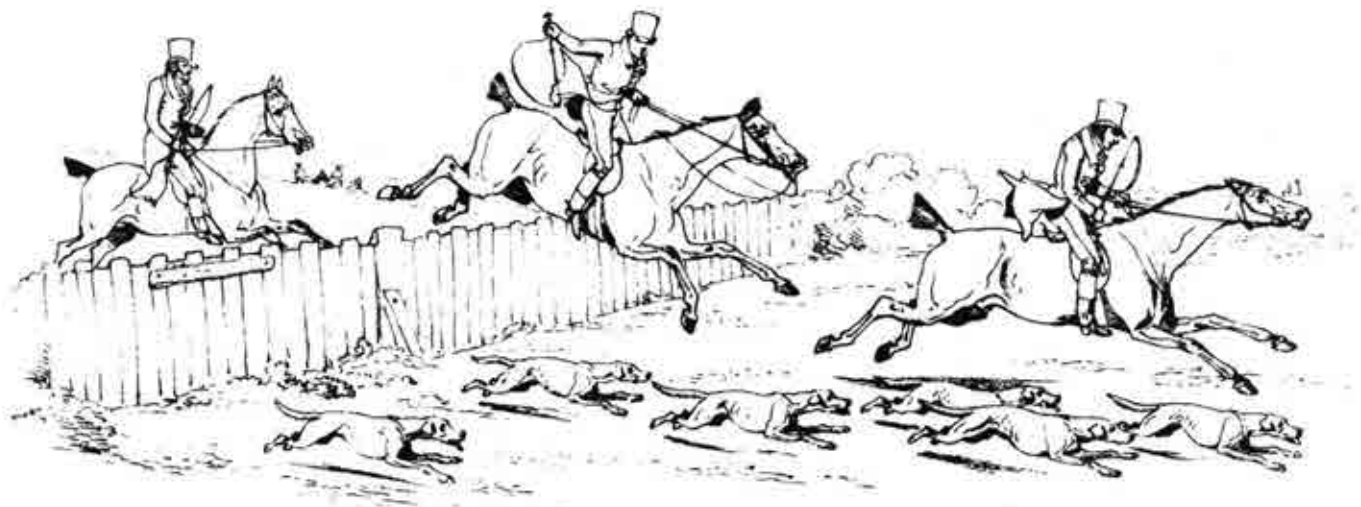


European stag hunts were often held in special reserves where hounds and riders pursued their quarry through thickly wooded forests, as in this painting, *The Hunt* (ca. 1460), by Paolo Uccello (Italian, 1396/97–1475). Uccello was one of the first Renaissance painters to depict horses, a subject that would later fascinate Leonardo and many other artists. *Asinoleon Museum, Oxford*

**H**unting from horseback, which dates back to at least 1300 B.C., quickly became as much sport as necessity, and hunting scenes have long been a favorite subject for artists and patrons. The speed of the horse, combined with man's ability to use spears, bows, swords, and later firearms, made for an exciting chase, whether the quarry was lion, wolf, wild boar, stag, roebuck, or the smaller species—fox, hare, and otter. Even a wide variety of birds have been hunted from horseback, often with the help of a falcon. Other partners in the hunt have been the various types of hounds, some bred to hunt by scent (foxhounds and harriers) and those known as coursing or sight hounds (greyhounds, whippets, salukis, wolfhounds, and so on). Feudal lords in Europe especially enjoyed hunting the larger animals and reserved the privilege of doing so for themselves and their households, and some species, such as the stag and roebuck, were often kept in parks or reserves to assure

their availability for the hunt. Eventually, the privilege of stag hunting (*la grande vénerie* in France) became the king's alone, and only members of the court or his guests could be granted permission to join him. In France, Louis XIV decreed that anyone permitted to participate in the royal hunt should wear a special hunting uniform, and during the reign of Louis XVI noble families were allowed to devise their own uniforms, known as *boutons*, because an important part of the costume was an elaborate set of engraved buttons. These *boutons* have been traditionally passed from one generation to the next. In England and America today, fox-hunting associations also use distinctive "colors," a reference to the colored collar worn on the coat with the permission of the Master of Hounds.

During the eighteenth century in England, the British Parliament passed the so-called Enclosure Acts, which transferred to private ownership the common lands that had been used by medieval villagers for farming and grazing their livestock. Property owners consequently built hedges, banks, and stout fences to enclose their lands, a development that brought about a dramatic change in the sport of hunting on horseback. Within a short time, fox hunting became extremely popular among young men of fashion, who took great pleasure in jumping their



horses over the newly constructed obstacles in pursuit of foxes, which were considered verminous pests by farmers but a lively and challenging quarry by sportsmen. Riding styles and hence riding clothes and equipment were altered to accommodate the new demands of riding over obstacles across country. Saddles lost their high pommels and cantles, and riders dispensed with dressage movements to take up what they called a "safety seat." Early in the twentieth century, an Italian cavalry officer, Federigo Caprilli, developed what is now called the "forward seat," a position in the saddle that enables the rider to remain over the horse's center of balance during the gallop and the jump and to interfere less with the animal's forward momentum. This style of riding is now common practice among all those who jump, not only during the hunt but also in the show ring. Two of the three Olympic equestrian disciplines—show jumping and three-day eventing—include the sport of jumping.

The introduction of hedges and fences into the eighteenth-century English landscape revolutionized the sport of hunting on horseback, which quickly became a spirited cross-country chase over obstacles. This print was made by Henry Alken (British, 1774/85 – 1850/51), one of the best-known producers of sporting prints in the nineteenth century.



The romantic image of Arabs riding their splendid horses appealed to many European artists of the nineteenth century, including Adolf Schreyer (German, 1828 – 1899), whose painting of a battle scene shows horsemen wearing their traditional robes. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art*

Aside from the four principal tasks that horses and men have performed in partnership through the centuries—traveling, fighting, dressage, and hunting—there is another, the herding of livestock, that has an important place in the history of equitation. Herding was first—and is still—practiced in Mongolia but is perhaps most familiar to us today in its American context, as a significant part of the development of the West. The style of so-called western riding, however, is a continuation of a tradition that began with the Bedouins of Arabia, who used their magnificent Arabian horses for warfare. The Muslim armies brought the horses to North Africa where, mixed with native stock, they became known as Barbs. When the Moors overran the Iberian peninsula, where cattle-herding was an important way of life, the horses, as well as the riding style, were used for herding and eventually bullfighting, which later became the national sport of Spain. The interbreeding of the Barbs with local Andalusian horses resulted in an exceptionally fine strain of riding horses that became prized all over Europe. (The Spanish Riding School in Vienna was named for these animals.) In 1493, on his second voyage to the New World, Christopher Columbus brought Spanish horses to the West Indies, and in 1519, Cortés took sixteen of them with him to Mexico. Over the next three centuries, the horse became an integral part of life on the North American continent, not only in furthering the

Spanish conquests but also in herding cattle and sheep. Although the training and riding techniques, as well as the clothing and equipment, used by cowboys underwent considerable adaptation from the Spanish tradition, the original source is still apparent in the long, straight legs and erect posture of the rider, the wide brim and tall crown of the hat, the high-heeled boots with roweled spurs, and the curb bit and loose rein of the bridle. And, in some areas, such as Mexico, California, and even parts of South and Central America, the Spanish styles of clothing and riding remained much the same and can still be seen at horse shows and parades, where horses and riders are dressed to resemble their equine and equestrian ancestors.

Alexander Mackay-Smith



Horsemen in Peru, Columbia, Brazil, and Puerto Rico have assiduously cultivated the lateral gait in their pleasure horses, which they use for working cattle and sheep and exhibit with great pride in horse shows. This photograph shows a Peruvian pinto horse pacing with his left foreleg thrown outward, a much-esteemed element of the gait known as the *termino*. The costume is a characteristic feature of pinto show classes.



The American cowboy of the late nineteenth century wore clothing adapted to the task of herding cattle and to the demands of rough countryside and weather. The rider in this bronze by Frederic Remington (American, 1861–1909) is wearing protective chaps over sturdy pants; a broad-brimmed hat protects him from sun and rain. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art*



## Equestrian Portraits

The over life-size equestrian bronze portrait below by Donatello (Italian, ca. 1386–1466), commissioned in 1497 and installed six years later in front of the Church of San Antonio in Padua, was the first colossal equestrian statue produced after classical times. Representing Erasmo da Narni, popularly known as Gattamelata, it became a prototype for hosts of equestrian monuments erected from the fifteenth through twentieth centuries. Donatello has created a perceptive portrait of this condottiere—the leader of a band of mercenary soldiers, the manner in which he sits his pacing horse reveals that he is a confident rider. He holds a baton of authority in his right hand and carries a broadsword on his left thigh; he wears pseudo-classical armor, and on his feet, which are thrust forward in the stirrups, are long spurs with sharp rowels. The horse wears a bridle with a browband and throat latch but no noseband; in his mouth is a severe curb bit. The high pommel and cantle of the saddle, which rests on a thick pad, provide the rider with maximum support. Although Donatello has clearly imbued his portrait with the spirit of classical antiquity, perhaps inspired by the Roman statue of Marcus Aurelius, the spurs, bit, and saddle of the rider did not exist in western Europe until years after the fall of the Roman Empire.



The principal figure in this fresco entitled *The Procession of the Magi* is actually Lorenzo de' Medici. The fresco, which covers the walls of the chapel in the Medici Riccardi palace in Florence, was commissioned in 1459 and painted by Benozzo Gozzoli (Italian, 1420–1497). Lorenzo shows his superior horsemanship by sitting securely on his trotting white horse. He wears Florentine red, like the others in his retinue, and the hooves are brilliantly turned out in caparisons (decorative trappings) of red and gold, blue and yellow.









Henri II of France, who reigned from 1547 to 1559, was also an accomplished horseman, and he is seen at left on a trotting horse in a painting from the workshop of François Clouet (French, 1515/20 – 1572), who made a number of similar portraits. The king is dressed in black velvet and white satin decorated with gold, the mourning colors he wore in sympathy with his mistress, Diane de Poitiers, whose husband has died. He wears military style jackboots and carries a riding stick similar to those described and illustrated in contemporary riding manuals. His black horse, whose bridle has a massive curb bit, is equally splendid: the tail is tied up in an

ornamental fashion, and the saddle and caparison are embroidered in gold with silk tassels that show the king's monogram *H* combined with a *D* for Diane de Poitiers and a *C*, the monogram of his queen, Catherine de' Medici. The queen was herself a fine rider and is credited with having been the first woman to wrap her right leg around the pommel of the saddle, thereby inventing the first true side saddle. This would have allowed her not only to maintain a more secure seat at faster gaits than the walk while riding sideways but also to face the horse's head and effectively control the reins herself. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art*

Prince Maurice of Orange, here depicted by Pieter van Hillegaert the Elder (Dutch, ca. 1595 – 1640) before a field of battle, is clearly more concerned with making a handsome appearance than with displaying his military prowess. His stocky horse has been bred not only for the ability to carry a rider wearing heavy armor but also for his long, silky mane and tail, a concession to fashion rather than practicality. *Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam*



This sketch for a portrait (now apparently lost) of the first duke of Buckingham was painted in Paris in 1625 by Peter Paul Rubens (Flemish, 1577 - 1680), an artist clearly aware of the fine points of *hards-ecole* riding. Buckingham was an excellent rider who was appointed Master of the Horse by James I in 1616; he was also a patron of racing, and many pedigrees of today's thoroughbreds can be traced to the Bucking-

ham stud at Helmsley. In this portrait Buckingham holds a staff in his upraised right hand in classical fashion; he wears a clochelet and hose with a cloak, but the over-the-knee jackboots of Pluvinel are absent. His horse is executing a *levade*, indicating that both horse and rider were accomplished in the art of dressage. *Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth*



Count Duke Olivares, like the duke of Buckingham, was a chief minister to his sovereign; Philip IV of Spain appointed him Master of the Horse (*General de la Caballería de España*) in 1625, and he became known as the best horseman in the country. In this portrait (ca. 1634) by Diego Velázquez (Spanish, 1599 – 1660), Olivares is rid-

ing a favorite white horse, the subject of other studies by Spain's court painter, who has chosen to depict the duke's skill and authority and the high degree of training of the horse. Olivares is wearing the high boots of the horseman; his armor is today in the collection of the duke of Alba *The Metropolitan Museum of Art*

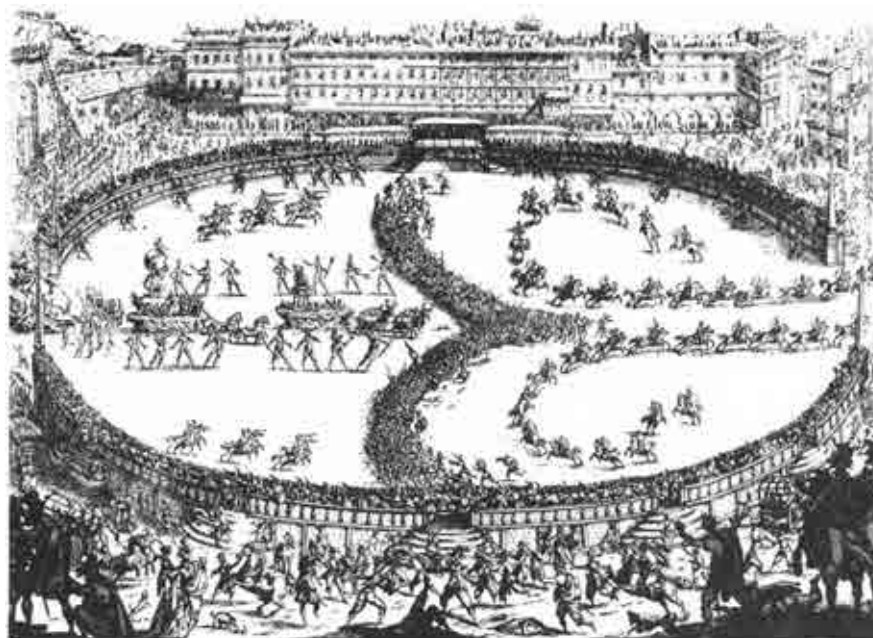


While court painters chose kings and noblemen as their subjects for equestrian portraits, Rembrandt van Rijn (Dutch, 1606 – 1669), the son of a miller and a baker's daughter, selected a humbler sitter. In this, his only equestrian portrait, he has depicted a young cavalryman, whose dress and style of riding differ sharply from those of the upper classes. The fur hat, long coat, and short boots seem to be of central European origin, and art historians have speculated that he represents one of the

Polish soldiers who fought gallantly in the Holy Wars to repel the Turks during their repeated invasions of central Europe. It is possible, however, that Rembrandt simply chose as his model one of the mercenary soldiers who were being imported at the time by the rulers of western Europe from Hungary and other eastern European countries. Unlike the riders painted by Rubens and Velázquez, who are shown sitting squarely in the center of the saddle to distribute their weight evenly and enable their horses to perform dressage movements,

Rembrandt's so-called *Polish Rider* (1655) sits well forward, balancing his horse on the forehand, essential for speed at the gallop. The horse is eastern European in type, suitable for warfare in rugged climates but far removed from the finely bred stallions of the Turkish and Polish cavalry. In fact, the horse is probably a gelding, for it was the Hungarians who first used them regularly in battle. (The French word for gelding is *borgne*, meaning Hungarian.) *The Frick Collection, New York*

The seventeenth century was the era of the equestrian ballet, in which a large group of costumed horses and riders would perform a series of intricate figures to music, similar to the quadrilles performed today by the riders of the Spanish Riding School and by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The early ballets are known to us through paintings and engravings as well as descriptions by contemporary writers. This print by Jacques Callot (French, 1592 – 1635) after a design of Giulio Parigi (Italian, 1571 – 1635) shows a ballet entitled "La Guerra di Bellezza," held in 1616 in the Piazza Santa Croce in Florence to celebrate the arrival of the prince of Urbino. The ballet was choreographed by Angelo Ricci, dancing master to the grand duke, Cosimo de' Medici, who led the ballet on horseback, supported by four quadrilles of forty-two riders each



The spirit of the eighteenth century survives today at the famous Spanish Riding School in Vienna, where horsemen regularly perform their ballet-like quadrille in its magnificent hall, a triumph of rococo architecture built in 1735. The riders wear a nineteenth-century costume, which includes a brown cutaway coat ornamented with a double row of gilt buttons, full skirts, white buckskin breeches, black boots covering the knees, and bicorne hats.





As part of the celebration of the birth of the dauphin, Louis XIV organized an equestrian ballet which took place on June 5 and 6, 1662, in Paris in front of the Palace of the Tuileries. The ballet or carrousel included 655 horses and riders, drummers, trumpeters, footmen, squires, pages, and grooms. There were five quadrilles, each with fanciful, exotic costumes: the "Romans" were led by the king, the "Persians" by his brother, Philippe d'Orléans, the

"Turks" by the prince de Condé, the "Indians" by the duke d'Enghien, and the "American Indians" by the duke de Guise. A folio volume of plates illustrating the carrousel was published in 1670; with text by Charles Perrault and engravings by Israel Silvestre and François Chauveau and illuminated by Jacques Bailly in the king's personal copy. This colorful portrait by Chauveau shows the king flanked by his attendants. Perrault described his costume: "The King was dressed like a Roman, in a

corset of silver brocade embroidered with gold. . . . He wore a silver helmet with gold leaf, enhanced by two large diamonds. . . . [and] a crest of feathers the color of fire, from which emerged four herons." The horse, as if it were a physical extension of the king, wore "a saddle of brocade. . . the whole caparison of the neck, chest, flanks, and croup was nothing but bands of gold brocade embroidered with silver, trimmed with diamonds. . . ."



The exotic nature of this equestrian portrait is completely authentic, a product of the Mughal court, which supported one of the most famous schools of Indian painting. This splendid miniature shows Shah Jahan, who reigned from 1627 to 1658 and was known in Europe as the Grand Mogul. (It was Shah Jahan who commissioned the building of the Taj Mahal, in memory of his

wife, Mumtaz Mahal.) He is seen here riding a pinto horse at the collected trot, a picture of pure magnificence, not only in the richness and color of the costume and equipment but also in the way in which the Shah sits his mount and in the conformation and controlled cadence of the horse in motion. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art*

## Equestrian Sports

### The Tournament



One of the most splendid and romantic activities of the Age of Chivalry (derived from the French word *chevalier*, meaning horse man) was the tournament, in which armored knights engaged in contests on horseback to display their skill and courage. Originally organized as war games in which the knights could train for battle, tournaments are known to have taken place as early as the ninth century in France and Germany, but they became formal events in eleventh-century France, and continued well into the sixteenth century, with increasingly complicated rules and specialized armor. Jousting was the principal equestrian exercise of the tournament. Two knights carrying lances and shields and riding heavy horses dressed in full armor would charge one another, the object being to unhorse the opponent or, failing this, to score the best hit on the other's shield while remaining in perfect balance on one's horse. The joust, which was limited to contestants of noble birth, became gradually less dangerous, but it was no mere game; Henri II, king of France, was wounded in a tournament in 1559, not long after the portrait on page 24 was painted, and he died of the injury a few days later.

To sharpen their accuracy with the lance, jousting participants used two practice devices. The first was the quintain, a wooden figure armed with shield and sword and modeled after a Saracen, the name given by the Crusaders to their Muslim opponents in the Holy Land. If the "Saracen" was hit with the tip of the lance exactly between the eyes, it would be knocked over, but if the rider missed, the figure would revolve on a swivel and strike the luckless horseman on the head with its sword. The second device, above right, was a suspended ring through which the rider would attempt to pass the point of his lance as he galloped past. These illustrations showing the quintain and ring come from Pluvet's *L'Instruction du Roy*, indicating that success in tournament games was as important an equestrian accomplishment as the art of dressage.

Tournaments were popular throughout Europe and were often occasions for grand social events, such as parades, pageants, and feasting. This colorful page from a tournament book, made to commemorate a procession that took place in Nuremberg in 1561, shows two knights riding elegantly caparisoned pacing horses, followed by attendants dressed in the same colors as the animals. Because knights in helmets were not recognizable to either friend or foe, they would wear distinctive colors and patterns (or coats-of-arms) to facilitate identification, and their horses and servants would do likewise, in what would eventually come to be known as livery. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art*

afar Bugell.





A. 1561.

Jodocus Schmid



## The Hunt



Another popular equestrian activity, but one in which women could participate as well, was hunting on horseback. In the sport of falconry, which has a long tradition going back to the steppe riders of the Dark Ages, different species of birds of prey are used to capture the quarry. In this scene, a lady with a hawk on her wrist rides astride, while two others ride sideways (pillion) behind gentlemen. At least two of the horses are paces of the type known as pal-freys, which were used for pleasure riding as well as for hunting. The elaborate, colorful costumes are not specially designed for riding but could be worn on many different social occasions. This meticulously painted illustration represents the month of August in the manuscript known as the *Trois Riches Heures*, commissioned by the duke of Berry about 1415 and executed by the Limbourg brothers of Burgundy and Jean Colombe. *Musée Condé, Chantilly*

By the eighteenth century, clothes worn for riding had become specialized in terms of design and fabric, as seen in equestrian portraits and riding-manual illustrations, and the same was true for clothes worn while hunting on horseback. In France the quarry of *la grande vénerie* was the stag, roebuck, or boar, which were then (as now) hunted in great forests through which were cut wide paths (*allées*) that converged like the spokes of a wheel on a central axis. This tapestry, made after a design by Jean-Baptiste Oudry (French, 1686–1755), official painter of the royal hunts, clearly shows the costume of participants in *la chasse à courre* (the hunt with running hounds): a long-skirted coat made of sturdy fabrics afforded protection from branches and mud, as did the knee covering boots, while the tricorne (cocked hat) and colors,

buttons, and trim on the coat identified each rider according to rank and hunting society. The circular horn is one of the most striking components of French hunting costume, carried over the shoulder not only by the Master of Hounds and hunt servants but also by members of the hunt. In the thick forest those who follow catch only occasional glimpses of the stag and hounds, but the musical range of the horn enables everyone who carries one to blow the particular series of notes that describes exactly what they have seen. French hunting is thus largely a matter of the ear rather than the eye. Hunting in France is still pursued in the traditional manner, although the tricorne and hunting horns have become smaller, following court fashion of the late eighteenth century. *Musée de Versailles*



British riding clothes of the eighteenth century derived from French hunting dress. In this 1740 portrait by James Seymour (British, 1702 – 1752), Sir Roger Burgoyne of Sutton Park, Bedfordshire, aboard his favorite horse, Badger, wears a cocked hat over a wig, a coat of blue camlet lined with red and richly ornamented with gold braid, a white lace cravat, and black boots with spurs. As the sport came to demand more athletic ability, the clothing became more practical, with long-skirted coats cut away at the waist (curaways), sturdier hars, and plainer cuffs and cravats. The military jackboot, which extended over the knee for protection, was also adapted to the need for greater flexibility; the tops were rolled down to reveal a colored leather lining, though eventually the tops disappeared and only a band of colored leather (usually brown) below the knee and the term *top boot* remained as reminders of the earlier style. *Yale Center for British Art, New Haven*

During the first half of the nineteenth century, an era often called the golden age of fox hunting, it took a bold and determined rider on a fast horse to keep up with the crack packs of hounds that raced across the British countryside. Most of the young bloods hunted six days a week, requiring several sets of hunting clothes and boots and a full-time, experienced valet to turn out his master impeccably clean and well pressed. In this portrait, painted in 1806 by Benjamin Marshall (British, 1768 – 1836), George Gordon, marquess of Huntly, sits astride his bay hunter, Tiny. Two hunt servants, the huntsman (on the bay horse) and the whipper-in (on the gray), wear black hunt caps but are otherwise dressed like their master, with white stock ties and waistcoats, long scarlet coats with square skirts, white breeches, and black boots with colored tops and spurs. The pattern, cut, and material of Huntly's clothes and boots differ little from those worn at fashionable hunts today. *Yale Center for British Art, New Haven*





This hunting scene, entitled *Two Busvines and a Cutaway*, was painted by Sir Alfred Munnings (British, 1879–1959), president of the Royal Academy and unquestionably the most successful horse painter of the

twentieth century. He made many portraits and was especially fond of racing and hunting subjects. Busvine was a British tailor who, for many years, was the most fashionable maker of sidesaddle habits. The gentleman wears a hunting cutaway, which is

somewhat impractical for bad weather, having no protective skirts on the jacket; however, it was considered the epitome of elegance in the hunting field. *Private collection.*







Breeches (1) Cap (2) Coat (3) Boots (4)  
 Gloves (5) shown at 1/4 actual size  
 Horn (6) Crop (7) Spur (8) Garter (9)  
 shown at one-half.

Fox hunting was no less popular among gentlemen in the British colonies in America than in England, and George Washington was one of its most enthusiastic participants. His hunting clothes, custom-made by a London tailor, were described by his step-grandson, George Washington Parke Custis: "Washington [was] always superbly mounted, in true sporting costume of blue coat, scarlet waistcoat, buckskin breeches, top boots, velvet cap, and whip with long thong." In 1766, a group of Philadelphia gentlemen founded the Gloucester Fox Hunting Club, and in 1774 they adopted a hunt uniform which, perhaps because of Quaker influence, called for a "dark brown cloth coatee, with lapelled dragoon pockets, white buttons and frock sleeves, buff waistcoat, white or ran colored breeches, and a black velvet hunting cap." Eventually, however, American hunting clothes became virtually identical to the accepted British style, as illustrated in this watercolor by Harold Sterner (1895 - 1976) made for Paul Mellon, Master of Foxhounds of the Piedmont Hunt in Upperville, Virginia. His rank is indicated by the four brass buttons on his scarlet coat and his velvet cap (a member of the hunt would have five buttons and wear a top hat or a bowler whereas a guest would wear a black coat with a plain black collar and a bowler or top hat rather than a cap). *Paul Mellon Collection, Upperville, Virginia*

## Racing



Horsing racing has probably existed as a sport since men first mounted horses. It was a popular activity in ancient Greece and draws the largest crowds of any sport in America today, where it is big business. But from the Renaissance to the early twentieth century, horseracing deserved to be called the sport of kings or at least of the nobility. Light horses called "hobbies" were bred in England and Ireland from the fourteenth through the sixteenth centuries, and Italian

noblemen imported them in considerable numbers to compete in *palio* races in the principal cities of Italy. Before a race, the horses would walk in a procession through town, wearing elaborate trappings in colors that represented different districts or *contrade* of the city. Then they would be disrobed and run through the streets or around the central square, with or without riders, cheered on by citizens of their respective districts. This panel painting, from

a *cassone* ("chest") painted by Giovanni di Francesco Toscani (Italian, ca. 1370–1470), shows such a race in the city of Florence. The forward-seat position of the riders resembles that of today's jockeys, except for the absence of stirrups, which forces these riders to keep their lower legs back in an effort to maintain balance. *Palio* races are still run twice a year in Siena, staged with all the pageantry of old. *The Cleveland Museum of Art*



A traditional feature of the annual Carnival season in Rome was the race of riderless horses, here portrayed by Horace Vernet (French, 1789–1863) in a sketch for a painting (now lost) completed in 1820. The race, which also inspired Goethe and Géricault, took place along a mile and a half of the via Flaminia, now known as the Corso, and the horses—small Barbis imported from North Africa—were driven not by jockeys but by noisemakers and the shouts of the crowd. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art*







Under the Tudor kings, races in England were held between the native-bred English and Irish hobbies, whose natural intermediate gait was the pace. Henry VIII maintained a stable of racing hobbies at Greenwich, but it was the house of Stuart that laid the foundations of the thoroughbred. Charles II established Newmarket as the racing center shortly after he regained the throne in 1660, and he instituted the King's Plate as a prize. Private breeders imported stallions from the Barbary coast of North Africa by way of Spain, as well as a few Arabian stallions from the Near East. One of the most influential of these was the Darley Arabian, who was brought in 1704 from Aleppo and is an ancestor of most modern thoroughbreds, the Hackney pony and even the standardbred, America's trotting race horses. This portrait by James Seymour (British, 1702–1752) is of England's first great racehorse, Devonshire or Flying Childers. He was foaled in 1715, sired by the Darley Arabian out of a mare whose ancestry can be traced back to the duke of Buckingham's stud. The cap and clothes of the jockey are typical of the period, lightweight and bare of decoration but brightly colored to match the colors of the horse's owner, the duke of Devonshire. *Private collection*

#### *Overleaf:*

In 1766 George Stubbs (British, 1724–1806) published his *Anatomy of the Horse*, with plates that he himself drew and engraved. The first book to deal adequately with the subject, it ushered in a new era in equestrian painting. Stubbs, an artist of the first rank, is considered by most critics the greatest painter of horses in history. In this painting of 1760–61, Stubbs shows the racehorses of the third duke of Richmond exercising in Goodwood Park, observed from horseback by the duke and duchess and Lady Louisa Lennox attired in clothing suitable for pleasure riding. The racehorses wear heavy yellow blankets and hoods trimmed with red (the duke's colors) in order to induce a good sweat that will help them lose surplus weight. Stubbs, despite his grasp of equine anatomy, has depicted the racehorses in a "flying gallop," a stylistic device typical of sporting artists until a photographer, Eadweard Muybridge, demonstrated in the late nineteenth century that galloping horses do not run with all four legs off the ground in this manner. Goodwood House has been an important site for equestrian activities for nearly three hundred years. There, the first duke of Richmond (a natural son of Charles II) established the Charlton hunt, the first formal British fox hunt, and the third duke initiated the Goodwood races in 1801, described by a journalist in the 1830s as "the most glorious meeting that ever man attended." Today Goodwood is one of the most popular centers for racing and dressage competitions. *Private collection*









John Hay Whitney, a great American art collector and former ambassador to the Court of St. James, was also a fine horseman; he owned and bred many of the finest racehorses of our time, including Triple-Crown winner Twenty Grand, and was himself a superb polo player. He bought this racing scene painted by Sir Alfred Munnings in part because it shows the Whitney racing silks, although the racetrack and the horses and riders are not identified. Munnings painted many racehorses on commission but this painting was apparently executed for his own pleasure; a skilled colorist, he was perhaps attracted to the distinctive Whitney colors because of their aesthetic value. The Whitney family maintains a racing stable in England as well as America. The British racing silks are shown here; the American silks are slightly different, with pink and black on the sleeves and a black cap. *Mrs. John Hay Whitney Collection, New York.*



Steeplechasing as a sport grew out of fox hunting in Ireland and England during the first half of the nineteenth century and is now popular throughout the world, both as a professional sport at major racetracks and as an amateur activity at hunt meetings. The professional steeplechase jockeys above are wearing the silks of their horses' owners, adding color to the excitement of the final jump at Saratoga. The photograph at left of an amateur point-to-point race at Pytchley, England, in 1911, shows gentlemen dressed in their formal hunting clothes.



Hunting and other equestrian sports require certain types of apparel for the sake of tradition as well as practicality, but riding for pleasure has offered the wealthy an opportunity to dress in the most fashionable garb of the day. In this 1777 painting, George Stubbs has portrayed John Musters, High Sheriff of Nottingham, and his wife,

Sophia, in front of their home, Colwick Hall, in Nottinghamshire. Musters wears a round black hat with a medium brim, a brown frock coat with a white stock, white breeches, and black boots with wide tops. Mrs. Musters wears a black fur hat and a red habit with a fitted coat and voluminous skirts, not unlike the riding habit of Lady Worsley, painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds

only a few years later (see page 65). John Musters altered this painting by eliminating the figures of himself and his wife, presumably because of her infidelity, and replacing them with grooms leading the horses, but the painting was restored to its original form in 1938. *Major Musters Collection, Nottingham*

## Riding for Pleasure



Along with Eugène Delacroix (see page 54), Théodore Géricault (French, 1791 – 1824) was a leading Romantic painter who was attracted to horses as a subject. Famed for his military and racing scenes, Géricault also made many sketches of horses and riders, including a number of *chevaliers* riding for pleasure, often accompanied by *amazonnes* (ladies on horseback). This horseman is wearing a typical French suit of the period, complete with top hat, and his horse's tail is fashionably docked, as was the custom in the nineteenth century. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art*

Unlike Géricault, who knew how to depict horses accurately, Edouard Manet (French, 1832 – 1883) adapted his horses from British sporting prints. As he explained to his friend Berthe Morisot, "Not being in the habit of painting horses, I copied mine from those who knew best how to do them." This may explain why Manet has omitted much of the horse in this 1870 portrait of an artist friend, Emile Guillaudin, who wears a fashionable white linen suit of the sort worn by Frenchmen who rode for pleasure rather than for the hunt. *Private collection*





The origin of polo, one of the oldest of stick-and-ball games, is unknown; the first representation we know of dates from the Tang dynasty (A.D. 618–906) in China, but it was probably played before that in other parts of Asia. (The name of the game comes from *pulu*, the Tibetan word for ball.) It was during the period of polo's greatest

popularity in Persia, the Safavid dynasty (A.D. 1501–1726), that this beautiful manuscript illumination was painted. Iran's national epic is the *Shah-nameh* (*Book of Kings*), written by the poet Firdowsi in the tenth century, and perhaps the greatest copy of the poem was the one commissioned by Shah Isma'il for his son in 1522

with 258 illustrations painted by artists of the court. This page, *Siyavush Plays Polo Before Afrasiyab*, shows the players with their weight in the stirrups leaning well forward, the most efficient position for a man on horseback who must swing his mallet at a ball resting on the playing field below. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art*

## Polo



British officers in India took up the game of polo in the mid-nineteenth century and brought it to England in 1869. Called "hockey on horseback," it became very popular among those who could afford the necessary strings of ponies. In 1876, the first polo game in America was played at Jerome Park, outside New York (see page 104). The heyday of polo in America took place between the two world wars when tremendous crowds were drawn to Meadow Brook, Long Island, to watch dashing young gentlemen compete with tremendous enthusiasm and skill. The danger and excitement of the game are boldly expressed in this powerful drawing by George Bellows (1882 - 1925), an American artist renowned for his dramatic paintings of boxing matches. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art*

This photograph dating from the 1920s shows, left to right, some of the finest American polo players of the time, Pete Bostwick, Gerald Balding, Tommy Hitchcock, and John Hay Whitney of the Greentree team, resting between chukkers. Polo is still played internationally today, the best teams being those from Argentina, the United States, and Great Britain, where the game has been a favorite among members of the royal family. Clothing for polo, designed for maximum flexibility and protection, includes helmets and knee pads, as well as the classic polo shirt, which has become a favorite article of sportswear even for those who have never mounted a horse.







The golden age of polo has passed, but the game is still a popular spectacle at clubs and playing fields around the world. The gentleman pictured above is the most honorable marquess of Cholmondeley, who played polo in England during the 1920s. The aggressive action of the game is scarcely apparent in the appearance of this elegant pair—the rider dressed in pristine white breeches and shirt with polished boots and the beautifully groomed horse with neatly wrapped protective leg bandages and impeccable bridle and saddle.





## “Western” Riding



When the Muslims invaded Andalusia in the eighth century, they introduced their techniques for bullfighting on horseback, and great tournaments were held in which Moorish chieftains competed against Iberian knights. After the Muslims were driven out in the fifteenth century, the sport continued to be a favorite among Spanish aristocrats and formed an integral part of court life. By 1700, the bull was no longer lanced from the back of a highly trained horse but was fought on foot, horsemen were there-

after relegated to a subordinate position as picadors, while the star of the show was the matador. Francisco Goya (Spanish, 1747 - 1828), who was official court painter, actually designed a professional uniform for use in bullfighting, and he made a series of engravings called *Taurromachias* in which he celebrated the history of the sport. This plate shows El Cid Campeador, a great hero of the eleventh century, who was supposedly the first Castilian to lance a bull from the back of a horse.

Arabian horses, originally bred by the Bedouins, are highly prized for their great speed over long distances, quality, and endurance, and many fine breeds used for riding today can trace their ancestry to them. This painting by Eugène Delacroix (French, 1798 - 1863) shows an Arab rider, probably a cavalryman, signaling from the back of his fiery steed. In 1832 Delacroix was sent by King Louis Philippe of France as part of a diplomatic mission to the sultan of Morocco, and thereafter North African horses and riders became one of his favorite subjects. *The Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, Virginia*

The conquistadors introduced horses to the New World and, along with the animals, brought their distinctive style of riding. Their clothing and equipment were adapted not only for battle but also for herding cattle and sheep. By the 1860s, when Maximilian of Austria became emperor of Mexico, Mexican riding clothes had become all the rage in Europe. In these paintings by the

British-American painter James Walker (1819–1889), a typical California ranch owner (*padron*) and cowboy (*vaquero*) are depicted in their characteristic costumes. The saddles are high in front and behind, like those used by European knights in armor, and the men sit their horses with straight legs, feet thrust forward. *The Bancroft Library, Berkeley, California*







# Aside and Astride

## *A History of Ladies' Riding Apparel*

From the earliest records of women on horseback, one learns that the rationale for women riding has been the same as that for men: war, transportation, sport, and pleasure. From the legendary Amazons onward, women rode astride as well as sideways—depending on the nature of the activity and the daring of the woman. Chaucer's description of the Wife of Bath on her way to Canterbury implies a pair of spurs, and an illustration from the Ellesmere manuscript of 1407 shows her with skirts hiked up riding astride:

*Easily on an ambling horse she sat  
Well wimpled up, and on her head a hat  
As broad as is a buckler or a shield,  
She had a flowing mantle that concealed  
Large hips, her heels sharply spurred under that.*

One could hardly have expected Joan of Arc to have accomplished her mission in 1429 had she been seated sideways, encumbered by skirts, on a docile palfrey. Equally daring, the mistress of Henri II of France, Diane de Poitiers (1499–1566), was an avid rider and hunter and is thought to have ridden astride. However, since classical times, as evidenced by Greek vase paintings depicting Amazons riding astride and goddesses riding sideways, there has been a strong implication that only a woman as masculine as an Amazon, as earthy as the Wife of Bath, as heretical as Joan of Arc, or as notorious as Diane de Poitiers would have dared to ride astride. This left the vast majority of ladies sitting sideways on horseback with their skirts spread modestly about them.

The first true sidesaddle, thought to have been inspired by Henri II's wife, Catherine de' Medici, in the early sixteenth century, was a decided improvement over the various pads and platforms upon which ladies had sat for untold centuries. Not only was it considerably safer than sitting sideways on a man's saddle, but it responded to aesthetic considerations as well, for a woman's wide hips were considered unseemly and unattractive when she was riding astride. This first type of sidesaddle, with the single pommel or crutch moved a little to the saddle's left side and curved to hold the rider's right leg, continued in use until the invention of the "leaping-head" at the end of the eighteenth century. Legend has it that Thomas Oldaker, huntsman to an English earl, broke



This illustration of the Wife of Bath, from the 1407 Ellesmere manuscript of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, clearly shows her broad-brimmed hat, spurs, and whip, some of the accessories essential for a woman riding alone and astride on a pilgrimage during the early fifteenth century. Many women at this time would have ridden pillion (behind a man on a special cushion designed for the purpose, as in the falconry scene from the *Des Riches Heures*, page 34), or been led while seated sideways on a pad or platform. *Huntington Library, San Marino, California*

This delightful painting by Claude Deruet (French, 1588 – 1662) vividly shows the perils involved in riding sideways. The elegant ladies, probably of the court of the duke de Lorraine, are disporting themselves on a falconry hunt (though one woman uses an owl), wearing their finest dresses, which are not at all adapted to riding on horseback. (It was not until the end of the seventeenth century that special clothes were developed for the purpose.) The artist has provided us with a rare opportunity to view what was worn beneath the skirt—a refined pair of shoes, stockings, and herb-boned garters—hardly a practical outfit for the chase. The fanciful nature of seventeenth-century taste can also be seen in the long, silky manes and tails of the horses, which were specially bred at this time to present an elegant appearance, matching that of their riders. *Musée de Chartres*



This seventeenth-century French saddle was intended for a woman riding aside. While it resembles a chair, with a back and a platform to support the feet, it also has the high pommel and cantle of the man's saddle. This saddle was designed to be used on either side of the horse, not just on the left side, as is the case with the true sidesaddle, which enables the rider to face the horse's head and manage the reins herself. *Hermès Collection, Paris*

his leg and devised this contraption to enable him to jump his horse while hunting. He placed a second crutch below the first so that it would curve over his left thigh. This saddle, which firmly controlled the position of the legs, became popular with women and led to the development of a special sidesaddle skirt cut, which allowed the rider's hemline to be perfectly horizontal when mounted but contained minimal yardage for a neat appearance. By the twentieth century, this had become an "apron-skirt," which was open in the back and had a weighted hem that hung parallel to the ground when mounted but when dismounted fell back over the breeches, making a partial skirt.

The first concessions by fashion to the development of specialized riding apparel came from a need to protect the rider from the hazards of traveling: wind, weather, and dirt. By the second half of the sixteenth century, such protective clothing included an overskirt or "safeguard," cloaks, capes, bouts, masks to protect the complexion, and hats. In addition to protection from the elements, the rider also needed to guard his or her legs from the sweat of the horse and from chafing caused by the saddle. Riding pants, apparently first worn in ancient Persia, were widely used by the nomadic horsemen of Asia, and breeches gradually became standard dress for horsemen throughout Europe. Women choosing to ride, whether astride or aside, needed some form of this "masculine" garment. An eighteenth-century inventory of Mme de Pompadour's possessions lists several pairs of silk knitted *pantalons*, which might well have been used for warmth and comfort under her riding skirt.

Women, attracted to the style of men's clothing for psychological as well as practical reasons, found early in the seventeenth century that riding provided the opportunity to adapt masculine attire for their own

purposes. Samuel Pepys in a diary entry dated June 12, 1666, wrote, "I find the Ladies of Honour dressed in their riding garb, with coats and doublets with deep skirts, just, for all the world, like mine . . . so that, only for a long petticoat dragging under their men's coats, nobody could take them for women. . . ."

An early illustration of a woman in specialized dress for the hunt, *Dame en habit de chasse* (1676), shows, in terms of line, the traditional accommodation of a man's style to feminine attire. The shape of the upper body—coat, hat, and accessories—is adapted from the lines and ornamentation of the stylish men's fashions of the time; the lower body—the skirt—establishes the femininity of the wearer. The eighteenth century in particular saw the development of a specialized costume for *l'amazone*—the woman on horseback. In France as well as England, this consisted of coat, waistcoat, tie, shirt, hat, gloves, and skirt with or without train, corresponding in line to men's fashions. The 1704 portrait of the duchesse de Bourgogne and the painting *Départ pour la Chasse à Course* illustrate this relationship clearly. The style of ornamentation is also related to the development of men's riding clothes, for equitation was recognized as an art at this time and specialized riding apparel had become associated with dressage as a courtly pastime. Englishwomen were no less aware of what their gentlemen on horseback (or their French *amazone* counterparts) were wearing at this time. One young equestrienne moved *The Spectator* in 1716 to describe "a coat and a waistcoat of blue camlet trimmed and embroidered with silver, with a petticoat of the same stuff, by which alone her sex was recognized, as she wore a smartly cocked beaver hat, edged with silver and rendered more sprightly with a feather, while her hair, curled and powdered, hung to a considerable length down her shoulders, tied like that of a rakish young gentleman, with a long streaming scarlet riband."

Alan Mansfield, in a history of English sporting costume, speculates that there may even have been a reciprocal relationship between such a costume and eighteenth-century military dress: "Some ladies in the 1780s and 1790s modeled their habits on military uniforms; perhaps in revenge for the adoption by the Royal Navy of dark blue and white for its officers' coats, said to have been inspired by the riding habit of the duchess of Bedford some forty years earlier." (Phillis Cunnington and Alan Mansfield, *English Costume for Sports and Outdoor Recreation from the 16th to the 19th Centuries* [London: Black, 1969], p. 105.) Royal ladies, including Marie Antoinette, found occasion to have their portraits painted wearing fully masculine attire and riding astride, perhaps to emphasize their status as well as to astonish their more conservative contemporaries.

However, not all who rode or hunted in the eighteenth century followed these specialized styles. Carle van Loo's painting in 1737, *Halte de Chasse*, shows a royal hunting party in which the ladies have made only minor concessions to the nature of the activity. The setting for this festive picnic is the forest of Compiègne, where Louis XV enjoyed exercising his royal prerogative of stag hunting—*la grande vénerie*. After a morning devoted to the chase, the king's party would stop during the afternoon at a pleasant spot, often by a stream, for relaxation and luncheon. The king, who can be seen standing in the center, is wearing a richly embroidered red coat. Mme de Pompadour sits in the foreground, elegantly costumed in a flowing skirt, with only slight masculine touches—the short jacket, open blouse, and small bow at her neck—to



*Dame en habit de chasse*, a fashion plate of 1676. Musée de la Vénerie, Senlis



indicate that she too has participated in the hunt. She is surrounded by noblemen dressed in royal blue, trimmed with red and silver, which was the livery worn by all members of the king's hunting party by his express permission. Louis XIV was the first to regulate the use of such uniforms to control participation in the royal hunt.

As the eighteenth century progressed, the major inspiration for men's fashionable apparel and therefore for women's riding habits switched from the French court to the English countryside. The English country gentleman rode and hunted over a course filled with obstacles in a climate that demanded rugged, weatherproof clothing. He was so enamored of this sporting life that even at court he did not give up his country clothes. It was this plain fabric and severity of cut that was to

*Départ pour la Chasse à Course*, painter unknown, ca. 1700. Location unknown





*Halte de Chasse* by Carle van Loo (French, 1705 – 1765), 1737. Musée du Louvre, Paris

influence men's and women's fashions of subsequent centuries. Alan Mansfield traces another source of this fashion creation: "A quite new development occurred in about 1785 when the Great Coat or Riding Coat dress was introduced. It has a close-fitting bodice with lapels and a deep double or triple cape-collar, after the style of a coachman's coat; and a long straight, full skirt, buttoned through; the bottom button often left undone to show the underpetticoat. The fashion apparently crossed the Channel and returned from France as the 'Redingote' at the end of the century."





Lady Worsley, who sat for Sir Joshua Reynolds (British, 1723 – 1792) in June 1779, chose to have herself portrayed in a riding habit based on the uniform of her husband's regiment, the Hants Militia, a practice followed by a number of other Englishwomen of her day *Earl of Harewood Collection, Harewood House, Leeds*



*Galerie des Modes*, 1779



*Galerie des Modes*, 1787.

The 1787 plate from *Galerie des Modes* shows a French version of this costume, adapted for women's riding apparel, but labeled "in a German style." In the 1779 plate the man is wearing a French interpretation of the influential English country gentleman's costume. Never lagging in fashion sense, equestriennes conformed to current feminine fashions in their riding apparel through the placement of the waistline, the configuration of the bodice, the shape of the sleeve, and the style of the skirt. After the eighteenth century, the cut of women's riding clothes did follow male fashions by becoming less voluminous, with jackets shorter, narrower, and more cutaway. Even so, sensitivity to feminine fashions persisted throughout the nineteenth century. The rise of the English tailor and availability of high-quality English woolen cloth meant that women's riding habits exuded the same kind of sartorial elegance epitomized by George Bryan ("Beau") Brummell (1778–1840). By refining the cut of the country gentleman's costume, insisting on impeccable cleanliness of linen, and demanding only dark colors contrasted with neutral shades and brilliant white, Brummell created an enduring standard of appearance in the tailored clothing of both men and women. Nowhere have his taste and style been more emphatically retained than in riding apparel as it evolved for both men and women through the nineteenth century. The cut of the costume worn by the Scottish country gentleman George Harley Drummond in the portrait by Sir Henry Raeburn could be said to represent Brummell's ideal.

A glance at the series of French fashion illustrations that starts on page 72 showing nineteenth-century riding habits reveals the degree to which these costumes used the fashionable French silhouette and the extent of the conservative and masculine influence of Beau Brummell. The line of each habit reflects a simplification of cut and ornamentation

when compared with fashionable day or evening counterparts. This is, of course, in keeping with the physical demands of riding horses, but it also reveals the sense of appropriateness and discipline associated with riding as a sport for women. This conservatism did not, however, prevent the sleeves and skirt from including a fashionable quantity of cloth.

One of the most beautiful and fashion-conscious horsewomen of the nineteenth century was the tall and slender Elisabeth of Austria (1837 – 1898). Not satisfied with a daily ride in Vienna, the Empress rode and hunted on an international scale, traveling by special train with her entourage (and forty tons of luggage!) to France, England, and Ireland, as well as to parts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. On these trips she took at least sixteen riding habits and along the way bought new ones, preferably in dark blue, in the latest style. According to Brigitte Hamann, Elisabeth

*had herself sewn into her riding habit every morning, and to the dismay of the prudish English aristocracy, she did not wear a petticoat under her habit; her only undergarment was a very soft chemise of the finest kid, which was as tight as a second skin. Naturally, she had herself sewn into that every morning too. . . . The severe, tight cut of the riding habit underlined her height. . . . Never before or after were ladies' riding habits as elegant or refined as in the 1880s, when Elisabeth set the pace for the fashion on the parcours. Never had riding been as fashionable for ladies of society. (The Imperial Style: Fashions of the Hapsburg Era [New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1980]. pp. 148, 149.)*

The inclination of women to have their riding skirts designed in the latest feminine style occasioned embarrassing as well as dangerous situations. Strong gusts of wind might play havoc with a carefully arranged skirt, and early in the nineteenth century various pins or straps, such as the one shown in the 1800 fashion plate, were suggested as remedies. Much more seriously, a fall from a horse might find the rider's skirts caught or entangled, adding to the risk of injury. Safety is a perennial concern, whether riding astride or sidesaddle, and keeping one's seat in a wide skirt took great skill and balance. The sidesaddle itself demanded skirts of sufficient width to allow for proper placement of the right leg. By 1855 a slight pouch on the right side of a full skirt had appeared as a remedy; but it was not until late in the nineteenth century that special tailoring was devised to accommodate the right knee, with a dramatic decrease in the volume of the skirt. An issue of *Cassell's Family Magazine* of 1879 describes such a skirt as too complicated to make at home, but by June 1893 *The Delineator* offered a detailed description and a pattern. The first "safety-skirt," which the rider could open up the back while in the saddle and fasten again when on the ground, was introduced in 1875, the idea being that this arrangement was less likely to catch during a fall. A later design for riding astride, resembling a modern culotte, is shown in the 1893 plate. Even then, there was as great a desire for a fashionable skirt shape when off the horse as for comfort and decorum when mounted. Women might wear the breeches and boots of the man's habit underneath, but few felt it proper to relinquish the look of the skirt entirely.



*George Harley Drummond* by Sir Henry Raeburn (British, 1756 – 1823), 1808. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art*

Special riding corsets underneath the habits gave the torso the current fashion shape and kept the spine erect for proper bearing, while petticoats and even bustles held the skirt in a stylish line. (The English found the simple kid chemise of Elisabeth of Austria a shocking lack of underwear!) Drawers of various kinds became trousers strapped under the foot, much like fashionable menswear of the mid-nineteenth century; and breeches were cut like a man's to below the knee. In breeches for sidesaddle, when made of traditional cloth, each leg was cut with regard to its position when mounted.

The guidelines for proper riding clothes developed later for women than for men. The formalization of women's sidesaddle attire seems to have come about with the specially cut skirt worn over breeches and boots. Thereafter, the corseted bodice shape and the style of sleeve became the only hallmarks of fashion found in formal riding apparel, and the influence of masculine style encompassed the whole look. The Belle Epoque, replete with traditions and a sense of propriety, determined the standard to which early twentieth-century equestrian activity adhered. Although sidesaddle riding went out of fashion by the end of the 1930s for most horsewomen, some ladies continued to ride sidesaddle to the hounds, and the style is now enjoying a revival, not only in the hunting field but also in the show ring. Sidesaddle habits retain the apron as a skirt, while women riding cross saddle wear habits with a traditional masculine cut.

Jodhpur pants, cut to the ankle and worn with jodhpur boots, were introduced for women in the 1920s. Originally adopted by British colonials in India for the comfort they offered in hot weather, they are now worn primarily by children or those who ride American, gaited horses in the so called saddle-seat style. Until the introduction of elastic fibers in fabric, a full cut above the knee for both breeches and jodhpurs for men and women was necessary, since the rider had to be able to flex the legs to mount the horse and to move athletically at the faster gaits. The material below the knee, usually reinforced with suede patches, had to remain snug to ensure a secure grip in the saddle and to prevent chafing. The slim appearance of riders today is in part due to a new breeches cut made possible by stretch fabrics.

**W**omen riding *en cavalier*, such as Marie Antoinette, had, of course, imitated a man's boots as well as his costume. Some early stirrups had a kind of shoe-shaped box which fitted over a lady's slipper, but half boots were used from at least 1786. Some early nineteenth-century stirrups had a platform for the slipper, as illustrated in the fashion plate of 1800. Today, however, men's and women's boots are cut in the same style and differentiated only by regulations governing various activities, such as hunting and showing.

Riding hats have also become standardized over the course of time. Whereas fashion set the style for headgear during most of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, safety also played a part in the final develop-

ment of the bowler, top hat, and riding or hunt cap styles designed and made specifically for riding. These specialized hats are made to be lightweight but close fitting and strong and hard enough to protect the wearer's head during a fall. They are sometimes attached to the neck of the riding coat by a cord, a further convenience for a rider experiencing an unplanned dismount or an extraordinary gust of wind.

Other accessories were also developed specifically for riding. Leather and string gloves provided an excellent grip on the reins when wet or dry and are still worn today. The hunting stock, a plain version of eighteenth-century neckwear adopted by the British, is still tied at the neck in a traditional style and fastened with a gold stock pin, while other scarves and ties are specified for other types of riding. Rainwear for use on horseback has a long history, beginning with capelike garments and progressing to the lightweight waterproof coat of today.

The choice of clothing and headgear deemed appropriate for different occasions is largely dictated by convention and special regulations. Following traditions begun in the seventeenth century, twentieth-century horsewomen conform to the specifics set forth by such authorities as Sydney D. Barry in *Clothes and the Horse: A Guide to Correct Dress for All Riding Occasions* (London: Vinton, 1953), the rule book of the American Horse Shows Association, or the regulations of individual hunt clubs. These regulations may be found in *Baily's Hunting Directory* (published annually) for British and American hunting and in the *Manuel de Vénérerie* for French livery (French hunts retain a decidedly eighteenth-century look, and the women still wear the tricorne hat.) Color is another carefully regulated area of attire. For example, in Britain and America red is often reserved for the coats worn by male members of the hunt and the hunt staff, who also have the privilege of wearing colored boot tops and, depending on the circumstances, white breeches. Only on special occasions are these rules broken. Women participating in events as members of the United States Equestrian Team, for instance, where they compete on an equal basis with men, wear identical uniforms, including a red coat for show jumping and a black cutaway and white breeches for dressage. Fashionable elements still affect the cut and fit of a contemporary habit, but are found only in very subtle degrees. Except for improvements in the cut of the breeches, which has allowed the skirt of the jacket to be shorter and less full, the basic silhouette for formal riding attire for women has not changed much since the 1920s.

The tradition of man-tailored garments for women, which had its origins at the end of the seventeenth century, has transcended sport and reached into every aspect of women's clothing today. No sooner was careful tailoring applied to riding apparel than the tailored suit for daytime wear became part of every woman's wardrobe. The ease and comfort of masculine apparel inspired Gabrielle Chanel early in her career, and the Chanel suit is very much with us today. The superb cut and tailoring of riding apparel are as attractive today as ever before and perhaps as influential in the fashion choices available to women.



*Vogue Magazine*, "Busvine," 1927. Busvine was a London tailor whose designs for sidesaddle habits were unquestionably the most fashionable of his day. This habit is made of tan English whipcord and includes a Tattersall waistcoat, a white hunting shirt, and an English bowler hat.

Jean R. Druesedow







In this handsome portrait by George Stubbs, the countess of Goring is wearing the colors of the Charlton hunt, which was based at the duke of Richmond's Goodwood House. Her habit includes a black, broad-brimmed beaver hat trimmed with white ermine, a black cravat, a blue riding habit with a coat that flares from the waist trimmed with ornamental gold buttons and froggings, a waistcoat, and a full skirt. This outfit was characteristic of British hunting clothes before the period when Englishmen took to jumping fences. *Yale Center for British Art, New Haven*



*Journal des Dames et des Modes*,  
"Attitude d'Amazone," 1800.



*Journal des Dames et des Modes*, "Habit  
Amazone en Drap," 1803







*Les Modes Parisiennes, 1857.*



*Petit Courrier des Dames* "Modes de Longchamps," 1861



*Journal des Demoiselles, 1867*



*Journal des Demoiselles, 1871.*







*La Mode Illustrée*, "Amazones," 1893.

*Amazone devant le Château de Pierrefonds* by Alfred de Dreux (French, 1810 - 1860), c. 1850. *Hermès Collection, Paris*





*Vogue Magazine*, "Correct Hunting Attire," 1927. "This Market-Harborough habit of dark-blue melton cloth, worn with a waistcoat of Fattersall, black butcher boots, and a silk or pique stock, is the correct out-

fit for hunting or showing hunters. A high silk hat or the bowler is equally correct... English habit imported by Saks-Fifth Avenue."



*Vogue Magazine*. "A Habit for Informal Cross-Saddle Riding." 1927. "Correct in every detail for summer shows and hacking is Miss Kitty Penn Smith's outfit, including well-fitted jodhpurs of brownish-beige

gabardine, tan jodhpur boots, a coat of a rough brown tweed, and a brown felt hat. A swagger stick and canary string gloves complete the outfit. English habit imported by Saks-Fifth Avenue."



The grace and perfect form of this horse and rider, photographed about 1890, illustrate the ability of the sidesaddle rider to retain her seat even over a fence. Many women who are proficient in sidesaddle

riding claim that the short-stirrup grip saddle provides a more comfortable and secure seat for jumping than the conventional cross-seat saddle.

The couturier Coco Chanel was an enthusiastic horsewoman who astonished her friends not only by riding astride but also by making her own jodhpurs based on a pair owned by a male groom. With her in this photograph from the 1920s is Boy Capel, a great sportsman of the day.





The hunting party of Madame la Duchesse d'Uzes in the forest of Rambouillet, about 1905



These two photographs taken on an early autumn morning in 1931 show the participants in a hunt with the pack of Lord Cowdray just before they departed for a day's sport. The guests lined up on the steps for their photograph are Oxford students wearing correct traditional hunting garb, the young women can be distinguished from the men by their bowler hats. Two of the ladies are obviously planning to ride astride, while the third wears the apron skirt appropriate to sidesaddle.





Although these members of the Myopia Hunt Club in Massachusetts were photographed recently, the riding habits give the scene a timeless quality.







These three photographs, displaying the apparel of the tailor Nardi and reproduced in a 1930s tack-shop catalogue for Kauffman & Sons Saddlery, show not only the correct dress for informal cross-saddle riding, left, and formal sidesaddle equitation, center, but also a feminine version of an outfit for playing polo, originally a game for men only.



This 1861 painting of the Prince Imperial, son of Napoleon III, by Benedict Masson (French, 1819 - 1893) shows the young prince handsomely attired in the costume designed for *la Vénère Impériale*, the dis-

tinctive green coat is decorated with red velvet and gold and silver braid and is worn with white breeches, black boots, and a bicorne hat. *Hermès Collection, Paris*



The prince's mother, the Empress Eugénie, wears a version of the same habit. *Musée de la Venerie, Sens*



Jodhpurs are usually worn today by children, but early in the century riding apparel for young horsemen was simply a reduced version of the habits worn by their

elders. This charming portrait of Alan Harriman was painted in 1905 by George De Forest Brush (American, 1855–1941). *The Metropolitan Museum of Art*



This charming equestrian portrait photographed in 1903 shows (left to right) Lady Diana Somerset on Maisie, Dyer the groom, Lady Blanche Somerset on Darkie, the duchess of Beaufort, and the marquess of Worcester on his donkey, Minnie. The girls are wearing their best hunting clothes while the young marquess sports a pair of gaiters as he sits securely in his special, boxlike saddle.



This page from a sixteenth-century Nuremberg tournament book shows one of the fantastic chariots that took part in the procession preceding the tournament. No expense or flight of imagination was spared

in making these vehicles, which are similar in spirit to the floats featured in some present-day parades. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art*

## *Fashion on Wheels*

Since antiquity, monarchs and princes have used various kinds of conveyances to dazzle their subjects. While some rode horses and others were carried in litters, it was the wheeled vehicle that offered the greatest possibilities for magnificent display. The rulers of Assyria and Egypt are depicted on ancient tombs and monuments riding on ceremonial occasions in ornate horse-drawn chariots, the symbols of power and authority. Nearer our own time, engravings and paintings by Albrecht Dürer and other artists show kings and princes riding in gala processions in highly decorated carriages.

The use of such carriages by lesser mortals was discouraged and, in some European countries, actually forbidden. One reason for this prohibition may have been to thwart the ambitions of potential rivals, but there was also the fear that knights and noblemen would become soft and unfit to lead their vassals on horseback in time of war if they were allowed to lounge through the streets in soft-cushioned coaches. At first only ladies and the old and infirm were permitted to use wheeled vehicles, but in time restrictions were lifted, and the use of carriages gradually increased. Different groups of specialized vehicles began to evolve, each group having its own style of decoration and of costume for occupants and attendants.

Beginning in the sixteenth century, coaches in which a monarch or a member of the royal family sat as though on his ornate throne were used for state ceremonies or for royal journeys through vassal territory. As time passed, the decoration of these state coaches became more splendidly lavish with gilded rococo carving, allegorical sculpture and painting, and heraldic devices. The height of fantastic grandeur was reached with the state coach of King Ludwig II of Bavaria, built in Munich in 1870–71. This coach, which can still be seen at the Nymphenburg Palace in Munich, has a trapezoidal body slung low to the ground on heavy leather braces, which are covered with embroidered blue velvet and suspended by C-springs mounted on the undercarriage. The body, wheels, and undercarriage are sumptuously decorated with gilded



State coaches were always elaborately decorated, but this coach, built for King Ludwig II ("The Dream King"), of Bavaria, is perhaps the most elaborate ever constructed. *Nymphenburg Palace, Munich*



The coachmen, footmen, and postilions on state coaches wore ornate livery to match the grandeur of the coaches themselves. This plate, from an early twentieth-century French history of driving, shows the livery of the coachmen who drove for the French court.



carving and figural motifs. The body panels are paintings on copper of scenes from the life of Louis XV of France and an allegory of the Christian Faith. On the roof are spritelike figures sounding trumpets, and the inside is lined with blue velvet heavily embroidered with gold thread. The coachman's seat is covered with an elaborately decorated hammercloth embroidered on the sides with the royal crown and monogram in gold.

The coachmen, postilions, and attendants who accompany state coaches are dressed in appropriately ornate livery coats, richly embellished with gold cords and strappings, worn with silk knee breeches, silk stockings, buckled shoes, and a cocked hat. The footman's dress suit differed from the coachman's only in having a coat of a more exaggerated cutaway style, fastened not with buttons but with a hook and eye at the point of the breast. The postilion, who rides one of the horses pulling the carriage, usually the near-side (left) horse, wears a full-dress livery with a short jacket reaching to the waist only and decorated with gold lace and gilt buttons. A white shirt and stock tie, white leather breeches, white gloves, decorated cap, boots with brown tops, and an iron leg-guard on the left leg to protect it from the battering of the carriage pole, complete the uniform. Full-dress livery became somewhat formalized toward the end of the eighteenth century, and it has been changed only in detail since then in surviving royal households.

In the more prosperous European countries, members of the nobility also had state carriages built for their use when attending the courts of their sovereigns or on various ceremonial occasions. Most of these were enclosed coaches carrying four persons, but similar, smaller carriages, called *chariots* in England, seated two persons inside. Open carriages, such as the *landau*, *vis-à-vis*, and *barouche* (called a *calèche* in

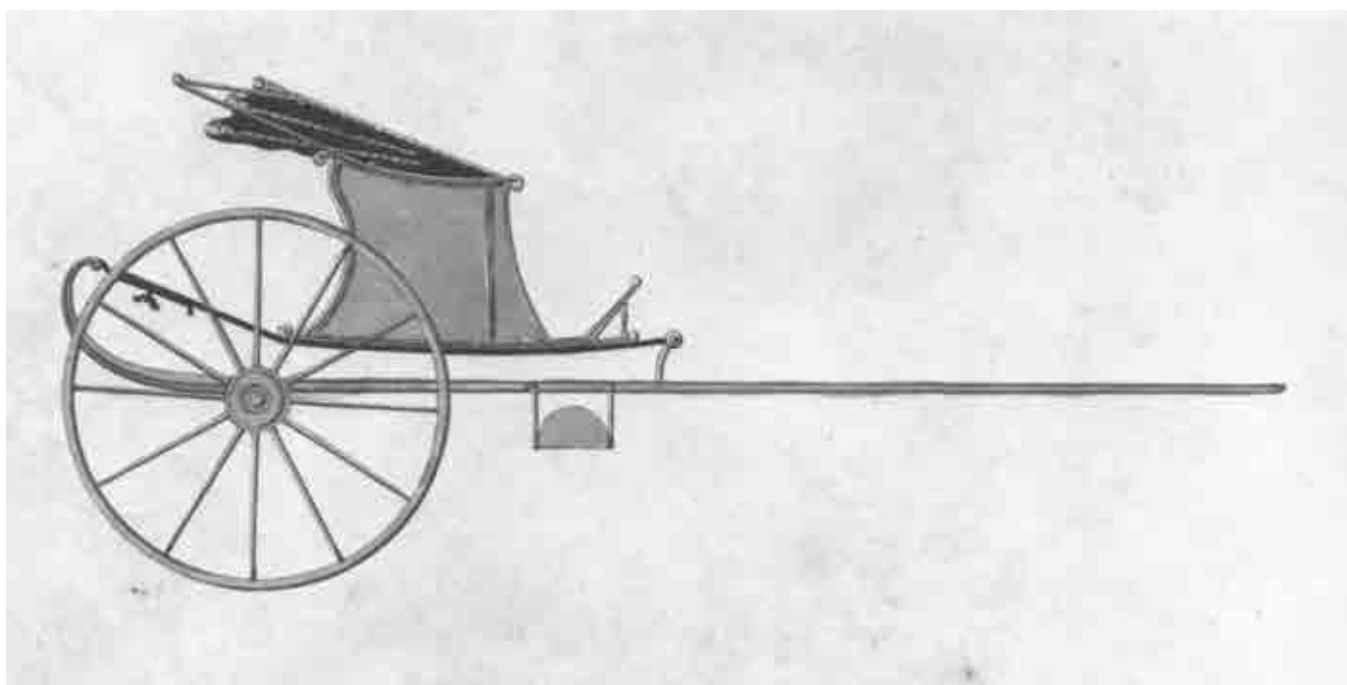


France) were also used in some noble stables. These state carriages were normally decorated with their owners' coats-of-arms on the door panels and the badges of the orders of chivalry on the side panels. Some gilded carving was common but on an altogether more modest scale than the state coaches of royalty. Accompanying these state carriages were servants who, on occasions of appropriate importance, wore state livery somewhat similar to that worn by the royal carriage servants.

State carriage horses needed not only size and strength to draw these ponderous vehicles but they were also expected to step along stylishly, wearing with suitable dignity their heavy, ornate harness. A team of such horses, matched for color, size, and action, was an expensive luxury. The use of fancy horses and coaches for public display by the rich and powerful was a noteworthy feature of London life in the early years of Queen Victoria's reign, and the picture of coaches arriving for one of Her Majesty's "drawing rooms" at Buckingham Palace was described by a contemporary French writer as follows: "It is truly delightful to mark the fiery, almost fierce action of the horses, restrained without any apparent effort by an impassible coachman, seated on his hammercloth like a throne."

During the latter half of the eighteenth century, noblemen, official envoys, and church dignitaries began to make long journeys in Europe by carriage with some frequency. Vehicles were specially equipped for such trips, and in some of them it was possible for the occupants to lie down and sleep. Some travelers would use their own carriages with

This handsome state coach design was produced by a London carriage-maker, who constructed vehicles for noblemen and decorated them with appropriate coats-of-arms and badges. The enclosed coach (called a "glass coach" because it has windows on each side) was designed to carry four people. Similar coaches were made to carry two people; in England this type was called a state chariot and in France a *coupe* (from the word *couper*, "to cut," since it was effectively half a coach). *Museums at Stony Brook*



This two-wheeled post chaise in a plate from a 1763 British book was probably drawn by one horse, with a second horse outside the shafts on the left, ridden by a postilion who controlled both horses in the absence of a coachman. Until the eighteenth century, men riding horses sat the trot, a fairly uncomfortable gait, but postilions developed the habit of rising in their stirrups at each stride, which enabled them to ride more comfortably over distance. Today most riders adopt this technique, which is called "posting."

horses hired at posting inns or stations, a service that had been organized under government regulation in many countries during the seventeenth century to speed the movement of messengers. Some of these posting carriages were two-wheeled; for example, the original form of post chaise was a two-wheeler. The post horses were often ridden by a postilion and not driven from the carriage. In France important people traveling "post" were often accompanied by a courier on horseback who saw to accommodation at inns on the route. The journalist C. J. Apperley (known as Nimrod) in *Nimrod Abroad* has given us the following description of such a courier in about 1825:

*A French courier must be seen to be believed. . . . No butcher in England is ever seen on so miserable an animal. . . . Of the rider, on his head—on the very top of it—is stuck a cap à la militaire, whilst his nether parts are cased in very thick, very tight, yellow or green breeches, and, of course, jackboots with spurs of some inches in length. Then away he goes, sitting back in his saddle, flourishing his whip above his head with no small degree of skill, the smacking of which, together with the jingling of bells (around the horse's neck), produces a musical medley of no common order.*

The French postilions wore a similar outfit, as well as a pair of very heavy, high boots designed to protect the legs from the carriage pole, so heavy, in fact, that the boots were often fastened to the saddle and the postilion was lowered into them in his stockinged feet. In Britain, the post-boys, so called whatever their age, were said to be generally neatly dressed in short bright-blue or yellow jackets with a single row of metal

buttons, breeches of white corduroy, and brown-topped riding boots. They usually wore high beaver hats, light in color, in which they stored a handkerchief, their tobacco, matches, and other small necessities. In case of bad weather, they often took along overcoats, which would be rolled and strapped onto some part of the carriage, perhaps the front C-spring.

The first wheeled conveyances for the general public were slow stage wagons, but early in the eighteenth century, faster coach service began to be organized. The coaches and the kind of service offered differed according to country, but it is generally acknowledged that the British coach service was the ne plus ultra before the coming of the railways.

There were two kinds of public coach in Britain—the crack mail coaches and the stage coaches. The mail coaches were horsed by contractors who also employed the drivers, but the guards were employees of the Post Office and wore a uniform of trousers, top boots,



This model of a French postilion wears the livery of members of the official messenger service for the French court in about 1825. His dark wool coat has a red collar, lapels, and cuffs, richly ornamented with silver galloons and brass buttons engraved *Poste aux chevaux*. His breeches are of buff calfskin, his hat of black leather, and his boots of exceptionally heavy leather. The horse's saddle is especially designed for the postilion: under the saddle tree is a case for carrying gold coins; at the pommel is a leather case for blankets; and behind the cantle is a leather trunk in which the mail was carried. The French royal coat of arms is engraved in silver on the horse's bridle. *Musée de l'Empéri, Salon de Provence*



This lithograph based on an early nineteenth-century painting called *The Last Change in* shows a typical British mail coach stopping at its final stage between York and London to pick up a fresh team of horses. The coachman wears a heavy topcoat and has a Tattersall blanket wrapped around his legs; the guard at the back adjusting the luggage wears a Post Office uniform, which includes a scarlet coat decorated with gold and a black top hat.

scarlet coat with strappings of gold lace, and a gold-braided, black top hat. They were armed with a blunderbuss, which was carried in a box affixed to the coach roof in front of their seat. The coachmen had no uniform attire but were dressed according to season in a low-crowned hat, a heavy, many-layered topcoat, with scarves and comforters as well in bad weather. Breeches and boots usually completed the outfit, but in later years many coachmen favored trousers instead.

Like the mail coaches, many of the stage coaches also carried guards who rode on the back seat of the coach. They were first put there solely to guard the coach, but later they took on other duties connected with the passengers and cargo. Some form of official garb was normal and usually consisted of a beaver hat and long frock coat of some brightly colored cloth with metal buttons and strappings like those on a mail guard's coat. Breeches and boots were also worn. Some of the coach proprietors may have provided the uniforms for the guards on their coaches, but evidently some individual preference in matters of dress was tolerated. There was, for instance, the case of Bob Hadley's hat. Hadley was the guard of the "Unicorn" coach that ran from Manchester to the pottery-making towns in the south, and his oversized hat was described as resembling "an umbrella in extent, and Bob, as he luxuriated under its broad leaf, looks like an orang-utang under a banyan tree."

It had long been customary for the guards to carry a horn of some kind to give warning of the coach's approach to the hostlers at staging inns, the turnpike keepers, and other vehicles or road users. Some guards came to pride themselves as performers on the coach horn and on occasion would entertain the passengers with such traditional and

popular airs as could be sounded in the limited musical range of a standard coach horn that was thirty-six inches in length. To add to their musical repertoire, a few guards used key bugles, but these were frowned on by officials at the Post Office, and the guards on mail coaches were forbidden to use them.

**I**n the days of poor roads and of coaches without springs pulled by underbred horses, driving as a pastime for the amateur had few attractions, but in the eighteenth century conditions began to improve, and about 1750 people began driving for pleasure. Carriages designed for the amateur driver began to appear, the four-wheeled types being called phaetons. The name, probably first used in France in this connection, was taken from the classical myth of Phaeton, the son of Helios (the sun), who persuaded his father to allow him to drive the sun chariot across the sky but was so erratic as a driver that he threatened to set heaven and earth on fire.

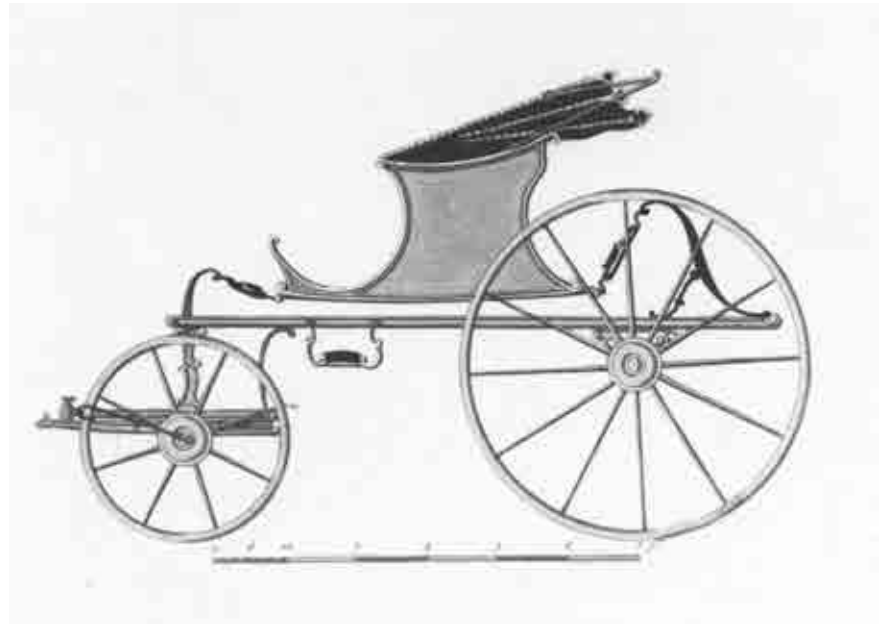
In England the prince of Wales, the future George IV, and the young bloods of his entourage took to driving phaetons of a type known as the "highflyer," built with a seat raised to an incredible height. Such was their fascination with driving that some of these amateur reinsmen would bribe the coachmen on the public coaches to let them take the reins. For those amateur coachmen who aspired to "take a handful" on a public coach, Donald Walker in *British Manly Exercises* (1837) offered the following suggestions:

*When traveling with a coachman you do not know, always adopt the following plan. Never get upon a coach-box wearing a black handkerchief around your neck, or in blue pantaloons. Always take care to have a look of the drag about you: a neat pair of boots, and knee-caps if cold weather; a good drab surtout [a close-fitting overcoat] . . . a benjamin [a coat consisting of as many as six capes, often with large pearl buttons] or two about the coach, and a little of the spot [a colored tie] about the neck. For the first mile I always observe a strict silence, unless broken by coachee. . . Leave him alone for a short while and when his mind is at ease, he will look you over as you sit beside him. He will begin with your boots, proceeding upwards to the crown of your hat, and if he likes you and you make a remark or two that pleases him, and shows you to be a judge of the art, the first time he stops he will say, "Now, sir, have you got your driving gloves on? Would you like to take 'em?" Coachmen's expenses on the road being heavy, you must not forget to reward him. They are generally satisfied with one shilling for under and two shillings for anything over thirty miles.*



Although this amusing eighteenth century print is hardly a realistic depiction of a highflyer phaeton, it does reflect the extremes to which fashionable drivers went in selecting their vehicles.

This small four-wheeled carriage dating from the 1760s is called a phaeton and was designed so that amateurs could drive without relying on a professional coachman.



By 1800 driving had become a fashionable sport, and notices appeared in the press, such as the following extract from *The Sporting Magazine* in 1801: "Lord Sefton takes the lead among our modern 'whips' and is very nice in his selection of coach and curriole horses. His lordship purchased six carriage horses the other day at the sum of seven hundred guineas."

In 1807 Lord Chesterfield organized the Kensington Driving Club whose members drove together from London to certain hostleries about fifty miles away, where they would dine, afterwards driving home again by lamplight. As to dress, his lordship adjured club members to "drive like coachmen but dress like gentlemen." His advice was not followed by other clubs that came into being about this time. Some young amateurs adopted the dress, manners, and speech of the professional "knights of the road," even to the extent of having their teeth filed so that they could expectorate with the same proficiency. Members of the Whip Club drove yellow-bodied barouches, wearing ankle-length drab-colored coats with three tiers of pockets and large mother-of-pearl buttons, blue waistcoats with one inch-yellow stripes, and plush breeches with strings and rosettes to the knee.

Most of the original driving clubs had disappeared by 1850, but at the end of the Crimean War in 1856 an interest in driving revived among the well-to-do. The Four-in-Hand Driving Club in England was formed in that year for drivers of private four-in-hand coaches, and membership was limited to thirty. The new club was conducted in a more polished fashion than those of a quarter century earlier. Members all drove private coaches, usually called park drags, built to the same general pattern as the mail coaches but finished in discreet colors, brilliant with many coats of fine varnish. The members' driving attire consisted of a single-breasted morning coat, black silk hat, and trousers. A blue cornflower

buttonhole was customary as a tribute to the duke of Beaufort, president of the club, whose family color was blue. Official meets were held in London's Hyde Park. Driving a coach and four became the rage among the sporting set in England and a new group, the Coaching Club, was formed in 1870 when the Four-in-Hand Club resolutely refused to increase its membership.

At about the same time other coaching enthusiasts started a revival of public coaches on certain routes. Often financing was provided by a syndicate of coaching men who shared the pleasure of driving. The road coaches, as they were called, were built much like the park drags but were somewhat heavier and finished in brighter colors, lettered with the names of places along the route. One of the early figures in this coaching revival was an American, George William Tiffany of Baltimore, who ran a coach on the road from London to Brighton in the summer of 1873. The verdict of British critics of this intrusion into one of the national institutions was that "he did the thing very well."

Driving for sport and pleasure in America did not become widespread until the second half of the nineteenth century. The first park drag built on the English pattern here was owned by T. Bigelow Lawrence of Boston in 1860. Leonard K. Jerome had one specially built by Wood Brothers of Bridgeport in 1863, and he and others regularly drove with their coaches to watch the races at Jerome Park. Jerome occasionally drove a six- or even eight-horse team hitched to his coach, but such flamboyant behavior was dismissed by his English counterparts with the comment "No gentleman drives more than four horses." Jerome was one of the founding members of the first American driving association, the Coaching Club, which was formed in New York in 1875. The official dress for members was a dark-green cutaway coat, yellow striped waistcoat, trousers of black cloth, and a black silk hat. The annual spring meet took place in Central Park on a Saturday in April or May, and a summer meet was held at Newport, Rhode Island, in August.

Carriages became increasingly popular during the nineteenth century in Europe, England, and America, for social as well as sporting reasons. Prominent families that did not include an enthusiastic amateur coachman would nevertheless own one or more four-wheeled carriages, which would be driven by a coachman in livery. Although often modest on the exterior, these private carriages were finely upholstered and appointed for the comfort and stylish appearance of the occupants inside. There were many different types of private carriage, open and enclosed, and each type had its own name, often borrowing the proper name of the owner to whose specifications it was built. Open carriages included the landau, calèche (known as a barouche in England), victoria, and vis-à-vis or sociable. Closed carriages were the brougham or coupé, town coach, clarence, and opera bus. A private hansom cab was kept in many private stables, and this, too, was driven by a professional coachman. As carriage design became more complicated, the names became more confusing. A writer for *The Hub and New York Coach-Makers' Magazine* noted in 1872:







This portrait by Alfred de Dreux (French, 1810 – 1860) of the Mosselman family, painted in 1848, shows Mme Mosselman driving her own carriage, which is of the type called a park-chaise. Queen Victoria drove a similar vehicle, which in England was called a pony phaeton. *Petit Palais, Paris*



Jerome Park, just outside New York, was established in 1866 by Leonard K. Jerome, who was a founder of the American Jockey Club along with August Belmont and who later became the grandfather of Winston Churchill. The park was the site of horse races and polo matches, and the fashionable attended in great numbers, often driving their own carriages. As a contemporary writer put it: "Racing was a social function. Jerome Park was in its glory, and the racehorses all belonged to one's friends." In the right foreground of this painting (ca 1866) by J. H. Beard is a lady's phaeton and, to the left, a high-wheeled sulky or racing carriage. *National Racing Museum, Saratoga Springs, New York*

*The difference in the names given to carriages is often perplexing to the public, and, in some cases, even to the manufacturer. One and the same vehicle goes frequently by different names, not only in different cities, but sometimes even in different shops in the same city. We do not wish to be understood to assert that a uniform denomination of carriages is an object of particular importance; yet it can not be denied that it would be more convenient if there were a little more harmony.*

When a carriage was pulled by a single horse, the coachman would drive alone, but if a pair was used, it was normal for a groom, also wearing livery, to sit beside him. In park drags, two grooms were always carried on the rear seat. The livery of these servants would vary from one family to another, but certain standards prevailed. In a manual called *Driving for Pleasure*, published in New York in 1896, the author, Francis T. Underhill, recommended that each servant should be equipped with the following:

*One silk hat; one felt storm hat, or second hat dressed for the purpose; one Derby; one suit of stable clothes, made either of whipcord or tweed; one sleeved waistcoat; one heavy cover coat; one stable cap; one mackintosh (or an*



*upper benjamin); one dozen collars; one dozen neck-cloths; one livery body coat; one striped valencia waistcoat (with sleeves); one livery great coat; one pair of trousers to match same (for occasional use in the morning or at night); one pair leathers (or cloth breeches); one pair top boots, with trees for same; one pair dogskin gloves; one pair heavy wool-lined gloves; one pair woolen gloves; one pair breeches trees.*

Since each household coach was likely to have a coachman as well as a groom or footman, to say nothing of a team of horses and its requisite harness, outfitting a private carriage obviously involved a sizable investment.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the public parks in many large cities were filled during the "season" by ladies taking the air in their carriages. Gentlemen in the park would often drive themselves in their gigs and phaetons, or in that most splendid of all two-wheeled carriages, the cabriolet. The cabriolet required only a single horse, but one of great size and beauty of form and action. One groom was carried, preferably small in stature; he stood on a small platform behind the body of the cabriolet, bobbing up and down with the motion of the horse.

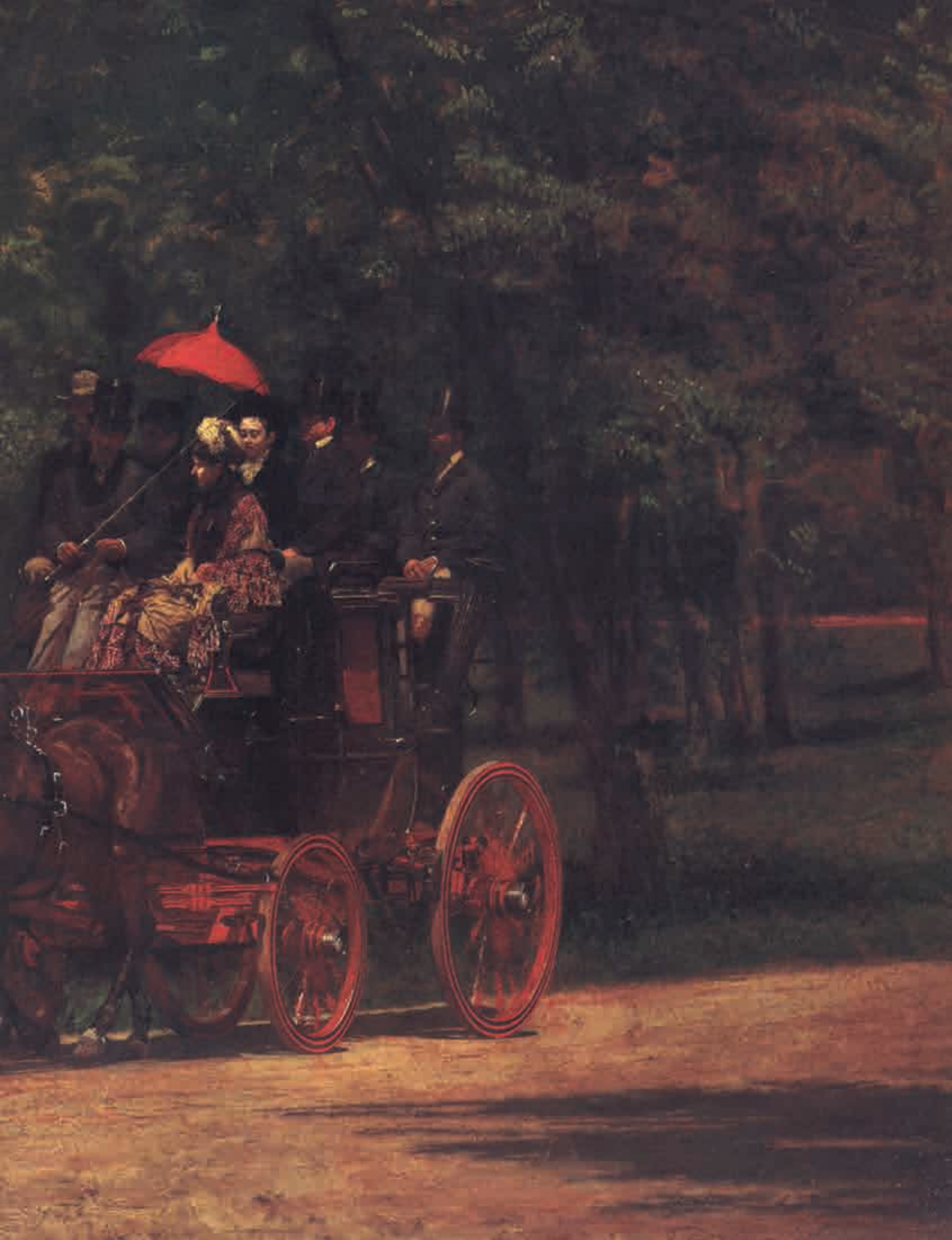
For many years, starting in the late nineteenth century, an annual coaching event was held on a special race day at Auteuil, the great course in the Bois de Boulogne. Called the *Prix des Drags*, the race would attract many fashionable coaching enthusiasts who would drive their park drags, each one more impressive than the next, from the Place de la Concorde to the racecourse. This scene was photographed in 1921.

*Overleaf:*

Fairman Rogers of Philadelphia taught engineering at the University of Pennsylvania but is best remembered as a superb horseman. He was a contestant at the first polo game played in America, held at Jerome Park in 1876, and was a leader in the revival of coaching as a sport. This painting by Thomas Eakins (American, 1844 – 1916) shows Rogers driving his park drag in 1879 shortly before the Coaching Club of Philadelphia was founded.

*Philadelphia Museum of Art*







Even in winter, it was fashionable for ladies in society to take the air in open carriages driven by their coachmen. This watercolor sketch by Constantin Guys (French, 1805 – 1892) shows a particularly elegant turn-out. The lady rides in a *milord* (which in England would be called a victoria) drawn by a horse wearing a blue caparison with yellow trim. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art*



This handsome print, dating from 1834, shows a cabriolet drawn by a large horse, held by an appropriately small groom, as was the fashion of the day. Grooms such as this one were called "tigers," because of their distinctively striped waistcoats.

*Overleaf:*

Thomas Worth (American, 1834 – 1917) was a master of caricature whose works were reproduced and sold by Currier & Ives during the late nineteenth century. He depicted the whole range of equestrian activity from foxhunting and trotting races to carriage scenes, such as this one entitled *Fashionable Turnouts in Central Park*, published in 1869. The picture is a veritable catalogue of pleasure carriages, in the foreground is a

victoria with a ramble for the carriage groom, behind it, moving left, is a Stanhope phaeton and behind that is a town coupé driven four-in-hand, to the left of the coupé is a Sefton (or canoe-shaped) landau, on the right, coming down the hill, is a Stanhope gig; above on the right is a pair-horse brougham or coupé; and at the top, moving left to right, are a lady's park phaeton with an English canopy (*left*) and a dog-cart phaeton (*right*).





Wm. H. Wood



These photographs from Francis T. Underhill's 1896 manual *Driving for Pleasure* show the typical livery of a coachman employed by an American family in the late nineteenth century.



In the middle of the nineteenth century, while the amateur reinsmen of Europe were driving their stylish phaetons and drags in the city parks, their counterparts in the United States were becoming more and more fascinated by the lure of the fast trotter. The development of a superior breed of trotters in America began early in the nineteenth century. In 1818, Major William Jones's black gelding, Boston Blue, trotted a mile in three minutes flat at Jamaica, Long Island, to win a bet of two thousand dollars, and thereafter interest grew apace. It appears that Jamaica was the location of the first trotting track in the country, and racing at a track near Philadelphia was started a few years later. By 1830 organized racing had spread to other parts of the country, and ownership of the fastest trotter in town became the ambition of many a young gentleman.

In New York, the owners of fast trotters would drive along Harlem Lane on weekends, and many an impromptu "brush" between rivals took place there. William H. Vanderbilt and Robert Bonner owned the fastest trotters at that time. Bonner, an Irishman, made a fortune as the publisher of the *New York Ledger* and other periodicals. He paid the incredible sum of thirty-five thousand dollars for a horse named Dexter, the king of the trotters.

By the 1890s several racing clubs had been formed in Buffalo, Cleveland, Boston, and other places. Membership was restricted to amateurs who were encouraged to drive their own horses. Wearing trousers, lightweight jackets, and caps, but not racing colors, these amateurs competed in "matinee" races throughout the summer. The professional race drivers used high-wheeled sulkies, built by American craftsmen who achieved miracles of lightness and strength, but the amateur reinsmen for the most part used four-wheeled speed wagons. Following the success of pneumatic tires in professional racing in the early 1890s, special matinee wagons were designed with wire wheels and inflated tires.

The coming of the automobile did not drive horses from the streets for many years, but in the United States the largest private stables in the big cities soon closed. The Coaching Club held its last meet in New York in 1910, and coachman-driven carriages were no longer seen in Central Park. Harness classes for gigs, highflyers, and other phaetons continued to be well supported at the National Horse Show in New York and elsewhere, and they continued to be turned out as impeccably as ever with grooms in livery. World War II practically ended the days of the gracious carriage, and for some years it seemed that the art of the coachman was ended.

Then in 1960, at the invitation of the late Ward Melville, a few carriage collectors gathered at Stony Brook on Long Island, and the Carriage Association of America came into being. The main objective of the new society was to save what relics remained of the horse-drawn era; it also sought to preserve the techniques of driving and the proper use of horses in harness. Interest in carriages and driving has grown at a steady pace since then, and driving activities of various kinds now take place in many parts of the country—as well as in England and Europe. One of the most popular events is the annual Carriage Marathon at the Devon Horse Show in Pennsylvania on the last Sunday in May. More than a hundred carriages appear at this event, most of them turned out as immaculately as those of the *haute monde* at the height of the season in Central Park at the turn of the century. There are also classes at Devon for coaches driven four-in-hand. A few other shows in different parts of the world offer classes for coaches, including obstacle courses, and more would do so if enough participants could be found.

In recent years coaching weekends have been held at Newport, reviving a summer tradition of the old Coaching Club, and a carriage drive is now held each August at Saratoga Springs, New York. Fashions may have changed somewhat, but old-timers assert that the standard of turnout at these events compares favorably with days gone by. One old hand wistfully added that he would willingly barter his soul, supposing he had one, for the privilege of sitting on the box once again, behind four smart steppers.

Thomas Ryder





A popular activity for those who could not resist the idea of outracing their neighbors even

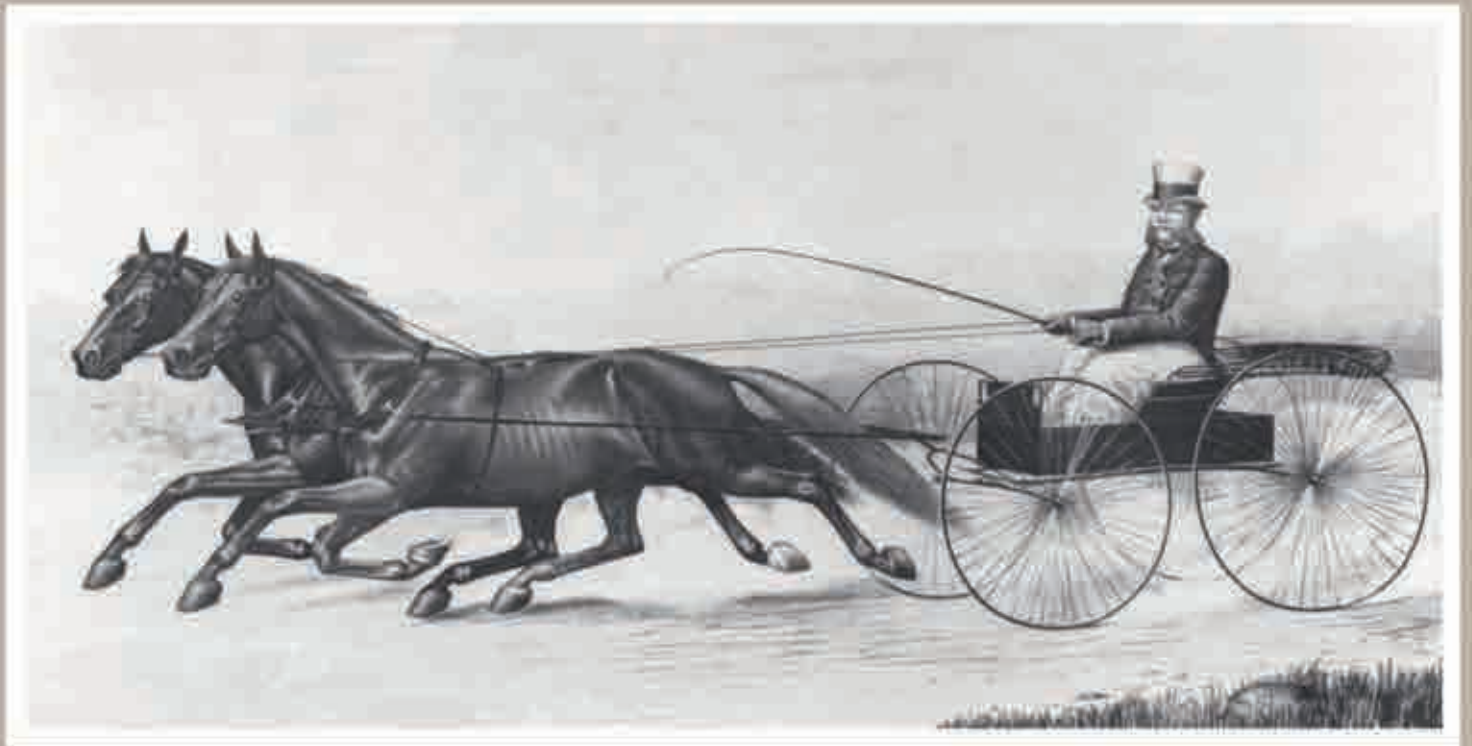


In wintertime was to hitch their trotters to a sleigh and take a turn through the snow.



Carriage driving is enjoying a revival today, and amateur catchmen take pleasure in showing off their well-trained horses and their painstakingly restored vehicles at meets and horse shows throughout the United States and Britain. This handsome

Hackney pony is pulling a Stanhope gig. Stanhope was an English gentleman who had a number of carriages designed to his specifications by Tilbury, the London carriage-maker, and his name became attached to carriages of the same design.



William H. Vanderbilt owned some of the fastest trotters in New York during the late nineteenth century; here he is driving a pair of fine mares, from a print published in 1884.





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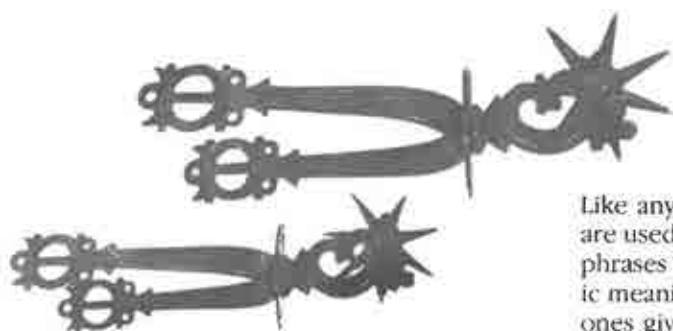




*Bridle (1) Saddle (2) Stirrup Leather (3) & Girth (4) shown at 1/4 actual Size Bit (5) & Stirrup (6) at 1/2. Blanket (7) at 1/12 the actual Size.*

**Paul Mellon's hunting equipment as painted by Harold Sterner. Paul Mellon Collection, Upperville, Virginia**

## Glossary



French eighteenth-century spurs designed for a musketeer.

Like any other field in which specialized equipment, apparel, and methods are used, the world of the horse has its own language. Some of the words and phrases that follow will be familiar to the general reader but have quite specific meanings when used in reference to horses, and these definitions are the ones given below.

**Airs above the ground:** Various movements in advanced dressage in which the horse's forehand, hindquarters, or both are raised above the ground, such as the *levade*, *capriole*, and *courbette*

**Amazone:** The French term for a woman who rides sidesaddle; also refers to her riding habit

**Amble:** See Pace

**Arabian:** A breed of light horse originally developed in Arabia; an important contributor to other light-horse breeds, including the thoroughbred

**Barouche:** An open four-wheeled carriage that seats four people, with an elevated seat in front for the driver; called a *calèche* in France

**Benjamin:** A close-fitting coat with several capes, worn by a coachman

**Bicorne:** See Cocked hat

**Bit:** A piece of metal (or rubber or bone) held in the horse's mouth by a bridle, used to control and steer the horse in riding or driving. See Bridle

**Boot tops:** Originally that part of the high boot worn over the knee; now refers to the band of leather, usually of a different color, sewn around the top of hunting boots

**Bouton:** The French word for button; refers to distinctive costumes worn for hunting by different groups or families in France

**Bowler:** A narrow-brimmed, dome shaped, hard felt hat worn in the hunting field by men or women, named after a nineteenth-century London hat-maker, also called a derby, after the twelfth earl of Derby

**Breeches:** Riding trousers that button below the knee, to be worn with high boots

**Bridle:** An arrangement of leather straps devised to hold the bit in a horse's mouth. See Bit

**Brougham:** A closed carriage seating two people, with an elevated seat outside for the driver; in France called a *coupe* ("cut") for its resemblance to a closed four-passenger carriage cut in half

**Browband:** A bridle strap placed across the horse's face just in front of the ears and above the eyes

**Cabriolet:** An open, two-wheeled carriage that has a folding leather hood and holds two people, drawn by one horse placed between the upward-curving shafts, driven by a coachman, and attended by a groom who rides in back; term also used in England and France to describe an open four-wheeled carriage similar to a victoria

**Calèche:** See Barouche

**Camlet:** A fine fabric of mixed materials, including wool, silk, and goat or camel's hair, closely woven and nearly waterproof

**Canter:** A three-beat gait

**Cantle:** The back part of the saddle, often raised to give the rider a secure position

**Caparison:** A decorative covering or trapping worn by a horse

**Capriole:** One of the airs above the ground in which the horse leaps into the air

**Carrousel:** A procession or ballet performed on horseback

**Carriage:** A horse-drawn two-passenger vehicle intended for private use

**C-spring:** A suspension spring for a carriage formed like the letter c

**Chamfron:** Plate armor designed to protect a horse's head

**Chaps:** An article of protective clothing worn on a rider's legs; derived from the Spanish word *chaparejos* or *chaparreras*, meaning leather breeches

**Chariot:** In the ancient world, a two-wheeled horse-drawn vehicle used for battle, racing, or processions; in eighteenth-century England a four-wheeled private or state carriage

**Chasse à courre:** The French term for hunting, usually for stag or roebuck

**Chivalry:** From the French word for *horseman*, refers to the customs of knighthood

**Chukker:** One of four or five periods of seven and one-half minutes each in a game of polo

**Clarence:** A closed, four-wheeled carriage seating four people, named for the duke of Clarence, later William IV of England

**Coach:** A large, four-wheeled enclosed carriage driven by a coachman seated outside in front

**Coach-and-four:** A coach drawn by four horses

**Coachman:** The driver of a coach, usually a professional

**Cockade:** An ornamental badge worn on a hat by a servant in livery

**Cocked hat:** A hat with a turned-up brim with two or three horn-shaped projections (bicorné or tricorne), still worn by Frenchwomen who hunt on horseback and by riders who perform in the classical tradition

**Colors:** A reference in England and the United States to the distinctive colors worn by members of different hunts

**Conformation:** The structure or shape of a horse

**Coupe:** See Brougham

**Courbette:** One of the airs above the ground in which the horse raises both forelegs and, as they fall, raises his hindlegs into the air; also called a curvet

**Crinet:** Plate armor to protect a horse's neck

**Croup:** The upper line of a horse from the loin to the root of the tail

**Crupper:** A piece of harness in the form of a padded loop that passes under the tail

**Crutch:** On a sidesaddle, one of the two projections that support the legs; the lower crutch is also called a leaping-head

**Cuirass:** A piece of body armor to cover the rider's upper torso

**Curb:** A type of bit with a high port inside the horse's mouth and a strap or chain beneath the jaw

**Carriage:** A small, two-wheeled, open carriage drawn by a pair of horses

**Cutaway:** A coat with the skirts cut away at the waist to form long tails at the back, worn in formal fox hunting and modern dressage competition

**Derby:** See Bowler

**Dog-cart:** A two-wheeled carriage drawn by one horse usually with seats for four seated back to back; also a four-wheeled version drawn by one horse or a pair

**Drag:** A heavy coach drawn by four or more horses, with seats on top; see also Park drag

**Dressage:** The modern term for classical riding as developed in the Renaissance; from the French word for *training*

**Epaule en dedans:** See Shoulder-in

**Equitation:** The art of riding on horseback

**Footman:** A liveried servant attending a rider or a carriage on foot



Boots worn by the Prince Imperial Jean Joseph-Eugène-Louis Napoléon Bonaparte, France, nineteenth century.



Embroidered saddle cloth, France, eighteenth century.

**Forehand:** The forequarters of a horse

**Forward seat:** A modern style of riding developed by the Italian cavalryman Federigo Caprilli in which the rider balances over the horse's forehand at the gallop or over a jump to enable the horse to move freely

**Four-in-hand:** A team of four horses driven by a single coachman

**Gait:** One of several ways in which a horse can move, determined by the sequence of footfalls, including the walk, trot, canter, gallop, pace, rack, and so on

**Gallop:** A fast four-beat gait

**Galloon:** A band of trimming on an article of clothing, usually embroidered or braided, often with metallic thread

**Gelding:** A castrated male horse

**Gig:** A small, two-wheeled, open carriage drawn by one horse between shafts or by two horses in tandem (one in front of the other)

**Girth:** A strap that passes beneath the barrel of a horse to hold a saddle or pad in place on his back

**Groom:** A servant, often liveried, who cares for a horse; also a verb meaning to clean a horse

**Hacking:** Informal riding for pleasure, derived from the word *hack* meaning a rented horse

**Hammercloth:** A decorated cloth draped over the coachman's seat

**Hansom:** A closed, two-wheeled carriage driven by a coachman who sits on an elevated outside seat at the back of the carriage

**Hauberk:** A type of medieval armor

**Haute école:** A French term meaning *high school*, refers to advanced levels of dressage

**Highflyer:** A phaeton with an elevated seat for the driver

**Hobby:** A type of riding horse bred in England and Ireland before the development of the modern-day thoroughbred

**Hostler:** A groom at an inn or stable; often spelled *ostler*

**Hunt cap:** A dome-shaped, stiff cap, often covered with black velvet, with a short brim in front; traditionally worn only by members of the hunt staff and children in the hunt field but now worn by many riders as informal protective gear

**Huntsman:** A professional member of the hunt staff whose task it is to manage the hunt and care for the hounds

**Jabot:** A piece of lace or cloth hanging from a collar in front

**Jackboots:** High boots with tops covering the knee, originally a military form but adapted for riding in the seventeenth century

**Jodhpurs:** Riding breeches that extend to the ankle, often with a foot strap, to be worn with short boots; derived from the name of the state in India where British colonials are said to have adopted them for playing polo

**Jousting:** One of the contests in a tournament in which two mounted knights in armor charge each other with lances

**Landau:** A four-wheeled carriage with a divided top that can be folded down; driven by a coachman on an elevated seat in front

**Lariat:** A rope with a noose, used in herding livestock; also called a lasso

**Leaping-head:** See Crutch

**Leggings:** A protective covering of leather or fabric for the rider's legs

**Levade:** One of the airs above the ground, in which the horse's forehand is elevated for a few moments with the hindquarters directly beneath the horse's body

**Lipizzan:** A breed of horse used at the Spanish Riding School, Vienna, derived from Andalusian stock originally bred at Lipizza, near Trieste, in the seventeenth century; also used as a carriage horse

**Livery:** A uniform worn by servants; also refers to a stable where horses are rented out for riding or driving

**Master of Foxhounds:** The man (or woman) in charge of a hunt by whose permission members and guests are allowed to participate; usually not a professional position; also called Master of Hounds

**Melton:** Melton Mowbray in England was once an important center of the cloth industry that gave its name to a type of heavy woolen cloth manufactured there used in making hunting coats

**Pace:** An intermediate two-beat lateral gait performed by the horse in which the legs on one side move together rather than diagonally, as in the trot

**Pack:** A group of hounds used for hunting; also refers to the riders who participate in a hunt

**Padron:** A Spanish word meaning *landowner*

**Pair:** Two horses driven side by side

**Palfrey:** A horse used for pleasure riding or processions rather than battle, usually a pacer

**Park drag:** A private coach drawn by four or more horses and driven by a single coachman

**Petatos:** A flat-brimmed Greek hat

**Phaeton:** An open, four-wheeled carriage driven by an amateur rather than a professional coachman

**Piaffe:** A movement in advanced dressage in which the horse trots in place

**Picador:** A mounted participant in a bullfight

**Piebald:** A white horse with black patches (a skewbald is white with any other color)

**Pillion:** A cushion or pad worn behind a man's saddle to support a woman; also refers to the style of riding double

**Pink:** A term occasionally applied to a scarlet hunting coat, once thought to have been the name of a London tailor but most likely a slang reference to the color of a well-worn hunting coat

**Poitrel:** A piece of plate armor made to cover a horse's chest and body

**Poll:** The area just behind the horse's ears where the top of the bridle rests

**Polo:** A stick-and-ball game, usually played on horseback, with four members to each team

**Pommel:** The front of a saddle, often raised to enable the rider to remain securely in position

**Postboy:** See Postilion

**Post chaise:** A vehicle originally used for carrying mail or messages and drawn by a horse ridden by a postilion rather than driven by a coachman

**Postilion:** One who rides as a guide on the near (left) horse of a pair that draws a post chaise or coach

**Posting:** Rising in the stirrups at the trot

**Quintain:** A device used by knights on horseback as a battle exercise or in a tournament contest

**Racing silks:** A uniform jacket and cap cover of lightweight fabric, worn by the professional jockey or driver of a racehorse, with colors or patterns that indicate a horse's owner; originally derived from the word *silk* referring to a gown worn by an advisor to the crown, indicating rank

**Rack:** A four-beat lateral gait or "broken pace," in which the horse's legs on each side move together but do not hit the ground simultaneously

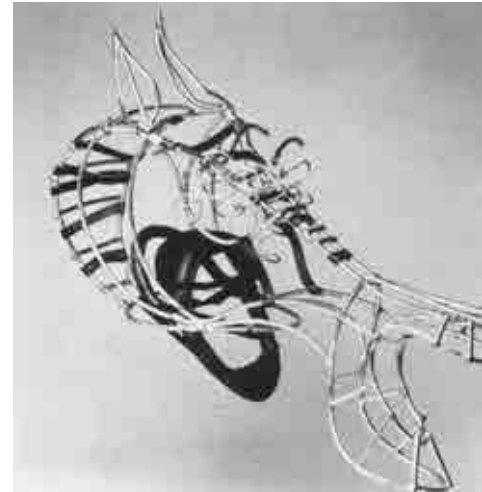
**Reins:** Straps that attach to the bit rings on a bridle at one end and are held by the rider at the other in order to control and steer the horse

**Rowel:** A small wheel with radiating spokes attached to a spur

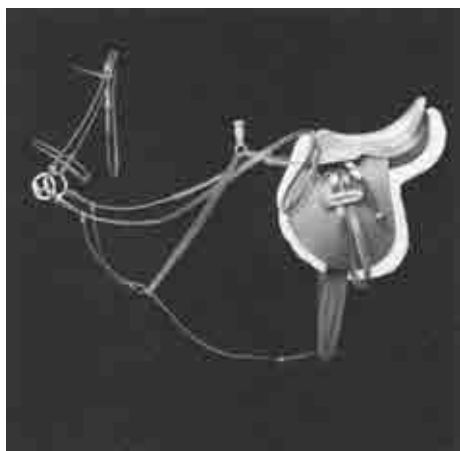
**Rumble:** A seat outside a carriage on the back to hold a guard, groom, or footman

**Saddle-seat:** An American style of equitation used in riding certain types of horses, including saddlebreds, Tennessee walking horses, and Morgans

**Saddle tree:** The frame of a saddle, made of wood or fiber glass



Horse head designed by John Napier and made by Hector Pascual for the play *Equus* by Peter Shaffer, Paris, 1977.



Snaffle bridle and forward-seat saddle by Hermès, French, twentieth century.

- Seat:** A rider's position on a horse's back
- Sefton:** A type of lundau, named for an English nobleman
- Shoulder-in:** A lateral dressage movement in which the horse moves on two tracks, the forelegs on one, the hindlegs on another
- Sidesaddle:** A saddle with two crutches or pommels on the left side to support a woman's legs
- Silks:** See Racing silks
- Singlefoot:** A slow version of the rack
- Snaffle:** A simple bit with a straight or jointed bar
- Sociable:** An open, four-wheeled carriage in which four people may sit, two facing the other two; also called a vis-à-vis
- Spur:** A metal device worn on each boot to reinforce the pressure of the rider's leg
- Stage coach:** A closed public coach drawn by four or more horses that work in relays, being replaced at various stages along the route
- Stanhope gig:** A small, open, one-horse carriage, originally designed to the specifications of an English gentleman named Stanhope in the nineteenth century
- State coach:** A closed, four-passenger coach drawn by four or more horses for use by royalty or nobility
- Stirrup:** A metal or wooden device suspended by straps from a saddle to support the rider's feet
- Stock:** A simple white cravat or neckcloth worn in the hunt field; for formal wear, the stock must be tied in a specific manner and fastened with a gold stock pin
- Stud:** A breeding stallion; also a breeding farm
- Sulky:** A small, open, two-wheeled carriage used for racing a harness horse
- Surcingle:** A three-inch strap of leather or webbing passing over the saddle and under the horse's body, secured with a buckle
- Surtout:** A long overcoat or frockcoat, close fitting to the waist and usually doublebreasted
- Tack:** Equipment worn by a horse, such as a bridle or saddle
- Tandem:** A method of driving two or more horses, one in front of the other
- Tattersall:** A bright, solid fabric with colored lines forming squares, often used for waistcoats; the name of a London horse market where such material was used for horse blankets
- Thoroughbred:** A breed of light horse developed for racing; also widely used for hunting, showing, and pleasure riding
- Throatlatch:** A strap on the bridle that passes under the horse's throat; also refers to that part of a horse's head
- Tournament:** An event in which knights on horseback compete in various contests to show skill and courage
- Tricorn:** See Cocked hat
- Trot:** A two-beat diagonal gait
- Undercarriage:** The framework supporting a carriage to which the wheels are attached
- Valencia:** A kind of woven fabric used for waistcoats
- Vaquero:** A Spanish word meaning *cowboy* or *herder*
- Vénerie:** The French term for hunting; *la grande vénerie* refers to hunting for stag, roebuck, or boar, a royal or noble privilege, *la petite vénerie* refers to hunting for lesser quarry, such as rabbit, hare, or fox
- Victoria:** An open, four-wheeled carriage with a folding top, driven by a coachman in front and carrying two passengers
- Vis-à-vis:** See Sociable
- Whip:** A stick used as an aid in riding or driving; there are many different sizes and types, including the crop, fly whisk, and jumping or racing bat
- Whipper-in:** A huntsman's assistant whose job it is to control the hounds during a hunt, usually a professional member of the hunt staff

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## *About the Authors*

Alexander Mackay-Smith is the author of a number of books, including *The Colonial Quarter Race Horse* and *The Race Horses of America: Portraits and Other Paintings by Edward Troye*, and was for years editor of the weekly *Chronicle of the Horse*. He was the founder and curator of the National Sporting Library in Middleburg, Virginia, and has been associated with the United States Equestrian Team, the American Horse Shows Association, the Masters of Foxhounds Association of America, the U.S. Pony Clubs, the U.S. Combined Training Association, and the International Alliance of Equestrian Journalists. He was, for twenty seasons, the Master of two Virginia hunts, and he still rides regularly to hounds.

Jean R. Druesedow is Associate Curator in Charge of The Costume Institute, The Metropolitan Museum of Art. She taught speech and theater arts at Miami University, Eastern Kentucky University, and the Mediterranean Division of the University of Maryland, and she joined the staff of The Costume Institute in 1978. She lectures widely on fashion and costume history and is Vice President of The Costume Society of America.

Thomas Ryder has been the editor of *The Carriage Journal* since 1975 and is actively involved in coaching, both as a participant and as a judge. He was born in England, where he learned to drive at an early age from an uncle who refused to drive an automobile; he moved to Canada in 1954 and to the United States in 1963. He is the author of several books about driving, including *On the Box Seat*, *The High Steppers*, a history of hackney horses, and *The Road and the Ring*, the coaching memoirs of an English horsewoman.





