

Biography  
of  
Charles Lowell Cook  
1889-1964

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Famous Saddle Horse Trainer  
Charles Lowell Cook  
1889-1964



Sweet Campernelle, winner of 1940 Three-Gaited  
Grand Championship Stake at Madison Square  
Garden, N.Y., Charles L. Cook up.

**Ground Hog Day, 1889**

“Ground Hog Day”, February 2, 1889, was a memorable day in Shelby County, Kentucky. On that day a son was born to Isaac Marion and Mary Elizabeth Cook. He was christened Charles Lowell Cook. Isaac Cook was a prominent farmer and jack breeder who kept a few saddle horses to use on the farm. Charles was a horse lover from the start and, at the age of ten, prepared a suckling colt for the Shelby County Fair. Thereafter, he won every boy’s riding class in which he showed until he was fourteen. For the next five years, he worked on his father’s farm training young horses for the show ring.

At the age of nineteen he opened a training stable in Shelbyville, Kentucky. He brought out a young black stallion, 16 hands high, foaled April 5, **1904**, called The American. This handsome stallion was a consistent winner ever since he was a colt and was undefeated as a two and three year old. One seldom finds a horse with the magnificent style and finish and symmetrical form as The American.

**Missouri**

On June 5, **1913**, Mr. Cook was married to Miss Sallie Thomas Lee, at “Maplewood”, the home of the bride’s parents, Mr. and Mrs. George Thomas Lee, Shelby County, Kentucky. Mr. Cook took his bride to New Bloomfield, Missouri where he was manager and trainer of New Bloomfield Saddle Horse Company. Quoting a Missouri newspaper, “Chas. L. Cook, the well-known saddle horse trainer and exhibitor, is very busy at the ‘Fair Grounds’ preparing some Rex McDonalds for the Central Missouri Circuit. He had put in his stable last week Rex Reighly by Rex McDonald 833, dam Black Dolly by Montrose 106. He is unquestionably one of the best two-year-old stallions in Missouri. He will be developed and prepared for the shows, and judging from the other Rex McDonalds Cook has brought to the front, he will be a romping boy by the time the bell taps.”

“At the New Bloomfield Fair last week the good horses owned in the vicinity were very successful under the guidance of their trainer and exhibitor, Chas. L. Cook. The star of the Cook Stable is the good 3-year old stallion Rex Wilson. The total winnings of the Cook Stable were seventeen blues, six reds and one third and a fourth in the champion classes. Mr. Cook is a Kentuckian who has made many friends by his gentlemanly manners and capabilities since locating at New Bloomfield. His efforts are meeting with deserved success.”

Later Charlie operated a public training stable in Mexico, Missouri. A daughter, Mildred Louise Cook, was born to Mr. and Mrs. Cook on Jan. 20, **1915** in Mexico, Missouri. While in Missouri, he brought out the great bay stallion Majestic McDonald that was a consistent winner and became a leading sire. He won the Junior Gaited Stake at the Missouri State Fair and many other good ribbons.

Returning to Kentucky, he went to work in Columbia. Charlie had a good string of horses owned by G. S. Chewning of Columbia, KY. The stellar attraction of the stable was a good chestnut stallion, Ball Chief, which was conceded to be one of the best stallions in the State.

### **Illinois**

He then became manager of the Saddle Horse Division for Otto W. Lehman, Chesney Farms, Lake Villa, Illinois, where he brought out the champions Ella May, Baby Vampire and Personality. He paid ridiculously low prices for them and made them great. For Ella May he paid \$410, for Baby Vampire \$275, and for Personality \$135. They all had brilliant tanbark careers. Ella May defeated Twilight Hour after he had won the championship at Madison Square Garden in New York.

While still with Mr. Lehman, Charlie bought Easter Star for \$600 but the horse failed to impress O.W. Lehman. In July **1920**, after his contract with Lehman expired, Charlie Cook again returned to Kentucky bringing Easter Star. Home again, Mr. Cook proceeded to launch the great gelding on his brilliant show career.

It was interesting to find a horse connection of Charlie with his older brother Jesse C. Cook. In **1921** Charlie went to Tennessee and purchased My Delight, a 15.1 hand beautiful chestnut mare. This mare was attractive in color and lines, and possessed refinement rarely encountered. Charlie prepared her for the three-gaited ring which she entered gloriously in the early autumn under the showmanship of brother Jess. Now, owned by Samuel Keller Jacobs of New York City, My Delight won at Syracuse, NY, Brockton, MA, Newport, RI, second at Rochester, NY, winner at the Eastern States Exposition, Springfield, IL, and 4th at New York National Horse Show, with Jess Cook in the saddle each time.

For three years, Charlie Cook operated a public training stable at the Shelby County Fair Grounds. In **1923** he signed a contract with E. J. Lehman, brother of his former employer (the Lehmans were owners of The Fair, Chicago, IL, Importers and Dealers in Merchandise) and went to work as manager of the Longwood Farm at Lake Villa, Illinois. During the term of his two year contract, he brought out such contenders as Brilliant Scandal, Prince Pal and Silver Gale.

### **Easter Star**

“Chas. L. Cook established his lifetime ambition by winning State Fair Championship. Easter Star, who won the grand championship for five-gaited saddle horses at the State Fair (1922, KY), was bred in Anderson County (KY) and offered for sale to many good judges of horseflesh, but was passed over until Charles L. Cook of this county (Shelby) gave him the once over, and seeing in this fine animal the makings of a magnificent show horse, bought him at once.

“Under the careful handling of Mr. Cook, Easter Star developed rapidly and was soon an object of wonder and admiration of every lover of a good horse.

“Buyers galore came to see this wonderful animal and at a fancy price. Mr. Cook, last May (**1922**), finally consented to part with his pride of horsedom. The skillful handling by Mr. Cook proved his ability to train and develop a world champion equine.

“Easter Star is a 7-year old, handsome chestnut by Bourbon Star, a great show horse whose dam was a daughter of Greatland, a son of Highland Denmark.”

### **Jonquil**

The year **1925** found him again reopening his public training stable at the Shelby County Fair Grounds in Kentucky. In **1926** Charlie Cook rode to fame on the golden mare Jonquil, the only mare of her time to win the Three-Gaited Championship at Louisville (Kentucky State Fair) for four consecutive years.

Jonquil was as consistent in showing as it was possible to be at that time. One magazine writer

said that in an early morning workout at the Kentucky State Fair, Jonquil would trot around the ring repeatedly without missing the same footprint in the tanbark. Charlie Cook states that the golden mare was the only horse of her time who could show for a solid hour without making a single mistake. She was conceded to be the best three-gaited saddle mare in the world. She was serene amidst turmoil. She did each gait with precision and poise. She was the only off-colored horse in the world to acquire such a brilliant record. Her coat was a rich, lustrous yellow resembling gold, the only technical term allowable to describe it is “dun.”

At Rochester Exposition Horse Show, Rochester N.Y., ‘Jonquil was a picture horse, her unusual bright golden coat glistening in the afternoon sun. Only two hours off the train from Kentucky before she entered the ring she made a magnificent showing and her victory was the signal for a tremendous burst of applause.

“Jonquil is an ‘iron horse’ and the longer a class shows the better it suits her. When she won the championship here last year after an hour and a half of hard showing, she was as fresh as could be while most of the others appeared to be greatly fatigued. If some other three-gaited horse or mare dethrones Jonquil they will have to wage the battle because she is already the champion and will continue to give her best for the man who is riding her.”

*New York Times* by Henry R. Ilsley

**1928** Kentucky State Fair - In the three-gaited division there was nothing but Burton A. Howe’s Jonquil which, after winning nearly everything of consequences elsewhere in the country, went down to his “home-town” to qualify at 15.2 against twenty-four aspirants and then won for the third time the Kentucky Hotel Stake from a field of twenty-five opponents.

### **Charles Junior**

From a newspaper clipping, “It will be of interest to the many friends of Charles L. Cook of Shelbyville, KY., who is nationally known as a maker of champions to know that the most recent accomplishment and the one he is proudest of and most hopeful for is Charles L. Jr., who was born April 23, (**1927**) and has all the requisites of a winner, and as I am a great believer in a great colt from a great dam I am backing this youngster for a good finish.”

Charles Jr. was given a chestnut Shetland pony, Tony, on his fifth birthday from mother and dad. There were Dalmatians and a billy goat to play with. It was natural for Junior to tag along with dad to the stable and to enjoy riding in the training cart. He got an early experience of handling the reins in driving horses. When Junior was about six or seven years old he showed his pony in a boy riders class under age 12 and won first prize at the Shelby County Fair. At nine years of age, he started riding a horse named Playmate. Charles Sr. thought Junior made a good showing of Playmate in a Saturday afternoon boy riders class under 12 at the Shelby County Fair. Charlie told Junior to keep on his riding outfit and he could ride Playmate in the **1936** Three-Gaited Grand Championship Stake that night, but do not tell mother as she would not be agreeable.

It was exciting to see Charlie enter the ring on Flashing American, a dashing, high stepping champion and Junior trailing him on Playmate. Junior rode his horse close to Charlie throughout the class. Charlie won the Championship and Junior received fifth place before a crowd of 8,000 people. Junior was the youngest person who had ever shown a horse in the Championship stake and on top of that had defeated adult riders. Charlie and Junior rode together at the Kentucky State Fair and they won the Cooke Chevrolet Co. trophy in the family class. From a magazine clipping, "Chas. Cooke Jr. - with Charley Cooke, Sr., for his dad, one would naturally expect much from Junior and Junior fills your expectation to overflowing. He's a ridin' ma-an."

A letter of May 2, **1938** to Charlie from R.W. Morrison, Anacacho Ranch, San Antonio, Texas, "Do wish you could find time to come down to the Ranch and see the two Jonquil daughters we have there now. I think if you did, you and your son would be riding them in the ring at Louisville and winning the pair classes, hands down, this year." Mr. Morrison had purchased Jonquil from Burton A. Howe in 1931 to become a broodmare.

In the spring of **1939**, Charlie gave his son a foal from his best broodmare Hollywood Girl. Junior named the weanling Hollywood Ace. He was chestnut with a white stripe down his face and had four white stockings. The colt's ears were well set and he had excellent conformation. There were great expectations in developing this foal, but in several months he took the colic and died. Knowing of Junior's disappointment, Charlie consoled him by saying he could have the foal out of Hollywood Girl next year.

### **Champions of Two Horse Stable**

In **1930** Mr. Cook brought out Brilliant Moon 7-year old gelding, an over two, three-gaited horse which he owned and with Bob Boy, 4-year old gelding, owned by Mrs. Howard B. Mahan, Hill-O-Content Farm of Prospect, KY, they went to the Alleghany Country Club Show at Sewickly, Pennsylvania. Cook showed Brilliant Moon five times and each time he was first including the Stake which carried the championship. Bob Boy was shown four times and was four times first including the Stake and Championship. He also won for the owner the 150-year old trophy of the Alleghany Country Club. It seldom happens that one exhibitor takes two horses to a big show like the Sewickley show and goes through the novice to the championship with both of them. This is a record for each horse and a record for the trainer. Mr. Cook is an expert horseman and usually has his horses ready when he goes to the show. It also might be said that both horses are much above average of those being shown.

### **Write-ups on Silver Star**

As Bob Ripley would say, "believe it or not", but Charlie Cook owns one of the most outstanding green horses in Kentucky today. He is called Silver Star, is a gray, dashingy trimmed in white, five years old, and oh boys' how that handsome rascal can carry on! Silver

Star is considered a formidable contender in the gelding class of this stake at the **1930** State Fair by men who know a good horse. Charlie loves this horse with a fervor of a clear draft blast furnace and although several have wanted to buy him badly, Charlie, so far, has balked at putting a price on him. His alibi being that he wants to play around with him a little while. But, just you watch, someone will come along with sufficient oodles of money to tempt him. He'll fall, and another good horse will have left Kentucky.

One of the most talked about new horses in Kentucky today is Silver Star, a gray five-gaited gelding owned by Charles L. Cook of Shelbyville. It has been a long time since a green horse has appeared that has the speed, action, brilliancy and form of this gelding. Dark gray with a little white to set him off, this horse has practically all the things that are required of a high class show horse. To begin with he is a very fine horse and yet is a horse of good size and substance. He has plenty of air and animation and when in action he is a speed marvel at either the rack or trot and goes with as much brilliance as any horse of the present day. The horse has never been inside a show ring yet and will likely be given a show or two at the Shelby County Fair just to give him a little education about a crowd, lights, etc. *The Lexington Herald* - reprinted in a Shelbyville newspaper.

**Twinkle, Twinkle, Silver Star - Charles L. Cook Entry Gives Masterful Performance**  
Silver Star, gray gelding, owned and ridden by Charles L. Cook of Shelbyville, Ky was the outstanding performer in Thursday nights horse show at the Tennessee State Fair, winning handily in the five-gaited class for stallions and geldings, any age.

The five-gaited stallions and geldings any age furnished the most important attraction of the evening. They contested for a stake of \$500 of which \$200 was the prize for the horse placing first. When the decision was made and Mrs. Paul Rye advanced to present the ribbons in the name of the Junior League, the beautiful gray gelding, Silver Star, was called out for the first award. He was owned and ridden by Charles L. Cook, Shelbyville, Ky. The finished show that this horse gave is something to be remembered. If he put a foot wrong in his performance, here's one who didn't see it. His gaits appeared almost perfect, his action was high and nicely balanced, he had speed, conformation and quality. Mr. Cook will probably sell this fellow for a stiff price - and, deserve it.

by Margaret Lindsley Warden, Nashville, Tennessee newspaper.

Silver Star, five-gaited gelding owned by Charles L. Cook of Shelbyville, Ky., Saturday won second prize in the grand sweepstakes for this class at the State Fair (Tennessee).

Silver Star, a handsome gray gelding out of a daughter of Greatland by Highland Denmark was a consistent winner for the noted trainer Mr. Charles L. Cook of Shelbyville, Ky.

### **What They Were Saying**

Charles L. Cook, Shelbyville, Ky. horseman, has been quietly working a few good horses this

fall and when he educates one it is ready for anyone to handle. Mr. Cook has established a great reputation for breaking horses so that amateurs or ladies can ride them. In addition to manning horses, Mr. Cook knows how to work them for the show ring and is one of the best showmen of the country today. When he goes into the ring he is fighting for the top until the ribbons are tied and he usually gets his share. He makes the Shelby County Fair Grounds his headquarters and has a nice place to show horses at any time. In addition to some well mannered horses, Mr. Cook now has some likely looking youngsters in this stable.

Frequently, Charles L. Cook would send a consignment of horses to the Kentucky Sale Company in Lexington, KY. An article announcing a coming sale said, "Mr. Cook is one of the most capable horsemen of the state and has developed and exhibited some of the outstanding show horses of the country and during that period had developed and sold many outstanding pleasure horses. He has always patronized the auction sales and often his horses have topped the sales."

### **Belle Lee Rose and Flashing American**

In **1935** Miss Mary Ballard, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ed Ballard of West Baden, Indiana (wealthy former Circus owner), sent two of her prize horses, Belle Lee Rose and Flashing American, to Mr. Cook for reconditioning and training. Belle Lee Rose was the former Champion of the \$10,000 Championship Saddle Horse Stake at the Kentucky State Fair in 1933 and 1934. Flashing American was 3rd in the Three-Gaited Saddle Horse Stake in 1933 and 3rd in Three-Gaited Saddle Horses over 15.2 in 1934 at the Kentucky State Fair. Included in her stable was Sport Model, a consistent winner for several seasons and Blessed Event, winner of fine harness classes last year. They will be given a slow and careful prep by Cook and will be exhibited at the leading shows of the year. Cook has enviable reputation as a trainer and showman and he should do well with this stable of high class horses.

After Flashing American was the Three-Gaited Champion and Belle Lee Rose was reserve Five-Gaited Champion at the 1935 Shelby County Fair, Charlie Cook took them to the Kentucky State Fair for Miss Ballard. Flashing American was 2nd in the \$500 Three- Gaited Championship Stake over 15.2 and Belle Lee Rose was 3rd in \$2,500 Five-Gaited Mare Division of the Grand Championship Stake. Belle Lee Rose was unable to compete in the Grand Championship Stake because of the illness of her trainer and rider, Charlie Cook.

Charlie Cook returned these two horses with his stable to the Kentucky State Fair in **1936**. The expectations were high but what follows is a blemish on his outstanding show horse career. On Wednesday night, Flashing American with Charlie in the saddle was tied second to Fiery Crags in the Three-Gaited Saddle Horses, Mare or Gelding over 15.2. A return match on Friday night in the Three-Gaited Championship Stake, Over 15.2, found Fiery Crags winning again and Flashing American receiving third place. Charlie Cook was angered that the judges gave first place to a lame horse. Immediately, Charlie dismounted his horse at the exit gate and ran to the judges stand in the middle of the ring. He struck horse show judge, John T. Hook,

Mexico, Missouri over the head with his riding crop.

### **Disbarment and Reinstatement**

The State Fair Board met the following morning and disbarred Mr. Cook for life from showing horses of his own or those of his patrons at the Kentucky State Fair. Charlie Cook gave a statement to The Shelby Sentinel, "While some might think an ungentlemanly act what occurred at the Kentucky State Fair, it was the love of the horse, and the show horse game that prompted me to do what I did. When you know the true story you will agree with me. I was perfectly justified in doing what I did. It wasn't anything but one of those unjust things pulled off in the judging of horses. It has been going on for years and it is time to be stopped."

Charlie Cook felt he had received vindication from the many phone calls, letters, and telegrams that he received. Some of the remarks were: "Was talking to several that saw the incident and every one said the same thing you were justified. If by any chance you broke the crop you used let me know (I deal in whips) and I will bring you down a heavy one that you can't break next time." John S. Paine, Auctioneer.

"I was not present at the meeting of the State Board of Agriculture when Mr. Cook was disbarred, but I want it understood that if I had any authority in the matter that I would reinstate him, at once, and have a special medal made and presented to him for his courageous action in bringing vividly to the attention of the public the condition that prevailed in the judging of classes. If it eventuates that I shall regain control of the Kentucky State Fair, I shall be very pleased indeed to have your counsel and advice (Cook supporter) relating to the proper method of eliminating a system of judging that, to use your own words, 'is antiquated, malicious and unfair,' and to set up through the proper channels a system that will meet the approval of horsemen throughout the country who have the best interests of the fine horse industry at heart." Commissioner of Agriculture

"The Chas. Cook episode was regrettable, but in my opinion justifiable. The Fisher horse is fine animal, but irrespective of the elusive quality of bloom on which it was judged, accordingly to the *Louisville Times*, the horse should not have been considered, because it was not only lame but could not go around the ring without breaking its gaits. I believe Mr. Cook should be exonerated and the judge suspended instead, because of his raw and unfair decisions. Every one has a right to protect his property and that was all that Mr. Cook was trying to do, - to protect the property entrusted to him by Miss Ballard." A.C. Born

Prior to the Kentucky State Fair incident, during the championship days of Jonquil, a Cook admirer wrote the following letter, describing an issue that existed in judging. "The Chicago Horse Show proved a great success to some people who had entries there. The 3 gaited Saddle Stake, the \_\_\_\_\_ Stable being placed first over such horses as Jonquil, the

champion of champions. But did the best horse win? In my opinion: No, for to class such horses as the \_\_\_\_\_ stable produces with horses like Jonquil is absurd. I venture to say there is not a 3 gaited horse in the whole of \_\_\_\_\_ Stable equal to Mr. Howe's Jonquil and I do not believe there ever will be. Horses, from stables like the \_\_\_\_\_ Stables, are produced for resale and not for the pure love of bringing out a real horse good enough for any company like they are in such stables as the C. L. Cook's of Shelbyville, Kentucky. Stables like the latter get down to real business and "make" real horses. Neither energy nor hard labor are spared and as a result they produce horses like Jonquil. This mare--in my eyes--surpasses any of our 3 gaited horses of today. To take a horse that has never won a real class--what I mean to win in all company not just here and there--one that goes alone to the field of battle without taking his judge with him and win--that is a real--a real horse. Take Hazel Down (Dawn), Jack Barrymore, Astrial King--when I think of the days gone by and of these "real" horses and how people tried every way to beat them not for the sportsmanship of it but because they just could not stand to see their horses beaten by horses better than they could produce. There are reasons for such things as the ribbons that were tied in Chicago 3 gaited stake when a no horse at all comes out and wins over a \$10,000.00 horse. Just a horse defeats a champion. Those days are past. Good horses are not found over night as of days gone by. Champions are not made over night for the good of horse lovers. A horse coming from a large stable that makes a business of selling show horses to horse lovers has to win. His product won't sell otherwise. But have they always really got the goods? Yes and no--but--moreso No. He must sell his horses for a big sum to make believe he really has what he has not. How is this done? By watching where he goes to stake his horses and taking his judge along. The rest is obvious. This has been done time and time again. But judges should be subjected to conditions such as empires at a baseball game. When they suddenly become blind in the heat of the game and don't see what they should but yet: see all. And then things begin to happen. So should horse judges be treated if their knowledge of horses is not better than was displayed at Chicago this year. I know that to put Jonquil and \_\_\_\_\_ in a class alone with judges that are true to the judgement of horses, would result in no show at all for Jonquil would surpass the \_\_\_\_\_ horse in all points.

"Would the judges that put this \_\_\_\_\_ horse stand on their judgment of the 3 gaited stake class at Chicago this year be willing to buy their 1st judgment or Jonquil (placed 4th) at a figure that will be asked for the horse that took 1st money? What is the answer?"

A Lover of Good Horses

One of the other practices in the saddle horse business that Charlie did not condone was the seller paying an agents fee or finders fee to the manager/rider of a buyer when selling a horse. Charlie felt that his horses were well trained and reasonably priced and stood on their own merit. He did not need someone else cutting in on the sale price. Shelbyville, Kentucky became a popular town for hunting saddle horses with the Charlie Cook Stables located at the Shelby County Fair Grounds. Buyers from all over the country would stop and find finished show and pleasure horses, a collection always on hand for their selection. As Charlie would say, "A Cook Finished Saddle Horse is the pride of every possessor of one."

With the encouragement of friends, Charlie Cook met with the Kentucky State Fair Board, Monday, May 2, **1938**, at 2:00 p.m., at the office on the Kentucky State Fair Grounds, Louisville, KY. Charlie requested reinstatement. J. C. Newcomb, Manager of Horse Show, proposed to the Board that Mr. Cook be reinstated and the motion was approved by the Board that Charlie Cook would be an exhibitor in good standing. After the decision, on May 3, 1938, Mat S. Cohen, Editor of *American Horseman*, wrote to J. C. Newcomb, Manager, "You know, John, none of us are without fault, even though my wife thinks I'm stainless, while Charlie Cook, I believe, is one of the most honorable men I ever came in contact with, an indefatigable worker, capable and as deserving as any human God ever made."

R. W. Morrison, owner of Anacacho Ranch, San Antonio, Texas gave some sage advice in a letter of May 18, 1938, "Charlie, everybody knows you are a real honest-to-God honest horseman and they respect you as such. They also know, however, that when you get mad, you get mad all over and I do hope hereafter, regardless of how unfairly you may be treated, or that you think you have been treated, that you will keep yourself in hand and do nothing about it for at least twenty-four hours. Then, if you still feel like whipping some fellow, catch him off the show grounds and use your fists until your heart is content. Now Charlie, I am saying this to you as a real friend and well-wisher and hope you will take it in the spirit it is meant."

### **Meadow View Farm**

In **1939**, V.V. Cooke, owner of Meadow View Farm, Louisville, Kentucky and owner of the third largest Chevrolet dealership in the south, persuaded Charlie Cook to leave his hometown of Shelbyville, Kentucky and become the manager of his saddle horse nursery. It did not take long for Charlie Cook to have Meadow View Farm well represented at the Kentucky County Fair horse shows and the State Fair. In 1939 Commentator won the Five-Gaited Kentucky County Fair Championship and Meadow View Mist won the Three- Gaited Kentucky County Fair Championship at the State Fair.

Charlie brought with him to the Cooke stables, a red bay gelding, 15.3, foaled in 1935 by the name of Commander In Chief. Charlie found and purchased this stalwart youngster as an unknown quality to many, and stated at the time of purchase for \$250, that he was a diamond in the rough and would some day add luster, not only to the show ring, but to the saddlebred. Mr. V.V. Cooke purchased this horse from Charlie, and true to his word in **1940**, his first year out, Commander In Chief topped the three-gaited division of the county fair horse shows and climaxed his achievements by winning at the Kentucky State Fair, the grand championship for three-gaited winners of the Kentucky County Fair Circuit. With all around motion, manners letter perfect, and his well bitten mouth Commander In Chief is all that could be desired in a saddle horse and was sold in September 1941 for \$5,000 to Mrs. N.S. Kelly, Medfield, MA to be a stablemate of the sensational, unbeaten Sweet Campernelle.

The Meadow View Farm horses were shown in 1940 at Rock Creek Riding Club, Danville

Horse Show, Columbia, Harrodsburg and Shelbyville Fairs and the Kentucky State Fair. Some of the horses on the show circuit besides Commander In Chief were Smart Trick, Genius Jewell and War King.

Charlie gave another foal of Hollywood Girl to Charles Jr. and Junior selected the name Hollywood Gold. Junior showed the colt at several 1940 horse show events and was Reserve Champion in the Stud or Filly Colt Championship at the Shelby County Fair. Charlie continued to teach the finer points of showing horses to his son. Most young riders ride for equitation honors, but Charles Jr. was taught to show the horse rather than himself. This was exhibited at the Danville Horse Show when Junior, only thirteen years old, rode three-year old Meadow View Fairy in a four year old and under three-gaited class. Judge Joe Jones gave him the blue ribbon over competing adults. At the Kentucky State Fair, Chester Caldwell, manager of Red Top Farm, owned by Irving S. Florshim (Florshim Shoes), asked Charles Jr. to show their horse Talked About. Junior rode this horse in a boy rider class 13 and over and under 16. He received the red ribbon. In the business of selling horses, it was a known fact, that if a boy could ride the horse, then the horse was suitable for another young person or lady. Charles Jr. learned quickly as if it was second nature to him.

In 1941, Meadow View Farm showed at Rock Creek Riding Club, Shelbyville Fair, Kentucky State Fair and Charlie Cook took Dixie Bell, Genuis Jewell, Midnight Rose and War King to the Ohio State Fair.

At the 1941 Shelbyville Fair there was a spectacular three-gaited class for grooms. This gave the hardworking caretakers of the horses an opportunity to show their ability as handlers of show horses. This class was won by Tobe Thomas, groom for V. V. Cooke's Meadow View Farm, Louisville. It seems somehow right and proper that this class should have been won by the loyal and reliable Tobe who worked so many years for Mr. Charlie Cook, and in the same ring where Mr. Cook had won many first place and championship honors with his many outstanding horses. The spirited showmanship and rivalry among the groom riders and their caretakers made this one of the most enjoyable classes of the show.

Mr. V. V. Cooke's intent when he entered the saddle horse business was to have an auction every year during the Kentucky State Fair. He said he had been a success in the automobile business by treating everyone fair. He would continue to use his business motto in the horse business: "You Can Trust Cooke And Cooke Will Trust You." Meadow View Farm's first Auction Sale was held on Sept 14, 1940. There were 50 high class and royally bred horses, from their outstanding collection of saddle stock and were sold on Saturday during the Kentucky State Fair.

### **Sweet Campernelle**

Another golden mare that Mr. Cook showed with great success was Sweet Campernelle that won the Three-Gaited Grand Championship Stake at Madison Square Garden. Sweet

Campernelle may well be termed a "freak" of the breed, that her mouth, manners, motion, conformation and finish, together with the pride she takes in her work, are all that could be desired. Her gaminess can be compared only with docility, always in form and seemingly eager at all times to demonstrate her wonderful ability in a manner faultless.

When Charlie Cook took over the stable at Meadow View Farm, he brought with him the two year old mare, Sweet Campernelle, owned by R. T. McCready, Pittsburgh, PA. Sweet Campernelle was a beautiful gold colored mare with flaxen mane and tail, the first foal of Mystery, a full sister to the great show mare Jonquil. She was presented at the Rock Creek Club Show, Louisville, KY, in the early summer of 1940, winning both events in which she was entered. Her next appearance was at the Kentucky State Fair in September, where she won the novice three-gaited, the three-year-old stake and the model class, shown in hand.

Sweet Campernelle was at the peak of her training and Charlie Cook appointed her to be shown in November at the National Horse Show held at Madison Square Garden, New York City. Jack Thompson, Hodgenville, KY the owner and driver of the Fine Harness Champion, Noble Kalarama, shipped with Sweet Campernelle, as a two horse stable, under the care of Charlie Cook's top groom of twenty years, Silas O'Bannion. Noble Kalarama continued his winning tradition of being the champion fine harness stallion of America for the past five years by winning the Championship Fine Harness Stake at the National.

A crowd of fifteen thousand were present for the final session of the National Horse Show. An unprecedented record was established by the dappled gold mare Sweet Campernelle, owned by R. T. McCready of Sewickley, PA, amateur breeder, horseman and sportsman. This 3-year-old with the white tail came unheralded to the Garden and on her first appearance caught the popular fancy and also held the close attention of the judges throughout. She accounted for four firsts. Sweet Campernelle concluded her remarkable showing for a youngster by winning the \$500 Grand Championship Three-Gaited Saddle Horse Stake. It was a popular victory. The fans at the Garden had adopted this dainty little homebred, and they wanted to see her win. The idea that she was shattering precedent, since no three-year old had ever before won a grand championship in the Garden, appealed to them, too. And then, Sweet Campernelle has the most gorgeous white tail. She drew the cheers and whistles of thousands when Judge Robert Moreland of Lexington, KY, announced the first choice. She was ridden by Charles Cook, who showed her in all classes.

One of the New York scribes said, "Sweet Campernelle, owned by R. T. McCready, Sewickley, PA, three-gaited mare that has electrified horse show enthusiasts by her bonnie coloring, her exquisite loveliness and brilliance, came through with flying colors at the National Horse Show with Charlie Cook on her back."

Another sportswriter described, "Sweet Campernelle's color as that of a cloth of gold; she has a small star, flowing cream colored tail and both rear ankles white, while her motion both fore and aft, her air, poise, and determination, together with her faultless conformation, make of her

just that which she has proven to be a 'freak of the saddlebreed.' In fact, it has been said that when passing you there is a vibration and suction that causes one to reach for his hat, and yet with all her gaminess and her determined way of going, she is as docile as a lamb, always behind the bit, in perfect form and seems to realize the position she now occupies in the field of showdom."

It was amusing to read this early writing, "Most unusual development of the show is the performance of the saddle horse Sweet Campernelle. This little lady is a 3-year old dappled gold mare, white mane and tail. This is like saying she's carrying a black cat and a buster mirror in her saddlebags, because 3-year olds rarely do much in big league show competition, and dappled gold, with white manes and tails, even more rarely. Yet, the owner, R. T. McCready of Sewickley, PA has sent his story book horse in the ring twice, and each time she trotted out with the Championship."

A prospective buyer asked Charlie Cook, during the New York Show, what Sweet Campernelle was worth, to which Charlie replied, "All the money you can beg, borrow or steal, I never rode or saw one her superior", and then patted the would be purchaser on the shoulder and said, "Bear in mind, friend, she's only a baby-a three-year-old."

In January of 1941, Mrs. N.S. Kelly of Medfield, MA wrote Mr. R. T. M. McCready, "I found Sweet Campernelle to be all that she was described and more. She is a darling to ride and all in all I fell quite in love with her and I could think of nothing else." There had been many flattering offers for this nugget of gold but Mrs. Kelly purchased Sweet Campernelle for \$12,000 for her personal mount.

### **Home Town Boy Makes Good**

Col. Mat S. Cohen, Editor Emeritus of *American Horseman* wrote this article in 1941 and sent it to a Shelbyville, Kentucky newspaper. "Home Town Boy Makes Good, Charles L. Cook, Outstanding Educator And Exhibitor of Fine Three and Five-Gaited Saddle Horses."

"Back in the early days when Charlie Cook, of Shelbyville, Ky. decided upon the horse business as his life's vocation, there were of course 'doubting Thomases' who tried to persuade Charlie to select some other endeavor, possibly farming, as his profession, but the determined, cold gray, steel-eyed youth cast such suggestions aside and in his middle teens began the breaking, developing and educating of five and three-gaited saddle horses, a love for which was a family heritage, and even in youth he philosophized by stating that when a man does what he loves to do and knows how to do it, he'll become a success, and which philosophy, together with brains, energy and honesty have carried Charlie Cook to the heights of his profession, the equal of which no man living or dead excels.

"For years Charlie's skill was demonstrated and recognized in the development and showing of

five-gaited horses, which he did with the indefatigable manner as to cause many to refer to him as a wizard for his age. Later on, Charlie became infatuated with the three-gaited horse and in applying his knowledge and energy to them his achievements equalled those with the five-gaited horse.

“Charlie’s first employers were Lehmann Bros. of Chicago for whom he worked and under Charlie’s management and showmanship that stable shortly became one of the most prominent of America’s show stables of saddle horses. After being with Lehmann Bros. for several years, Charlie resigned and returned to his old home town, Shelbyville, Ky. and opened a public training stable, and from that day up to the day he became manager of V. V. Cooke’s saddle horse nursery, Meadow View Farm, Louisville, Ky., many of the nation’s three and five-gaited champions received their schooling and education by the honest and hard-working Charlie.

“Mr. R. T. McCready, a prominent eastern attorney, recognized Charlie’s ability and sent to him the buckskin colored mare, Jonquil, which after graduating from the Cook School and the guidance of Master Charlie, was the nation’s grand champion three-gaited saddle horse for four (4) years, competing at most the larger shows throughout the country and declared the best mannered and most beautiful mouthed of any saddle horse of her day.

“Mr. McCready, also owned a full sister to Jonquil named Mystery 15063, which he bred to his stallion, Anderson Rex 12482, a son of King Barrymore 8861, and as a result a beautiful yellow or cream colored filly, Sweet Campernelle 26904, was foaled in April, 1937. Mr. McCready remembered the success Charlie achieved with the great Jonquil, sent this daughter of American (Anderson) Rex-Mystery to Charlie when she was a year-old and under his talented direction and skill she made her first appearance under saddle at the Rock Creek Show in the spring of 1940 as a three-gaited mare, winning all events in which she contested and in the fall of last year she made her next appearance at the Kentucky State Fair where again demonstrated her superiority by going through that show without a defeat. Her next appearance was at Madison Square Garden Show last November, where she not only won the three-year old three-gaited stake and the Grand Championship three-gaited saddle stake at the Madison Square Garden Show, a feat never before accomplished by a three-year old. In fact, today she stands the unbeaten, if not the unbeatable, of the three-gaited saddle horses.

“Immediately after the New York Show she was sold to an eastern horse fancier for \$12,000, the record price for a three-year old saddle mare, either three or five-gaited. The name of the new owner will not be divulged until the closing of the Devon Horse Show entries, where she will be shown by the skillful Charlie and in fact spend her show life under the guidance of the man who has made the name Sweet Campernelle the household word throughout showdom.

“Therefore, to Charlie Cook must go the credit of being one of America’s most outstanding educators and exhibitors of three and five-gaited horses and which reputation is not only well deserved but acknowledged wherever the saddle horse is shown, and it is therefore no wonder that the people of Shelby County, Kentucky are outspoken in their praise and proud of this

wonderful educator and showman, Charles L. Cook.”

### **Favorite Five-Gaited Horse**

Charlie Cook’s favorite of many five-gaited horses that he handled was Easter Star. He was a chestnut gelding, 15.2, with two white feet, a small star and foaled on Easter Sunday in 1915. As a four year old, he was driven regularly to Lawrenceburg, Kentucky, as a buggy horse, by school children. Because of his terrific speed at the trot he was raced with nearly every horse that they chanced to meet along the road. Most of the prominent horsemen had, at one time or another, viewed Easter Star but he remained in Anderson County, Kentucky. Then Charlie Cook saw him. After watching his unusual speed and hock action, Mr. Cook lost no time in buying him for \$600.

In the summer of 1920, Charlie Cook showed Easter Star, as a five year old, in the Kentucky County Fairs. The gelding went into those rings as a light harness and three- gaited horse. His mane and tail, were not shaved but braided, after the fashion of those days. In the autumn of 1920 Charlie Cook gaited Easter Star.

Closing out the season of 1921 as a five-gaited horse, Easter Star won the open gelding class and finished third in the Gelding Division of \$10,000 Stake at the Kentucky State Fair. In the World Grand Championship Stake with Cook in the saddle, Easter Star was tied second to the famed Mass of Gold. Susanne (Emily Ellen Scharf) writing in Volume II, *Famous Saddle Horses* says, “Charlie Cook made one of the greatest shows with Easter Star that has ever been witnessed in any ring, a performance that was so brilliant, so inspiring and so thrilling that it caught the fancy of the crowd and there was vociferous shouting from all points of the amphitheater for ‘Number 9’, the designation of Easter Star, and the most remarkable part of the performance was that the longer the contest continued, the better Easter Star became. When, at the end of his individual performance, Charlie Cook turned the horse loose clear around the ring, it seemed as though the entire crowd had suddenly been converted to the idea that he should head the class. He gave a display of hock action that undoubtedly could not be equaled by any other horse before the public at that time, and his individual appearance seemed to show a much finer and more finished horse than the same animal had ever appeared to present in his earlier appearance of that week. So convincing was the performance that it secured for him the vote for first place by one of the judges and two judges voted for Mass of Gold for first. It was a great show; a great contest; a great spectacle; it was in every sense of the term a great occasion--one of the historic events in the development of the Saddle Horse game.”

Easter Star went on to win second in all classes at Madison Square Garden in New York, won the Gelding Stake and was second in the Grand Championship at the International Horse Show at the Union Stock Yards in Chicago (a.k.a. “court of last appeals”). Up to this point in the horse’s career no one but Charlie Cook had ever had a leg over Easter Star.

In May of 1922, the gelding was sold and after winning the Gelding Division of the \$10,000 Stake at the Kentucky State Fair in Louisville was resold on the morning of the night when the finals were to be held. Easter Star brought the highest price ever paid up to that time for any saddle stallion, mare or gelding, and vastly in excess of what any well-informed horseman would say represented any fair actual value of any Saddle Horse at that time, and more especially of any saddle gelding which would necessarily be without those ultimate potential earning capacities which might inhere in a stallion or mare. Easter Star won the finals of the World Grand Championship Stake and Charlie Cook had made a World Champion. This had been his lifetime ambition.

### **Favorite Three-Gaited Horse**

Charlie Cook's favorite of the many three-gaited horses that he handled was Jonquil. She was a golden yellow mare, 15.1 1/2, with three white feet, black legs and a small star. R. T. M. McCready, a prominent Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania attorney and horse breeder, shipped Jonquil to Charlie Cook as a six year old in June, 1926 for training. Charlie said that the mare was smart, had a nice disposition and took to her training "like a duck to water."

Jonquil was entered in the 1926 Championship Three-Gaited Stake at the Kentucky State Fair carrying number 13. After one solid hour of showing, in the third workout, she won the stake over a field of twenty-three horses. In a letter of May 31, 1927, to Charles L. Cook, Shelbyville, Kentucky, "As Mr. McCready has doubtless told you, I have purchased Jonquil "Sight unseen", based on what John Mitchell has told me she has done under your handling and on Mr. McCready's representations and recommendations." Burton A. Howe of Howe, Snow & Bertles, Investment Securities, New York. The purchase price was \$10,000.

Jonquil was the first horse to ever win the Three-Gaited Championship at Louisville for four consecutive years. This was during the period when the stake included both over and under two, horses. Her record is a monument to the horsemanship of Charlie Cook. If a horse stepped in front of her she calmly slowed down and proceeded without a break. Jonquil was ridden to victory each time by Charlie Cook, who understood her every move.

A tribute to Jonquil was written by Marguerite Farlee Bayliss in the *1927 Official Horse Show Blue Book* as follows: "Mr. Burton Howe's gold mare Jonquil emerges from the particularly hard-contested season of 1927 as the outstanding figure in the three-gaited saddle classes. Except only Bohemian Actress and Nancy Highland no other newcomer to the three-gaited section has created so much talk among horsemen within twenty years. Like many horses of remarkable deeds, Jonquil is quiet to the point of indifference when she is not working, but when mounted and put into action she becomes transformed. Not that she is then fractious, or disposed to pull, for she is like something that has no mind but the master's, and she seems to have the knack of knowing what the rider wants as soon as he knows, and before he can tell her by the ordinary processes, she does just that. As a park horse she is in a class all by

herself. Her striking beauty, light true action, and her lady-like manners, together with her perfect mouth, are a combination rarely equalled. Yet a judge of horses must regard her as having strength and stamina to do any work a saddle horse ought to do. It will be remembered that she is a full sister to one of the most celebrated weight-carrying, three hundred mile racehorses alive.

“She gained her wide fame in 1927 without appearing at many shows, only seven in all. She took important classes at every one of them. At the Louisville State Fair she repeated her last year’s victory in the \$1,000 championship stake and also in the mare class. She won the stakes at Stamford, Cincinnati, and the Chicago International, giving her four stakes out of a possible five in competition with the cream of the three-gaited section. Four stakes in one season is all any horse ought to win. Besides this she has won a Cathedral Cup (at Stamford) and other good classes.

“Not the least interesting thing about the aptly named Jonquil is her lovely color. Far back, she has Barb blood, and this golden color is historic in certain strains of Barb. Some of the horses brought to the New World by the Spanish Conquerors were of this shade, which was almost classic in mediaeval Spain and Morocco. Descendants of the Spanish Barbs, still breeding true to the gold color, form several valued South American breeds to this day. We had once a fine line of it in our old time Copper-bottom stock to which Jonquil traces no less than eight times. The celebrated stallion, Dorsey’s Golddust, Morgan and African-Arab in blood, was a shining example of the color, from which he took his name. The color also appeared in certain of the most prized strains of the Turkish Arab, and one of the greatest foundation sires of the British Thoroughbred breed was a grand Levantine Arab known in England as D’Arcy’s yellow Turk. The appearance of the gold color in our horse shows is therefore of exceptional interest.

“As a daughter of some of the best old-time stock, which is proven as a source of sound and useful and beautiful horses, Jonquil is a credit to her family. She is a demonstration of the possibilities that await the skilled small breeder, for she came from no elaborate stud farm, but was reared in the private grounds of Mr. McCready’s residence. She illustrates what can be done by the truly amateur sportsman in the way of selecting and developing champion show horses, for Mr. Howe keeps only a small stable and has his horses purely for the love of horses. Both the breeder and the owner of Jonquil have the congratulations of the *Blue Book*.”

### **Showmanship**

In the early years of Charlie’s training, he trained trick horses like his older brother Jesse C. Cook. Jesse had made a specialty of educating saddle horses and jumpers that he exhibited at Madison Square Garden, N.Y., Boston and other Eastern Horse Shows with marked success.

Charlie Cook’s skill in training was shown one time at the Shelby County Fair when he slipped out of the saddle and stirrups to the rump of the horse, laid the reins down on the horse’s mane, riding bareback, noticeably bringing attention to the judge and the crowd of his showmanship and

the schooling of the show horse.

During the Arlington Show in Indianapolis in 1936, Charlie Cook mounted on Peavine's Kentucky Belle, was awarded the blue. The trophy included a silver tray and cup. Mr. Cook placed the tray, with the cup on it, in his left hand and gathering the reins in his right hand, rode the mare completely around the arena at a brisk trot. Needless to say, the cup remained in place on the tray.

Sallie would accompany Charlie to all the horse shows. They would make the Kentucky County Fair Circuit and State Fairs in the summer. Having the riding attire clean for multiple showings, arranging for the meals and comfortable living quarters was handled superbly by Sallie. They often entertained their clients during their younger years and the glory days of Charlie. Though they received many invitations to parties, the late hours of showing horses and the necessity to get up for early morning workouts, usually took preference. However, one outstanding party they attended was at the home of Eli Lilly, Indianapolis, IN, (pharmaceutical manufacturer). The flapper dress and beaded purse of Sallie's remains in the family. Charlie and Sallie made a good team. She did the bookkeeping and if there were any conflicts with clients or bankers, etc., Sallie was able to smooth over the relationships. The commission of a professional trainer to manage the horses' show ring career was an awesome responsibility.

### **Judging**

Charlie Cook being a breeder, trainer, exhibitor and dealer was known as one of America's foremost authorities on saddlebred horses. He was registered as a senior judge with the American Horse Show Association. He was asked often to be a judge at a horse show but would decline because of the demands of operating a stable with fifteen to thirty horses in training. In addition, he represented his clients at some of the same fairs and horse shows. Charlie did all his own saddle work and that means he had to stay close to home and on the job everyday. Not only was he preparing horses for shows but for sales, too. However, in 1930 he did accept being the judge of five and three-gaited, fine harness and roadster horses at the Los Angeles National Horse Show, Los Angeles, California. He received the largest professional judging fee of \$1,250 which was \$250 more than had ever been paid a judge at this horse show.

An Atlanta area newspaper had this to say, Horse Judge Is Likened To Baseball Ump - Calls 'Em As He Sees 'Em - C. L. Cook Does It At DeKalb Show

"A horse show judge is just like a baseball umpire. He calls 'em like he sees 'em and walks away tough.

"He's luckier than an umpire, though. A horse show crowd is too polite to hurl pop bottles or epithets when he gives the blue ribbon to Shufflin' Sam and they think it should have gone to Dancing Lady. The worst he can expect is a few well-bred boos and when he's a judge with

the fame of Charles L. Cook, of Louisville, he doesn't even get those. So fine a judge of horse flesh is Cook, himself the breeder and owner of many champions, his decisions never are questioned, even though a favorite may be placed lower than his fanciers hoped.

"They like Cook because they know he judges the horse on its merits, and not on who owns it. They know he judges it on the way it looks and handles in the ring that day, and not on the number of blue ribbons taken in times past that hang in the tack room of its stable.

"Atlanta horse lovers for the past two days have observed Cook at work in the new judging ring at Panthersville, where in conjunction with the annual DeKalb Harvest Festival, one of the big horse shows of the southeast in the making."

After judging the DeKalb County Chamber of Commerce Horse Show, Decatur, Georgia, Oct. 10-11, 1941, Charlie received a letter from Fred. L. Cannon, Horse Show Chairman saying, "I have received call after call and people have told me in person that your judging was the best that they had ever seen in Atlanta. We have received nothing but praise for your efforts and I personally want to thank you."

A horse show article said, "His Honor, Charles L. Cook, of Louisville, Kentucky, will judge the Greenville Horse Show June 17, 18, 19 at Manly field (South Carolina). The local show is fortunate to have such a world famous trainer and exhibitor as a judge who is known for his 'pinning them the way he sees them'." Another article, "No better steeds have ever been shown here and this southern exposure is the finest on the nether side of Madison Square Garden. Nobody but Judge Charles Cook of Louisville, Ky., could have weighed the difference so keen was the competition in some of the 11 classes displayed in the second nights' program before 1,500 spectators."

### **Cook Method, Early Colt Training**

The Cook method of training saddle horses was featured in *The National Horseman* magazine, October 1936. Let's examine the Cook method of early colt training. Charlie Cook does not approve of using a biting harness in the education of young horses. He believes that the harness, with its rigid check-rein fails to allow the colt enough freedom, which is essential in developing a good mouth. The biting harness does not have the "give and take" of the human hand and only serves to anger and annoy the youngster instead of keeping his mind free to absorb his training. Therefore Mr. Cook depends entirely upon the double bridle, the human hand and good judgment in setting the young horse's head. Incidentally, it is Charlie Cook's belief that a top show horse, well set in his gaits, can do much to teach the novice to ride.

Charlie Cook makes it a point to begin educating the colt the autumn it reaches the age of two and one-half years. In so doing he avoids worrying the colt during the hot summer months, with the result that the youngster takes more readily to training because of not having the added annoyance of heat and insects.

The colt's first lesson is in light driving harness equipped with a blind bridle and long reins. He is barefooted and without quarter or shin boots. Mr. Cook drives him from the ground with the reins around the colt's hips to prevent unexpected turning. He is taught starting, stopping and turning by commands and urging with the reins. The trainer, at this stage, is without assistants or a whip. Due to the fact that the colt is young and soft he is only worked fifteen minutes a day at this period. Never tire the youngster. Try to take him back to the barn fresh and playing. The above routine is usually followed for a week or ten days, at which time the colt should be ready for his second lesson.

The colt is now ready to be hitched to a light break cart. He is still barefooted and without quarter or shin boots. The trainer quietly mounts the cart and moves the youngster off gently, taking care to avoid prancing by talking softly to him. The colt is taught a good, steady, flat-footed walk. He is then educated in starting, stopping and turning the cart. From this point until he is ready to be put under saddle all of his work is at the trot, but the trainer has not, as yet, begun to ask for either speed or action. This portion of the training is used from fifteen to thirty minutes a day for a period of sixty days. Mr. Cook assures that the above method of early colt training, used with good, common horse-sense will never produce a balker or a kicker.

### **Cook Method, Gaiting**

The young horse is now ready to begin his education under saddle and we will look at the Cook method of gaiting the colt. The trainer bridles him with a light snaffle bit and single reins. He is quietly saddled and gradually girthed until the saddle is tight enough to permit mounting. The colt is still barefooted and without quarter or shin boots. This period of the colt's education is conducted inside of the barn. The reason is apparent. Inside the barn, the colt will not be inclined to run or otherwise acquire the bad habit of inattention to the trainer's signals and commands. When the trainer mounts the colt for the first time he is equipped with a riding crop only. Work the youngster at a walk and slow trot for a few days before taking him to an outside straightaway.

When the colt is started on his outside training it should be on a dirt track running to a slight incline. The trainer trots the colt up the incline and tries to make him shuffle or hit a few licks of the rack, on the down grade coming back. There is still no attempt to set the colt's head or to ask for form or speed, at any certain gait.

When the colt starts to hit a few licks of the rack, it is Charlie Cook's method to allow him to move right along, if the youngster shows an inclination to do so. Some trainers believe in holding the colt down and attempting to teach the slow gait first. But, as Mr. Cook says, once the horse becomes well set in his rack it is a simple matter to teach the stepping pace, it being nothing more than a slow rack. The rack is taught by shaking the horse's head and urging him on downgrade. The above portion of the colt's education is conducted for approximately thirty minutes a day during a period of sixty days.

After the preceding periods of training, the colt should be well set in his trot and rack but still uncalled on for either speed or action.

We now put on light shoes, light quarter boots and a double bridle with both curb and snaffle bits. The trainer equips himself with spurs.

The colt is ready to be schooled in the canter. When first asked for the canter he is quite likely to break into a full gallop. To slow the colt work him in very small circles until he loses the desire to run. Then he is taught to take off on the proper leads. Mr. Cook asks for the right lead by simply turning horse to the right and pulling the left rein and for the left lead by reversing the above.

Immediately after the colt begins to canter on either lead in good form, the trainer begins to set his head. The rider lifts the horse's head with the snaffle and tucks or flexes it with the curb. Charlie Cook uses spurs to help set a horse's head. He claims that while a stroke with a crop will cause a horse to toss his head high in the air, a touch of the spurs will cause him to lower his head slightly and bore into the bridle, which is precisely what the trainer wants in teaching a young horse to flex his head.

At this point the colt is racked by shaking his head on the curb bit. Charlie Cook believes that more good horses rack on the curb than on the snaffle.

The colt is still being worked at the trot and rack. Now the trainer is beginning to ask him for high action and form at these gaits. After the colt is well set in his gaits the trainer calls on him for speed, taking care never to sacrifice form. After all we are discussing saddlehorses and not racehorses. The above work should be indulged in approximately thirty minutes a day for a tentative period of six months, after which your horse should be ready to serve his time on the bridle path or tanbark.

### **Cook Method, Holding Reins**

The Cook method of holding the reins is unique in itself. Charlie Cook takes both off reins in his right hand. The right snaffle rein enters his right hand under the little finger. The right curb rein enters his right hand under the third or ring finger. The left or near reins are, of course, held the same way in the left hand. Thus we have the reins evenly divided, two in each hand. Now he slides his right hand about four inches toward the horse's head and hooks the index finger of his right hand over the left curb rein. This is the only connection between the off and near reins and can be released at will.

Mr. Cook, being right handed, claims that hooking the right index finger over the left curb rein gives added support of the left hand which is naturally weaker.

Cook says that the most important thing about schooling a saddle horse is to have him thoroughly bitted. He does this with his hands. As we have said before, biting harness and dumb jockeys have no place in the Cook Stable. Most action comes from the bit. After all is said and done, a horse is just as good as his mouth. A bad mouthed horse cannot be depended upon. Most usually, bad legs are the result because a badly bitted horse will not allow the rider to take care of him and he certainly cannot take care of himself.

### **Cook Cures Saddle Horse Vices**

Here, it might be well to add a few of Mr. Cook's cures for common saddle horse vices. A rearing horse should be hit about the head with the butt end of the crop. A runaway can only be stopped by pulling his head sharply to one side and holding it there, forcing him to run in small circles until he halts. Bucking can usually be stopped by lifting his head high in the air. Kicking is checked by lifting his head and urging him on faster. Proper shoeing is highly important in successfully training and showing saddle horses. Charlie Cook gets the best results with a half round shoe, well rolled. They vary in weight from fourteen to sixteen ounces. The Cook horses are shod with 4 1/4 and 4 1/2 inch toes. Charlie Cook attributes his success, in training, to plenty of hard work and a love of horses. It is a consensus of opinion of prominent horsemen that a horse broken by Mr. Cook is thoroughly broken.

### **Once Again, Back To Shelbyville**

In the spring of **1941**, Charlie and Junior, decided to go into business together on the horses that Charlie owned and was allowed to keep, to develop and produce at Meadow View Farm. They would operate as Chas. L. Cook & Son and their slogan was "Our Selections Win Whenever and Wherever They Are Shown" and stationary was printed accordingly.

December 7, 1941 the infamous day of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor was going to affect Charlie Cook's job as manager of Meadow View Farm. World War II stopped the manufacture of cars for retail sale; therefore Mr. V. V. Cooke could not continue to support the saddle horse show business. In the summer of **1942**, Charlie Cook returned with his family to Shelbyville, Ky and he opened a public training stable at the Shelby County Fair Grounds with Junior helping him.

In July after working a horse out, Charlie being extremely hot and sweaty, neglected to cover himself and cooled down too quickly and took a cold that resulted in pneumonia. He had had pneumonia about four times from the same cause when showing horses on the road. The doctor gave him sulfa drugs and the medicine did not agree with his nerves. It is believed that it caused a nervous breakdown. He was in critical condition at first. Prior to this incident he had started drinking. Sallie had ovarian cancer and her condition had been deteriorating since 1939. Sallie loved Charlie dearly and had been an inspiration to his success. Sallie at the age of 51 died on February 5, **1943**. With the loss of his dear wife and teammate, he became dependent on alcohol.

## **Near Fatal Accidents**

Once Charlie Cook had escaped a near fatal injury when a frenzied bull overthrew the horse he was riding at the Shelby County Fair Grounds. The bull attacked as Charlie rode from the stable. He was thrown to the ground, his head just missing a metal stake that was holding the barn entrance door. Luckily the animal had been de-horned and Charlie suffered only a broken nose and bruises about the head and body from the fall. One of the grooms drove the bull off with a pitch fork.

Another mishap happened one winter when he was riding a large horse within the barn. When Charlie turned the horse at the end of the hallway, the horse slipped on ice and fell on him. Though they at first thought Charlie was paralyzed, he wasn't, but he sustained a painful hip and back injury that stayed with him during the remainder of his riding days.

A freak accident happened when Charlie entered the ring riding Smart Trick at the Rock Creek Riding Club Horse Show in Louisville. This horse was easily frightened and the noise from the crowd scared her when she entered the ring. She reared up immediately and Charlie lost his seating. As he was falling his left foot got tangled in the stirrup. He hit the ground hanging from the stirrup, unable to withdraw his foot and without the reins. Charlie's son, Charles Jr., had entered the class first on War Nurse. When he saw the terrifying scene, he rode his horse in circles around Smart Trick to keep her from moving and a fast thinking groom reached Smart Trick in time to calm the horse and rescue Charlie.

Charlie's daughter, Mildred, said that Charlie got pneumonia at the Indianapolis Horse Show. He was in critical condition and they thought he was going to die. Charlie was susceptible often in the summer when he was showing a number of times in the evening and the temperature would change. Pneumonia brings back the memory of the death of Charlie's brother, Jesse C. Cook. Jess died of pneumonia which developed as the result of injuries to his chest when he was kicked by one of his show horses at the Shelby County Fair Grounds. He was forty-eight years old and a bachelor.

## **Retirement and Return**

The rigors and risks of training and showing saddle horses had caught up with Charlie Cook. In the summer of **1944**, all of Charlie's earthly possessions were sold at auction to satisfy his debtors. For the next eight years he lived with his daughter, Mildred Louise Wuest in Louisville, Kentucky.

After the dissolution of the Cook saddle horse business, Charles Jr. graduated from Shelbyville High School and served in the Navy during World War II. He received honorable discharge from the Navy, attended Georgetown College and graduated from Transylvania University,

Lexington, Kentucky in 1950. Upon graduation, Junior was offered a riding job by a Central Kentucky trainer but he declined. Having gained knowledge and experience in business affairs, he decided to continue in that direction. However, the love of the horse remains always in the blood.

In 1952, Charlie received a letter, "The Shelby County Fair is celebrating its 100th Anniversary this year. You, as, a former Shelby County exhibitor at the fair, have played an important part in the success of the fair through the years. The Shelby County Fair cordially invites you to be guest of the fair at the horse show on Friday night, August 3. You are also invited to be a guest at the Exhibitor's Luncheon to be held at the Old Stone Inn, Simpsonville, at 1:00 p.m. August 4." Sincerely, William A. M. Kay

With the encouragement of his son and daughter, they accompanied him to the Shelby County Fair where he was given recognition. Charlie enjoyed seeing his old friends and by happenstance, one of them, Mr. George Gwinn, showed an interest in having him train horses. His son and daughter felt it would be good for him to get back in the horse business. Again, at the Kentucky State Fair in September, Charlie saw Mr. Gwinn and came to terms on a job starting in October in Danville, KY.

Having not ridden a horse for eight years and having a bad hip and back from an accident when a twelve hundred pound horse had fallen on him, this was one of Charlie's toughest challenges. In about six weeks, he overcame his self doubts, the disability and the rigors of riding again. However, his weakness for alcohol had returned by Christmas and soon this would interfere with his relationship with Mr. Guinn. Charlie had several other horse connections but none would return him to his glory days. His latter years were lived with a broken heart, low spirits, some form of dementia and a dependency on alcohol. Charlie Cook died in King's Daughters Hospital on May 3, 1964 with uremia. He had been in the hospital for ten days and The Rev. Fred T. Moffatt of the Shelbyville First Baptist Church ministered unto him. Rev. Moffatt said that Charlie Cook accepted Jesus Christ as his savior on his death bed. The family felt blessed with this saving knowledge. The obituary in a Shelby County, Kentucky newspaper said, "Mr. Cook was a gentlemen with high ideals, strong in his convictions, devoted to his family and loyal friends."

### **Remembering**

Charlie Cook grew up in the horse and buggy days. He courted Sallie in a horse and buggy. He never learned to drive a car. Charlie's son recalls the younger years when the family was together. Their residence in Shelbyville was a short walk from the Fair Grounds. Charlie got up early every morning to milk a Jersey cow and feed the horses and ended a long, hard day by milking the cow. During the depression Sallie would sell milk, buttermilk, cream, butter and cottage cheese to bring in some extra cash. Charlie kept game chickens at the Fair Grounds and he would often bring one home for a fried chicken dinner. Sallie was an excellent cook and enjoyed having clients for dinner.

Son believes that Charlie was most content when he had his stable at the Shelby County Fair Grounds. He liked to discover a horse out in the country, buy him cheap, and develop him. He seemed to have a knack at finding these type of horses. Even though a horse could be mean and dangerous, Charlie was fearless and would conquer the horse's spirit. With his "million dollar hands", he could transform a "bad acting" horse into a steady performer with gentle manners.

Looking back on Charlie's bout with sulfa drugs for pneumonia, there was a complete change in his demeanor. When he was trying to recover from his sickness and at the same time concerned about Sallie's terminal illness with cancer, he had severe worries. He tried to get relief in alcohol but this only added to his problems. He was overcome with loneliness and despair after Sallie's death.

We wonder if the ground hog not only saw his own shadow on that February day in 1889, but if he also saw the shadows of coming events? Namely the future champions of Easter Star, Jonquil, Sweet Campernelle, and others, flashing over the tanbark under the deft hands of Charlie Cook. Why has this incredible, gifted saddle horseman not been recognized by the National Horse Show Hall of Fame or the Kentucky Sports Hall of Fame? Saddle horse fanciers will have to remember Charlie Cook and these champions inscribed in the mythical Hall of Fame. It is the journey and the memories that are so important!

Written and Compiled by Charles Lowell Cook, Jr., son - Cookstuff@aol.com 6/23/2001

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Photo of Easter Star with Charles Cook up. *The Horse America Made* by Louis Taylor, 1944, p. 100

Source: Cook Family Papers in possession of Charles Lowell Cook, Jr.

### **Lineage:**

*Charles Lowell Cook* (1889-1964), Isaac Marion Cook, (1846-1914), Abraham C. Cook (1809-1893), William Cook III (Abt. 1764-1816), William Cook II (Abt. 1725-Abt.1784), William Cook I (Abt. 1700-Unknown).

*Charles Lowell Cook, Jr.* (1927-), Charles Lowell Cook (1889-1964), Isaac Marion Cook, (1846-1914), Abraham C. Cook (1809-1893), William Cook III (Abt. 1764-1816), William Cook II (Abt. 1725-Abt. 1784), William Cook I (Abt. 1700-Unknown).

*Isaac Marion Cook*, (1846-1914), Abraham C. Cook (1809-1893), William Cook III (Abt. 1764-1816), William Cook II (Abt. 1725-Abt.1784), William Cook I (Abt. 1700-Unknown).

*Jesse Cash Cook*, (1874-1922), Isaac Marion Cook, (1846-1914), Abraham C. Cook (1809-1893), William Cook III (Abt. 1764-1816), William Cook II (Abt. 1725-Abt.1784), William Cook I (Abt. 1700-Unknown).

*Mary Elizabeth Carpenter Cook*, (1846-1905), James Carpenter (1824-1859), George Carpenter, (1783-1859), John Carpenter (Unknown).

*Mildred Louise Cook*, (1915-), Charles Lowell Cook (1889-1964), Isaac Marion Cook, (1846-1914), Abraham C. Cook (1809-1893), William Cook III (Abt. 1764-1816), William Cook II (Abt. 1725-Abt. 1784), William Cook I (Abt. 1700-Unknown).

*Sallie Thomas Lee Cook*, (1891-1943), George Thomas Lee (1863-1951).