Mr. President,

Members of Essex County Historical Society, Guests

It is a privilege, a pleasure and an honor for me to have the opportunity to speak to you on racing harness horses in Tappahannock, Essex County and the surrounding area. I hope that I am equal to the task. Let me refer to the area as a wheel and Tappahannock as the hub, for at Tappahannock horsemen would gather at the Essex County Fair every fall to race. This included horses from Eastern Shore, Mathews, Kilmarnock, Heathsville and local horses. For this reason I will have to tie Tappahannock’s harness racing history in with the above mentioned areas. Please understand that for the most part, I will be bringing to your attention facts that have taken place in our area relating to harness racing. I have gathered these facts from old capable gentlemen for a period of over 50 years, some by experience and some by reading. However, I gave all of my harness horse history to a friend several years back and what I have to share with you at this time is from memory. I realize some of the facts will be a little curious to you ladies, but I hope they will be amusing.

First let me tell you how the harness horse (trotters and pacers) came into existence. When this country was settled the colonist imported from England thoroughbreds. I say imported because I have never read where any were on the Mayflower or that Capt. John Smith brought any to Jamestown. As you know a thoroughbred is a running horse, they may trot a little out in the pasture while going slow, but when they really want to move they run.

A thoroughbred stallion named Messenger was imported from England. He was bred to mares over here and breeders soon noticed that his colts and fillies showed signs of being able to trot and pace. I guess you would say they were inclined to trot and pace rather than run. Breeders kept on breeding this blood line and they showed improvements year after year. Finally a stallion was produced, Hamblitonion 10. He was owned by a man named RYSDICK and the stallion was always referred to as Rysdick’s Hamblitonion 10. With the importation of Messenger whose blood line produced Hamblitonion 10 all of this led to the creation of a new breed, the Standardbred Horse and Hamblitonion 10 is regarded as the father of the Standardbred Horse. The only other country that I know of with trotters is Russia or at least they had them up to the Bolshevik Revolution. Their trotter was known as the OLOFF trotter, the confirmation of which I understand was more stocky than our trotters.

The Australians go in for harness racing more especially pacers. However, my understanding is that their foundation stock was imported from the United States.

Now at this point and time I am going to surprise you by connecting Hamblitonion 10 with Essex County. I have always been a great admirer of Mr. Allen Latane who died in the 1940’s. Mr. Latane’s Column in the Tappahannock Times was current comments. I refer you to an article Mr. Latane wrote at least 45 years ago.

Mr. Latane was writing regarding how the automobile had taken the place of the horse. He mentioned the names of some of the horses his father owned which he loved so much, their names were, SELIM, MOHAWK, MEADOW MAID, ZEPHYR, FAIRY, PORTIA AND GUSIE. Mohawk, a stallion, was sold for a fancy price and developed great speed as a race horse. Gussie was a Hamblitonion and possessed almost human intelligence. This article proves to us that breeders of fine horses always reached out for the best blood lines available.

Now so much for the early back ground of the harness horse. Let us dwell on the harness horse one half mile tracks of our area. To my knowledge Tappahannock has had three one half mile tracks. The first one was right here in town, on the left going up 17 on what is now Mr. Overton Brooks farm. It was known then as Brockenbrough’s Track. The second track was what is known as Jacks Fork on the Airport road when it turns right for Mt. Landing. pine trees are growing on it now. The third track was on the left of the Airport looking West-South-West. This track was built and owned by Mayor George Clanton about 1946-47, it was laid off by Mr. Robert Pet-
tigrew and I helped him decide how it should lay in relation to the area. After it was built, Mr. Tom Warner measured it 3 feet from the rail and it was one and one half inches over one half mile. The reason for 3 feet from the rail is when the inside horse would be racing right on the one half mile line.

My father raced over the Brockenbrough Track and he said it was a real good track. Now I imagine you would like to know when this track was used and I can give you a good idea. My Uncle Bob Trice brought out a real good trotting stallion named Seabreeze. My father trained him and he told me that he drove Seabreeze in a race over this track when he was 19 years old.

My father was born in 1880, this means the track had to be in use around 1900. However, Mr. Haile Parker who was born in 1900 remembers going to races there when he was eight or ten years old, so you can see it was in use in 1908 or 1910.

The Jacks Fork Track and fair grounds replaced the Brockenbrough track. It had an exhibition hall, carnival atmosphere etc., and wonderful harness racing. I remember my father taking us there mainly to see the races around 1925-1928. The fourth track in the county was on Mr. Booth Eubank's farm, Dunnsville. He sponsored race meetings there and I have heard that the competition was mighty keen. The fifth track was on Mannfield Farm where Aylett Country Day School is now located. It would be of interest to mention the location of some nearby tracks. I feel sure the oldest was across the river from Tappahannock on Mt. Airy Farm, you could see part of the outline of the track up to a few years ago. It has been said the Washington's, Lee's, Byrds and many other famous Virginians raced horses over this track. Racing was for honor and glory, not gold, but I expect some gold changed hands. King and Queen had three tracks to my knowledge, one in the Smithfield section, one on Melville Farm, both owned by Mr. Henley Broache and the third track, Fleetwood, the Jack Acree home place. The field is to this day known as the race track field.

Now let us discuss racing here in Tappahannock. When the Essex County fair went out of existence, I guess about the time of the depression, the only chance local folks had of seeing a harness race was to travel to other areas. Mathews County Fair, Chesterfield County Fair, and Mr. Henley Broache's mentioned races at his farm in 1938. However, World War II halted racing at all of these locations.

In the Mid 40's I realized we needed a racing association here in Tappahannock to sponsor race meetings. I discussed the need with Capt. Bob Crowthers of Kilmarnock, Va.; Capt. Bob being a strong supporter of harness racing, having owned and raced several good horses. I quote Capt. Bob, "We can raise enough money to sponsor a meeting in Tappahannock." This give me moral support. I appeared before the Tappahannock Chamber of Commerce and immediately they were for a race meeting in Tappahannock. Men like Len Charnock, Pres., Capt. Wachsmuth, Dr. Warner, Sydor Phillips and Carson Phillips. There were other members of the Chamber of Commerce, I apologize for not mentioning their names. We organized the Rappahannock Valley Racing Association. I remember so well, that Dr. Warner helped to name the association. We solicited memberships and funds, total members being 36 who contributed $25.00 making a total of $900.00, which was enough money to guarantee the purse. We sponsored our first meeting in late October. It was a huge success and about 2500 to 3000 people attended. The Association sponsored races for several years with success but what broke us up was when Maryland started night racing with Parana-Mutual. We just could not get enough good horses and we had to stop. Of the 36 members only one is living, your humble speaker with one exception, a Mr. W. R. Tompkins who lived at the Riverside Hotel. I have no idea what happened to him.

I am proud of the fact that we formed the Rappahannock Valley Racing Association. I am sure it helped keep the sport of harness racing alive in this area. I mention the following which are in the sport probably as a result of our association, they are Mr. Herbert Scott; Warsaw, Va.; he has been successful as a owner and trainer. Ben Baird, Chance, Va., has raced and sold some good horses at attractive prices. John Tignor, Caret, Va., has been successful. John sold two pacers that he bred. One paced in 1:54 and one in 1:55, each one has won in excess of $150,000 in 2 years. Turpin Acree, Millers Tavern, Va., has had some good horses. Roger Andrews, Tappahannock, Va., has bred, trained, raced and sold several horses for handsome prices. I guess his top horse was Southern Gypsy which he sold to George STEINBRENNER, ower of the New York Yankees. Roger sold Southern Le High. He has won over $300,000.00 and Southern Sam has won $270,000.00 Wayne Davis has owned some good stock and so has Archie Davis. The sport of harness racing is a good business with a little luck.

Now I am going to connect training horses here in Tappahannock with a trainer who went all the way to Russia with a stable of trotters. When C.K.G. Billings owned Curles Neck Farm in Henrico County near Richmond, Va., he had one of the finest stables of harness horses in the country. On two occasions he shipped his horses over to Russia, the main purpose was to go exhibition miles. I have often wondered what Mr. Billings purpose was. It may have been to help establish good will with the United States and Russia or it may have been for business reasons as Mr. Billings company was Union. I owned some good horses at the head of Mr. Billings exquisite trotter Lou Dillion. Mr. Billings drove Lou Dillion five two minute miles, I think. The trainer of the Billings stable was Mr. Rosemire. The second trainer was Thad Logan. They were in Russia when the Bolshevik Revolution broke out. I think it was in 1917, thy escaped by way of Siberia. I will now try to make the point of interest to you. When Mr. Lyn Charnock bought two trotters about 1946 I managed to secure the services of Mr. Thad Logan to train Lyn's horses. I think it interesting that a trainer who went all the way to Russia training horses should end his training career in Tappahannock, VA. He was a good horseman.

When races were conducted here we had horses from North Carolina, Mayland and Virginia racing. At times, the competition was fierce. Len Applegate's horse Empire Group paced the Jacks Fork Track in 2:05, W.E. Miller's horse Henry Volo raced in 2:06. The phenomenal double gated horse Hanover Express, by Guy McKinney, won on the trot and pace. The reason I mention his breeding is that Guy McKinney won the first Hamboltian in 1927. We must not forget Dr. Backe Gill's good two year old pacer, Quick Trick, he won his race over the Jacks Fork Track. I could name so many good horses but time will not permit.

In the late tens the automobile was spelling doom to the breeding of trotters in this area but I must pay tribute to the man who helped the blood lines in this area, at that time. He was the beloved Dr. E.L.W. Ferry. He imported (I think from Kentucky) the wonderful trotting sire Dane Not by Dane Devil. His lines had a lot of fine horses and
when settled down they were hard to beat. I remember one of his colts was in a race. It was a large field, Buddy Jeffries was driving him the first two heats. Buddy could not get him settled and he finished out of the money. However, the last heat Buddy got him away to a good start, trailed the field the 1st half, going down the back stretch the 2nd half Buddy eased him out, called on him and he started trotting by horses like they had stopped going; in the second turn he was still passing horses and when he hit the home stretch was several lengths ahead of the field and went on to win.

Mr. Richard (Dick) Davis lived at Bisco in King & Queen, he owned two mighty fine trotters Lou M and Pilot. Mr. Davis trained on the track at Fleetwood Farm. I recall Mr. Garnett Acree telling of riding one of their horses and running them beside Pilot, which would be called prompting. They were getting Pilot ready for a race. The mare, Lou M, I am quoting my father, Mr. Davis hitched her to a buggy, drove to Tappahannock, entered her in a race, won the race with her, hitched her back to the buggy and drove back to Bisco all in the same day.

Here is a good Tappahannock and King & Queen story. Mr. Tom Minor from Newtown in King & Queen, when he was a young man, drove down to the Fair, entered Daisy in the race that she qualified for and won all three heats. Quote Mr. Minor coming down the home stretch almost to the wire looking down at Daisy picking them up and putting them down, he said to himself, “I have my family to raise, I love this too much.” He sold Daisy for a fancy price that afternoon.

Here is a good Tappahannock incident and I know this owner real well. He was Mr. Cleveland Payne who lived near Wilton in Middlesex County. Mr. Payne owned and trained a horse named TONY BOY. He entered him in the trotting race here at Fair, it was a field of good horses. The first heat he was trailing and during the second half when he pulled him out he trotted right around the field. The time was 2:10 which was fast for those times. The next two heats he had the pole position to start and won both heats. After the race he sold TONY BOY, for I think it was $2500.00. It was a group of three that bought him, they turned him over to their trainer and he was a complete failure. He was put for sale, Mr. Payne bought him back, straightened him out and sold him again for a good price. When he sold him the first time he did not sell the key or secret that went with Tony Boy. The key was when racing or training any horse when they are hot you cover them with a 100% wool cooler. In Tony Boy’s case you had to use one cooler and the second piece about 3 feet x 3 feet, this piece was placed over the kidneys. This area was rubbed with Absorbine, by so doing he would not have any soreness.

Now here is a story that will sound far fetched in the beginning but will make sense in the end. I am sure some of you remember the movie David Harum, Will Rogers played the leading role. It was a trotting horse race story that showed in the movies about 1935. You will recall Will was driving a horse that he had to sing to to make him trot. In the first heat Will forgot the song and lost the heat. Will returned to the paddock all upset, Stephen Fitchett remembered the song and told Will it was Fra-Ra-Tra-Ra Bumps T Ray. Will won the next two heats going away from the field. Well believe it or not the horse Will drove was named LESTER and his last race was over the Jacks Fork Track. Mr. Shank who owned him, raced horses all the way across the U.S. to Tappahannock. He sold him to Capt. Andrew Packett of Warsaw and Capt. Andrew sold him up in Delaware. He was a magnificent horse.

Here in Essex there have been so many good horsemen and horses. Mr. Burnley Newbill brought out a good pacing black mare back in the mid twenties, I saw him win with her. I guess the most outstanding standard field man in the county was Mr. Booth Eubank, the time would be approximately from the turn of the century to up in the twenties. I remember my father said he drove in a race with Booth about 1899, he was 16, dad 19. In my opinion he had to be a good horseman to accomplish what he did. He had to know blood lines, how to train and drive a horse in a race. He had a son who was a good horseman, Richard Booth. I saw him drive POMPIZINE here at Jacks Fork, he was a big high strung horse. Richard Booth handled him well.

Here is my prize story on Booth Eubank. I wish I could tell you what year it happened but I can't, most likely it was in the teens or twenties. At this time Mr. Eubank brought out a young pacing stallion named S.K. BEDWORTH (Bedworth was blood line). On a Monday he drove S.K.B. from Dunsville to Foster, Va. in Mathews County. He spent the night with Mr. Melvin Blake who in later years was one of my good friends. Mr. Blake had raced horses and at this time was Secretary of the Mathews fair. The following morning Mr. Blake went with Mr. Eubank and S.K. Bedworth to the Blacksmith Shop, S.K. Bedworth was fitted with a new pair of shoes and off to the fair they went.

Mr. Eubank started S.K. Bedworth in three races that week and won all three. Well, about Saturday afternoon three gentlemen decided to buy S.K. Bedworth. Mr. Eubank finally agreed to sell for the almost unheard of price of $2500.00 That night Mr. Blake was in his secretary's office at the fair. The midway was in full swing, at this point I quote the exact words of Mr. Blake, "a gentleman walks in my office and said I just saw Booth Eubank down on the midway and he was crying because he sold S.K. Bedworth." Mr. Blake replied, "no you are wrong Booth is crying because he does not have another one to sell."

In closing I must say the people of Tappahannock and Essex County were good to me when I was active in the Sport of Harness Racing.

MINUTES OF THE SOCIETY
Latane Trice Addresses Society

THE ESSEX COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY met in the Courthouse January 18, 1988 at 3:00 p.m. with the President, Mr. Hill B. Wellford presiding. Mr. Wellford asked for the secretary's report. Mrs. Wright said that since the minutes were published in the bulletin which all members have just received that she would not read them. Mr. Ludwell, the Treasurer, reported total funds on deposit amounted to $1697.97. Dues for 1988 are due at this meeting.

Mr. Wellford then called on the Nominating Committee for their report. Mr. Charles Warner, Chairman, gave the report for the committee: Mr. Gordon Lewis, Mrs. Jeannette Ellis, Mrs. Daisy T. Gouldin. The following slate of officers were nominated and elected: Mr. Carroll Garnett, President, Mr. Wilson Ware, Vice-President, Mr. Ludwell Smither, Treasurer, and Mrs. Anne T. Wright, Secretary.

Mr. Wellford then thanked the hostesses for today's social hour, Mrs. Agnes Ware and Mrs. Mittie Wellford, Chairmen, and any others who helped them.
The President then turned the meeting over to our incoming president, Mr. Carroll Garnett to introduce our speaker. Mr. Garnett first welcomed visitors from the King and Queen Historical Society who had been especially invited for this meeting. Mr. & Mrs. Earl Jones, Mrs. Jones is vice president of their society, our speaker’s wife, Mrs. Trice, Mrs. Rhoda McCullough, Mr. Turpin Acree, Mr. Richard Rennolds and friend Bob Crowther, son of Captain Bob who owned lots of Harness Racing Horses.

Mr. Garnett then introduced Mr. Latane Trice, who gave us a very interesting talk about Horse Racing in Essex and surrounding counties from the turn of the century until the last races taking place in Tappahannock in the late 40’s. Mr. Trice generously donated all this material to the Essex Society to place in their files in the Clerk’s Office. This talk will also be published in our next bulletin so many of our members were not able to attend as well as many living in many other states find our bulletins so very interesting.

After thanking Mr. Trice for his splendid address and for his generosity in turning over his notes and minutes of the Rappahannock Valley Racing Association, the meeting adjourned to the Woman’s Club House for delicious refreshments and a delightful social hour.

Anne T. Wright, Secretary

Mrs. Louise Eubank Gray Addresses Society

THE ESSEX COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY met at the Court House at 3:00 p.m. April 17, 1988 with our president, Mr. Carroll Garnett, presiding. The president welcomed the members, the guests, and new members.

Mr. Garnett stated that our by-laws would have to be amended so that officers could be elected for more than one year and he named a committee. He also stated that a member from the society should be elected to serve with the elected officials as a member of the Executive Committee according to the by-laws. Mrs. Mary Evans was so nominated and elected to the Executive Committee.

Mr. Garnett also named Mrs. Lib Smither, Mrs. Mary Ball Mountsinger, and Mrs. Elizabeth Warner Trible to be the new Membership Committee. We desperately need new younger members to interested to join our society.

The president then asked the secretary, Mrs. Wright, to read the minutes of our January meeting which were read and approved. Mr. Ludwell Smither, treasurer gave his report listing dues and disbursements since January meeting, leaving a total balance in checking and savings of $1522.26. His report was approved and filed.

Mr. Garnett announced that Essex County will have April 24, 1988 as a special clean up day and hopes everyone will clean up their own property.

Mr. Garnett then introduced our new vice president in charge of programs, Mr. Wilson Ware. Mr. Ware then introduced our speaker, Mrs. Louise Eubank Gray, whose topic will be, Rappahannock District High School, Center Cross. Mrs. Gray is a former English teacher. Mrs. Gray attended Rappahannock when it was first opened. She now is retired and lives in Saluda, Va. Mrs. Gray opened her remarks by saying she hoped to take us down memory lane as she had been in trying to prepare her talk. Mrs. Gray stated that there were 35 public schools in Essex County, 18 of which were for colored, and nearly all were one room, one teacher schools, in 1919 and 1920. We did not have an accredited high school until 1920 and 1921 when Lloyds and Rappahannock District High School were accredited. Tappahannock High School was not accredited until 1922. Many of the young people had to go out of county to finish their high school education, several went to Stevenville and other nearby places. Irene Stiff and Helen Ruffin were the first teachers at Rappahannock. Miss Ruffin who later became Mrs. Calvin WARFIELD returned to Essex a few years ago and both she and Dr. WARFIELD were ardent members of our Society. Carl, a life member, served as president and vice president for several years. They moved to Williamsburg a few years ago and unfortunately Dr. WARFIELD died last year, but Mrs. Helen Ruffin WARFIELD still lives in Williamsburg and continues her interest in our Society.

Mrs. Gray mentioned that the county provided school buses for the first time to transport pupils to school. Ellen COPE EVANS Mitchell drove a bus from Laneview area, Justin Waring and John DeShazo drove school buses and someone volunteered that they were black in color. The Ino bus driver was Sel Young and his bus was a one horse spring wagon with hooks for a canvas cover and with seals along the sides of the wagon. Mrs. Gray rode this bus for a couple of weeks saying they arrived late every day, and the pupils had to get out and walk when they passed over a sand bar and when they had to go up Newbill’s Hill. Young Louise’s parents decided after this experience it was better for her to board with Mr. Rennolds’ family and go to school there. Mr. Rennolds was the County Superintendent. The school offered 4 years of English, 4 years of Math, 4 of History and 4 of Latin. General Science was the only elective in those days. In 1921, 6 boys and 2 girls graduated, in 1923, 8 girls, in 1925 11 students and 12 graduated in 1926-27, several are here today.

We were thrilled to have so many visitors and members present who had attended Rappahannock District High School. Fred Garrett, Emory Carlton, Franklin Hundley, Coty Neale Dowell, Mary Evelyn Acree, Virginia Evans Eubank, and others remembered interesting stories about their school and their friends.

We are indebted to Mrs. Gray for a delightful, interesting talk, which all members enjoyed. Mr. Garnett after thanking Mrs. Gray, announced that she would not accept any remuneration for expenses, so we would automatically give her an honorary membership in our Society. Mrs. Ware thanked the committee of Ladies, Mrs. Agnes Ware, Chairman, Mrs. Lib Smithers, Mrs. Polly Taliaferro and Mrs. Jeannette Ellis for the delicious refreshments we will all enjoy when we adjourn to the Woman’s Club next door for our social hour.

Anne T. Wright, Secretary

Officers of the Society

President..................Carroll M. Garnett
Vice President...............Wilson C. Ware
Secretary..................Anne S. Wright
Treasurer...............Ludwell F. Smither

PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE

Charles W. H. Warner, Chairman
Mrs. William A. Wright, Mrs. J. M. Evans

Meetings are held quarterly in the Essex Court House, or in an historic home or church of the County. Dues are $3.00 per year. For copies of publications send $2.00 to Mrs. J. M. Evans, Box 8, Tappahannock, Virginia 22560.