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The Park and the Horses

By
Ali Cho

Senior Thesis
Department of History

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To my parents,
who supported me through Barnard and made me into a person capable of writing a senior thesis

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The horse, of all our domestic animals, has always held the most conspicuous place. It is easy to say that he is more showy, but less useful than the cow or sheep and that he has carried many men into trouble as well as out of it, but the fact remains that he has been celebrated in romance and poetry and song, from the days when he was admired by Solomon and when Job wrote his splendid panegyric on the war-horse, down to the present time. Is he justly entitled to the place of honor he has thus held, and still holds, in the world? And is he worthy of the attention of the best intellects and the lifetimes of study that, from time to time, has been bestowed upon his breeding, care, and management? Be assured that he is.¹

¹ David Buffum, *The Horse: His breeding, care, and use* (New York: Outing Publishing Company, 1911), 11.

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Introduction

The cart-horse requires courage, but not the sort of courage which blood bestows; he requires pluck to move and draw a heavy load, and to pull again and again if required until he stirs the inert mass; but the courage of the blood-horse would in him be quite out of place. The beauty of the cart-horse depends not only on the quality and symmetry, but on a sort of elephantine ponderosity that bespeaks power in every muscle and every limb.²

Unlike the racehorse who was prized for his speed or the carriage horse for his sleek elegance, the cart-horse was regarded as a beast of labor. While encountering a horse today requires committed effort, the horse was a ubiquitous force in the nineteenth to early-twentieth Gilded Age cityscape. A bird eye's view of the nation would show horses everywhere, transporting goods in and out of the city, hauling streetcars and private carriages, alongside canals, delivering packages from Macy's, mowing lawns, and powering street sweepers and garbage wagons.³ Without a doubt, horses provided a diversity of services and uses pivotal to the upkeep of city life. In 1900, at least 130,000 horses jammed the streets of Manhattan, inspiring the *New York Times* to assert, "New York must move on wheels...the whole population must drive...this is obviously a *Stable* city."⁴ It would not be an overstatement then to refer to the urban horse as a historical agent who powered and made possible the industrial transformation of the nineteenth century cities. Historian Anne Norton Greene further expounded, "it is inappropriate to impose a model of human agency upon another species, about whose cognition

² Samuel Sidney, *The Book of the Horse* (London: Cassell, Peter, Galphin & Co., 1883), 156.

³ Anne Norton Greene, *Horses at Work : Harnessing Power in Industrial America* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2008), 5, 170; New York, N.Y., Department of Public Parks, "Architect Report, 1898," 12; Clay McShane and Joel A. Tarr, *The Horse in the City: Living Machines in the nineteenth century* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 111.

⁴ *New York Times*, 20 Mar 1879.

and consciousness we inevitably understand very little,” but horses do exert a historical agency of their own.⁵

The Gilded Apple: the social context of nineteenth century New York City

By the late 1880s, New York City, with its merchants turned businessmen, industrialists, bankers, and professionals, had become the world of the bourgeois, forgoing the notion of an universalist society without social differences and becoming obsessed with constructing class consciousness. As President Cleveland framed it, “the gulf between employers and the employed is constantly widening, and classes are rapidly forming.” Indeed, the “perception of social distances” permeated society to its core and created rigid social circles that were keenly felt and enforced by upper class New Yorkers. For example, in 1883, *The Season – An Annual Record of Society* issued a thorough list of elite individuals who had attended the city’s top social events, demonstrating the fact that “class formation had become a conscious project.” Distinguished by attire, place of residence, gestures, and language, the rising, NY bourgeois elite sought to further differentiate themselves by emulating European aristocrats by partaking in a “cultural repertoire” that was appropriate to their status: investing their money and attention to fashion, recreational hunting, country estates, and a fascination for horses.⁶

As early as the 1850s, newspaper reports, letters to the editor, and individual testimonies credited the brilliant mind behind Central Park’s conception to an anonymous gentleman who, after a trip to Europe, had argued for the establishing of a large park on this Island as well. Historians Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar asserted that this anonymous gentleman was the prominent merchant, Robert Minturn. The first official park proposal arrived on May 5,

⁵ Greene, *Horses at Work*, 8-9.

⁶ Sven Beckert, *The Monied Metropolis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 236, 255, 265, 257-258.

1851 by Mayor Ambrose Kingsland who remarked that “the establishment of such a park would prove a lasting monument to the wisdom, sagacity, and forethought of its founders.”⁷

Abandoning the purchase of Jones Wood for an alternative site in the middle of Manhattan, the residents of Seneca Village and the pig keepers, gardeners, and squatters of the surrounding areas soon lost their homes and workplaces in the fall of 1855. By October 13, 1857, the Board of Commissioners of Central Park made the announcement for the nation’s first major landscape design competition. Meanwhile, construction had already begun in the summer of 1856. On April 28, 1858, plan #33 titled the “Greensward” plan by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux won first place.⁸

By the park’s opening in the mid-1800s, Central Park with its 778 sprawling acres, had indeed become the showing grounds for New York City’s elite despite Olmsted referring to it as a public park of democracy and morality.⁹ Between 1859 to 1869 about half the visitors arrived by carriage when less than 5 percent of New Yorkers even owned these vehicles. And so, “late-afternoon carriage parades became a ritual in which New York’s wealthy residents could display their finest trappings.” In addition, Olmsted’s strict ordinances and regulations further reinforced the newly built park’s already selective group of patrons and controlled the movement of its laborers.¹⁰ But in this entire narrative of arguably one of the world’s most famed parks in the “Capital of the World,” the horse is left out in the dust. Construction horses were indispensable to transforming the once wasteland into the pastoral beauty and landscape artistry of the Greensward Plan. The contributions and labor of the four-legged laborers, the continual debate between the good and bad horse on the equine spectrum of hierarchy and visibility, and how

⁷ *Post*, May 7, 1851

⁸ Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar, *The Park and the People* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 37, 77, 95, 161, 211.

⁹ Catherine McNeur, *Taming Manhattan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 200.

¹⁰ John S. Berman, *Central Park* (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 2003), 41.

these attitudes played out in the promenade and transverse roads of Central Park; this rich tale of mid-nineteenth to early-twentieth century historical discourse has been overlooked and marginalized by contemporary historians and scholars alike. In this thesis, I will examine the possibility of framing these equine laborers as historical agents who shaped the history of Central Park and were also affected by and resisted the social undercurrents of the park's spatial segregation and class discrimination.

Any piece of work on Central Park would be inadequate without Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar's seminal book, *The Park and the People*. This text provided extensive background and thorough history of the park's aesthetic vision, the years of construction and the park's operation, and countless anecdotes and images that enriched and guided this project. However, much attention was given to the human agents of the narrative; whereas working class horses were excluded and ignored in this historical discourse. The idea for this thesis originated from my own passion and fascination for the equine species and was greatly inspired by historian Hilary Sweeney's article, "Pasture to Pavement" and her discussion on equine hierarchy, Catherine McNeur's *Taming Manhattan* for her revealing study on the ties between social and environmental control, Thomas A. Andrews' notion of the workscape and his discussion on the symbiotic relationship between mine workers and mice in *Killing for Coal*, and Clay McShane and Joel A. Tarr's *The Horse in the City* for the extensive research on the ubiquitous and crucial function of the urban horse. Finally, I was compelled to do my own original research for this thesis and dedicated an unhealthy number of hours reading and typing "horse(s)" into Control-Find for a legion of historical reports from Central Park.

Chapter one frames the ideological theories and historical events that informed and influenced horse literature from the 1850s to the 1920s, the period of study for this project.

Chapter two discusses the construction of Central Park and sheds light on the pivotal contributions and labor made by the workhorses, a history that has been largely marginalized and minimized in historical research on the park. Chapter three examines the operation of the park from its opening in the 1850s to the 1900s and how the public space functioned as both a pastoral landscape and an invisible workscape. In addition, the section explores how the infrastructure of the park's road system and placement of drinking fountains propagated notions of spatial segregation and class difference, hierarchy and privilege, and Jim Crow discrimination. The fourth and final chapter focuses on the early-twentieth century and the workhorse's demise and displacement by automobiles and mechanization in the city landscape.

Chapter 1: The 70 Years of the Horse (1850s-1920s):
From breeding the beautiful to breeding the machine

Humans and horses have always lived together and engaged in symbiotic contact, inspiring volumes of horsemanship literature and diverse opinions regarding the four-footed species. Examining primary texts from the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth century, the debate over defining the “good horse” and the “bad horse” was a constant theme, but the authors’ language and tone reflected a change over time in response to the reigning ideologies of the historical context. From the 1850s to the early 1900s, the equine discourse was heavily influenced by Social Darwinist thought. As horse breeding gained prominence in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century, individuals became engrossed with eugenic terminology and making parallels between the animal and human worlds. In the next decade, the American ethos of productivity and the mass popularity of automobiles penetrated the horse world, returning the discussion back to the utilitarian-horse framework and which eventually hastened the demise of the urban horse.

Social Darwinism and Anthropomorphism

Throughout the nineteenth century, horses were categorized and judged into different groups based on their breed and type of use. It was difficult to assert one uniform standard of perfection since as agricultural writer, Samuel Sidney argued in the 1860s, “each class of horse – the racer, the hunter, the hackney, the cob, the draught horse, etc. – has some particular points in his best conformation which would be absolutely faulty in another class... The respective conformations of the bull-dog and the greyhound will perhaps illustrate our meaning.” In other

words, the definition of the good horse was dependent on his purpose.¹¹ W.J. Gordon's 1871 book, *The Horse World of London*, attested to this fact when he said, "the horse is looked on as a machine, for sentiment pays no dividend." The value or excellence of a horse depended on his "indisputab[e] quickness of working," said one writer in 1859. Historians Clay McShane and Joel Tarr have argued that nineteenth-century business owners regarded horses as merely machines and valued them solely for their economic value.¹² However, the writings published between 1859 to 1911 have revealed a more elaborate and complicated narrative of man's perception of the horse.

Continually, mid-nineteenth to early twentieth century individuals disputed with one another and contended for their own respective lists on the proper groupings of the horse. Some argued for five classes-- the saddle, trotting, coach, draft, and pony -- while others argued for two but for different reasons: the work horse versus the pleasure horse, and light work type versus the heavy draft type.¹³ Utility was not the sole motivating agent in creating these categories though. In 1866, Colonel J.C. Battersby who served as Assistant Inspector General in Sheridan's Calvary Corps during the Civil War, made the heated comparison between the "lunk-head...fat, big-bellied, short-legged, bob-tailed cob" and the "fine carriage horses," elevating the elegance of the carriage horse above the workhorse. David Buffum also made his own assertion in 1911 that "beauty always sells...the handsomest and best bring the good prices...Personally, the handsomest horses I ever raised were from strictly thoroughbred mares, bred to a trotting-bred

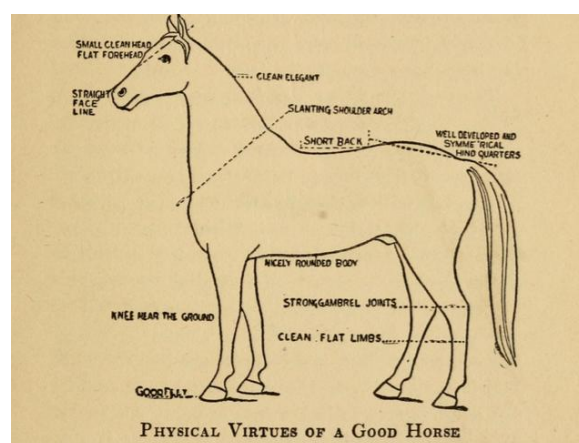
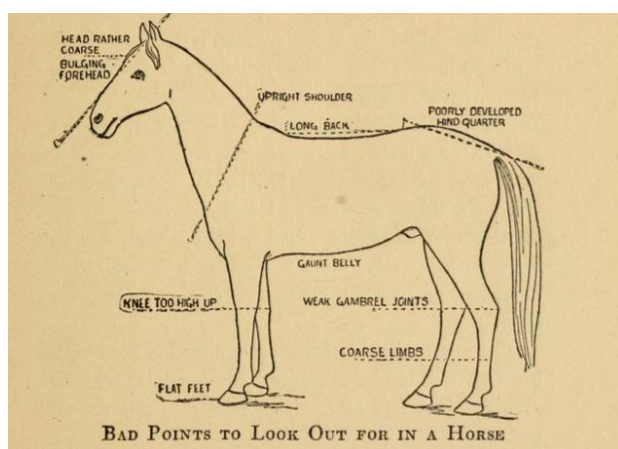
¹¹ Samuel Sidney, *The Book of the horse* (London: Cassell, Peter, Galphin & Co., 1883), 576-577.

¹² W.J. Gordon, *The Horse World of London* (1871), 16.; Herbert, 18; Clay McShane and Joel Tarr, "The Decline of the Urban Horse in American Cities," *The Journal of Transport History*, Sep 2003, 177.

¹³ Fred Smith Cooley, *A Sketch of the development of the Modern Horse* (Old Town, Maine, Bickmore Gall Cure Company, 1906), 12.

stallion.”¹⁴ Thus, the physical aesthetics of the horse played an important role in determining the “good” horse.

Imagine oneself as a mid-nineteenth early twentieth century prospective horse buyer. He would arrive at the barn and walk the horse into a space with good lighting. He would examine the specimen through a myriad of lens: form, height, weight, type, temperament, color, and pedigree. The following 1911 diagrams illustrate the “bad points” and “physical virtues” of the equine model; visual evidence that the animal’s physicality was crucial in determining the good horse.



Figures 1 and 2. Two diagrams depicting the “Bad Points to look out for in a horse” and “physical virtues of a good horse” from David Buffum’s 1911 book, *The Horse*.¹⁵

And yet, these physical characteristics were representative, not just of type and capacity, but of the horse’s character. In 1906, Fred S. Cooley claimed that a big head signified laziness, dull eyes expressed restricted mobility and vivacity, firm lips portrayed strength and determination, an eye showing a lot of white meant great courage, and a wide forehead indicated intelligence while a narrow one insinuated a dull and jaded personality. In 1883, the color of the horse was

¹⁴ J.C. Battersby, *The Bridle Bits* (New York: Orange Judd Co., 1886, 127-128; Buffum 18, 41, 133

¹⁵ Buffum, *The Horse*, 13.

also perceived as a sign of superiority by Samuel Sidney, “There are colors that diminish the value of an otherwise excellent horse in a very annoying manner for the breeder...those who fancy a pair of good greys, whether mottled or iron-grey, have to pay an extra price for them.” The horse’s physical traits were thus anthropomorphized and argued as the direct manifestation of a plentitude or lack of desired noble and human qualities, expressing the popular nineteenth century belief that appearance influenced mental and moral character. Winwood Reade, an early thinker in the application of Darwinism to social subjects, proposed in 1872 that in the body, “there, in unmistakable characters, are inscribed the annals of his early life.” Just when individuals were beginning to speculate the notions of species, breed, and racial identity and assert white superiority on the grounds of Social Darwinism, one horse breeder replied, “so great is the distinction [between cart horses and Thoroughbreds] they stand at the two extremes of the equine tribe.” Even though the cart horse and the Thoroughbred existed as members of the same species, this breeder could not accept grouping such two “extremes” in the same category, similar to the Social Darwinist ideology that argued humans stemmed from different species.¹⁶

Sidney Samuel went so far as to group lazy or “slug” horses with a specific human demographic: “dowagers, and their fat, sleepy, autocratic coachmen; single ladies, who make pets of their ponies, and pass most of their drives at the walk; and the middle-aged stout men who ride, not for pleasure, but on medical advice...no horse [could] be placed on the list of *useful* that has not a good constitution.”¹⁷ And this disposition, similar to human beings, Henry William Herbert, a mid-nineteenth century author, claimed was inherited genetically from the horse’s dam, rendering the subject’s pedigree a point of great interest. Consequently, the

¹⁶ Cooley, *A Sketch of the development of the modern horse*, 74; Sidney, *The Book of the horse*, 195; Mike Hawkins, *Social Darwinism in European and American thought, 1860-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 74; Greene, *Horses at Work*, 94.

¹⁷ Sidney, *The Book of the horse*, 204-205.

“advantage of blood” was an integral factor in determining the good horse; the “blood-horse possessed more strength in his bones and sinews” and about four times the “resistance and endurance of the cold-blooded cart-horse.” According to Herbert, superior blood added quicker mobility, more courage, and better perseverance to overcome hardship and suffering.¹⁸

The Good horse: a calculated eugenic construction

The good horse did not exist as the natural or providential byproduct of nature. Rather, the good horse was a carefully designed creation through the means of selective breeding and horse education. At the turn of the twentieth century, American horse breeding radically adapted and transformed the bodies of horses to accommodate the necessities of industrialization, prompting the genesis of specialized horses differing in size, appearance, purpose, and breed. The practice was similar to an industrial production, in which “manufacturers (the breeders) got their workers and machines (the horses) to reproduce themselves,” reinforcing the equine utilitarian model discussed previously. Rejecting Robert Blakewell’s notion that improvement was ongoing, American breeders desired to halt when the breed was deemed “pure.” As a result, the horse’s breed, often referred to as “race” or “species,” was seen as his unchanging, innate, and distinct biological group or identity. Thus, while horses’ bodies were seen as malleable, their identities were believed to be fixed and immutable; strikingly similar to the argument of eugenics.¹⁹

In 1907, the state of Indiana passed its first sterilization law and twenty-nine other states followed thereafter by 1933. Darwin had also prefigured the “eugenic conscience” when he wrote,

¹⁸ Henry William Herbert, *Hints to horsekeepers* (New York : A.O Moore & Co., 1859), 20.

¹⁹ Greene, *Horses at Work*, 83, 117, 84, 94, 85, 89.

Thus the weak members of civilized society propagate their kind. No one who has attended to the breeding of domestic animals will doubt that this must be highly injurious to the race of man. It is surprising how soon a want of care, or care wrongly directed, leads to the degeneration of a domestic race; but excepting in the case of man himself, hardly any one is so ignorant as to allow his worst animals to breed.²⁰

Victoria Woodhull, one of the earliest supporters of eugenics, demanded in the early 1890s that “nations refrain from breeding from the unfit and instead encourage the breeding of the fit...the first principle of the breeder’s art.”²¹ In 1907, a G.W. Cooke from Wakefield, Massachusetts asserted, “Wonderful results are produced with horses by the strict application of the law of selection. Can the same methods be applied by men in producing a higher human breed?”²² Thus, eugenic ideology sought to compare and make parallels between animal breeding and human procreation.

The eugenic conscience also propagated an irrational fear for cross-breeding, relegating the inferior donkey or the “poor man’s horse” to the bottom of the equine hierarchy and regarding the spawn of the donkey and horse, the mule, with abhorrence and unease.²³ When owners were sterilizing donkeys with the extreme and communally ingrained fear of creating unwanted hybrids, over 16,000 people in America had also been officially sterilized, most involuntarily, in the early-twentieth century. From 1907 to 1974, hundreds of thousands of under-reported victims were also subjected to this sterilization campaign.²⁴ By the same token, Dr. James McGillivray (head of the Edinburgh Veterinary School) even suggested in the late 1890s that mares faced the danger of contamination and losing their breed identity if they

²⁰ Hawkins, *Social Darwinism in European and American thought*, 216; Charles Darwin, *The Descent of man: And selection in relation to sex* (Philadelphia: D. Appleton and Co., 1875), 205-206.

²¹ Hawkins, *Social Darwinism*, 243

²² Sweeny, “Pasture to Pavement,” 142; Greene, *Horses at Work*, 94; D. Collin Wells, “Social Darwinism,” *American Journal of Sociology*, March 1907, 714.

²³ Henry William Herbert, 157, 13; J.C. Battersby, *The Bridle Bits* (New York : Orange Judd Co., 1886), 127-128; Buffum, *The Horse*, 18, 41, 133; Sidney, *The Book of the horse*, 168, 183; Merritt Wesley Harper, *Management and Breeding of horses* (New York: Orange Judd Co., 1913), 77.

²⁴ Hawkins, *Social Darwinism*, 242.

became impregnated by a zebra or a donkey jack: “When a pure animal of any breed has been pregnant to an animal of a different breed, such pregnant animal is a cross ever after, the purity of her blood being lost in consequence of her connection with the foreign animal.”²⁵ With the breeder’s assertion that “like begets like,” horse experts strongly argued that, “it is only when the two parents are somewhat alike in type and points that they assimilate nicely and the points of one are modified or strengthened... and along no other road can much *progress* be made.” An early twentieth century contemporary agreed that, “it obviously [did] not pay to breed poor mares with the certainty that their inferiority would be reproduced.” Another writer, when asked if he would breed a certain mare who was “an ill-looking brute-weedy, long-backed, upright-shouldered, cow-hocked, and generally as lacking in good points,” said that he doubted “if anything on earth could have set right that combination of horrors and the resulting colt was a disgrace to his sire.” Thus, American horse breeding in the twentieth century was both influenced by and informed Social Darwinist and Eugenic thinkers. Horsemen were very aware of this fact, as one early twentieth century writer contended that “it was stated by Darwin many years ago that the minds of animals do not differ from those of men.”²⁶

Besides careful breeding, the construction of a good horse was still in need of more human design. Good horsemanship was described as “an art, to be studied and learned like any other art.” It was about educating the horse to fit its purpose and to accord with the demands of his owner. Equine training was framed as a battle against the wills: “The well-broken horse is

²⁵ Greene, *Horses at Work*, 101.

²⁶ Ibid; Cooley, *A Sketch of the development of the modern horse*, 76; Buffum, *The Horse*, 44; Cooley, *A sketch of the development of the modern horse*, 76; Buffum, *The Horse*, 45.

kind because, whenever he attempted to do as he pleased, he found his master's will superior to his own."²⁷

This idea that the good horse was not found in nature but rather a human construction might be best illustrated by a nineteenth century *New York Times* article, "How to Make Good Horses: some of the secrets of the training school,"

A carriage horse is of no account in New-York unless he is slick and smooth as a piece of seal-skin, arches his neck, keeps his 'chin' well drawn in, steps high, and has the proper curve to his tail. All horses are not born with these accomplishments. On the contrary, a very large majority of horses are born with necks that look as if they might have mortised into their bodies, with tails hanging straight down like cows' tails, and with their noses out in the air... So as shapely horses enough are not born, they have to be made.

The article then revealed the transformations of "miserable-looking gawky creatures, [resembling] a cross between a sheep and a camel"²⁸ that came out looking like refined carriage horses with style and improved value. The aim or "great scheme" was to make the carriage horses appear like a thoroughbred and the sense of wealth and glory that the prestigious breed represented. Keep note that the purpose was not to truly reconstruct the horse, but to make him appear as one. The carriage horses' bones were described as solid and heavy as opposed to the "spongy and weak bones of the plebian horse." Again, there was this desire to create equine difference and superiority. This obsession with thoroughbreds was riddled with class imagery and again echoed the mid-1800s to 1950s bourgeois New Yorker's desire to differentiate himself from his inferiors. Furthermore, the image of the thoroughbred breed was idolized and portrayed almost as god-like:

succession of lines of beauty. His neck is not set into his body, as if a carpenter had put it there, but joins it gently and gracefully with a long sweep... He lifts his feet high when he walks. His tails falls

²⁷ Ibid, 50-51; Sidney, *The Book of the Horse*, 555.

²⁸ *New York Times*, 31 July 1881, "How to make Good horses: Some of the secrets of the training School."

with a graceful arch, and hangs like a festoon at the back...His ankles are hardly bigger than your wrist.

It was almost as if these horses were being trained to attend a beauty pageant. In the case of New York City, the promenades of Central Park would serve as their runways and showing ground. The article continued to anthropomorphize the four-footed equines when one horse dealer described the metamorphosis of these common, lowly horses as analogous to “a boarder in a Water-street boarding house going to a first class hotel to live,” of turning the awkward “country boobies into City swells.”

This transformation was neither easy nor painless. For example, to get the horse to arch his neck, a mouthing iron (a solid iron bar with iron tassels) was inserted on the horse’s tongue. Another distortion that differentiated the thoroughbred from the plebian was getting the horse to raise his tail since naturally hanging it against his legs relegated him to the status of a cow or a mule. During this equine makeover, the focus was on how to get rid of the commonplace farm horse characteristics, which were clearly lower on the hierarchal equine ladder.²⁹

The Utilitarian Model reigns supreme in the twentieth century

As discussed at the beginning of the chapter, the likening of horses to machines was a prevalent theme before the twentieth century, but the discourse was certainly not restricted to it. However, starting from the 1910s, individuals became infatuated with and entrenched in the utilitarian model of the horse. In 1913, Merritt Wesley Harper, professor of Animal Husbandry at Cornell University, defined the productive energy of the horse to that of ten men and wholeheartedly advocated for the purchase of horse workers since it would cost “one-half as much to

²⁹ *New York Times*, 31 July 1881, “How to make Good horses: Some of the secrets of the training School.”

keep him [the horse] as one man.” Horses were still classified into hierarchal groups, namely equine “market classes.” Harper, explained that the “horses [were] divided into classes, sub-classes, and grades.”³⁰

	Poor to Fair.	Good to Choice.
Drafters	\$110 to \$160	\$165 to \$240
Loggers and feeders . .	75 to 145	150 to 190
Chunks	75 to 100	110 to 145
Expressers	110 to 150	150 to 170
Farm mares and chunks .	60 to 90	90 to 125
Light drivers	65 to 130	150 to 400
Actors and coachers . .	100 to 175	200 to 450

Figure 1. Looking at a Chicago horse market quotation from a 1906 book published by the Bickmore gall cure Company, we can see that the grades went from “poor to fair and good to choice.”³¹

The 1906 excerpt of a Chicago horse market revealed this strict price hierarchy with the lowest including the farm mares costing at most \$125 and the actors and coachers reaching prices up to \$450. Fred S. Cooley proposed that the immense price difference between the market horses possibly stemmed from the difficulty of grading these horses because their characteristics varied and their ability to adapt or conform was less uniform than other market products like grain or beef cattle.³²

Following the next decade, the language and tone surrounding the horse presented the equine species more as property, subject to management, and not as moral beings. In 1914, Carl W. Gay wrote in *Productive Horse Husbandry* that the best horses were the ones who were most

³⁰ Harper, *Management and breeding of horses*, 310.

³¹ Cooley, *A Sketch of the development of the modern horse*, 67.

³² *Ibid.*

productive while consuming the least amount of food.³³ When a business and account record book for farmers emerged in 1918, the author included templates of daily diary entries which listed several rows and two columns: one for the number of human labor hours and the other for horse hours.³⁴ Three years later in an economic study on the horse and tractor, the report applied the principles of scientific management to the farmstead and examined ways to reduce the cost of horse management, housing, and feed. The author categorized farm work “into three categories: strictly horse, or non-tractor work, doubtful tractor work, and tractor work.” The non-tractor work accounted for the majority of farm operations, such as mowing, planting corn, and household tasks.³⁵ The very fact that horse use was defined as non-tractor emphasized that these animals were seen as simply another form of farm equipment. At the same time, Taylorism and the ethos of American productivity were reimagining factory spaces and factory workers. In a farmers’ bulletin pamphlet in 1925 from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, similar to the nineteenth and early-twentieth century horse literature, Herbert Reese provided a thorough list of favorable physical attributes, but he refrained from making the anthropomorphic insinuations about character that were prevalent in the previous. A horse should be valued,” Reese argued, “by the amount of services it will perform rather than by its minor shortcomings.”³⁶ The good horse was defined then as the serviceable horse. While the utilitarian framing of horses served to initially reinforce their presence in the city, this attitude quickly hastened the exile of the equine laborer.

³³ Clay McShane and Joel Tarr, “The Decline of the urban horse in American cities,” *The Journal of Transport History* 2003: 178; Carl W. Gay, *Productive Horse Husbandry* (Philadelphia: Lippincott’s Farm Manuals, 1914), 3.

³⁴ W.J. Spillman, *Farm Diary* (New York: World Book Company, 1918), 6.

³⁵ Walter Frederick Handschin, *The horse and the tractor* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Agricultural Experiment Station, 1921), 21-22.

³⁶ Herbert H. Reese, *How to select a good horse* (Washington: U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1925), 22.

Chapter 2: The Construction of the Stable Park **(Central Park's Construction in the mid-19th Century)**



Fig 1. Issued in 1859, lithographer George Hayward produced a selection of images titled, “View in Central Park.”³⁷

Trees rise in the distance against smoke and dirt while men and equines toil below. The air is filled with unbroken noise: the shouting of men, shovels scraping the ground, the resisting whinnies of horses, and endless carts being pulled over untamed terrain. Beads of sweat roll down on both man and beast. They labor together side by side, neck to neck; subject to the broiling August heat and the demand for labor in New York City’s most ambitious landscaping endeavor. The 1859 lithograph by George Hayward provides a rare visual representation of construction horses working alongside their fellow laborers in the building of the Park’s Mall. However, following the opening of this public space, both laborers were herded out and exiled from the Park grounds that they had helped build to the sunken roads of the transverse, forgotten and hidden away from the beautiful and pastoral.

³⁷ Art and Picture Collection, The New York Public Library. "View In Central Park, New York, Ca. 1859." New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed Feb 20, 2016. <http://digitalcollections.nysl.org/items/510d47e1-0fb6-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>.

Despite the plethora of lithographs, maps, and other available forms of visual representation of Central Park, to find images of the park's construction is a difficult and barren endeavor; and even more so to find vestiges of the horse. And yet, the transformation of the 778 acres of rocky swampland into America's most iconic landscaped park indeed required a massive effort forged by human sweat, 40,000 cubic yards of manure and compost, 166 tons of gunpowder, and the indispensable power of the horse. Frederick Law Olmsted himself estimated having hired "nearly ten millions of ordinary city one-horse cart-loads, which, in single file, would make a procession thirty thousand...miles in length."³⁸ George Hayward's 1859 lithograph (*Fig. 1*) was clearly an affirmation of this observation. For the purpose of this research project, these laboring specimens have been identified as "construction horses," one of the many categories that constituted the urban horse population in New York City.

In 1856, Central Park was overturned and transformed into a construction site. At the peak of the park's construction from 1859 to 1860, the public park employed one of the city's largest workforces, hiring about four thousand workers each year. On a cold December morning in 1858, three hundred New Yorkers brought their skates and prepared to glide over the partially completed Central Park lake. These skaters were most likely the first to enjoy the public park. Over the course of the year, park-goers rushed to visit the newly constructed sites of the park such as the Ramble and the carriage drives. In 1860, 2.5 million individuals toured the public space. Throughout the next decade, "attendance more than tripled, growing fifteen times faster than the city's population."³⁹

³⁸ Rosenzweig and Blackmar. *The Park and the People*, 150.; New York, N.Y., Department of Public Parks, "Statistical Report of the Landscape Architect, 31st December, 1873," in *Third Annual Report*, Appendix 1, p. 46

³⁹ Rosenzweig and Blackmar, *The Park and the People*, 37, 77, 95, 161, 211.

For this chapter, I will frame Central Park within Thomas Andrews' notion of a "workscape...a constellation of unruly and ever-unfolding relationships – not simply land, but also air and water, bodies and organisms"⁴⁰ and how a landscape of work was reimagined as a canvas of pastoral beauty through the active mechanism of ordinances, patrolling park-keepers, and underground laborers. This section will analyze Central park as a workscape, using research from the New York Department of Public Park's annual and architect reports from 1858 to 1911, Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar's definitive book on the history of Central Park, and various scholars' work on the impact and function of mid-nineteenth Century's urban workhorses. However, despite the fact that horses were indispensable laborers in the construction of Central Park, scholarly literature and images alike have both discounted and thought little of these horses that created the nation's most acclaimed park. In a correspondence between Calvert Vaux and Clarence Cook, Vaux wrote that he had "concealed the processes." Indeed, the pictorial convention of the mid-19th century leaned towards depicting the finished works (and not images of construction) since the purpose of such commissions was to promote city refinement and its achievements. But Vaux's quotation may also be understood as an adherence to the 18th century English pastoral tradition, which promoted a landscape in which the discordant (namely, labor or the evidences of such) were screened out to enhance the viewer's perception of the beautiful and orderly.⁴¹

In this picturesque rhetoric, the landscape was defined as the "scenery of nature."⁴² One of the influential thinkers behind English landscaping, Humphry Repton, stressed that the visual image "must display the natural beauties and hide the natural defects of every situation

⁴⁰ Thomas Andrews, *Killing for Coal* (Massachusetts: Harvard University of Press, 2010), 127.

⁴¹ Rosenzweig and Blackmar, *The Park and the People*, 150, 107.

⁴² Walter John Hipple, *The Beautiful, the sublime and the picturesque in eighteenth Century British aesthetic theory* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press), 230.

...[manifest] a production of nature only.” Taking another glance at Hayward’s *View in Central Park* lithograph (*Fig. 1*), certainly this image was a production or testament of industry and industrial construction. Repton would have judged the construction horses and their human laborers as the “neighboring intruder: [such as] an ugly barn, a ploughed field, or any obtrusive object which disgraces the scenery of a park... therefore robs the mind of the pleasure derived...the unity and continuity of unmixed property.” According to the British pastoral tradition, the value of an image was measured by the quality of ideas it inspired. Most likely in Vaux’s mind, the construction process with its dull and rough array of commonplace horses and terribly middle-class toilers was not the image of the park that he wanted to promote. Rather, by arranging the “useful and necessary forms,” Vaux wanted his design to “suggest the pleasant ideas of harmonious proportion, fitness, and agreeable variety to the eye.” Both Vaux and Olmsted’s envisioned a park that would emphasize the “moral superiority of a natural aesthetic” to refresh the eyes from the bustling and competitive streets of the city and exercise “a distinctly harmonizing and refining influence upon the most unfortunate and most lawless class of the city, an influence favorable to courtesy, self-control, and temperance.”⁴³ Visual vestiges of the park-in-progress were thought to hinder the designers’ ambitions. It was argued that one could not elevate the lowly with images of the lowly since he was the “intruding neighbor.”

Who paved, carted, and pulled Central Park into existence?

The construction horse, otherwise known as the cart-horse or the draft horse, hailed from a myriad of breeds ranging from the Belgian, Clydesdale, English Shire, and Suffolk Punch. He stood at an impressive height of 5 to 6 feet, weighing approximately 1,600 pounds. Merritt

⁴³ Humphry Repton, *The Landscape gardening and landscape architecture of the late Humphry Repton* (London: Printed for the Editor, 1840), 84, 114.; James Hogg to FLO, June 21, 1858.; Rosenzweig and Blackmar, 131.

Wesley Harper in 1913 characterized this equine group as strong boned, “heavily muscled, as well as to large proportions, and not the result of excessive fatness.” Another horseman described the construction horse as having no other purpose or value than hauling heavy burdens.⁴⁴

Indeed, construction horses were thought of as workers through and through. And, they were in high demand. Especially with large-scale construction projects, builders and contractors had little capital and preferred to use horses for their cheap mechanical power. Furthermore, few strides for construction technology were made in the nineteenth century. Even until 1912, the Clyde Iron Works of Duluth, Minnesota, was still advertising a myriad of horse-powered equipment for “contractor’s use.” The Gilded industrial metropolis was indeed fixated on using the horse for every aspect of its capitalist expansion and boom, and to the equine’s full potential.

But even among this one equine group, individual horses were then “divided into classes according to their weight: Light draft, weighing 1,600 to 1,700; medium draft, 1,700 to 1,800 and heavy draft, 1,800 pounds and up.” Weight was not the only criteria in judging the better horse. As discussed in the previous chapter, bloodline, color, and the supposed character of the specimen were all taken into account. As much as society categorized difference among its human citizens, identities of race, gender, wealth, origin, hierarchy, morality, and status were projected unto its residing equine inhabitants as well.⁴⁵

Who were their riders?

After the terrain had been surveyed in 1856, Central Park was stripped and dismantled into a massive construction site by 1857 under the direction of Egbert Viele. Laboring for ten

⁴⁴ Sidney, *The Book of the Horse*, 156; Cooley, *A Sketch of the development of the modern horse*, 12; Harper, *Management and the breeding of horses*, 16.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 16; Greene, *Horses at Work*, 12.

hours under the scorching sun, 27 gangs of fifteen to twenty men and one hundred and thirty cartmen and drivers of fifteen double trucks (each requiring two horses) were hired by the Board of Commissioners. Soon after, derrick gangs used cranes to transfer blasted boulders of rock to two-horse trucks. Meanwhile, carts and wheelbarrows moved through the park delivering fieldstone and rubble. Irish laborers constituted the majority of park workers.⁴⁶ Historian Hilary J. Sweeney sheds light on the parallels between the plight of the urban workhorse and his Irish co-worker, citing their symbiotic effort in adapting to and contributing to the industrial landscape. According to the Census of 1850, the occupations for 149 Irish men living in the Sixth Ward were as follows: blacksmithing, carting, coachmen, and carmen. Historian Robert Ernst noted that “In an age of horse power the care of animals was entrusted almost entirely to the Irish,” and their world heavily revolved around the use and maintenance of the urban horse.⁴⁷

By the mid-nineteenth century, the Irish constituted for the largest foreign-born ethnic group of New York City, with a size of 203,740 individuals when the total population of the city was 813, 669. Since the 1840s, historian Dale Knobel noted that most Americans believed that Irish immigrants carried a fixed set of inherited characteristics of depravity and degradation known as “Irishism.” Political speeches, newspaper cartoons, social policy outlines, and a wide range of contexts described the “Celtic physiognomy” as an “inherited organic imperfection, vitiated constitution, or *poor stock*.” In both published sketches and literature from the mid-nineteenth century, the Irish were depicted as brutish and violent. They were drawn with simian faces with the penchant to abuse their equine workhorses while wearing misshapen hats and patched-up suits. If not equal to the black race, the Irish were perceived as an intermediary social

⁴⁶ Rosenzweig and Blackmar, *The Park and the People*, 161-162, 167, 175.

⁴⁷ Sweeney, “Pasture to Pavement,” 145-146, 130; Robert Ernst, *Immigrant Life in New York City 1825-1863* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1994), 71.

group between black and white due to the recurrence of “mixed matings” and residing in the same neighborhoods.⁴⁸

Olmsted himself described the park workers, the majority being Irish, as constituents of “the poorest or what is generally considered the most dangerous class of the great city’s population” with very little sense of duty or refinement. Since most of the construction depended on human labor, the park’s architect-in-chief and engineers considered the rigorous discipline of park workers as crucial. About three-quarters of the construction funds went towards the artisans and menial workers. In one of the numerous handbills of park rules, one of the notices asked foremen to compile a list of men who demonstrated “sobriety, industry and general good conduct.” If a name was found on the Foreman’s “Good Conduct” list for three consecutive months, the individual could “claim a certificate of character” and his name might even be printed in the annual Central Park directory if he maintained this behavior for a full year. Even before the park was opened, Olmsted governed Central Park “as if it were a city within a city,” earning him the title, “Frederick the Great.”⁴⁹

Nevertheless, not everyone succumbed to Frederick II and his daily roll calls. When the drives were nearly finished in the fall of 1859, one official was “distressed to discover that cartmen themselves were enjoying the facilities they were helping to construct. . . Any employee found riding or driving a horse or vehicle *“faster than a walk* on any of the drives that are

⁴⁸Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a different color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1999), 48, 52; Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish became white* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 40-42, 76; Sweeney, “Pasture to Pavement,” 142.

⁴⁹Collections of the Municipal Archives of the City of New York; Rosenzweig and Blackmar, *The Park and the People*, 172-173; McNeur, *Taming Manhattan*, 217.

completed or are in progress,” he announced, “would be promptly dismissed.”⁵⁰ Clearly, although these laborers and horses were the builders of the park, the enjoyment of that space was reserved for someone else. Later, these cart horses and drivers would be officially exiled from the Park grounds and forced to travel on the hidden and invisible transverse roads.

The toil and contributions of construction horses



Fig 2. This is a rare image of horses paving Lenox Avenue above Central park. The photographer and year of this image are both unknown.⁵¹

Horses served as a ubiquitous workforce during the Park’s construction. They delivered the necessary building materials to erect bridges and fountains. In 1867 alone, horses hauled away 3,186 cartloads of grass to livery and railroad stables to generate income. These equine serfs transported water around the park, neatly removed excavated dirt and rocks, plowed snow in the winter, drained and trenched, constructed ponds, and removed the unseemly waste on the

⁵⁰ Interview with Elizabeth Blackmar, 4 February 2016, New York, NY.; Rosenzweig and Blackmar, *The Park and the People*, 174, 170; Grant, “Driving and Riding on New and Unfinished roads,” 17 Oct 1859, Francis Hawks Papers, NYPL.

⁵¹ The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs: Photography Collection, The New York Public Library. “Paving of Lenox Ave. no. of Central Park.” New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed Mar 1, 2016. <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e2-6d9c-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>

portion of Ocean Avenue under the park's jurisdiction.⁵² There was really no aspect of the park's construction that did not depend on horsepower.

Horse manure was also an invaluable asset to the park's development. An 1858 Architect Report suggested that the "liberty to take street manure for fertilizing the park, would be very desirable, inasmuch as otherwise other fertilizing matters must be purchased."⁵³ This of course was a very practical and economical idea since the city's streets reeked of equine waste, and horses could produce anywhere between thirty to fifty pounds of manure a day or seven tons a year. Regardless, the Board most likely decided against using street waste because the 1858 list of expenses recorded over \$5,700 spent for the purchase and carting of manure alone. Clearly, certain individuals were worried regarding the quality of this "street manure." In that same 1858 Architect's report, the document explained that "the manuring of the park is a subject which requires the most careful consideration and the closest management... Stable Manure is so well known, and so easily attainable... it will doubtless be the principal manure that will be used on the park." There may have been a distinction between street and stable manure. In addition, annual reports stated that the park housed some of its own horses and so would have had access to high-quality stable manure of its own. Indeed, construction horses provided a myriad of services to the park's growth, but the park's expenses also revolved around meeting the needs of these indispensable laborers through the purchase of horse pads, straw and corn, repairing

⁵² New York, N.Y., Department of Public Parks, "Annual Report, 1867, Eleventh Annual Report" p. 47.; New York, N.Y., Department of Public Parks, "Annual Report, 1865," 35. Greene, 170; New York, N.Y., Department of Public Parks, "Architect Report, 1898," 12; New York, N.Y., Department of Public Parks, "Annual Report, 1898," 28, 33.

⁵³ New York, N.Y., Department of Public Parks, "Annual Report, 1858," 5.

harnesses, investing in horse medicine, stocking on horse feed, and purchasing wagon and carriage hardware.⁵⁴

Once the park was opened to the public, sleighing in the winter season was a popular pastime. The *Daily Eagle* referred to it as strictly reserved for the upper class. Similar to the elite fashion of carriage riding on the Promenades, sleighing involved showing off fancy rigs and “fancy high-stepper” horses. But in reality this activity was not just enjoyed by the wealthy. Individuals who could not afford the sleighing rates at Central Park invented alternative ways to experience the joy of sleighing. For example, grocers and butchers tied runners to their wagon boxes and had their draft horses pull the sleighs. Livery stables offered group carrier sleigh rides with cheaper rates, such as a fifty-seat sleigh pulled by six horses.⁵⁵ As a result, the urban working class reimagined and redefined the sleighing experience on their own terms and circumstances, allowing the draft horse as well the opportunity to enjoy and dispute a pastime that was deemed improper for their station.

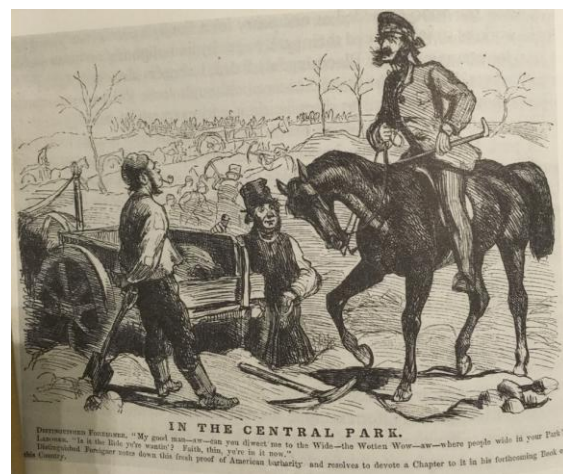
In the park’s process of road making as well, construction horses exerted a pivotal function in forming the road-bed and ensuring the necessary drainage. First, horse carts delivered large loads of rubble stone over the road-bed. “Sprinkling carts” then moistened the surfacing material. After that, “six feet in length, thirty-six inches in diameter” rollers drawn by two horses firmly flattened and surfaced the material. “The rolling and surfacing of the layer of stone, and the travel and working of teams upon it” was crucial to the success of road construction. “As each layer [of gravel] [was] applied, it [was then] rolled with the lighter two-horse rollers, and

⁵⁴ Greene, *Horses at Work*, 26.; New York, N.Y., Department of Public Parks, “Annual Report, 1858,” 9-55.; New York, N.Y., Department of Public Parks, “Architect Report, 1858,” 38.; See 1861 Annual Report on page 54 citing the purchasing of horses for the Park; 1894 New York City Public Park report reported to the existence of an 80 work horse stable for park work; New York, N.Y., Department of Public Parks, “Annual Report, 1898,” 39-49.

⁵⁵ McShane and Tarr, *The Horse in the City*, 91.

after the last layer [was] put on, the whole [was] thoroughly rolled with a heavy roller weighing six and a half tons, and drawn by eight horses.” Horse carts repeatedly rolled over the surface until “the surface [was] firm enough to bear the travel of horses without their feet sinking in it. This is as far as the process is continued, as pertains to actual construction, before the admission of travel upon the road.”⁵⁶ Thus, the soundness of a road was determined and influenced by the test of its equine visitors. Unfortunately, these construction horses or rather roller horses would be forbidden to utilize the roads that they so painstakingly perfected. In the following image (Fig. 3), an individual on horseback is asking for directions to the not-yet built equestrian path; another road that would be made off limits to the laboring equine class. Notice the faint outline of horse toilers in the background pulling carts and working alongside their human co-workers while their more superior counterparts bathed in the spotlight and galloped on roads that were created by the inferior *other*.

Fig 3. In this cartoon, the “distinguished foreigner” on horseback asks the laborers for directions to the equestrian path. Even in images, construction horses were relegated to the background, to the hidden and undesired pockets of the park.⁵⁷



⁵⁶ New York, N.Y., Department of Public Parks, “Annual Report, 1861, Fifth Annual Report,” 6-64.

⁵⁷ United States History, Local History & Genealogy Division, the New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations; Rosenzweig and Blackmar, *The Park and the People*, 178.

An 1868 Annual Report cited:

The gravel and sand upon the surface not being firmly and rigidly compacted, as in the case of carriage roads, is the more easily displaced and worked out of shape by the horses' hoofs; this must be remedied by raking and by light rolling, to preserve the proper shape of the road and facilitate drainage.⁵⁸

Even the vestiges of the roller horses' labors were erased for the sake of what was considered proper and most efficient. Working-class history is always difficult to reconstruct, even when researching on human agents since "the inarticulate and often uneducated laborer," historian Melvyn Dubofsky explained, "had little sense of history and less compulsion to record his emotions or thoughts for the benefit of posterity and scholars."⁵⁹ However, these individuals can at least leave traces of their labor, which makes this erasure of the construction horses' hoof tracks another testament of the marginalization of the equine group. Another disconcerting example was found in the 1911 Annual Report, which stated that nine old horses who had become "unfit for further service" were sent to the Health Department at Otisville, NY for "experimental purposes."⁶⁰ Considering the enormous service given by these productive haulers, excavators, and rollers, should we not be at least pause and wonder what kind of experiments these toilers were subjected to and how many others encountered this similar fate? The rhetoric that these laborers were just beasts of burden, that by their not being human justifies such indifference seems problematic and highly egocentric.

Historians Clay McShane and Joel Tarr made the argument that the urban horse functioned as the city's living machine, which made possible the burgeoning capitalistic economy of the mid-nineteenth century. Indeed, every aspect of this specimen was commodified

⁵⁸ New York, N.Y., Department of Public Parks, "Annual Report, 1863," 77.

⁵⁹ Melvyn Dubofsky. *When Workers Organize* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1968), ix.

⁶⁰ New York, N.Y., Department of Public Parks, "Annual Report, 1911," 53.

from their power to pull omnibuses and streetcars, the use of manure for fertilization, and even with their death, equine hides were recycled to earn additional profit. Nothing went to waste. For the most part, the draft horse and his historical presence were framed within a utilitarian construct. McShane and Tarr further argued that since much of the urban built environment was influenced by its equine residents, such as the city's proliferation of horse stables and wider-designed streets which facilitated horse travel, the equine scholar should recognize horses, not just as commodities, but also as consumers in their own right.⁶¹

⁶¹ McShane and Tarr, *The Horse in the City*, 35.

Chapter 3: The Juxtaposition of leisure and hidden labor **(Central park from 1858 to 1900)**

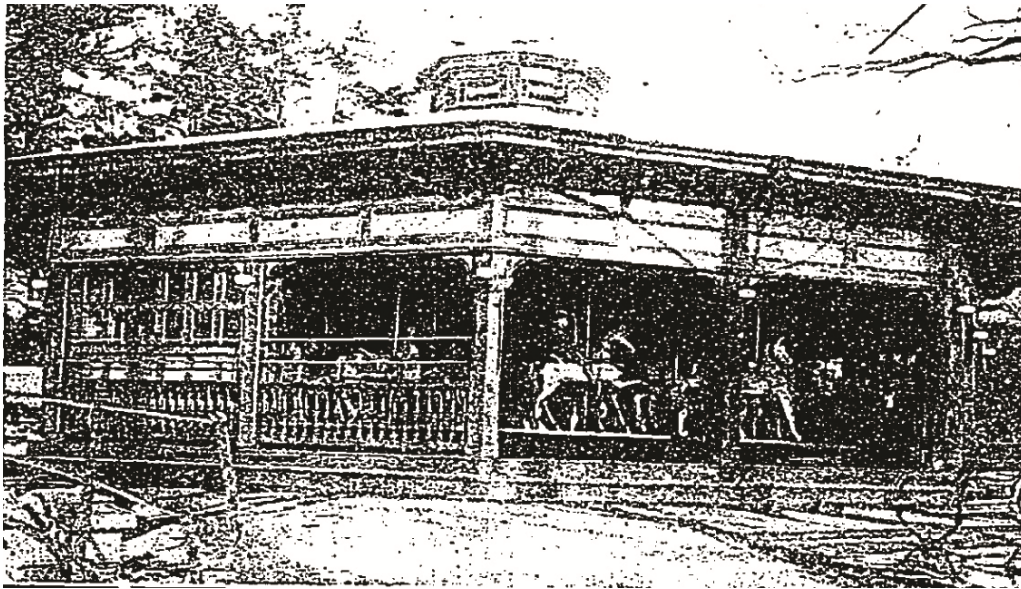


Fig.1 An image of the carousel in Central Park with the caption, “where thousands of children enjoy themselves every year” from an 1899 *New York Times* article⁶²

Building a carousel in the nineteenth century was no small feat. Depending upon the quality and number of elaborate ornamentations, this apparatus could cost from \$300 to \$10,000 in 1899. The carousel had four principal elements: the figurine animals, the platform, the organ, and the engine. Each was usually made by different companies around the city. Park visitors, reveling in the awe of “galloping horses,” were probably never told that from the carousel’s opening in 1873 to 1924, a living and not so brightly ornate mule and horse were standing right beneath the platform, powering the merry-go-round each “nutty” tune at a time.⁶³ In 1872, a basement for the carousel’s hidden horse power had been constructed “with an entrance leading

⁶² *New York Times*, 19 Mar 1899, “How a Carousel is Made.”

⁶³ New York City department of parks and recreation. “Central Park.” Accessed March 2, 2016. <http://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/central-park/highlights/12390>; New York, N.Y., Department of Public Parks, “Annual Report, 1872,” p. 58; *New York Times*, 19 Mar 1899, “How a Carousel is Made.”

from the transverse road.”⁶⁴ The two-team carousel engine was trained to start and stop depending on the tapping of the operator’s foot.⁶⁵ Thus, Central Park’s carousel was a manifestation of the vertical juxtaposition of leisure and work or rather the whimsical attempt to create an aesthetically pleasing feature of recreation by hiding the work that made it possible.

In the previous chapter, the erasure of the construction horses from the park’s visual history was discussed. But even after the park’s opening, the concealment of the work horse only became more pressing. The impetus to cover up these discordant elements of labor informed the social engineering of Central park, inspiring the creation of sunken transverse roads and police-enforced park ordinances. Meanwhile, the carriage drives and promenade parades of the elite in their costly carriage horse driven apparatuses were regarded as the pinnacle of style, beauty, and interest. The designed spatialization was propelled by a desire to package and romanticize Central Park, a bustling workscape of park laborers, maintenance buildings, incoming and outgoing city traffic, as an artistic pastoral landscape untouched and distinct from its surrounding urban grit and industry.⁶⁶ Furthermore, the infrastructure of the park’s roads manifested a class hierarchy of pleasure horses prevailing over the horses of burden. The menials were not though complete victims to their supposed inferiority. This section will examine the operation of Central Park from its opening in 1857 until the influx of automobiles at the turn of the 20th century.

The Transverse Roads

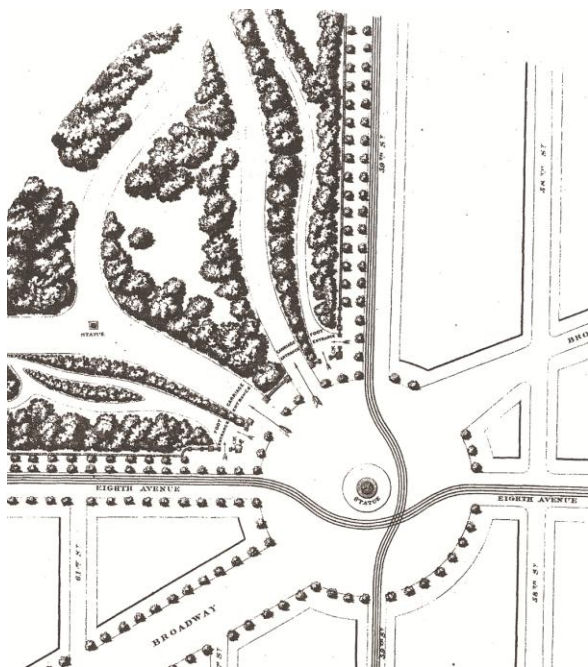
⁶⁴ *New York Times*, 19 Mar 1899, “How a Carousel is Made.”

⁶⁵ New York City department of parks and recreation. “Carousel.” Accessed Mar 2, 2016. <http://www.centralparknyc.org/things-to-see-and-do/attractions/carousel.html>

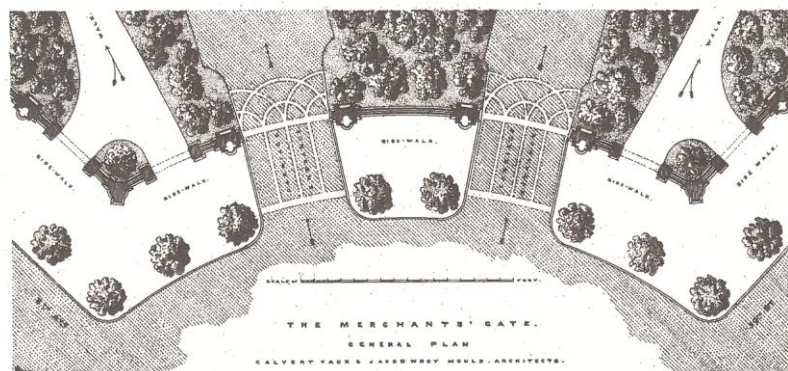
⁶⁶ Rosenzweig and Blackmar, *The Park and the People*, 2-9.

Andrew Green, the controller of the park, wrote in 1866 that considering the “history of the modes of use of streets in cities,” streets were first made without any division and shared by both men and animals of burden without any distinction. However, “the dangers and inconveniences of this indiscriminate mixture of travel when carriages were introduced, led to a distribution of travel and traffic.”⁶⁷ Indeed, the majority of plans that had been submitted to the park’s design competition in the mid-1800s shared the belief of insulating the landscaped space from the city’s “confined and formal lines” and its raucous stream of traffic. It was agreed that following the example of European parks, the Central Park roads should be categorized into

a system of independent ways: 1st, for carriages; 2^d, for horsemen wishing to gallop; 3^d, for footmen; and 4th, for common street traffic requiring to cross the Park to prevent divergence from direct movement...collision...pleasure carriages will move with greater regularity and be better accommodated...By this means it was made possible, even for the most timid and nervous, to go on foot to any district the Park designed to be visited.⁶⁸



Figures 1-2. The two black and white images reveal the Park’s proposed entrance plan at 8th Ave and 59th Street in the 1860s. Notice the different entrances for pedestrians (labeled as “foot entrance” on the left map and “walk” on the map below) and for horse carriage visitors (labeled as “carriage entrance” on both maps).⁶⁹



⁶⁷ New York, N.Y., Department of Public Parks, “Communication to the Commissioners of the Central Park, 1866,” 13.

⁶⁸ New York, N.Y., Department of Public Parks, “Annual Report, 1871,” 93-94.

⁶⁹ New York, N.Y., Department of Public Parks, “Annual Report, 1865,” 12; New York, N.Y., Department of Public Parks, “Annual Report, 1869,” 10.

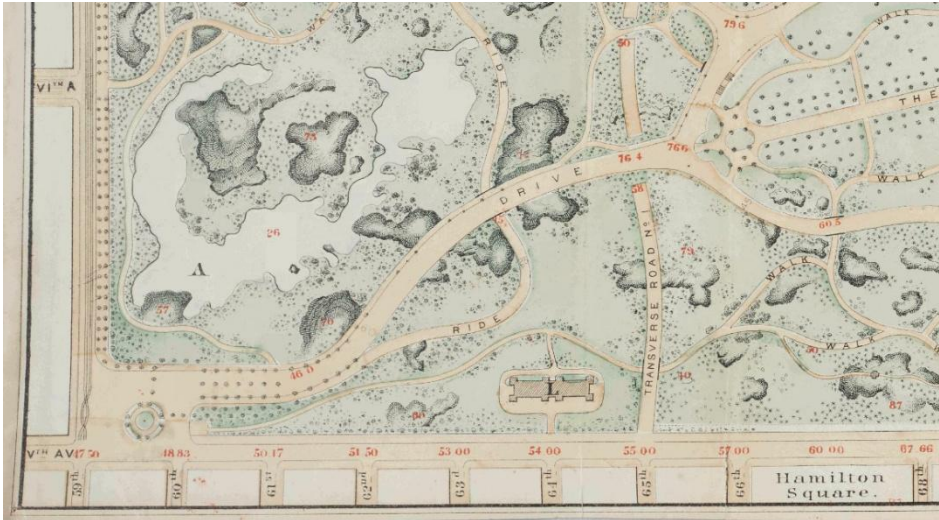


Figure 3. “Map of the Central Park showing the progress of the work up to January 1st 1867.” Here we see four different paths: drive (carriage), walk (pedestrian), ride (horseback), and transverse (traffic).⁷⁰

These three maps provide a visual representation of the park’s complex road system. Notice that the working horses who rode on the first transverse road on 65th street between sixth and seventh Avenues would have had no way to enjoy the “music and the play of the waters of the fountains” by the Merchants’ Gate or the scenery of neatly lined trees of the drives.⁷¹ In a *Minutes of proceedings of the Board of Commissioners of the Central Park for 1866-1867*, the report stated that the carriage roads occupied about forty-nine acres, the walks about thirty-seven, the bridle roads about fifteen, and the four transverse roads about nine acres.⁷² Clearly, the Park’s designers prioritized the construction of roads of leisure and recreation, and not of work and city life. The Ninth Annual report elaborated further on the park’s elaborate road system,

Roads and Walks constitute a very important branch of the Park work. These are required to be in the best condition throughout, and from the constant use to which they are subjected require much labor and material to keep them in proper order...Traffic roads include expenses incident to the care, repairs, and keeping proper order for public convenience [of] the transverse roads.⁷³

⁷⁰ “Map of the Central Park showing the progress of the work up to January 1st, 1866.” *Columbia Digital Library Collections [Columbia University Libraries]*. Accessed 21 Mar 2016.

<https://dlc.library.columbia.edu/catalog/cul:7h44j0zpd9>

⁷¹ New York, N.Y., Department of Public Parks, “Ninth Annual Report, 1865,” 9.

⁷² New York, N.Y., Department of Public Parks, “*Minutes of proceedings of the Board of Commissioners of the Central Park for 1866-1867*,” 81.

⁷³ New York, N.Y., Department of Public Parks, “Ninth Annual Report, 1865,” 17-18

The Park's 1865 Maintenance Account recorded that considering labor and material costs, the transverse roads required a total of \$425.80, the roads \$45,526.16, and the walks \$11,675.55.

Andrew Green asserted his opinion as well that

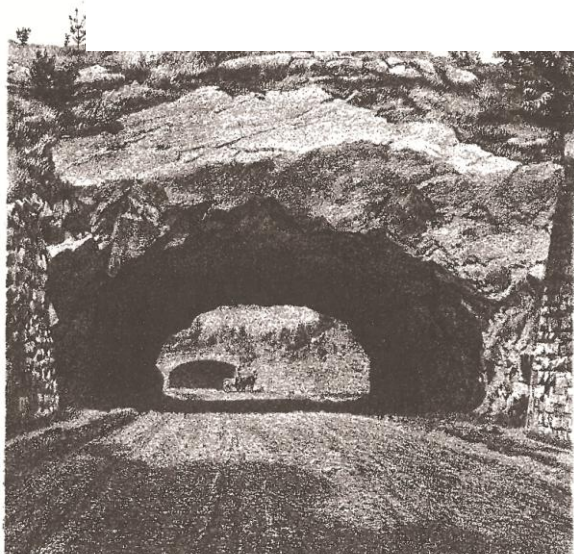
the intelligent determination of the width of an avenue for travel, and of the proper material for its surface, involves the consideration of the present and the prospective volume of travel upon it, the character of this travel, the relative proportion of the various classes of it, whether for man on foot or in vehicles, or for traffic or pleasure, and the classic of traffic.⁷⁴

In terms of acreage, type of class, and required maintenance, the four channels were arranged in a hierarchal system with the carriage road as part of an artistic endeavor of perfection and the transverse road as necessary for "public convenience" and negligible menials. Adding to Green's history of street use, a contemporary parallel to Central Park's road system could be found in Moses Henry's banning of trucks on New York's parkways who, like the architects of Central park, desired to protect the driving experience from any disruptive ruckus or discordant triggers.

The transverse roads were thought of as the practical solution to deal with the city's bustling traffic, while also creating an anxiety-free and undisturbed parkgoing rendezvous for visitors. Most plans argued for the construction of these work channels as scenic drives in order to extend the park's views into the city's grid, allowing the individuals who would not have a chance to visit the park a taste of fresh air and enjoyable scenery. However, only the Greensward Plan (submitted by Olmsted and Vaux) suggested sinking all four of the commercial transverse roads. Hidden eight feet below the park's grounds, the city traffic and commercial vehicles would have no opportunity to invade or disturb the beautifully "unified parkgoing experience" of

⁷⁴ New York, N.Y., Department of Public Parks, "Communication to the commissioners of the Central park 1866," 62.

Central Park. Olmsted passionately asserted, “coal carts and butchers’ carts, dust carts and dung carts...have nothing in common with the park proper...[and] those agreeable sentiments we should wish the park to inspire.” And so the Greensward Plan mercilessly divorced labor and leisure from one another and portrayed them as occupying radically distinct environments.⁷⁵



THE TUNNEL AND TRAFFIC ROAD.

Figure 4. An image of a transverse road found in the Park’s Ninth Annual Report. It is apparent that the aesthetic motif of the drives and roads were not incorporated in these traffic roads. Notice also the miniscule commuting horse and cart at the center of the tunnel and how his driving experience was vastly different from those on the carriage or bridle paths.⁷⁶

Ironically, although Vaux and Olmsted carefully orchestrated and perfected the parkgoing experience of leisure by burying all the menial horse carts and commercial wagons, the park’s pastoral aesthetic motif would not have been possible without the sweat and work of the transverse maintenance crew who maintained its fields, irrigated its lawns, and planted its trees and shrubs. Thus, what was above gravely required what was below to survive; and the latter only existed because the first demanded it. It would be helpful then to consider these two settings,

⁷⁵ Rosenzweig and Blackmar. *The Park and the People*, 131-132.

⁷⁶ New York, N.Y., Department of Public Parks, “Ninth Annual Report, 1865,” 17.

not as distinct, but as comprising one landscape: the vertical juxtaposition of leisure and labor (much like the carousel).

Figure 5. One of the transverse roads of Central Park. Vaux and Olmsted had wanted to separate the two landscapes of city traffic and artistically crafted nature, but inevitably both were vital to the operation of the park.⁷⁷



Regardless that the menial workers and carters who utilized the transverse roads were pivotal to the upkeep and maintenance of the park's landscaping, they were given very little credit or recognition. As seen in the case for the horses who constructed Central Park, there was very little visual evidence of the working cart horses who worked in the park. The scarcity for both was propelled by the same aesthetic desire to uphold a notion of beauty and perfection which screened out the discordant ugly and gritty grime of menial work. As a result, discovering the below photo (*Figure 6*) of working class horses and laborers was indeed a precious find in this scholar's research.

⁷⁷ New York, N.Y., Department of Public Parks, "Second Annual Report."



Fig. 6 A rare find of horses and their riders using one of the park's transverse roads on 66th Street. This was a hand-colored photo print by William M. Chase (1818-1901). Date of image is unknown.⁷⁸

Notice in this photo that not only did these horses look terribly commonplace compared to their elegantly flamboyant carriage horse counterparts, but the class appearance of their fellow humans mirrored their animals'. The men's attire was remarkably working class. The horse scholar cannot help but wonder how much of the park's spatial segregation was for the sake of an aesthetic standard (as Vaux argued) and how much to geographically assign New York city's class circles (including the equine population) to well-defined, disparate, and at times "invisible" spaces in the park? Undoubtedly, the class line could be most keenly felt whilst taking a late afternoon drive in Central Park in the 1880s, assuming one could afford it.

The Society Carriage Parade

⁷⁸ The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs: Photography Collection, The New York Public Library. "Arch over 66th Street, Central Park, N.Y." New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed Mar 5, 2016. <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e1-ee2e-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>

Under the shadow of Europe’s “fashionable promenades and drives,” New Yorkers awaited Central Park with relief and great anticipation. A 1858 *Herald* editorial gushed that “our citizens will be in possession, for the first time, of a good drive and ride, both of which have been so long needed.” However, the “citizens” that the *Herald* referred to only accounted for the five percent of New York’s elite society: the bankers, landlords, politicians, and merchants who could afford to own a carriage or a horse. For the first thirteen years of Central Park’s operation, gate-keeper records revealed that the majority of visitors came by carriage or horse. By 1863, about two-thirds of the Park’s visitors arrived by carriage. Indeed, “wealthy New Yorkers defined the new public park as their own...[Central Park was] both effect and cause of a growing enthusiasm for carriages among the upper classes,” instigating a “revolution” in wealthy society. Furthermore, the carriage became a symbol of class and status simply due to the exorbitant costs of owning one. A large French-style coupé carriage could cost about twelve hundred dollars. The annual income in the 1850s for a baker could average to about three hundred dollars; the park’s maintenance crew and engineers who created the promenades for these vehicles earned even less. Popular novels such as Theodore Dreiser’s *Sister Carrie* and Edith Wharton’s *The Age of Innocence* also solidified horses and carriages as markers of prestige and class.⁷⁹

To own a carriage meant more than just financially securing one. This pleasure activity required the purchase of a horse, riding equipment, separate seasonal carriages, and being able to afford stables and coachmen. Horse stables are rarely incorporated in the discourse on the built environment, but in New York City’s Gilded Age, equine housing was a ubiquitous feature in the urban landscape. Some were multi-storied while others took up several blocks. Horse quarters

⁷⁹ Rosenzweig and Blackmar, *The Park and the People*, 211-12, 245, 222; McShane and Tarr, 86-87.

ranged from wooden shanties to enormous brick and iron structures.⁸⁰ According to *The Report on the Sanitary Condition of the City* issued in 1866, inspectors found crowded stables with neglected and dirty surroundings in the Fifth Ward, the Fourth Ward's stable shanties at the tenements' rear and their "noxious gases," and the hundred and sixty-three neatly kept and well ventilated private stables in the healthiest Ward (the Twelfth). The report also included the well-known Bull's Head stables on Twenty-third Street between Lexington and Second Avenues in the Nineteenth district boasting thirty five stables in total with each containing about 1,000 stalls. Park Commissioner August Belmont's personal equine lodging reportedly boasted gaslights and running water in a period when the majority of New York homes had neither luxury; inciting one newspaper to exclaim that even the elite's horses were better housed and fed than half the city.⁸¹ Much like human residences, horse residences differentiated in living conditions based on location, class, and money. And those same horses would be spatially divided once more in the city's public park by function and class standing.

Carriage driving was reserved for the crème of society. In 1863, carriages accounted for at least 5,000 of the 13,500 horse-powered vehicles in New York City. Middle-class denizens could enjoy Central Park's scenic drives by paying a hack driver one dollar or renting a carriage from a livery stable for a dollar to two dollars per hour. However, this was a luxury set aside for special occasions. The overwhelming majority of "ordinary people" who rode and drove through the Park were the coachmen. Thus, while Central Park was in fact a public park created with American democratic values, the elite claimed the park as their own private playing ground.⁸² If less well off passersby desired to enjoy the Drive, they could do so from afar by watching from

⁸⁰ Ibid, 125, 107.

⁸¹ Citizens' Association of New York. *The Report on the Sanitary Condition of the City* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1866), 27, 61, 138, 225.; Rosenzweig and Blackmar, *The Park and the People*, 214.

⁸² Ibid, 214, 222.

the Terrace, but never partaking in that scenic ride themselves. As a result, it was not uncommon to find “wagon owning citizens” being turned away by gatekeepers on Sunday mornings for the reason that these particular vehicles “during the week [transported] legs of mutton, or cans of milk, or kegs of crackers, or boxes of candles from their shops to the customers’ houses.”⁸³

Most importantly, Olmsted’s infamous park ordinances systematized and controlled the movement of class groups, making it “illegal” for the menial horse to enjoy the landscape that he had helped to conceive.

All persons are forbidden ---

“To turn cattle, horses, goats, or swine into the Park;

“No animal shall travel on any part of the Central Park, except upon the ‘ride’ or ‘equestrian road,’ at a rate exceeding seven miles an hour...No vehicle shall be permitted on the ‘ride’ or ‘equestrian road,’ the same being devoted exclusively to equestrians; nor shall any vehicle, horse, or animal of burden, go upon any part of the Central Park, except upon the ‘drive,’ and other carriage and transverse roads, and upon such places as are appropriated for carriages at rest...No omnibus, or express wagon, with or without passengers; nor any cart, dray, wagon, truck, or other vehicle carrying goods, merchandise, manure, soil, or other articles, shall be allowed to enter any part of the Central Park, except upon the transverse roads.”⁸⁴

Lawn maintenance also posed a grave concern to Olmsted. His ordinance prohibiting the turning out of any animals was not exclusively motivated by his dislike for the beasts of burden, but rather due to his passionate zeal that the artistic landscaping of nature was key to the park’s success and that nothing and no one had the right to unsettle it. He explained in the park’s Thirteenth Annual Report, “You cannot keep lawns frequently trampled by men, horses, and by artillery in a proper condition for others to enjoy. If they are not kept in such a condition, you deprive tenfold more people of enjoyment than you gratify by a military use of the grounds.”⁸⁵

⁸³ McShane and Tarr, *The Horse in the City*, 86; *New York Times*, 30 May 1860.

⁸⁴ New York, N.Y., Department of Public Parks, “Third Annual Report, 1859,” 17-19.

⁸⁵ New York, N.Y., Department of Public Parks, “Thirteenth Annual Report, 1869,” 168.

Central park's ordinances discriminated against and prohibited commercial wagons and trucks from entering the drives or paths, relegating the menials to the transverse roads and dispossessing them of the right to enjoy the roads that they and their class had helped to pave and lay down. In the same way that struggling tenant farmers in England were kicked off and deprived by the 18th century enclosure acts as part of an aesthetic project to beautify the agrarian landscape, one could argue that the same phenomena occurred to the draft horses of Central Park. Analogous to the peasant farmers who were sentimentalized by planter paternalism, much of Olmsted's ideology was to utilize nature and landscaping as a way to uplift and elevate the morals of the common people, meanwhile disregarding the contribution that these construction laborers had already made to the public space.⁸⁶

The designated drinking places for horses revealed another form of discrimination. The Fifth Annual Report outlined that smaller pipes from Eighty-Sixth street supplied water to only the carriage roads and bridle roads and would provide drinking stations for thirsty equines frolicking in that area.⁸⁷ The following image (*Figure 7*) was found in the Park's Ninth Annual Report of a drinking place for horses on the bridle road. By 1866, there were twenty-seven drinking fountains throughout the park.⁸⁸ Any fountains located on or by the carriage or bridle roads would have been inaccessible and prohibited to working-class horses because the ordinances forbade their use of any other path than the common traffic routes. Where these horses would have quenched their thirst is still in question, but these sources of water would have been situated on the transverse roads. Nevertheless, the very fact that draft horses were banned from certain drinking fountains, and that these fountains served a certain class of the

⁸⁶ Rosenzweig and Blackmar, *The Park and the People*, 131.

⁸⁷ New York, N.Y., Department of Public Parks, "Fifth Annual Report," 112.

⁸⁸ New York, N.Y., Department of Public Parks, "Ninth Annual Report, 1865," 10.

equine population that distinguished itself with money, social rank, and superior breeding, is compelling and reminiscent of Jim Crow ideology projected onto horses. The separate entrances for the different roads also exposed this need to spatially segregate horses, another Jim Crow attitude applied to the equine world. The park's ordinances then reinforced a hierarchy (previously seen earlier in the infrastructure of the roads) which placed the pleasure, carriage horses at the top, echoing an opinion held by many horsemen in the mid-nineteenth century discourse of what constituted a good horse, of what was superior stock.

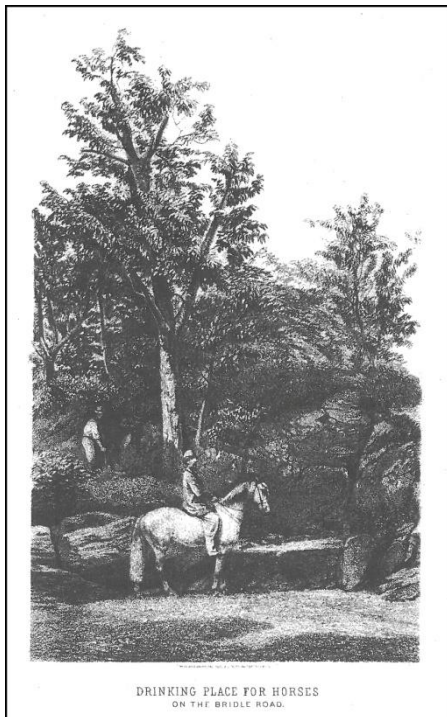


Figure 7. A view of a drinking place for horses on the bridle road, which would have been inaccessible to the working horses on the transverse roads. An example of Jim Crow projected onto the equine visitors of Central Park. Where the working class horses of the transverse roads would have quenched their thirst is still unknown.

Olmsted even established his own policing force to impose and oversee these ordinances: “The Park-keepers, fifty in number, are invested with Police powers, and form the patrol of the Park night and day. Twenty-five Gate-keepers uniformed and un-uniformed, are posted at the gates to enforce the ordinances of the Park respecting the admission of vehicles and to preserve

the order about the gates.”⁸⁹ Central Park’s squad was regularly instructed and exercised in “military drill” and were stated to have even carried clubs.⁹⁰ Indeed, this public park was a tightly controlled space. Olmsted and the Board of Commissioners wrote in 1861, “The preservation of order on the park, and its exception from the presence of influences that would render it a disagreeable or unsafe resort for all classes of society, is of the very first importance, and requires constant vigilance, as, if it is not well understood that disorder or obscenity on the Park are promptly punished, the virtuous and orderly will be banished from it.” Historian Catherine McNeur has argued that by regimenting the park through his police force and ordinances, Olmsted and the park’s commissioners continued the elite’s reign over Central Park and hoped to instill upper-class notions and sensibilities in its lower-class visitors. Thus even though it was a democratic park open to all classes, “Central Park catered to the fashions and needs of the city’s wealthy denizens, those who had the loudest voices in government and the fullest representation on the park’s Board of Commissioners. The poor were welcome in the park, but only if they respected the rules,” only if they were “tamed.”⁹¹ Furthermore, the park’s police even made numerous arrests, 93 in 1861, 130 in 1864, and 489 in 1871.⁹² The following (*Fig. 8*) shows the causes for arrest and what followed; revealing the extent of authority and influence granted to these Park-keepers.

⁸⁹ New York, N.Y., Department of Public Parks, “Ninth Annual Report, 1865,” 20.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 21; New York, N.Y., Department of Public Parks, “Annual Report, 1871,” 16.

⁹¹ Catherine McNeur, *Taming Manhattan*, 218.

⁹² New York, N.Y., Department of Public Parks, “Fifth Annual Report, 1861,” 38; New York, N.Y., Department of Public Parks, “Ninth Annual Report, 1865,” 20; New York, N.Y., Department of Public Parks, “Annual Report, 1871,” 16.

17	
Fast driving and riding,	29
Breaking shrubs, &c.,	55
Thieving,	11
Disorderly conduct,	136
Insanity,	5
Intoxication,	198
Vagrancy,	19
Picking pockets,	6
Indecent exposure of person,	8
Assault and battery,	22
The following statement indicates the disposition made of those arrested :	
Let go at station,	114
Fined by Magistrate \$10 each,	26
Fined by Magistrate \$10 each and held to bail to keep peace,	17
Committed for ten days,	69
Committed for trial,	22
Committed to Blackwell's Island,	51
Committed for examination,	92
Discharged,	98
	489
The cost of the police force of the Central Park, for a series of years, has been as follows :	
1858,	\$10,841 60
1859,	24,404 55

Figure 8. This is a page from the 1871 Annual Park Report. The idea that breaking shrubs was included in the causes for arrest is surprising from a modern standpoint, but considering Vaux and Olmsted's stance on preserving the lawn, only logical. Another surprising discovery was that individuals could be committed for ten days, trial, or sent to Blackwell's Island but for what causes these certain individuals were guilty for was not included.⁹³

The Counter narrative to Central Park's Equine Hierarchy

For the purpose of this section, two *New York Times* articles written in the late 1880s were used to construct the following narratives, in hopes to demonstrate that working horses did indeed push back against claims of their inferiority and the reductionist notion that they were just beasts of burden that were best to be hidden away.

How a Horse fooled his Owner

One Sunday afternoon in New York City, Mr. Hiram Champlin found his horse lying on the floor next to the cemetery. Twenty-five men gathered around the large, gray horse to assist Mr. Champlin in lifting the massive beast. They brought ropes, pulleys, and high poles to hoist

⁹³ New York, N.Y., Department of Public Parks, "Annual Report, 1871," 17.

him up on his feet. Unfortunately, the weight of the horse broke the contraption and nearly killed his owner. “They finally conclude to let the horse lie where he was until he died, and went away.” When Mr. Champlin returned home, he found his horse standing by the front door, “apparently waiting for his owner to come out and give him some water...It appears that the horse, after the people had left him, got up himself and walked home.”⁹⁴ While some might reduce this horse’s behavior as an example of bestial obstinacy, this account revealed that workhorses possessed the ability to resist and also the capacity to make their own decisions. Certainly, Mr. Hiram Champlin’s horse possessed an agency of his own. He clearly did not like being told (or rather, pulled via pulley) when to come home.

The second article was titled, “An Intelligent Work-Horse,” a story of “equine intelligence” by a horse named Paddy. Every morning, Paddy was seen walking himself to work. He was an employee at Horton House’s baggage wagon. If the weather was pleasant, Paddy would wait out front “as immovable as a rock...but if the morning [was] cold, windy, or damp, after waiting a reasonable time he deliberately walk[ed] around to the east end of the house and enter[ed] the horse-shed at the northeast corner.” Despite having to navigate “two sharp turns at right angles,” Paddy never made the mistake of bumping into the post or sidewalk. Paddy’s routine was so consistent that anyone at Horton House’s baggage-wagon would know where to look for this faithful steed just by checking the weather. Furthermore, if the porter forgot to get Paddy, “Paddy, true as steel, as is his regular custom...evidently understanding that he would be needed...quietly took up his line of march to the wharf.”⁹⁵

⁹⁴ *New York Times*, 13 Jun 1880, “How a Horse fooled his owner.”

⁹⁵ *New York Times*, 1880, “An Intelligent Workhorse.”

Throughout the piece, the writer took anthropomorphic flourishes in his treatment of Paddy, but for the intent of praising the horse's intelligence and work ethic. By doing so, he re-imagined the term, "Paddy," a historically derogative slur applied to the Irish. And yet, Paddy was praised solely because he could consistently carry out a regular routine and adjust his location, suggesting that this horse's identity and virtue were entirely wrapped up in his occupation as a menial worker. Nevertheless, this account revealed that horses could indeed rationalize for themselves and negated the reductive notion that horses were just living machines. Had Paddy not been insightful enough to arrive at the wharf on his own accord, Horton House's passengers would have been at a loss. The resourcefulness and intercession of this horse evidently saved the day and earned him his own article in the prestigious *New York Times*.

Chapter 4: Exit the Horse. Enter the Automobile
Central Park during the first two decades of the twentieth century

“The Old Workhorse has a Day of Glory”

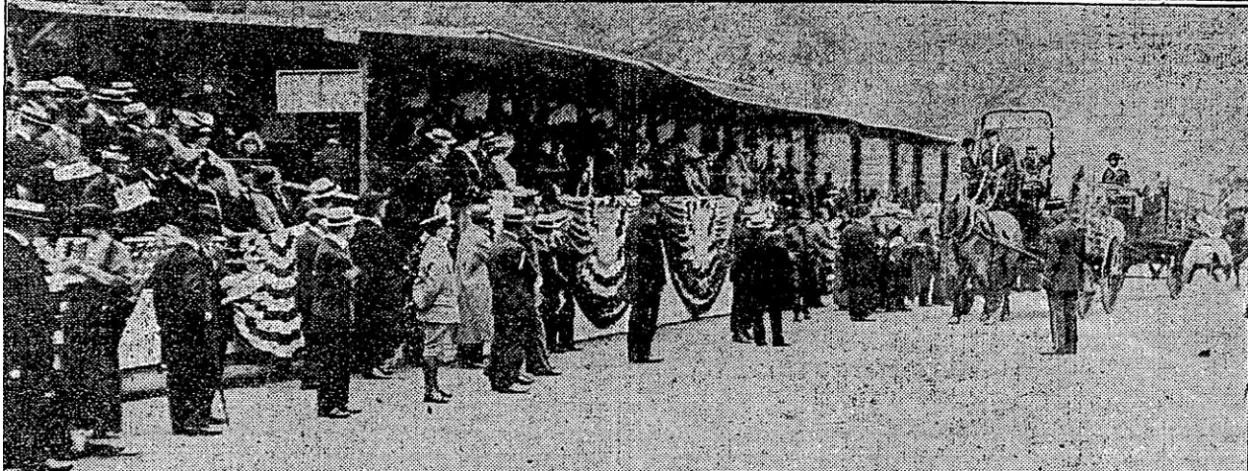


Figure 1. An image of the eighth annual workhorse parade in New York City in 1914.⁹⁶

Although working class horses were denied the experience of promenading on the drives of Central Park, the Women’s Auxiliary to the American Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Animals organized the first workhorse parade in 1907. The object of the competition was “to encourage and reward the stable bosses and watchmen, among whom, scattered about the city, are many faithful conscientious men, who make life as pleasant for the horses in their charge as it is possible for them to do.”⁹⁷ During the fourth annual workhorse parade on May 30, 1910, sixteen hundred participants from over sixty-one different classes: the city’s butchers, grain dealers, ice men, “butter and eggs,” milk wagons, coal men, fishermen, tea and coffee, and so on, marched down Fifth Avenue. Even blind horses and veteran horses had judging classes of their own. The workhorse parade lasted from 10:30 AM to 3:30 PM and over \$2,000 was distributed

⁹⁶ *New York Times*, 31 May 1914, “Horses and Drivers honored for Merit.”

⁹⁷ *New York Times*, 2 Mar 1907, “A Work Horse Parade.”

in prizes and blue ribbons. The crowd's favorite, Pompey, did not lead the parade as he had for the previous three, but he joined the promenade with the Street Cleaning Department. The competition was stiff, motivating one superintendent to feed his horses a "dozen hard-boiled eggs daily for a week to give an extra gloss to their hides...[since] His rival had given his horses two days' rest to the previous." The laboring horse was getting the pageant-star treatment.

The workhorse parade recognized and praised the equine's service, giving special interest to the six divisions of old veteran horses. The article referred to Spot and Jumbo, the old-horse team, as having the "best story" of the parade: Spot (25) and Jumbo (26) had pulled wagons for the Bradley Contracting Company for over twenty years. When they got too old, the owner retired Spot and Jumbo on his farm in New Jersey. "But instead of enjoying the landscape and communing joyfully with the heart of nature, Jumbo and Spot grew peaked and thin. The veterinary couldn't discover any trouble, but their driver said they were lonesome for their work in New York." As a result, the two workhorses returned to city work and once more regained their health and two blue ribbons. Certainly, this was a day to glorify and anthropomorphize the workhorses' service; to affirm that their very existence was irrevocably tied and immersed to pulling carts and powering the city. What is more, a 1921 *New York Times* article even reported that a horse working for the Department of Public Works was on the company's payroll under the name of H. Bell, earning three dollars a day.⁹⁸ By the seventh workhorse parade, scores of horse owners and horse lovers still demonstrated the same eagerness and excitement for the event, pointing to the parade "as the best illustration that it will be a long time before

⁹⁸ *New York Times*, 31 May 1910, "The Old Workhorse has a day of Glory"; *New York Times*, 15 May 1921, "Horse is Carried on City Payroll."

automobiles will entirely replace the horse in New York.”⁹⁹ But they were sorely mistaken in the longevity of the workhorse’s future in the cityscape.

The Rise of the Labor Movement and the Automobile Century

During the first two decades of the twentieth century, progressive reformers campaigned to improve the lives of working class men and women by pushing for welfare and factory legislation. But laborers soon found that “legislative gifts” did not always lend themselves to reform. They determined instead to turn to trade-unionism and to use their collective power to improve their conditions. One woman asserted,

I believe in the Union. It makes us stronger and it makes us happier and it makes us more interested in life and to be interested is oh, a thousand times better than to be so dead that one never sees anything but work all day and not enough money to live on. That is terrible. That is like death.¹⁰⁰

Historian Melvyn Dubofsky described unions as “the material manifestations of the dreams nourished by so many of the underprivileged, underpaid, and overworked.” The *Ladies’ Garment Worker* added that the trade-union was “organized self-help and self-respect.”¹⁰¹ From this context can the workhorse parades be best understood, as a way to celebrate the working class individual and horse in a period when both were overloaded, undervalued, and marginalized.

The start of the twentieth century also marked the age of the automobile. Even Central Park’s gates were not impervious to this intruder, albeit the approval to allow automobile traffic into the park did not take place until a series of experiments and heated discussion. At first, the park’s commissioners had attempted to forbid these horseless carriages, citing the already prevalent horse traffic collisions and the emotional stress of automobiles on the four-legged

⁹⁹ *New York Times*, 31 May 1913, “2,500 Horses parade on Fifth Avenue.”

¹⁰⁰ *Life and Labor*, II (April, 1912), 99

¹⁰¹ Dubofsky, *When Workers organize*, vii-viii, 39; *Ladies’ Garment Worker*, V, (December, 1914), 3.

visitors. “I assert that we have the finest horses in the world in Central Park,” said the president of the New York Park Board, George C. Clausen, “and to let in machines that frighten them would not be right.” Clausen believed that only pleasure vehicles, or horse-drawn vehicles, deserved the right to enjoy the drives. After considerable criticism was thrown at the “veritable ogre,” President Clausen agreed to issue “temporary revocable permit[s]” in order to garner “first-hand data on the effect of horseless carriages on horses...He must make experiments and tests.” Soon after, the permits were revoked on “the grounds that their automobiles did not come up to the specifications of automobiles allowed,” namely because they were not open pleasure automobiles. Then on October 27, 1898, Winslow E. Buzby, described as the martyr for automobiles in a 1925 *New York Times* article, drove his car into the park and was arrested to “serve as a test case on the altar of freedom and liberty for automobiles in Central Park.” The Buzby matter sparked a heated debate between “the park versus auto.” Livery stable owners, carriage manufacturers, and cabmen were adamant that “Central Park was no place for noisy automobiles.” The following year, the Automobile Club of America dispatched several drivers into the park with the intention of getting arrested. By 1901, the Park Board had no choice but to change its ordinances and allow the horseless carriages, in whatever shape or form, onto the drives of the public park.¹⁰²

During the first decade of the twentieth century, one could spy motor cars and carriages driving side by side and competing for control of the roads. Individuals on horseback, carriage, and foot issued complaints that cars were too smelly and raucous, disrupting the retreat to nature that they had come to relish. At the same time, automobiles displaced the carriage as the new status symbol for New York’s elites. One high society Manhattan denizen proclaimed, “A stable

¹⁰² *New York Times*, 1925, “Park Versus Auto”; Rosenzweig and Blackmar, *The Park and the People*, 400-401.

of cars is coming to be recognized as the proper thing for a man of wealth.” The influx of new ridership pressured park officials to oil the drives for dust control but in effect made the roads too slippery for the carriage equines. In 1909, Maurice Connoly, the president of the Carriage Builders’ National Association, suggested that “it [was] time to sing the swan song to the high-grade carriage builder.” The burgeoning of motorcar showrooms by 1911 revealed the changing landscape of American driving, prompting one carriage manufacturer to announce, “We are out of the carriage business – all closed up – plant for sale.” In 1912, administrators began to reorganize paths and modify the drives for high-speed automobiles by asphaltting the roads; even the speed limit was doubled to fifteen miles per hour to accommodate for the park’s newest visitor. One journal noted in 1914, “cars are now accepted as something that has naturally happened and belongs in every scene.”¹⁰³

By World War I, the ritual of the carriage parade had grown obsolete. New York elites no longer desired to be restricted to Central Park, but instead telephoned each other to set up rendezvous at department store tearooms or at private country clubs. “Now that the motor-car is the prevailing vehicle,” one Manhattanite noted, “the Park seems smaller.” By the 1920s, especially once the middle class was able to afford motorcars, city traffic began to pour into Central Park, not to enjoy the driving experience, but to take advantage of the faster route across the city. After a series of complaints by parkgoing pedestrians and two hundred damaged park lampposts, some proposed banning the “car menace.” Nevertheless, by 1932, the automobile had

¹⁰³ John W. Lineham and Edward Cogswell, eds., *The Driving Clubs of Greater Boston* (Boston: Atlantic Printing Co., 1914), 24; Rosenzweig and Blackmar, *The Park and the People*, 400-401; J. Frank Hutcheson, “The Horse-Drawn vehicle Situations,” *The Spokesman and Harness World*, June 1916, 273, 434.

become a staple of the city, and traffic lights were installed in Central Park as evidence of this mechanical reality.¹⁰⁴

During the age of the automobile, horse power had been rendered strenuous and incompetent to meet the increasing demands of the rapidly growing city. A 1921 article from the *Wall Street Journal* reported, “to see the long lines of cars streaming in and out New York city each day, it would appear that the horse is really “extinct.”¹⁰⁵ A letter to the New York Times’ editor in 1926 argued that horses did not “belong in modern efficient business” because the economic costs to provide the horse outweighed the laborer’s productivity, “he eats seven days a week whether he works or not,” and “his speed is limited.” Raymond Zindle, the writer of the letter, further explained that

compared with horses, the electric truck has established an indisputable record of cutting hauling costs by a large fraction. The electric truck has from three to four times the speed of a horse and more than twice the cruising radius of a horse in both good and bad weather. It can be counted upon to do from one and one-half to two times the work of a team of horses at practically the same operating cost per day.¹⁰⁶

By the next decade, trolleys had replaced horse cars, automobiles were seen as the new status vehicle for the wealthy, and heavy duty trucks had usurped the teamster horse-drawn wagons and buggies. However, it was not just the lack of horsepower that had signaled the extinction of the urban workhorse. Business owners were no longer allowed to build cheap wooden stables due to the risk of fire and had no choice but to build costly equine residences within the context of rising and limited land costs. The crisis of manure was another harbinger of the horse’s exile. From a 1899 statistic, Manhattan’s horses were reported to produce at least 17.4 tons of excrement daily. Previously, farmers had been willing to purchase stable manure but the

¹⁰⁴ Rosezweig and Blackmar, *The Park and the People*, 401, 5.

¹⁰⁵ *Wall Street Journal*, 28 Jul 1921, *Dobbins’ Come-Back*.

¹⁰⁶ *New York Times*, 27 Feb 1926, “Horses in the City.”

increasing use of cheaper phosphate fertilizers made city excrement less attractive. Moreover by 1900, reformers argued that manure piles were not just unsightly or foul nuisances but could also serve as the nesting ground for harmful diseases.¹⁰⁷

The public's perception of the horse had changed as well. Previously, the equine citizen had symbolized human progress and the taming of nature, but in the newly mechanized American landscape, he was an alien, an antiquated intruder. In many ways, the automobile began to exemplify modernity while the horse, the traditional rural past.¹⁰⁸ In 1927, a Mrs. Mary C. Bletcher in Philadelphia was reported to have blocked city traffic for forty-five minutes when she suspected that the driver of a mail wagon was employing a lame horse.

Ignoring the pleas of a traffic policeman and the cries of a crowd of several hundred, she [Mary Bletcher] climbed into the driver's seat, and holding the reins, refused to let a substitute horse be hitched to the wagon until her charge was examined by an agent for the Society of Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. At a police station an hour later, the horse was pronounced well and fit. No arrests were made, and the horse returned to work. "I am so sorry," said Mrs. Bletcher. "I did it for the love of the horse."¹⁰⁹

By the mid-twentieth century, the term, workhorse had become a paradox. To the American public, the horse was now seen as a pitiful anomaly in the city workforce, belonging instead to the world of "acres and acres of green meadows...no more work for him now...Green meadows to roam in the summer and a big, straw-filled box stall to sleep in at night."¹¹⁰ Traffic accidents involving the horse also heightened the mistrust and skepticism surrounding the horse laborer.

Below was one article from the *New York Times*, highlighting this fear:

By seizing the nose of one of a team of runaway horses and holding on while he was dragged 150 feet, Sergeant Thomas J. O'Grady, of the Tremont Station succeeded in stopping the animals at 171st Street and Webster Avenue, the Bronx, yesterday afternoon. The driver of the truck...had been

¹⁰⁷ McShane and Tarr, "The Decline of the urban horse in American cities," 184-185; 192.

¹⁰⁸ McShane and Tarr, *The Horse in the city*, 179.

¹⁰⁹ *New York Times*, 12 July 1927, "Woman Blocks city Traffic in pity for mail wagon horses."

¹¹⁰ *Washington Post*, 1 May 1927, "What a Love match did for the faithful old police horse."

thrown from his seat and was hanging to the wagon tongue, between the horses, when the policeman ran to stop them. He was thrown to the ground...Both the driver and O'Grady were bruised and scratched...the horses were hit by an automobile and started running up Wester Avenue...Running to the front platform of the car, [Sergeant O'Grady] told the motorman to put on full speed and catch up with the runaways. As the car got even with the truck, O'Grady jumped off and seized the nearer horse by the nostrils.¹¹¹

Sergeant O'Grady's fast-paced adventure to seize these uncontrollable runaways and the chaos of the chase confirmed the public view that horses were unsafe and did not belong in the city.

¹¹¹ *New York Times*, 31 May 1913, "Grabbed Runaway by Nose."

Conclusion

To write a senior thesis in which horses are the historical agents of the narrative is neither an easy nor conventional feat. This project is an attempt to recover the erased history of Central Park's workhorses from the mid-nineteenth to the first two decades of the twentieth century. My hope is that the reader will come away from this text and realize the indispensable contribution that construction horses made in creating New York's beloved public park. When I was in high school, I was tragically plagued with very little sense of direction and found myself walking on one of Central Park's transverse roads. Walking on this road was a vastly different experience than zooming past it in a NYC cab. If the reader ever finds himself there, walking in the clip-clops of the working class horse, recall how Central Park was socially engineered: the spatial segregation and water fountain discrimination that impoverished equines were subjected to on a daily basis. Spotting a horse today in New York City might mean enlisting the service of one of Central Park's carriage drivers or a happenstance encounter with an equestrian police officer, but we must not forget or dismiss the fundamental impact and service that the urban horse made in the industrial transformation of nineteenth century cityscapes.

This thesis did not touch upon the current controversy surrounding the carriage horses of Central Park. However, it was fascinating to discover that the same ideologies and opinions of the horse world in the nineteenth and twentieth century were still very much relevant and believed today. The anthropomorphic and utilitarian frameworks are still used to either advocate for the horse's right to work or for the four-footed animal to spend his days rolling around in green pastures. My thesis does not aim to side with a particular party in the controversial issue, but rather to recover and give credit to the working horse's place in the history of Central Park. I

am not sure that I will ever be able to pass by the carousel without thinking about the horse-mule duo who were hidden underneath the platform. I might even tap my foot when the music stops, only to sadly realize that the equine laborers were exiled long ago without even a plaque to show for it.

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