

HOLY MEN OF JERICHO

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Over 3,000 years ago, Joshua used his horn to blow down the walls of Jericho in the Promised Land for the Israelites. Thousands of miles away and three thousand years later on the American continent, at the beginning of the twentieth century, arose a new Jericho. This was the Jericho Turnpike in Long Island, New York where another more modern horn blew that was still similar to the horn of 3,000 year ago. This new instrument created a sensation amongst sportsmen when used as a fox hunting horn and a horn sounded by the guards on coaches and fours.

There were other new sounds created during the Jazz Age in New York City in the 1920's such as the thundering hooves at Meadow Brook Polo Club on Long Island along Jericho Turnpike - the sight of the earliest polo matches in America. There were the sounds of the newly invented automobiles in William K. Vanderbilt's race alongside Jericho Turnpike in 1904.

Jericho Turnpike is a six mile road that affluent New York City dwellers travelled to reach their country estates and weekend retreats. It was the home of some of the greatest sportsmen during the Gilded Age. It lies in Nassau County in the western half of Long Island. If one drives down the six mile stretch of Jericho Turnpike today, one will still see streets named after the greatest polo team ever assembled in America: streets with names like: Hitchcock Lane, Whitney Lane, Bostwick Lane and Polo Drive - all relating to the sporting giants who once resided on Long Island.

Fourteen of the nation's 25 richest families could be linked to Long Island. Perhaps the most lavish parties ever described in American literature were the galas that Gatsby threw on his Long Island estate. In fact, the parties at night were so bright that the Long Island Lighting Company had to be notified in advance to prevent electrical overload. Dinners for 1,500 guests were held in 80 room mansions. This level of entertaining was immortalized in 1925 by F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby*.

“It was a time elegantly dressed men and women came and went like moths among the whisperings, champagne and the stars, where guest dived from the tower of his float during the day and his motorboats drew aquaplanes

over the swirling wavelets of the Sound, and in the evening the orchestra arrived and played cocktail music and the motorcars were packed five deep in the driveway, and the halls were gaudy with color and bouncy with noise. Gay young women were surrounded by men in tuxedos, and there were eddies of conversation and splashes of laughter, and corks popped and liquor flowed, and you knew it was a time that would never come again.”

The social climax of this era on Long Island came in August of 1924 when Edward, the Prince of Wales, and society's most eligible bachelor, came to visit. He attended polo matches at Meadow Brook and races at Belmont Park. Members of the social set vied to outdo each other to lure the future King of England to their parties.

Dixon Wecter in his Saga of *American Society* notes, “*Aristocracy and sport enjoy an affinity.*” He goes on to say, “*There is something in the blood, perhaps, that cries out for beauty, and there are few living things as beautiful as horses. And where there are horses there is danger, and danger gives off an appealing scent.*” The often used phrase in New York sporting society, “*I rode at the Garden*” seems magically to suggest that the speaker has reveled in the innocent pleasures of an Eden before the fall. From the

National Horse Show at Madison Square Garden in New York City to International polo at Meadow Brook Hunt - horses were the way to achieve status in society.

There were at least four major horse shows a year on Long Island. These were the North Shore, Cedar Valley, Sands Point and Piping Rock shows. The lead chronicler of society in this era was Nelson Doubleday's magazine, *Country Life in America*, which flourished from 1910 until the magazine was discontinued after World War II. According to *Country Life in America* the Piping Rock Club House was "*The type of thing George Washington would have built if he could afford it*".

A typical day on the Gold Coast would start with golf at a private course, lunch at the Piping Rock Club terrace with much talk about horses, and then on to Meadow Brook Club to watch afternoon polo. Afterwards, friends would fill up their Rolls Royces and head for the nearest dinner party that often ended with a Charleston contest.

Such displays of extravagance as seen in the Twentieth century would have been unfathomable to the humble English Quakers who settled this section

of the Hempstead Plains on Long Island. Old Westbury is the premiere town in the heart of Jericho Turnpike and its history goes back to 1670 when English Quakers developed farms in the area. Westbury derives its name from a town in Wiltshire, England.

In 1665 Governor Richard Nicholls laid out the Hempstead Plain, America's first formal racecourse. Prior to the Revolutionary War there were three major race tracks in New York. On Long Island was Jamaica, the Hempstead Newmarket Course and in the city was Greenwich Village Racetrack.

In 1774 the Continental Congress banned horse racing. During the Revolutionary War, George Washington lost the Island to General Gates for the duration of the war and patriots relocated to Connecticut. Ironically, the British occupation of New York guaranteed racing's continuation because the British troops always held regularly scheduled races, and New York was the center of horse racing in America during the Revolutionary War.

The 1916 edition of the directory, *Prominent Residents of Long Island and their Pleasure Clubs* listed 71 clubs between Jamaica and Flushing Bay,

Long Island. It stated the members of these clubs participated in “*Fox Hunting, Polo, Racing, Golf, Tennis, Aviation, Yachting, Fishing, Hunting, etc.*” In essence there was every sporting and social activity short of Alpine skiing.

Hunting was sometimes scheduled up to six days a week for six weeks in the Fall and Winter - was a way of life on Long Island. It took some time to teach aggressive New Yorkers that the competition was the fox, not each other. In association with spending a few hours in pursuit of *voracious* hounds running at a feverish pace from one estate to the next, there were fancy hunt breakfasts and lavish hunt balls

A few miles down the Jericho Turnpike is the very covert Meadow Brook Hunt established in 1881. Today, one would struggle to find its hidden location since there are no signs or listings of its physical existence.

Although it has a new location since its heyday, Meadow Brook is the second oldest Country Club in America.

It is to Meadow Brook that Long Island owes its all-time distinction and prominence in the world of sport. The club was conceived at a meeting at

Delmonico's restaurant in 1881. Mr. William Travers was elected president and Mr. Belmont Purdy was elected Master of the Foxhounds. The clubhouse was the former estate of Mr. Belmont Purdy, the first master of the hounds. The club was to be limited to 100 members. Meadow Brook club recruiters are thought to have said, "*To be in good standing in the Meadow Brook Hunt, one is supposed to have a bowing acquaintance with the Prince of Wales.*"

The Meadow Brook Hunt at one time had property so extensive that one could ride for hours without encountering any buildings or roads. The Meadow Brook Club's terrain extended 20 miles from east to west and about 12 miles from north to south. As building increased, the maximum length of a hunt became a 15 minute chase. Foxhunting became virtually impossible since the minute a fox crosses a road, the hounds lose their scent.

Theodore Roosevelt was one of the prominent early Meadow Brook Hunt members. Today we think of him as a big game hunter, big stick waving, rough riding and having an oversized grin. He was an avid foxhunter during his youth. Foxhall Keene remarked that he saw Roosevelt, "*turn over in the middle of the hunt, break his arm and go on to finish the hunt at Meadow*

Brook.” In 1886 Roosevelt wrote an extensive article on riding to hounds on Long Island.

Theodore Roosevelt had a theory of the Southern cavalry’s superiority during the Civil War was due to their heavy involvement with foxhunting .
“If in 1860 riding to hounds had been to the North, as it was to the South, a national pastime, it would have not taken us until well on towards the middle of the [Civil] War before we were able to develop a cavalry capable of withstanding the shock of Southern horsemen.”

The second major Hunt organization on Long Island was the Rockaway Hunt. It was founded in 1878 and was located 12 miles from Westbury in Old Rockaway. The Hunt was due east of the Meadow Brook Hunt and it was founded three years prior. A great rivalry existed between Rockaway and its neighboring Meadow Brook Hunt to the point where it became necessary to draw a formal line that restricted how far east the Meadow Brook could hunt. The rivalry also extended to their polo teams. The ladies of the Meadow Brook and the ladies of Rockaway viewed each other in jealousy and hate from atop their coaches while their lords and masters

fought their battles on the fields. Hissing by the ladies on both sides of the polo field was not uncommon.

Foxhall Keene called the Rockaway's steeplechase course, "*The best I have seen anywhere, barring only the Grand National at Aintree.*" By 1889 it had been said that the club had the best pack of imported foxhounds in the country. Beyond foxhunting there was game hunting, steeplechasing, pigeon shooting, cock fighting, and even prize fighting. There was a pit under the grandstand that had been built for some of the more extraneous sports. Incidentally this same pit was used to "jail" pickpockets during the race meet until the police would arrive.

The clubhouse at Rockaway was called Cedarhurst. It was built in 1884 at a cost of \$44,000 and purportedly was the largest clubhouse in all America. On July 1, 1893, the clubhouse burned down and even the trophies were lost. Fourteen years after its founding, urban development put an end to the Rockaway Hunt.

Other hunts on Long Island faced similar challenges. One of the smaller nearby hunts on Long Island also experienced a bout with the modern age.

During a hunt, a fox went to ground inside a fairly large drain. But true to the line, the whole pack of hounds went into the drain as well. The huntsman waited in vain for some visible action and after no success he withdrew with fellow members of the hunt to their headquarters for the hunt breakfast.

After breakfast the group returned to the drain armed with spades and shovels. Again to no avail. The fox and hounds were in seclusion. Mr. Kenneth Caswell, a small man, disrobed and wiggled into the drain to the point only his feet were visible. His presence created a riot of confusion and clamor. He reappeared, covered with sand and mud-even to his goatee. In his hand he had the tail of the fox. Nearly one hundred years later we assume that this tail still stands intact today in the choicest nook of Mr. Caswell's country estate.

The Meadow Brook was just as famous for their polo as they were for their foxhunting. Meadow Brook derived its name from a brook that runs through the polo fields. The course of the brook was changed in order to build more polo fields. Meadow Brook is called the "*Heart of American polo*" and grew to be America's Hurlingham. "*For polo is in Westbury what golf is in*

St. Andrews, talked, lived, eaten and slept over.” It boasted eight polo fields (keep in mind each polo field was larger than 7 football fields.) The premier field was the International Field which hosted over 40,000 spectators in the trademark “robin’s egg blue” grandstands. In the Westbury area alone, there were over 30 polo fields. On Long Island there were over 60 polo fields that saw constant use between the two World Wars.

Royalty seen at the club was not uncommon. Gustavus Adolphus, the Crown Prince of Sweden visited in 1928. The Duke of Windsor was also a regular at the Meadow Brook polo matches. After World War II the Meadow Brook grounds had been requisitioned for highway development. Although the name survived in a successful polo team for many years, the club was forced to close.

Another popular sport among the “holy men of Jericho” was coaching. Leonard Jerome and August Belmont introduced four-in-hand driving to his cohorts in New York after learning the Duke of Beaufort was reviving the sport in London. The Duke of Beaufort’s book “*Driving*” revolutionized coaching, which had come to an end during the railroad era. In 1870 coaching became a leading sport in England.

In coaching, speed did not count as much as style. There were many aspects of judging including the coach, the horses, the driver and the attendants.

Buttons were polished, lap robes were perfectly folded and artificial flowers were inserted into the horses headbands.

In 1875 the New York Coaching Club was formed. It was not uncommon for the New York Coaching Club to plan an excursion from Fifth Avenue to a Jericho Turnpike destination. The opening event of the club's season was often a trip to August Belmont's home in Hempstead, Long Island. The 25 mile trip had a few stops to change teams of horses. The next day they would participate in the return trip back to the city.

Long Island was very influential in coach making and many carriages are named after various locations on the island. There was the East Williston Cart named after Henry M. Willis whose ancestors settled Long Island in 1673. There was also the Mineola Cart, the Hempstead Cart and the Meadowbrook Cart. The "Meadowbrook Cart" became a catchall term for the other Long Island carts. Meadowbrook Carts were very popular for following local packs of foxhounds. Possibly by pure coincidence, another famous style of carriage is called the "Rockaway."

The earliest auto races in America were on Long Island and known as the Vanderbilt Cup races. Auto racing historian Beverly Rae Kimes notes , “*The Vanderbilt Cup was the most exciting thing that happened on the Island since the Battle of Long Island during the Revolutionary War.*” In the first race there were 18 cars and 50,000 spectators. The annual Vanderbilt Cup eventually drew up to 300,000 spectators. The race started at Jericho Turnpike and Hitchcock Lane. It went across the North Country road, up to Roslyn. The finish line was also on Jericho Turnpike at Mineola.

In 1904, William K. Vanderbilt, turned 30 miles of public roads, mostly in Nassau County, into a racecourse for automobiles that would become a 300 mile race for the pleasure of him and his tycoon friends. He called the race the “Vanderbilt Cup” and the 30 pound silver trophy was designed by Louis Comfort Tiffany.

In 1908, William K. Vanderbilt constructed a 45 mile private motor parkway from Flushing, Queens to Lake Ronkonkoma. The Vanderbilt Motor Parkway was complete with eleven tollhouses, a restaurant and a hotel. Mr. Vanderbilt moved his annual auto race to portions of this road. For two years the race was on public roads until the Automobile Club of America

withdrew its support. Because the new course's roads were privately owned, Vanderbilt did not have to abide by the laws relating to public road use. There was no posted speed limit and the parkway's banked curves encouraged high-speed driving. Mr. Vanderbilt incorporated this road into the race that he established four years earlier.

The 10 laps over the 30 mile course was arduous, considering that part of the course was unpaved. Road conditions were diabolical since rocks and ruts tore up tires and wheel spokes. There was one spot near the finish line where a road bump caused cars to leap into the air. Just before they reached this spot the participants would lift one hand from the wheel and fervently cross themselves. The drivers did not get a chance to practice prior to the race since all drivers had to be off the course by seven in the morning to clear the course for ordinary traffic.

Sportsman Foxhall Keene was one of the automobile races earliest participants. During the race he hit a telegraph pole. Coincidentally he owned 1/3 of the utility company that installed it. He abandoned the course and went on to watch the conclusion of the race from the grandstand.

Invariably the biggest hazard was the crowds, which scrambled to get out of the way only moments before the cars came roaring past. The daring crowds were partially to blame for the demise of the race. In 1910 the race came to an end when two mechanics and two spectators were killed and 20 bystanders were injured.

Aviation was considered a gentrified pursuit and it flourished on Long Island. Mineola Pike intersects Jericho Turnpike and was the site of a branch of the New York Aeronautic Society. Perhaps more glamorous was the Long Island Aviation Country Club at Hicksville also along the Jericho Turnpike. It opened up in 1929 and had a 25 plane hanger, white glove mechanics service, lessons, and the pilot's equivalent of a "pro shop." Charles Lindbergh was inducted as an honorary member of the Aviation Country Club.

A Long Island millionaire would frequently fly his plane from the Aviation Club to a sea plane ramp at the foot of Wall Street. It was not unusual to see Jock Whitney preparing to take off for a quick trip to the races in Saratoga, New York. Or perhaps one might catch a glimpse of Alice DuPont Mills

stepping off her plane returning home from a morning hunt in Wilmington, Delaware.

The Aviation Country Club was sold to William Levitt in 1948. He transferred some of this property to his Levittown housing development project. Today a street named Pilot's Lane is the only memory of the club.

The so-called "*holy men*" of Jericho Turnpike were a product of America's Gilded Age. All sources amply testify that of all the sportsmen, playboys, rounders, and profligates produced by the Gilded Age, the most spirited and least inhibited was ***James Gordon Bennett, Jr.*** He spent an estimated 30 to 40 million dollars as a yachtsman, womanizer and sportsman. He was heir to the *New York Herald*.

There is no cloud on Bennett's title of, "*Father of American Polo.*"

While watching a game of polo in England at Hurlingham in 1876 he was fascinated and brought the concept back to America as well as one of England's players, Captain Candy. The first game of polo was allegedly played in Newport, Rhode Island in 1876, but the players including Long Island resident, August Belmont, were given practice drills at Jerome Park

beforehand. Bennett went on to found the Westchester Polo Club in New York.

Bennett was a reckless coachman and was the talk of New York society for his speed and shouting while driving his carriage. He once had several girls in his carriage including Jennie Jerome, daughter of Leonard Jerome, one of the Jockey Club's founders. His reckless driving forced the carriage to overturn and his passengers spilled onto the pavement. Fortunately Jenny Jerome was unhurt. Otherwise, this could have been a calamitous loss for Britain since Jennie Jerome went on to marry Lord Randolph Churchill and their son was to be Sir Winston Churchill.

Mr. Bennett was an ardent foxhunter who carried a hunting kit with him in whatever part of the world he traveled. He gave first hand reports from a horse known as "Herald's Hunter." The hunting accounts in the *Herald* were of excessive length, sometimes three or four columns. Equal space was provided for maps charting the current afternoon's outing.

In 1866 two sportsmen from the New York Yacht Club, George A. Osgood and Pierre Lorrillard, Jr. wagered a \$30,000 bet on a race from Sandy Hook,

New York to the Isle of Wight, England. Bennett got wind of this and boldly upped the wager to \$90,000. Bennett's yacht, Henrietta, won the first transatlantic race in 1866 on Christmas Day in 13 days, 21 hours, and 55 minutes. Bennett was the only man in the history of the New York Yacht Club to hold the title of Commodore twice (1871-1874 and 1884-1885.) He was a man to whom all lovers of manly sports, on land and water, owe a debt of gratitude.

Another "Holy Man" was sportsman *Foxhall Keene*. In 1886 the Keene family moved to Babylon, Long Island. At the age of only 14 Foxhall Keene must have made quite an impression on the neighbors since he became a member of the Rockaway Hunt. At this young age he also became involved with polo. He was on the first American International Polo team.

He was known for his attention to detail on the polo field. He would have his saddles specifically made for each polo pony which allowed for him to always be the same exact distance off the ground. Each spring he would routinely visit Holbrow's in London to order 50 to 60 custom made mallets. Then elsewhere he had each of the grips custom fitted to his hand size.

By 1888 the polo players at Rockaway and Meadow Brook were superior to all other polo clubs on the continent. The success of these two clubs led to a need to handicap players to equal out contests. The original scale was zero to five with Foxhall Keene and Tommy Hitchcock being the only two 5-goal handicapped players in America. In 1890 when the Polo Association of America was formed the handicap scale was changed from zero to ten. Keene was the only athlete at that time to be rated a ten goal player. During his long polo career no one would ever be rated ahead of him.

Beyond the sport of polo, Keene was involved in other gentleman's sports. In 1887 Foxhall Keene rode in 101 races and won 79 of them. Keene became Master of the Foxhounds of Meadow Brook Hunt in 1903. He played in doubles lawn tennis tournaments on the same team with Tom Slocum, the national champion. He competed in singles tennis with Tommy Pettit, the world champion at the time. He won several golf tournaments and participated in competitive yachting events

Foxhall's father, James R. Keene, considered his son the greatest all-round athlete in the world. James Keene had a \$100,000 standing wager to back his son against any man in the world at ten sports of his choice. Fortunately,

there were never any takers - the professional athletes of his day could not afford to play Mr. Keene's kind of game.

He wrote in his memoirs that on Long Island it was common to see sportsmen everywhere. *"It was a very sporting community...Everyone rode, hunted, played polo and fairly lived out of doors. On Sunday morning you would see thirty or forty men riding over the countryside larking over fences and having a wonderful time"*.

Unfortunately by 1935 Keene was virtually penniless from the grand lifestyle he lived. In his autobiography ***Full Tilt***, Keene remarked, *"Now I ride no more. My strength, skill and even the fortune that enabled me to live so royally are spent. But if I had to do it again, I would follow exactly the same way. It was a life of pure delight."*

In 1867 another Long Island sports legend, ***August Belmont***, began laying the foundation for his racing empire. He purchased 1,300 acres on Long Island near Babylon. All country sports and recreations which render a sojourn at a fine country house were to be found. Sports like riding, shooting, fishing, rowing, bowling, billiards, and croquet were available.

For the racing aspect, there were barns, training stables, paddocks and boxes for the broodmares. There was a one mile race track and 36 paddocks on the property. The main stable had 27 stalls and a pair of stables with 12 more stalls in case there was any overflow. There was the trainer's house, a bunkhouse for 50 stable boys and an indoor exercising barn where horses trained in the winter. Just south of the main house was a private one-mile long racetrack complete with its own grandstands where Mr. Belmont would frequently sit all by himself and watch his horses race.

The Belmont Stakes were originally run at Jerome Park in Long Island from 1867-1889. The race was a mile and three quarters for three year olds. Soon came developments of the Belmont Park we know today. In 1902 August Belmont, Jr. and William C. Whitney put aside their differences to join with Thomas Hitchcock Sr., E.D. Morgan and J.P. Morgan to purchase 650 acres in Queens and Nassau counties to build Belmont racetrack. Mr. Whitney suggested that it be called Belmont after August Belmont Jr.'s father. The track opened in 1905 and soon was established as America's leading race course. The first international air show took place at Belmont Park in 1910. August Belmont, along with Leonard Jerome and William R. Travers were

the founders of the American Jockey Club in 1893. Belmont was also a director of Wilbur and Orville Wright's Airplane Company.

Novelist Edith Wharton modeled the mysterious upstart, Julius Beaufort, in *The Age of Innocence* after Belmont.

On Long Island resided the three greatest polo players ever to play the game. *John Hay "Jock" Whitney* in 1927 became heir to one of America's greatest fortunes when his father Payne Whitney died and left him and his sister Mrs. Joan Payne Whitney \$239 million- the largest estate recorded in the United States at that time. Jock is merely the Scottish form of "Jack" and is in no way due to his riding abilities. Jock had a 500-acre home in Manhasset called Greentree. At one time Greentree had an army of nearly 300 employees.

He was publisher of the *New York Herald Tribune* from 1959-1966 (the same paper that James Gordon Bennett owned prior to him). During World War II Whitney was captured by the Nazis. The Belmont public address system announced on August 28, 1944, "that an especially esteemed member of the Jockey Club had fallen into enemy hands."

Whitney once told some of his staff that he wished that he had his own polo field at Greentree to practice on, but there were no spots level enough. One day when he had returned from abroad, he was astonished to be advised that the staff of Greentree had interpreted his wish as a command and had carved a polo field for him from the side of a hill. It set Whitney back \$200,000, but it was undoubtedly the most velvety private polo field ever created.

Whenever he played in a match there, the entire staff of Greentree would drop their assigned duties, flock to the field and cheer Whitney on. The polo field's demise occurred in World War II when it became a victory garden consisting of potatoes and alfalfa.

On the polo field Whitney was an average performer with a 6-goal handicap. He was always playing defensive back, a role that did not match his competitive nature. Whitney was idolatrous of a man who moved in a totally different orbit - the polo player Tommy Hitchcock. Whitney spoke feverently of his teammate when he said, *“My feelings for Hitchcock remained hero worship long after that kind of emotion is supposed to stop beating in a boyish breast.”*

Tommy Hitchcock, Jr. began playing polo at the age of six. In World War I he was turned down for the American Air Force on account of his youth. Instead he joined the French LaFayette Escadrille and quickly became a pilot. He was shot down over German lines and spent four months in hospitals and prison camps. He escaped by jumping off of a prisoner train and walked to Switzerland at nighttime via night compass. By 1921 he was back in America representing his country in the Westchester International Polo Cup in New York.

His celebrity in the 1920's rivaled Babe Ruth's, Jack Dempsey's and Man O' War's. As many as 40,000 people would come to watch him play. The games were on the front pages of the American and British newspapers. It was once noted that one could fill an entire copy of the Social Register with the mere introduction of "among those present" at his polo matches. Critics say, "*His polo handicap should be a 12 not a 10.*" He held a 10-goal handicap for 18 years. Hitchcock was also Master of the Foxhounds of the Meadow Brook Hunt.

F. Scott Fitzgerald met Tommy Hitchcock in 1921 and they became firm friends. Fitzgerald subsequently used Hitchcock as a model for Tom Buchanan in the *Great Gatsby* and described him this way in the novel:

He was a sturdy, straw-haired man of thirty with a rather hard mouth and a supercilious manner. Two shining arrogant eyes had established dominance over his face and gave him an appearance of always leaning aggressively forward. Not even the effeminate swank of his riding clothes could hide the enormous power of that body - he seemed to fill those glistening boots until he strained to top lacing, and you could see a great pack of muscle when his shoulder moved under his thin coat. It was a body capable of enormous leverage - a cruel body."

In 1946 Hitchcock was featured in the lead story of a children's comic called *True Comics-The Story of Ten Goal Tommy*. To date, there are no other known polo players featured as a children's comic book hero.

Devereux Milburn is hailed as the greatest back who ever played polo. Milburn grew up in Buffalo, New York, and at age 12 he had organized his own polo club. He played polo during his university days in England at Oxford. In his law-school days he played for Harvard at Myopia Polo Club.

Milburn most likely would have stayed in Buffalo for his professional and sporting career if not for one incident in 1901. President McKinley had been staying with Millburns parents while attending the Pan-American Exposition in 1901 which his father, John Milburn spearheaded. McKinley was shot by an anarchist and died in Milburn's home. The family grew tired of the numerous gawkers peering at the house from the sidewalks. So the family moved to New York City.

He was a member of Meadow Brook Hunt which was the epicenter of sport in America. Milburn played in every Westchester cup polo event from 1909-1927 with an unbeatable 14 match record and was captain in all but six. He was part of the world's first 40-goal team comprised of the big four at Meadow Brook, consisting of Milburn, Larry and Monte Waterbury and Louis Stoddard. In 1913 Milburn married Nancy G. Steele, the daughter of one of J.P. Morgan's partners. For a wedding gift, Harry Payne Whitney gave his teammate six polo ponies and a groom.

The *New York Times* quoted, "*He was the first player whose backhand strokes were as long and accurate as his forward hits...*" Tommy Hitchcock

once replied to an inquiry of who would make up the all-time best polo team. “*Milburn, Milburn, Milburn and Milburn.*”

In the art world, renowned British sporting painter Sir Alfred J. Munnings paid a six month visit to America in 1924. Munnings spent much of this time on Long Island to paint a number of society portraits. One of the paintings was of Milburn astride his piebald horse Gargantilla. French bronze sculptor Herbert Haseltine sculpted a piece entitled, “The Meadow Brook Team 1909” also known as, “The Big Four.” This was commissioned by Harry Payne Whitney. The Whitneys sponsored Haseltine at his art studio at his Long Island home. Leading the charge of the four horsemen in the statue was Milburn.

Milburn incurred several injuries after the war from playing polo.

Sportswriter Grantland Rice remarked, “*Devereux Millburn, one of the all time greats, in keeping his bones together, has used enough wire to encircle Long Island.*”

The *New York Times* said at his death, “*Mr. Milburn, one of the great figures in the history of American sport, was a magnetic and stirring leader*

and a consummate performer; a man of forceful, bold personality, quick to seeing new ways of doing things; finding joy in every moment on the polo field and playing the game to the last whistle with every ounce of his strength and spirit.”

The sporting period came into being on Long Island, *“with the spontaneity of a prairie wildfire. It burned brightly and hotly for a brief time. And then extinguished so completely that the record of its existence is confined to a few surviving long-empty mansions, some yellowing photographs and the pages of books and old newspapers.”* One might recall a verse from Edna St. Vincent Millay: *“My candle burns at both ends; it gives a lovely light. But oh, my foes, and oh my friends - it will not last the night.”* This “Golden Age” of sport on Long Island could not survive the triple tsunami of the stock market crash, the Depression and World War II.

As Long Island’s urban sprawl worsened, New Yorkers and other wealthy Americans migrated to an area between Middleburg and Warrenton, Virginia. Today route 17 in Virginia is nicknamed, “Jericho Turnpike.” The Orange County Hunt located in the Plains, Virginia is actually named after Orange County, New York. It was founded by Edward H. Harriman in

1900 and he relocated this hunt to Virginia. Today there are 13 organized hunt clubs within an hours drive from the new “Jericho Turnpike” in Virginia. One hopes that this could last forever unlike the Jericho Turnpike in Long Island.

The newly built Long Island Expressway cut through the country like an unhealing wound. Driving along the Long Island Expressway today approaching Old Westbury from the west there is a five mile sharp turn to the south known as “*Objector’s Bend.*” This was an effort by local citizens to preserve some of its grandeur. Another compromise was to have no exits along the Long Island Expressway within the four mile stretch of Old Westbury. The Old Westbury residents further insisted that no streetlights be put in to shine on their village. However, the highway cut through some of the grand properties, ultimately causing their disappearance.

By the year 2000 2/3 of the great estates that gave Long Island its great cachet were gone. Ultimately, the number of estates continue to shrink as the uniformed public does little to salvage their history. Throughout this paper, I have noted a consistent pattern of the rise and fall of the sporting heritage and empires along Jericho Turnpike, Long Island. By World War

II, less than seventy years after the second promised land of Jericho was built, it was again destroyed by horns. But, this time they were automobile horns of the growing number of residents and highways on Long Island.

Today when one drives down the Jericho Turnpike it looks just like any other normal street in America. *“And we stop and wonder”*.