

## Biography of a Thoroughbred Training Farm: The Intersection of Class, Labor Structures, and the Built Environment at William du Pont, Jr.'s Bellevue Hall

In March 1929, racehorse owner William du Pont, Jr. responded to a letter written by Peter Monaghan, a recent immigrant from Scotland concerned about his nineteen-year-old son William's dismissal from du Pont's thoroughbred racehorse stable. Du Pont wrote, "You evidently are not very familiar with the hiring of help in the race horse establishments. [...] I am sure there was nothing personal regarding the trainer's dismissal of your son, as laying off men is a perpetual occurrence in the race horse business, due to the constant elimination of the horses themselves for racing purposes."<sup>1</sup> Du Pont's letter shows that thoroughbred horse racing was much more than a rich man's hobby. Although seasonal in nature, the racing industry provided an important source of income for working-class people. Employees like William Monaghan preferred working in the racing industry to farming or laboring in factories, in spite of their expendability in the eyes of owners like du Pont.

The tensions exposed in du Pont's letter to Peter Monaghan raise a number of questions. Who were the people who worked in du Pont's stable? What jobs did they perform? Where did they work when they were seasonally laid off? What were their relationships like? How did the trainer situate himself between du Pont and the stable workers he supervised on a daily basis?

Furthermore, the racing industry itself was paradoxical during the early-to-mid twentieth century. Much like other forms of manufacturing, the stables comprising the racing industry employed large numbers of working-class people who completed specific sets of tasks and operated within a defined labor hierarchy to produce winning racehorses. Yet, unlike other industries of the time, this work often took place within the landscapes of the owners' country

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<sup>1</sup> William du Pont, Jr. to Peter Monaghan, 15 March 1929, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Delaware.

estates, frequently in view of the mansion. During the 1930s, du Pont transformed his property into an American country estate with a state-of-the-art thoroughbred training center as part of his performance of his status within the thoroughbred industry and American high society, raising additional questions about the presence of working-class people within du Pont's estate. How did working-class employees occupy the landscapes? Where did they live? How did du Pont design the landscape and buildings to impose hierarchies and order on his racing stable workforce?

While the answers to some of these questions are constrained by the silences of the workers in the archives, an in-depth exploration of du Pont's racing stable workforce and his construction of a state-of-the-art training center at Bellevue Hall near Wilmington, Delaware shows that the operation of his racing stables would not have been possible without the labor of dozens of working-class individuals. In spite of the workers' centrality to the racing stable, du Pont created a visual narrative that removed workers from the landscape at Bellevue Hall, imposing a class-based hierarchy on his workers and the built environment, further perpetuating the myth that horseracing solely involved the social elite.

As a single case study, this research paper has limitations in reaching definitive conclusions about the overarching patterns of employment within the racing industry and the ways in which social and labor hierarchies were reflected within the landscapes of thoroughbred breeding and training farms. It does, however, make a case for cultural landscape studies as a form of analysis in architectural and labor histories of the Gilded Age and early-twentieth century. The study of cultural landscapes, or "the intricate webs of mental, social, and ecological spaces that help to define human groups and their activities"<sup>2</sup> emerged as a vastly

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<sup>2</sup> Paul Groth and Chris Wilson, "The Polyphony of Cultural Landscape Study," in *Everyday America: Cultural Landscape Studies After J. B. Jackson* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2003), 1.

interdisciplinary field during the second half of the twentieth century. Initially popularized by landscape philosopher John Brinkerhoff Jackson, cultural landscapes have been studied using a wide variety of methodological approaches by scholars from disciplines including geography, anthropology, sociology, architecture, landscape architecture, history, English, urban planning, architectural history, and historic preservation. Scholars have recognized that landscapes are normative. Landscapes reflect cultural and social norms while simultaneously working to reinforce these norms by shaping human life.<sup>3</sup>

In spite of the momentousness of landscape's normative role, architectural historians have largely only considered landscape as a category of analysis in the study of Southern plantation architecture. Archaeological and architectural studies of plantations revealed that as part of the emergence of antebellum paternalism during the early-nineteenth century, large slaveholders shifted from housing their enslaved people in communal barracks-style housing to single-family houses or duplexes. They also improved the slave quarters by building housing with wood floors and glazed windows. Slaveholders believed these changes would keep their enslaved people happier, healthier, more productive, and less inclined to escape, while also serving as a justification for slavery as a benevolent institution. While earlier slave quarters had often been located away from the big house to minimize the presence of enslaved people within the landscape, paternalistic slaveholders often located their improved slave quarters in more prominent locations to showcase their benevolence as masters and their wealth. Archaeological, architectural history, and cultural landscape studies have revealed important shifts in the

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<sup>3</sup> Richard H. Schein, "Normative Dimensions of Landscape," in *Everyday America: Cultural Landscape Studies After J. B. Jackson*, ed. Paul Groth and Chris Wilson (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2003), 199-231.

conceptualization of race, labor, and space in the American South.<sup>4</sup>

In contrast, scholarship on labor and space during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries through a cultural landscape studies framework has been extremely limited. Labor historians have occasionally considered the role of space on shop floors, but have largely shied away from the broader inclusion of architecture and landscapes in their studies. Some architectural historians, like Alison K. Hoagland in her book *Mine Towns: Buildings for Workers in Michigan's Copper County* (2010), have studied the architecture and landscapes of company towns to reveal how space reinforced corporate paternalism. These works remain largely driven by the study of individual building types and spaces, ignoring how larger patterns within the landscapes functioned in shaping the lives of workers. Likewise, labor and social history have been completely excluded from scholarship on American country houses. Likely due to these buildings' architectural extravagance, architectural historians have focused on architectural style, the houses' elite owners, and the talented architects who designed the buildings. This approach has largely resulted in the erasure of the working-class people who enabled these estates to function. An examination of an American country house's collective built environment and the histories of its workforce within the framework of cultural landscape studies has the potential to reveal how elite landscapes created and reinforced race, class, and gender norms.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> John Michael Vlach, *Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 18-32; Dennis J. Pogue, "The Domestic Architecture of Slavery at George Washington's Mount Vernon," *Winterthur Portfolio* 37, no. 1 (2002): 3-22; and Edward A. Chappell, "Housing Slavery," in *The Chesapeake House*, ed. Cary Carson and Carl Lounsbury (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 156-178.

<sup>5</sup> Rick Halpern, *Down on the Killing Floor: Black and White Workers in Chicago's Packinghouses, 1904-54* (Urbana and Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1997); Roger Horowitz, *"Negro and White, Unite and Fight!": A Social History of Industrial Unionism in Meatpacking, 1930-90* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997); and Deborah Fink, *Cutting into the Meatpacking Line: Workers and Change in the Rural Midwest* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); John S. Garner, ed., *The Company Town: Architecture and Society in the Early Industrial Age* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Alison K. Hoagland, *Mine Towns: Buildings for Workers in Michigan's Copper Country* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010); Clive Aslet,

This research paper studies the workforce and the development of William du Pont, Jr.'s thoroughbred landscape at Bellevue Hall to examine how the class, race, and gender norms of a racing stable mapped onto the landscape of a country estate. Du Pont's estate is especially important to study. As a significant figure in early-to-mid twentieth century American horse racing, du Pont made important contributions to the industry and culture as a breeder, racehorse owner, and designer of more than twenty racing venues. Furthermore, he retained more records on his workforce than many of his contemporaries, which have been archived at the Hagley Library and Museum, allowing for a detailed analysis of labor at Bellevue Hall. In addition to the development of a labor history, the cultural landscape study of Bellevue Hall uses visual analysis of the buildings and landscape in conjunction with historic photographs, aerials, and maps. As an anglophile, class predominantly drove du Pont's organization of the landscape.

William du Pont, Jr. was exposed to the equestrian lifestyle from a young age. He was born in 1896 while the family was living in England to ride out the scandal caused by his parents' divorces from their previous spouses. His father loved coaching and often drove his children around British country estates outside of London. In 1902, du Pont moved with his family to James Madison's Montpelier estate in Orange, Virginia. His father had purchased the property and converted it into an American country estate by more than doubling the size of the house and constructing numerous barns, stables, and carriage houses. He encouraged his

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*The American Country House* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990); Roger W. Moss, *The American Country House* (New York: H. Holt, 1990); Mark Alan Hewitt, *The Architect and the American Country House, 1890-1940* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); Richard Guy Wilson, *The Colonial Revival House* (New York: Henry N. Abrams, 2004); Wayne Craven, *Gilded Mansions: Grand Architecture and High Society* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2009); Maggie Lidz, *The du Ponts: Houses and Gardens in the Brandywine, 1900-1951* (New York: Acanthus Press, 2009); and Laurie Ossman and Debra A. McClane, *The Gentleman's Farm: Elegant Country House Living* (New York: Rizzoli, 2016).

children's interests in horses by giving them ponies. William and his sister Marion quickly took to riding, becoming talented equestrians by their teenage years. William du Pont, Jr. rode as an amateur jockey in steeplechase races as a young man, leading him to become interested in thoroughbred racehorse ownership, breeding, and training by the late 1920s. Du Pont initially tried to monetize his racing stable by incorporating it as Foxcatcher Farms in 1927. In spite of the money du Pont made on horse sales, stud fees, and race purses, the racing stable was so expensive that the business consistently ended in the red each quarter. Foxcatcher Farms, Inc. became defunct by 1932 and du Pont continued to operate his Foxcatcher Farms racing stable privately even though he frequently lost money on it.<sup>6</sup>

Du Pont first began to develop his racing stable at his Liseter Hall estate in Newtown Square, Pennsylvania during the late 1920s. Du Pont's father-in-law, William Liseter Austin, gave du Pont and his wife Jean land in Newtown Square as a wedding gift, while du Pont's father built them a mansion replicating Montpelier in 1922. As avid horsepeople, William and Jean du Pont first set about building barns for their riding horses before developing a thoroughbred breeding and training farm. For all of the construction work, they only briefly used Liseter Hall as their primary residence. William du Pont, Sr. died in 1928, leaving his Bellevue

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<sup>6</sup> "William du Pont Papers Finding Aid," Hagley Museum and Library; "Saulsbury-du Pont: The Bride the Divorced Wife of Her Cousin, Victor [sic] du Pont," *The Sun* (New York, New York), December 6, 1893, accessed April 12, 2019, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/466213447>; Gerald Strine, *Montpelier: The Recollections of Marion duPont Scott* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976), 35-36, 54-63; K. Edward Lay, *The Architecture of Jefferson Country: Charlottesville and Albemarle County, Virginia* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2000), 253; "NPS Form 002-1832 Southwest Mountain Rural HD 1992 NRHP Final.pdf," accessed January 10, 2016, [http://www.dhr.virginia.gov/register/Counties/Albemarle/002-1832\\_Southwest\\_Mountain\\_Rural\\_HD\\_1992\\_NRHP\\_Final.pdf](http://www.dhr.virginia.gov/register/Counties/Albemarle/002-1832_Southwest_Mountain_Rural_HD_1992_NRHP_Final.pdf); "NPS Form 030-5435 Cromwells Run Rural HD 2008 draft.doc," accessed January 10, 2016, [http://www.dhr.virginia.gov/register/Counties/Fauquier/030-5434\\_Cromwells\\_Run\\_Rural\\_HD\\_2008\\_final.pdf](http://www.dhr.virginia.gov/register/Counties/Fauquier/030-5434_Cromwells_Run_Rural_HD_2008_final.pdf); Foxcatcher Farms, Inc. Financial Statements, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 311, Hagley; Racing Stables Working Papers, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 251, Hagley.

Hall estate in Wilmington, Delaware to his son. Bellevue Hall had been built by wealthy Philadelphia wool merchant Hanson Robinson in 1855 as part of the movement to construct villas outside major cities. Du Pont's father purchased the stone Gothic Revival castle in 1893, but had made few changes to the property aside from renovating the house's interior, constructing several outbuildings during the 1910s, and purchasing an additional 317 acres.<sup>7</sup>

Following his father's death, William du Pont, Jr. undertook a massive renovation of Bellevue Hall to transform it into a premiere thoroughbred training farm and a country estate befitting his status. Du Pont succeeded his father as president of the Delaware Trust Company, so the family's relocation to Bellevue Hall enabled him to live considerably closer to his job. Prior to moving, he completely remodeled the house at Bellevue Hall by transforming it from a Gothic Revival castle into a Colonial Revival mansion beginning in 1930. He had the stone towers removed, redid the servants' quarters on the third floor while changing the roof's form, stuccoed the exterior, added two large, columned porticos, and redid the interior woodwork in an exaggerated imitation of early American architectural interiors. He designed the primary façade to resemble Montpelier. Du Pont's rationale for having two houses imitating Montpelier is unknown, but his decision was likely influenced by a combination of nostalgia for his childhood home, bitterness over Marion inheriting his father's five-thousand-acre showpiece Montpelier

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<sup>7</sup> Cara L. Wise, "1987 Cultural Resource Management Plan for Bellevue State Park," Delaware Division of Parks and Recreation, 17; Moss, *The American Country House*, 144-146; "Estate of William du Pont, Jr. Derivation of Acreage Remaining," 18 February 1971, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 373, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Delaware; Asst. Supt. Architectural Dept. of the American Car and Foundry Company to J. W. Barkley, 16 April 1915, William du Pont Collection, Box 45, Hagley; J. Warren Barkley Invoice, 8 April 1918, William du Pont Collection, Box 45; J. Warren Barkley Invoice, 16 December 1919, William du Pont Collection, Box 45, Hagley; J. Warren Barkley Invoice, 21 May 1920, William du Pont Collection, Box 45, Hagley; J. Warren Barkley Invoice, 1 August 1921, William du Pont Collection, Box 45, Hagley; "Mount Pleasant School," Delaware Public Archives, 2007; Strine, *Montpelier*, 39; "William du Pont, Jr. Biography," Hagley Library and Museum, accessed April 13, 2019, <https://www.hagley.org/research/digital-exhibits/biography>.

estate, and the popularity of Colonial Revival architecture among elite Americans at the time, including other members of the du Pont family.<sup>8</sup>

After radically altering the house, du Pont constructed or remodeled many of the outbuildings on the property in the Colonial Revival style during the early-to-mid 1930s. He stuccoed the ca. 1830 Mount Pleasant School building, added Colonial Revival woodwork, and converted it into a cottage. He also built a Colonial Revival bathhouse near his father's stable and constructed two Colonial Revival bungalows as gatehouses at the property's rear entrance. He added gardens, including a whimsical parterre with bushes arranged in the shapes of horseshoes, saddles, and bits by the 1960s.<sup>9</sup> The construction of outbuildings and gardens added more recreational spaces for the du Ponts to Bellevue Hall, as well as additional worker housing to support the increased number of staff needed to care for the buildings, gardens, animals, vehicles, and du Pont family.

Aside from his alterations to the main house, du Pont's most extensive undertaking was his development of a state-of-the-art thoroughbred training center at Bellevue Hall following his great passion for thoroughbred racehorses. He spent tens of thousands of dollars constructing his training center, in spite of the ongoing Great Depression. Du Pont began planning the construction of training tracks and barns as early as 1930, although construction crews did not build most of the facility until the mid-1930s. Du Pont continued to train his racehorses at his Newtown Square farm until his Bellevue Hall training center was finished. Although he had both thoroughbred training and breeding barns at Liseter Hall, he only constructed a training barn and

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<sup>8</sup> Wise, "Cultural Resource Management Plan," 17-23; John A. Bader Construction Invoices, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Boxes 132 and 133, Hagley; J. W. Barkley Construction Invoices, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Boxes 132 and 133, Hagley.

<sup>9</sup> Wise, "Cultural Resource Management Plan," 17-23; "Mount Pleasant School," Delaware Public Archives, 2007; Bellevue Hall Aerial, Delaware State Parks.



a yearling barn at Bellevue Hall because he had already developed a breeding facility called Walnut Hall Farm in Virginia during the 1920s. Both the Bellevue Hall training barn and yearling barn were enclosed shedrows consisting of a center row of stalls surrounded by an enclosed dirt track with offices, tack rooms, feed rooms, and bedrooms for the horses' caretakers located at the north end of the barn convenient to the farm road. Du Pont also built a bunkhouse for his stable workers between the two barns. Although largely utilitarian structures, du Pont referenced his Colonial Revival aesthetic by installing lunette windows like the one used in Bellevue Hall's portico at either end of the yearling barn. The training barn burned in 1966 and the yearling barn has been extensively altered, making it difficult to assess how innovative du Pont's architectural designs were.<sup>10</sup>

While much remains unknown about the living conditions of du Pont's racehorses indoors, du Pont created an innovative system of turnout fields to improve the horses' quality of life outdoors. Racehorse owners grappled with the problems caused by allowing horses to spend time outside because the costly horses could easily hurt themselves playing or fighting. To remedy this, du Pont constructed a series of turnout fields around the training center with two-stall sheds located at the corners of the fields during the 1940s and 1950s. The two-stall sheds had center aisles between the stalls to provide workers with access to the horses, while the horses could come inside the stalls from their pastures to seek shelter from the elements. The sheds' designs and alleys between each pasture prevented horses from making contact with one another. Du Pont's field system enabled him to turn his racehorses out to pasture individually, while simultaneously reducing the risk of them hurting themselves or one another by limiting their physical contact. Turnout allowed the horses to engage in natural behaviors like grazing, and

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<sup>10</sup> 1946 Bellevue Hall Building Inventory, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 272, Hagley.

helped prevent boredom and anxiety from spending extensive amounts of time indoors.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to the training barn complex, du Pont also built a one-and-one-eighth mile dirt training track with a turf track for steeplechase racing in the infield. While du Pont selected one of the flattest areas on the property to build the track, his contractors still had to make extensive cuts and fills to keep the track level. Du Pont also had the contractors create a pond in a stand of trees within the infield, making his track into a picturesque landscape. In addition to its distinctive landscape features, the track was unusual for a private training facility due to its size. Most state-of-the-art, private training facilities constructed during the same period such as Montpelier and Burrland Farm in Virginia only had three-quarter mile training tracks, while public racing venues often had one mile to one-and-one-half mile tracks. Due to the size of the track and its landscape aesthetics, du Pont may have either initially intended to make it into a public racing venue or constructed the track to one-up his competitors, including his sister.<sup>12</sup> However, in a 1935 newspaper article on the legalization of pari-mutuel betting at racetracks in Delaware, du Pont informed that the Bellevue track would not be open to the public because there was not enough room for parking and the construction of additional stables. He also stated that the track was not wide enough and “technical construction details made its use for racing impossible.”<sup>13</sup> Du Pont had used his influence to help pass the legislation, so he followed up by becoming the largest stockholder and director of the Delaware Steeplechase and Race

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<sup>11</sup> 1946 Bellevue Hall Building Inventory, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 272, Hagley; Two-Stall Stable Plans, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 374, Hagley.

<sup>12</sup> Bellevue Track Receipts, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 293, Hagley; Race Track Construction Drawings, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 387, Hagley; Mary Christine Fesak, “Gender and Virginia’s Early-Twentieth Century Equine Landscapes” (Undergraduate honors thesis, University of Mary Washington, 2016).

<sup>13</sup> “DuPont Track Not To Be for Public Meets,” *Journal Every-Evening (Wilmington, DE)*, January 17, 1935, accessed April 15, 2019, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/154267320>.

Association, Inc. in 1936 to lead in the construction of the racetrack at Delaware Park.<sup>14</sup>

Du Pont completed the development of his state-of-the-art thoroughbred training facilities with the construction of two indoor riding structures. After finishing the training track, du Pont built a covered quarter-mile track connected to the training barn by a corridor. Known as a Miami track, the covered track enabled horses to train indoors during inclement weather. The Miami track enabled du Pont to train horses at Bellevue Hall over the winter, instead of shipping them to southern winter training centers like Aiken and Camden, South Carolina. Du Pont also moved a 475-foot-long, figure-eight-shaped indoor riding barn to the property in 1939. He had originally built the steel-frame structure at Liseter Hall in 1930. He intended to build an identical structure at Bellevue Hall, but ultimately moved the riding barn to Bellevue Hall to save money. It would have cost him about \$18,500 to build a new figure-eight riding barn. He located the riding barn on the opposite side of the Bellevue Hall house from his thoroughbred training stables and built an attached barn for his riding horses, indicating that he primarily used the barn to train his riding horses. Although du Pont was probably motivated to move the figure-eight barn due to the costs of constructing a new one, he may have also been anticipating his separation from his wife in 1940. She received Liseter Hall during the 1941 divorce settlement, while du Pont retained Bellevue Hall, including his recently-moved riding barn.<sup>15</sup>

Du Pont filled his new training facilities with fine racehorses he purchased at sales or bred at his Walnut Hall Farm in Millwood, Virginia. His strategically-located nursery was based in the bluegrass country of the Shenandoah Valley to take advantage of the limestone soil and the

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<sup>14</sup> William du Pont, Jr. Papers Finding Aid, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Delaware, accessed April 15, 2019, [https://findingaids.hagley.org/xtf/view?docId=ead/2317\\_II.xml&chunk.id=&toc.depth=1&toc.id=&brand=default](https://findingaids.hagley.org/xtf/view?docId=ead/2317_II.xml&chunk.id=&toc.depth=1&toc.id=&brand=default).

<sup>15</sup> Riding School Invoices, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 387, Hagley; William du Pont, Jr. and Jean L. Austin du Pont Settlement Agreement, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 254, Hagley.

rail lines du Pont used to ship his broodmares to Kentucky stud farms to be bred with top American sires like Man o'War. Although du Pont sometimes boarded his mares in Kentucky, he often brought them back to Walnut Hall Farm to give birth. He also bought pregnant mares at sales and brought them to his nursery farm, like Garden Rose who gave birth to Rosemont in 1932. Rosemont became one of du Pont's top sires at Walnut Hall Farm after retiring from a successful career including defeats of Triple Crown winner Omaha in the 1935 Withers Stakes and Seabiscuit in the 1937 Santa Anita Handicap. The foals lived at Walnut Hall Farm until they were a year old, when du Pont shipped them up to Bellevue Hall by rail to begin their training in late June or early July. Du Pont's trainer Richard Handlen came back to Bellevue Hall from supervising du Pont's horses at the racetracks to direct boys in breaking the yearlings for two months over the summer, while du Pont continued to oversee the yearlings' training after Handlen returned to the racing circuit. The young horses lived in the yearling barn where they became accustomed to being handled by workers on the ground, tacked up, and eventually ridden. Once the yearlings learned to be ridden, they began conditioning work like walking, trotting, and cantering on the training track to build up their strength and endurance for galloping. After several months of training, the yearlings ran short-distance speed trials to enable du Pont and Handlen to determine whether or not they should sell the horses or continue to train them.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Contrary to popular belief, du Pont did not train his racehorses at Fairhill. He used Fairhill for foxhunting and raising cattle when it was not in use as a racing venue. William du Pont, Jr. to Thomas Kerrigan, 19 January 1948, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 113, Hagley; William du Pont, Jr. to Richard Gibson, 21 June 1936, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 111, Hagley; William du Pont, Jr. to Willis Sharpe Kilmer, 1 June 1938, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 111, Hagley; William du Pont to Hugh Nesbitt, 27 July 1942, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 113, Hagley; W. C. Vreeland, "Omaha Defeated by Rosemont in Withers," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle (Brooklyn, New York)*, 26 May 1935, accessed April 18, 2019, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/52850178>; Sid Keener, "Weak Ride on Seabiscuit," *The St. Louis Star and Times (St. Louis, Missouri)*, 4 March 1937, accessed April 18, 2019,

In many ways, du Pont and Handlen's training and development of the racing stable workers paralleled that of the horses. Du Pont frequently hired teenaged boys to break his yearlings over the summers, which often required their fathers' permission. Although many boys wrote du Pont asking work, du Pont seems to have hired boys from families he or his other employees knew in the Wilmington-Philadelphia and Millwood areas. Most of the boys came from white, working-class families, but du Pont also allowed his relative George T. Weymouth's son Eugene to learn how to break yearlings when the boy was fourteen. Eugene trained the horses in exchange for a reduction in the cost of boarding two of George Weymouth's yearlings at Bellevue from seven dollars per day to four dollars. Lack of prior experience with horses did not seem to deter du Pont. He and Handlen likely adopted trainer Preston Burch's preference for training green boys and horses together so the boys learned to ride well and the horses benefitted from carrying lighter-weight riders. Burch had trained du Pont's horses and mentored Handlen during the 1920s and early 1930s. Burch preferred using teenage boys because those who became skilled equestrians could be kept on as exercise riders and possibly jockeys.<sup>17</sup>

In reality, the teenagers who broke yearlings for du Pont usually only worked for several months. Du Pont frequently sold many of his yearlings, resulting in the layoffs of their riders as the training season progressed. After testing the speed of the horses in the fall, du Pont began to sell yearlings. He gave the remaining yearlings lighter work during the winter inside his covered track, reducing the number of riders he needed. When the horses began to train and race as two-year-olds, du Pont continued to sell horses he deemed unsuitable for his racing stable. He used

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<https://www.newspapers.com/image/204402440>; Preston Burch, *Training Thoroughbred Horses* (Lexington, KY: The Blood-Horse, 1953), 15-38;

<sup>17</sup> William du Pont, Jr. to C. W. Huff, 11 June 1956, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 114, Hagley; William du Pont, Jr. to George T. Weymouth, 30 October 1947, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 113, Hagley; Burch, *Training Thoroughbred Horses*, 27-31.

stronger, heavier, more experienced men as exercise riders as the horses he kept were sent to the racetracks. The horses had grown considerably and become fit, making them more difficult for a teenage boy to control. In an undated summary of the number of months men worked in the du Pont racing stable for one year, only ten of the fifty-one employees worked the full year. The remainder either stopped working in late winter because they were likely boys employed the year before in training yearlings, or they began working during the summer with that year's crop of young horses with only a handful making through the fall. As a result of the cyclical nature of racehorse training, boys sometimes came back to break yearlings for multiple seasons, but only a few became long-term grooms, exercise riders, or jockeys for du Pont.<sup>18</sup>

Since du Pont kept a smaller racing stable usually consisting of ten to twenty horses, he frequently employed three to six exercise riders and grooms. Several exercise riders and grooms travelled the racing circuit for six to nine months at a time with the horses and Handlen, while others remained at Bellevue Hall to care for the young horses in training. Exercise riders were usually paid slightly more than grooms, but collaboration between the two over the horses in their care was essential to the horses' success. Under the 1949 Fair Labor Standards Act Amendment, which posed difficulties for racing stable owners since their exercise riders usually worked less than forty hours per week, du Pont had his exercise riders work mornings as well as three afternoons per week. During the afternoons, the exercise riders cared for horses before and after races. While the exercise riders were often referred to as boys, many were not. Of du Pont's exercise riders listed as residents of Bellevue Hall on the 1940 census, one rider, Thomas Gray, was forty-one years old. Likely small in stature and skilled with horses, Gray had made his living

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<sup>18</sup> William du Pont, Jr. to John Keen, 19 August 1930, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 94, Hagley; William du Pont, Jr. to Peter Monaghan, 15 March 1929, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 93, Hagley; Undated Training Stable Payroll, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 311, Hagley; Burch, *Training Thoroughbred Horses*, 39-44.

exercising racehorses. Although there is limited information about Gray, he had started working for du Pont as early as 1934. Gray was born in Nevada, meaning that the du Pont racing outfit probably found him at a racetrack such as Santa Anita. Du Pont's other resident exercise rider Charles Kay was twenty-one in 1940. Kay may have followed the more traditional route of becoming an exercise rider by breaking yearlings for du Pont. Kay was from Virginia, meaning that du Pont likely found Kay through his connections at Millwood and Montpelier. Du Pont's exercise riders travelled across the country on the racing circuit. Their transient lifestyles may have attracted men who preferred to remain single, possibly due to their sexualities. Of du Pont's employees, Albert Boyle, James McGrath, and John Handlon were the only exercise riders to report that they were married on tax returns and payrolls during the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>19</sup>

The origins of du Pont's grooms are even more obscure. The grooms residing at Bellevue Hall in 1940 included William Cissna, age sixty-one, Alexander Davidson, age thirty-five, Joseph Oblesky, age thirty-two, and Frank Allen, age twenty-nine. Due to their ages, they may have started working as exercise riders, but switched to grooming after they had become too old or heavy to ride. For example, Handlon became a groom after retiring as an exercise rider. Although exercise riders could be heavier than jockeys, trainers still preferred their exercise riders to weigh less than 130 pounds. Grooming provided opportunities for men who had physically outgrown positions as riders to continue working with racehorses. Grooms could also be skilled horsemen who had backgrounds in other riding disciplines. Grooming required

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<sup>19</sup> William du Pont, Jr. to Thomas Kerrigan, 19 January 1948, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 113, Hagley; 1940 U. S. Census (Population Schedule), Wilmington, Delaware, Enumeration District 2-7, sheet no. 14-B, Du Pont Estate, lines 43-64, digital image, accessed April 18, 2019, <http://www.ancestry.com/>; William du Pont, Jr. to Oscar White, 29 June 1949, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 113, Hagley; 1934 State Income Tax Receipts, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 251, Hagley; Racing Stable Payroll, April 1944, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 251, Hagley; Racing Stable Tax Returns, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 211, Hagley.

considerable skills to manage horses from the ground, as well as knowledge about the horses' care. Grooms in du Pont's stable worked from 5:30 to noon and 4:00 to 6:00 in the afternoon. Of the four grooms, only Oblesky may have been local as he had been born in Pennsylvania. Cissna was from Ohio, Davidson from Scotland, and Allen from South Carolina, meaning that they had likely gravitated towards the racetracks at a younger age and later found employment with du Pont while working at the tracks similar to Thomas Gray. Like exercise riders, many of the grooms were single. Several of the grooms appear to have arranged to work at Bellevue, possibly to be closer to families.<sup>20</sup>

Of du Pont's racing stable workers, the trajectory of Clinton Johnson's life perhaps best represented occupational transitions in thoroughbred racing for the average employee. A Pennsylvania native, Johnson began working for du Pont as early as 1928, when he was about ten years old. Johnson likely started off breaking yearlings before becoming an exercise rider. By the time he turned twenty-two, he was listed as a jockey on the 1940 census. He may have been riding as a jockey apprenticed to du Pont's stable. Jockeys usually remained apprenticed until they had won a prescribed number of races or had ridden for a specific amount of time after winning their first race. Johnson either was not a successful jockey or physically outgrew the position. By 1942, he was listed as the stable foreman on an injury report for an exercise rider at Belmont Park. Foremen were responsible for overseeing much of the day-to-day care of the racehorses. They also kept the medicine closet for the stable, monitored the usage of medicines and leg treatments on horses, ensured that each horse had its proper racing equipment, managed the grooms, and collaborated with the trainers. Johnson was likely a groom acting as the foreman when the accident occurred at Belmont Park because a 1944 payroll list showed that he made the

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<sup>20</sup> 1940 U.S. Census, Du Pont Estate; Racing Stable Payroll, April 1944, William du Pont, Jr. Papers; Burch, *Training Thoroughbred Horses*, 75-78.



same \$75 per month wage plus board as the other grooms. William Cissna was likely the true foreman for du Pont's stables due to his age, experience, and his higher salary of \$85 per month. Johnson probably succeeded Cissna as the foreman at Bellevue Hall. By 1951, Johnson's salary was listed at \$250 per month plus rent, which was higher than the other grooms and exercise riders who made around \$200 per month. The 1944 payroll listed that he had gotten married and the 1951 payroll indicated that he worked as a groom at Bellevue Hall instead of on the racing circuit with Handlen. Johnson likely married during the early 1940s and negotiated a position as a groom at Bellevue Hall, enabling him to lead a more settled lifestyle with his family. Johnson continued to work at Bellevue Hall after du Pont's death in 1965.<sup>21</sup>

In contrast to Johnson, trainer Richard "Dick" Handlen had an exceptional career. A native of the Bronx, Handlen began working in horseracing at the age of fifteen as an exercise boy for the Sanford Stud Farm in Amsterdam, New York. He eventually became a foreman for trainer Preston Burch. Burch was widely considered to be one of the best American racehorse trainers of the twentieth century. As foreman, Handlen gained invaluable experience working closely with Burch. Handlen took over as trainer for du Pont's Foxcatcher Farms during in 1933 when Burch left to train for Isabel Dodge Sloane's Brookmeade Stable in Virginia. Burch had been looking for an opportunity to become head trainer for a larger, more prominent stable than Foxcatcher Farms. Handlen trained a number of successful horses for du Pont, including Faberose, Fairy Chant, Chevation, Fairy Hill, Dauber, Parlo, Rosemont, and Berlo. Handlen considered Berlo, who was the daughter of Faberose and Rosemont, to be the best horse he ever

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<sup>21</sup> Foxcatcher Farms 1929 Wage Adjustments, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 311, Hagley; 1940 U.S. Census, Du Pont Estate; Racing Stable Payroll, April 1944, William du Pont, Jr. Papers; Burch, *Training Thoroughbred Horses*, 77-80; William du Pont, Jr. to Oscar White, 29 June 1949, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 113, Hagley; Employers First Report of Injury Form, April 29, 1942, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 113, Hagley; Racing Stable Payroll, March 1951, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 251, Hagley; 1973 Building Inventory, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 373, Hagley.

trained. Handlen retired from training in 1962 after du Pont retired Berlo to Walnut Hall Farm. Handlen moved to Florida, but died the following year. Hall of Fame trainer Ed Christmas took over for several years following Handlen's retirement. As a trainer, Handlen only made a slightly higher monthly salary than the exercise riders at \$250 to \$275 per month during the 1930s and 1940s. However, du Pont often paid him over a thousand dollars more in sales commissions and bonuses each year.<sup>22</sup>

Du Pont appears to have given Handlen more extensive power over the racing stable than he acknowledged to his peers. When discussing employment and the new labor laws in his racing stable with lawyers, du Pont stated that Handlen's "responsibilities are the care and training of the horses I give him from time to time," adding that the "trainer has no authority on any of the farms other than the group of horses he is to train away from the farm to advertise for sale or to prove their ability for stud purposes." Du Pont significantly downplayed Handlen's year-round centrality in managing du Pont's horses on the racing circuit. Du Pont likely did this to appear as though he was completely in charge of his racing stable in front of his peers and possibly out of fear of potential future legal pitfalls for racing stable owners should he disclose Handlen's actual levels of authority. Du Pont also informed the lawyers that Handlen "has no authority to hire or discharge anyone without my approval [and] he has no authority to sell or purchase horses or materials without my consent."<sup>23</sup> In reality, Handlen often made hiring decisions and bought

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<sup>22</sup> "Retired Horse Trainer Dead," *The Capital Times (Madison, Wisconsin)*, 4 June 1963, accessed April 18, 2019, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/518577725>; "Rates Berlo the Best," *The Morning News (Wilmington, Delaware)*, 13 September 1961, accessed April 18, 2019, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/155609649>; Gene Ward, "Staretta Cops 3-Hoss Foto, Berlo's Great Surge Fails," *Daily News (New York, New York)*, 30 August 1961, accessed April 18, 2019, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/459115787>; William du Pont, Jr. to Richard Handlen, 31 December 1940, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 111, Hagley.

<sup>23</sup> William du Pont, Jr. to Thomas Kerrigan, 19 January 1948, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 113, Hagley.

equipment for the racing stable with little-to-no input from du Pont. For example, in 1934 du Pont did not have enough boys to break yearlings, so he asked Handlen to make the decision in finding a boy at Saratoga who was “light in weight and having a certain intelligence, enough to breeze a colt.”<sup>24</sup> Handlen also hired Jack Robinski to ride the lead pony, later laying him off after selling three horses. In both instances, he informed du Pont after making the decisions. Handlen also made decisions about changes in employment within the racing stable prior to notifying du Pont. For example, he made Alexander Davidson night watchman before a major race and hired another groom to temporarily take Davidson’s daytime position. While du Pont ultimately had the final say and controlled the finances, Handlen appears to have had a lot of autonomy in making day-to-day decisions for the racing stable while it was away on the racing circuit. He and du Pont seem to have a much more collaborative relationship than du Pont indicated to the lawyers.<sup>25</sup>

Du Pont employed the leading American jockeys of the early-to-mid twentieth centuries to ride his top horses in races. He hired Maurice Peters to ride as his stable’s main contract jockey during the 1930s and early 1940s. Peters rode du Pont’s horse Dauber in the 1938 Triple Crown races. While they finished second in the Kentucky Derby and Belmont Stakes, Dauber and Peters won the Preakness Stakes by seven lengths. Peters continued to work for du Pont into the 1950s as a trainer and rider. Du Pont also hired jockey Eddie Arcaro during the 1940s and 1950s when possible. Considered to be the best jockey in American racing history due to the number of major races he won, including winning the Triple Crown twice, he was in high demand as a rider. Hall of Fame jockey Eric Guerin also rode extensively for du Pont during the

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<sup>24</sup> William du Pont, Jr. to Richard Handlen, 16 July 1934, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 111, Hagley.

<sup>25</sup> Leola Handlen to William Shelton, 17 February 1936, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 111, Hagley.

1950s. Du Pont hired other successful jockeys when Peters, Arcaro, or Guerin could not ride for him. Jockeys made ten percent of the purse for winning a race.<sup>26</sup>

Du Pont used contracts with his jockeys, especially those in apprenticeships, to exert control over their actions. Du Pont paid his contract jockeys about \$200 per month during the 1940s and \$300 to \$400 per month during the 1950s in addition to percentages of winnings. In spite of Peters's success, du Pont forced Peters to get rid of his agent and hire an agent approved by du Pont in order to keep his contract in 1941. In contrast, other stable workers had more freedom to leave because they were not bound by contracts. Some of du Pont's senior grooms and exercise riders Cissna, Gray, and McGrath left in 1944, likely after having a falling out with Handlen or du Pont. Hoping to have a contract with a highly-successful rider, du Pont bought up-and-coming apprentice jockey Frank Lovato, Sr.'s contract from Dr. D. R. Munroe for \$12,000 in 1957. Munroe felt that Lovato could develop his talents better with a more prominent stable, such as du Pont's. Lovato rode for du Pont for about a year, winning a number of races for the stable. Lovato evidently began to want to ride for other major stables and wanted his contract back, while du Pont and Handlen felt that Lovato was not working enough for the amount du Pont spent on the contract. Tensions came to a head when Lovato went to the New Orleans racetracks without du Pont or Handlen's permission in December 1958. Handlen wanted Lovato to exercise horses in the spring to help pay off the contract, but du Pont ultimately decided to let

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<sup>26</sup> Jockey Invoices, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Boxes 112-115, Hagley; "Dauber Makes Up For Derby Bad Luck With Smashing Preakness Triumph," *The Baltimore Sun* (Baltimore, Maryland), 15 May 1938, accessed April 18, 2019, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/373841747>; "Obituaries: M.W. "Moose" Peters; Jockey, Owner, Trainer," *The Morning News* (Wilmington, Delaware), April 8, 1987, accessed April 18, 2019, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/159760088>; "Eddie Arcaro was The Master," *The Kokomo Tribune* (Kokomo, Indiana), 16 November 1997, accessed April 18, 2019, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/2799089>; "Louisiana Jockey Eric Guerin Dies," *The Times* (Shreveport, Louisiana), 23 March 1993, accessed April 18, 2019, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/218019230>.

the other stables have Lovato's contract in exchange for all of Lovato's winnings amounting to \$2,190.50. Du Pont's treatment of Peters and Lovato revealed the lengths trainers and owners would go to in obtaining contracts with talented jockeys. While jockeys had agency in deciding which stables they rode for, their options were still limited by the financial clout the owners carried in controlling the jockey's contracts.<sup>27</sup>

Unsurprisingly, du Pont held fairly paternalistic views of his racing stable employees. He often used gifts or money to help mask employment changes that were detrimental to the workers and only raised salaries when forced to. In December 1940, du Pont sent Handlen bonuses to give the workers, noting the bonuses were "somewhat higher than last year. [...] This does not include the sales of the three horses you spoke to me about, but I can make the adjustment at the end of the year for those sales. The parting of those horses should make it possible for you to drop off considerable number of men and also shave your expenses down quite a bit."<sup>28</sup> Du Pont gave substantial end-of-year bonuses of \$100 for employees who had worked for him over a year and \$50 for shorter-term employees, indicating that he wanted to recognize the contributions of men who had been with the stable for longer periods of time. In addition to end-of-year bonuses helping to mask du Pont's intent to layoff some employees, he also had Handlen give the workers cigars and candy for Christmas to boost morale. During

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<sup>27</sup> William du Pont, Jr. to Richard Handlen, 23 October 1940, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 111, Hagley; Racing Stable Payroll, April 1944, William du Pont, Jr. Papers; Racing Stable Payroll, March 1951, William du Pont, Jr. Papers; Racing Stable Income Tax Returns, 1945, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 251, Hagley; D. R. Munroe to William du Pont, Jr., 5 March 1957, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 115, Hagley; Frank Lovato to Richard Handlen, n.d., William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 115, Hagley; Frank Lovato to William du Pont, Jr., 10 December 1958, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 115, Hagley; Richard Handlen to William du Pont, Jr., 11 December 1958, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 115, Hagley; William du Pont, Jr. to Frank Lovato, 19 December 1958, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 115, Hagley; William du Pont, Jr. to Frank Lovato, 9 January 1959, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 115, Hagley.

<sup>28</sup> William du Pont, Jr. to Richard Handlen, 17 December 1940, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 111, Hagley.

WWII, laid-off workers frequently worked in wartime industrial jobs until they could be hired by du Pont again during the following racing season. Du Pont also generally only raised salaries when he absolutely needed to. For example, he only expected to pay groom Carl Potts \$75 per month, but when Potts mentioned that he thought he would get a salary of \$85 per month as he could have gotten three jobs for that price in New York, du Pont agreed to paying him \$85 to avoid conflict since Potts was a short-term employee anyway.<sup>29</sup> Handlen also had to persuade du Pont to raise salaries in 1944 to remain competitive as an employer as income levels rose.

Handlen reported that his exercise rider Jimmy had told him he could get a \$250 per month salary anywhere. Handlen checked and found that “they are paying even more than that to boys that can’t even gallop horses and he is the only one I can depend on, as for the grooms we shall probably have to give them more also [...] they are paying two hundred a month out here.”<sup>30</sup> Du Pont’s coverage of the workers’ room and board expenses in addition to their monthly pay could also be seen as a form of paternalism because it he exerted influence over their quality of life and made them feel further indebted to him by providing housing and food. Du Pont used bonuses and gifts to keep the loyalty of his employees, even while planning to lay many of them off or trying to pay them the lowest salaries possible.

Du Pont’s attempts to manipulate one of his apprentice jockeys was one of the clearest examples of his paternalism. Apprentice jockey Charley Hanna decided he did not want to return to work for du Pont after going home on vacation because his father was in poor health, he did

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<sup>29</sup> William du Pont, Jr. to Richard Handlen, 5 December 1947, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 111, Hagley; William du Pont, Jr. to Richard Handlen, 23 December 1947, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 111, Hagley; William du Pont, Jr. to Richard Handlen, 23 January 1945, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 112, Hagley; William Shelton to Richard Handlen, 17 July 1940, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 111, Hagley.

<sup>30</sup> Richard Handlen to William du Pont, Jr., 6 November 1944, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 112, Hagley.

not know whether or not he would be drafted, and he felt like he was too heavy to race. Du Pont wrote Hanna's mother, reminding her that he had paid for Hanna's contract and informing her that Hanna was running out on the contract. He warned, "No one respects or will give any good job to a boy or man who is known to quit on a contract [...] all owner and trainers of race horses notify the various racing associations whenever a rider or other employee fails to fulfill a contract and that boy's name is posted in racing organizations all over the country to warn others not to employ him as he is not dependable or trustworthy."<sup>31</sup> Completely ignoring the complexities of Hanna's personal life that influenced his decision to leave, du Pont threatened to blacklist Hanna from jobs in horse racing should he fail to complete his contract. He also implied that Hanna's mother was a bad parent for allowing her son to quit and that Hanna had poor character.<sup>32</sup>

Although unstated, race factored prominently into employment within horse racing during the early-to-mid twentieth century. During the nineteenth century, many skilled horsemen in the racing industry were African American. Although horseracing was a dangerous occupation, skilled black jockeys used it to gain freedom, stardom, and money. Threatened by the prestige of African American jockeys, white racehorse owners and jockeys pushed African Americans out of the racing industry during the early-twentieth century. White jockeys collaborated to intimidate black jockeys by boxing them in or trying to unseat them during races, making horseracing an even more dangerous occupation for African Americans. Owners tacitly supported the white jockeys and refused to allow black jockeys to ride their expensive horses for fear that the horses would be injured during attempts to harm their black riders. Furthermore, the

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<sup>31</sup> William du Pont, Jr. to Mrs. Stewart Hanna, 14 February 1944, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 112, Hagley.

<sup>32</sup> Hanna Family Correspondence, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 112, Hagley.

Jockey Club required jockeys and trainers to be licensed annually beginning in the 1890s to compete on sanctioned tracks. Stable owners could refuse to give African Americans licenses. Licenses could also be revoked at any time if white colleagues or owners fabricated reports about the immoral behavior of black jockeys. Finally, Jim Crow Laws disincentivized owners from employing African American jockeys because it required them to find segregated housing while on the racing circuit.<sup>33</sup>

Du Pont, and likely Handlen by extension, participated in the exclusion of African Americans from the racing industry, although the extent to which they did so intentionally is unknowable. Du Pont rarely hired African American workers. Not only were du Pont's racing stable employees almost exclusively white, but his domestic servants and farm employees at Bellevue Hall, Fairhill, and Walnut Hall were predominantly white as well. Du Pont had grown up with Jim Crow-era segregation and segregated facilities at Montpelier, but the extent to which this impacted his hiring decisions as an adult are unclear. He hired two African American horsemen Charles Smoot and Henry Jones in the late 1920s, shortly after establishing his racing stable. Smoot signed a ten-month contract to ride as a jockey and exercise boy for du Pont in 1929. A native of Warrenton, Virginia, Smoot was a very talented steeplechase jockey who commanded a high monthly wage of \$400. Smoot became a jockey for du Pont's sister by 1938, ultimately becoming her foreman once he retired as a jockey. Du Pont's employment of Smoot showed that he was unafraid to hire a skilled African American jockey and pay him well, although it raises questions about why Smoot eventually chose to work for Marion instead. It also raises questions about why du Pont did not hire more skilled African American jockeys or exercise riders. Du Pont spent a fair amount of time on the racing circuits in South Carolina and

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<sup>33</sup> Katherine C. Mooney, *Race Horse Men: How Slavery and Freedom were Made at the Racetrack* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 225-235.



Virginia, where there were many talented black horsemen working around the tracks.<sup>34</sup>

Less is known about Henry Jones, although he spent much of his career working for du Pont. Jones may have become an apprentice jockey for Chicagoan Frederick M. Grabner in 1925. By 1928, Jones was employed in du Pont's stable. The 1940 census listed the fifty-four-year-old Jones as a caretaker in the racing stable, although the 1944 and 1951 payrolls listed his occupation as a groom. Jones's designation as a caretaker may have indicated that he was a night watchman for the stable. Night watchmen made sure the horses did not become sick or injure themselves at night. However, Jones made the same salary as du Pont's white grooms on the payrolls, indicating du Pont valued Jones's skills as much as the other grooms. While Jones may have been a night watchman in 1940 before becoming a groom, the census records could have also reflected bias on the part of the census taker or the racing stable in characterizing Jones's labor as less important than that of the white grooms. If Jones was riding as an apprentice jockey in 1928, it also seems improbable that du Pont and Handlen would squander Jones's skill with horses on a position as night watchman instead of groom.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Employee Insurance Schedule, 1936, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 99, Hagley; 1940 U.S. Census, Du Pont Estate; 1943 Bellevue Hall Payroll, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 251, Hagley; Racing Stable Payroll, April 1944, William du Pont, Jr. Papers; Bellevue Hall Payroll, May 1950, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 251, Hagley; Racing Stable Payroll, March 1951, William du Pont, Jr. Papers; Charles Smoot Jockey Contract, July 1, 1929, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 311, Hagley; "Smoot Changes Stables," *Wausau Daily Herald* (Wausau, Michigan), 2 August 1929, accessed April 21, 2019, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/273054101>; Allison Brophy Champion, "Beating the Odds: Black Horsemen at Montpelier Leave Legacy of Strength, Talent," *Culpeper Star-Exponent* (Culpeper, Virginia), 4 February 2019, accessed April 21, 2019, [https://www.starexponent.com/news/beating-the-odds-black-horsemen-at-montpelier-leave-legacy-of/article\\_5b58bbd8-85ef-5097-8dab-86eecbcb8253.html](https://www.starexponent.com/news/beating-the-odds-black-horsemen-at-montpelier-leave-legacy-of/article_5b58bbd8-85ef-5097-8dab-86eecbcb8253.html); Sparrow, "Delaware Park Turf Chatter," *The Morning News* (Wilmington, Delaware), 18 June 1938, accessed April 21, 2019, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/160605800>.

<sup>35</sup> C. J. Savage, "Baker Stable Captures Three Races on Latonia Programme," *The Courier-Journal* (Louisville, Kentucky), 9 October 1925, accessed April 21, 2019, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/107528695>; 1940 U.S. Census, Du Pont Estate; Racing Stable Payroll, April 1944, William du Pont, Jr. Papers; Racing Stable Payroll, March 1951, William du Pont, Jr. Papers.

Gender also played an important role in the functioning of du Pont's racing stable, even though women were excluded from working directly with the horses. Although he never put his thoughts on the matter in writing, likely because he died before Diane Crump became the first professional female jockey to ride in a pari-mutuel race in 1969, du Pont probably believed that the labor associated with training and caring for racehorses was unsuitable for women. In spite of her prominence within the thoroughbred industry and her own challenges to gender norms, his sister definitely espoused this view, refusing to hire women even after female stable workers became increasingly commonplace during the 1970s and 1980s. Despite their exclusion from working in du Pont's stable, women served in essential supporting roles by caring for the stable workers. Du Pont hired Edna Norris as a secretary to manage the racing stable's administrative affairs. Formerly employed as a housekeeper, Norris began to work as the racing stable secretary during the 1940s. Possibly due to the fact that she was single with three children, du Pont paid Norris the same salary as his grooms at \$75 per month. Although they were not listed as employees of the racing stable, the women who ran du Pont's boarding house at Bellevue Hall were also essential to its functioning. Edith Norris initially operated the boarding house during the 1930s and early 1940s. She prepared meals for stable workers who boarded with her, including making extra food for members of the racing stable to eat on their trips to the racetracks in California, Kentucky, Florida, and New York. She also performed seamstress work, including hemming saddle pads. By 1949, Emma Riggs had taken over as boarding house manager, continuing to perform the same jobs as Norris during the 1950s. Norris and Riggs were vital to the racing stable because they performed gendered domestic work necessary to the daily functioning of men who were single or away from their spouses who would ordinarily undertake

these tasks.<sup>36</sup>

While Edna Norris, Edith Norris, and Emma Riggs were paid for their work, Leola Handlen also performed important, unpaid roles in the racing stable. Leola Handlen travelled the racing circuit with her husband Richard Handlen. She acted as a secretary for du Pont's stable as it moved about on the racing circuit. She forwarded bills accrued by the racing stable and its workers to du Pont's secretaries in Delaware, and in turn passed on paychecks, tax documents, and letters from family members forwarded from Delaware to the racing stable employees. After the passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act Amendment of 1949, Leola organized the stable employees' time sheets. Although most of her letters explained expenditures, Leola also wrote du Pont letters updating him on the performances of the horses, jockeys, and stable workers. Her husband often signed the letters, although they were almost always in her hand. Du Pont acknowledged Leola's role as Richard's unpaid secretary, writing him "I trust that your Secretary hasn't strained her right fore pastern as I had expected to hear from you in regards to the weights and how the horses were getting along"<sup>37</sup> when he had not received a letter from Leola in a while. While recognizing Leola's role as the primary line of communication between his racing stable and himself, du Pont snidely undercut her importance by comparing her to a horse. Like a horse, du Pont expected her to work for him, even though she made no direct gains from doing so. Leola played a role a financial mediator by reporting when employees stopped working for du Pont or had changed boarding houses to ensure that the right amounts of money were withheld from their paychecks. She also made sure that the workers received the correct amounts

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<sup>36</sup> Natalie Voss, "Women in Racing: The Anti-Feminist Pioneer," *Paulick Report*, December 5, 2014, accessed April 21, 2019, <https://www.paulickreport.com/news/ray-s-paddock/women-in-racing-the-anti-feminist-pioneer/>; Bellevue Boarding House Account, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 251, Hagley.

<sup>37</sup> William du Pont, Jr. to Richard Handlen, 22 December 1937, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 111, Hagley.

of pay from du Pont.<sup>38</sup>

In addition to her secretarial roles, Leola also acted as an intermediary between the racing stable workers and du Pont. She reported on the workers' health and living conditions. When exercise rider Tomas Gray had to be hospitalized due to a severe cold, she wrote du Pont's secretary William Shelton a lengthy description of Gray's dire illness prior to inquiring whether worker's compensation covered the hospital bills or if Gray would have to pay the bills himself. Her detailing of Gray's situation likely persuaded du Pont to instruct Handlen to charge all of Gray's medical bills on the racing stable account. She also reported on the workers' living conditions. The stable workers lived at boarding houses while on the racing circuit, including places like Julia's Kitchen at the Saratoga racetrack, while the Handlens rented small houses near the racetracks. In December 1937, the boarding house the workers were living at had low-quality food, so Richard gave them a \$10 weekly allowance to board themselves at the Santa Anita track kitchen. Leola reported the situation to Shelton as "the boys have had quite a time finding a place to board—they started at one place and had to leave, the food was so poor."<sup>39</sup> She characterized the workers' living situation as so bad that it was essential that they board themselves elsewhere. Leola signed the letter as "the Handlens," instead of having her husband sign it, making it clear that she had written the letter and giving her husband's decision legitimacy by weighing in as a woman on the workers' domestic living situation.<sup>40</sup>

Du Pont's values, priorities, and views of his workforce were mirrored in his construction of the built environment at Bellevue Hall through his hierarchical ordering of buildings and

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<sup>38</sup> William du Pont, Jr. to Oscar White, 29 June 1949, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 113, Hagley; Richard Handlen Correspondence, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Boxes 111-112, Hagley.

<sup>39</sup> Leola Handlen to William Shelton, 6 December 1937, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 111, Hagley.

<sup>40</sup> Richard Handlen Correspondence, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Boxes 111-112, Hagley.

landscapes. His decisions on the placements of buildings and their architectural treatments placed the mansion at the top of the hierarchy, followed by buildings that reflected his wealth and leisurely sporting lifestyle, with the buildings that housed workers at the bottom. Du Pont's ordering of space and use of aesthetics imposed hierarchical orderings on his workers.

Du Pont used gateposts and trees to frame the viewer's experiences and demarcate the boundaries of his hierarchical ordering of space. This can be seen through the way du Pont or a high-status guest would have experienced the approach to the mansion. After turning off the Philadelphia Pike, a visitor would have proceeded through a set of gates next to a stone gatehouse designed loosely in the Colonial Revival to avoid detracting from the mansion visible in the background. The visitor would have proceeded up a tree-lined, linear road past a complex of garage buildings to the left. The eight-bay, U-shaped main garage evocative of an early-twentieth-century carriage barn visually dominated the group through its architectural design and placement near the crest of the hill. Garages and sheds for trucks and wagons, as well as a mechanics shop, stood behind the main garage as further indicators of du Pont's vast fleet of automobiles. A house for some of du Pont's servants also stood within the complex, disguised to resemble a garage. On the right, du Pont's large sports building with an indoor tennis court constructed for his second wife Margaret Osborne would have been visible through the trees. As the visitor crested the hill, they would have glimpsed the thoroughbred training barn, horse pastures with the two-stall barns, and William du Pont, Sr.'s greenhouse before turning right through a set of gate posts marking the separation of Bellevue Hall's domestic landscape from its agricultural landscape. A ham house, designed to be reminiscent of a smokehouse, sat on one side of the driveway and the Mt. Pleasant School done over as a Colonial Revival style cottage for the Handlens on the other. The visitor would have caught another glimpse of the sports

building through the trees on the approach to another pair of gateposts demarcating the boundaries of the house and gardens. Next to the gateposts, ornamental trees framed the view of the mansion's portico. Upon arriving at the house, the gardens stretched out to the left with the training track visible in the distance, while the large portico loomed over the visitor. In the distance, tennis courts, the swimming pool, the Colonial Revival style playhouse, and the hunter and figure-eight barns were visible along another treelined driveway, further revealing du Pont's immense wealth and passion for sports and recreation.<sup>41</sup>

Du Pont's creation of a pastoral landscape of leisure and sports paralleled the development of thoroughbred landscapes in the Kentucky bluegrass during the early-to-mid twentieth century as American thoroughbred farm owners emulated British country estates. Similar to the Kentucky farm owners, du Pont's landscape at Bellevue Hall featured sweeping views of the horse pastures and stretches of woods in an imitation of the parks on British estates like the ones du Pont spent his early childhood living at. Both the Kentucky farms and Bellevue featured expanses of mown grass, ponds, winding lanes, sharply-painted fences, and picturesquely-planted trees to create the park-like aesthetic requiring extensive capital and labor to create and maintain. Du Pont took the linkage to British estates a step further than many of his American peers through the creation of his equine-themed garden parterres. Many American country estates, equine and non-equine, had Colonial Revival formal gardens that relied heavily on geometry and historicized plantings. Du Pont's whimsical formal garden was a departure from American Colonial Revival landscape aesthetics and more similar to fanciful British garden design.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> 1946 Bellevue Hall Building Inventory, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 272, Hagley; Historic Aerials, 1937-1965, NETR Online, accessed April 23, 2019.

<sup>42</sup> Karl Raitz and Dorn VanDommele, "Creating the Landscape Symbol Vocabulary for a Regional Image: The Case of the Kentucky Bluegrass," *Landscape Journal* 9, no. 2 (1990): 115-116.

Although du Pont and other Kentucky farm owners imitated British landscapes, they used Colonial Revival architecture to create a distinctive American aesthetic on their thoroughbred farms. Kentucky farm owners built or renovated their mansions in the Colonial Revival style, using features like porticos, possibly to evoke the wealth and racial stratification antebellum Southern plantations. While du Pont's remodeling of Bellevue Hall from a Gothic Revival castle into a Colonial Revival mansion was a clear rejection of architectural aesthetics tying the house to British estates, he does not appear to have been interested in imitating a Southern plantation. While seemingly paradoxical because Bellevue's primary façade replicated Montpelier, which had been a Southern plantation built upon slave labor, du Pont imitated his father's renovations to Montpelier, not the house's original façade. Du Pont likely chose to replicate his father's Montpelier to establish ties to his father's legacy, evoke his fond childhood memories of Montpelier, and forge a connection to one of the nation's most important founding fathers, however contrived it was. In using the Colonial Revival style, du Pont bought into an architectural aesthetic used by elite Americans, including many of his relatives, to showcase their class, social status, taste, and money.<sup>43</sup>

Although parts of du Pont's training facilities were visible, particularly aspects that showed his innovative approaches like the figure-eight barn, two-stall barns, and his grand training track, housing for the stable workers was notably absent. With the exception of the servant housing that resembled a garage and the training complex bunkhouse, du Pont housed his country estate workforce in the mansion's attic, buildings along the Philadelphia Pike, and small

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<http://www.jstor.org/udel.idm.oclc.org/stable/43324046>; Susan M. Roberts and Richard H. Schein, "The Super-rich, Horses and the Transformation of a Rural Landscape", in *Geographies of the Super-Rich*, ed. Iain Hay (Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2013), 141-148.

<sup>43</sup> Roberts and Schein, "The Super-rich, Horses and the Transformation of a Rural Landscape," 144; Lydia Mattice Brandt, *First in the Homes of His Countrymen: George Washington's Mount Vernon in the American Imagination* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2016), 81.

houses near the back of the property. He situated the bunkhouse to be at the center of the training complex so the boys who broke the yearlings lived at their worksite. While the bunkhouse was visible within the complex, the horse barns and indoor training track largely obstructed it from view from outside the complex. The remainder of du Pont's racing stable employees lived in houses on the Philadelphia Pike. Over the years, the owners of Bellevue Hall had bought up houses built along both sides of the Philadelphia Pike near Bellevue and used them for worker or rental housing. Du Pont had inherited many of these houses and constructed several more CMU bungalows to house his workers. The racing stable employees who worked out of Bellevue Hall rented houses from du Pont. At the time of du Pont's death in 1965, groom John Hanlon lived on one side of the gambrel-roofed, "double frame house" duplex near the figure-eight barn, while groom Clinton Johnson lived in the cross-gabled, "two-story wooden house" across the Philadelphia Pike from the Bellevue Hall gatehouse. Workers who travelled the racing circuit, including Thomas Gray and Henry Jones, stayed at the stone boarding house next to Johnson's residence when they came to Bellevue Hall. The boarding house only contained two rooms, raising questions about whether or not segregation was enforced on Jones when he travelled to Bellevue Hall with white workers like Gray.<sup>44</sup>

The housing of du Pont's stable workers epitomizes both his paternalistic approach to managing his workforce and his dedication to creating a landscape of leisure. By owning the workers' housing he could exert considerable control on their lives outside of work because he could make decisions ranging from eviction to determining when upgrades to mechanical systems and renovations should be made. By housing his workers in buildings located along the

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<sup>44</sup> 1946 Bellevue Hall Building Inventory, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 272, Hagley; 1973 Building Inventory, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 373, Hagley; Bellevue Boarding House Account, William du Pont, Jr. Papers, Box 251, Hagley.



Philadelphia Pike outside the gates of Bellevue Hall, du Pont visually removed their housing from the landscape of his country estate while still retaining ownership. This also removed domestic spaces like the boarding house, as well as the women who occupied these spaces, from within Bellevue Hall, making the landscape within the gates a largely masculine space. The workers had to pass through the gates to access the stables where they were largely removed from view, adding an aspect of surveillance to their comings and goings. Du Pont used architectural style to further distance his worker housing from the buildings on his estate. His construction or renovation of the buildings at Bellevue Hall in the Colonial Revival style created visual cohesion between the mansion and outbuildings like the Mt. Pleasant School, the playhouse, and the gatehouse. In contrast to the extensive and costly construction campaign at Bellevue Hall, du Pont did not renovate or construct any of the housing along the Philadelphia Pike in the Colonial Revival style. Instead, he left the houses as an eclectic mix of vernacular buildings resembling other houses constructed elsewhere along the Philadelphia Pike. This effectively removed all visible linkages between the buildings located within the gates of Bellevue Hall and the worker housing outside, serving as an erasure of workers within the thoroughbred country estate landscape.

Finally, du Pont used Colonial Revival architecture to define Richard Handlen's status within class and labor hierarchies. Richard and Leola Handlen lived in the Mt. Pleasant School building, which du Pont had converted into a Colonial Revival cottage. Jockeys like Maurice Peters usually lodged with the Handlens when they came to Bellevue Hall. Du Pont used his road systems and Colonial Revival architecture to highlight the Mt. Pleasant School on the approach to the mansion. By housing Handlen in the Mt. Pleasant School instead of in a house on the Philadelphia Pike, du Pont acknowledged the importance of Handlen's role in the racing stable

by physically and metaphorically situating Handlen's house within Bellevue's gates. While this helped solidify Handlen's superiority and authority over the racing stable workers, it also made sure his subservience to du Pont was clear. The use of Colonial Revival architecture in the mansion and the Mt. Pleasant School suggested that the occupants of both houses were of a higher status, but the mansion dwarfed the Mt. Pleasant School in size and the prominence of its central location, making it clear that Handlen was by no means equal to du Pont. There was also an important element of display in the placement of Handlen's residence. By situating Handlen's house near the mansion where it could be used as a conversation piece, du Pont could show off his talented trainer and any of the skilled jockeys who happened to be staying with Handlen. Much like the fine thoroughbreds galloping on du Pont's state-of-the-art training track or grazing in his pastures, Handlen and the jockeys served as statements of du Pont's wealth and his clout within the national thoroughbred industry.<sup>45</sup>

William du Pont, Jr. died in December 1965 at the age of sixty-nine. His daughter, Jean Ellen du Pont McConnell initially continued to use the training facilities for her thoroughbred racing stable. Du Pont's children ultimately did not have the money or interests in maintaining the extensive recreational facilities at Bellevue Hall. They considered several development plans before selling the property to the state of Delaware for use as a park in 1976. The underfunded state parks department has also struggled to maintain the buildings, causing many to be demolished or heavily altered over the years. Today, many of the horse pastures have been paved over to provide visitor parking. The figure-eight barn has become an events space, while the Miami track gradually collapses in the woods, a victim of demolition by neglect like many du

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<sup>45</sup> 1940 U. S. Census, Du Pont Estate.

Pont-era buildings on the property. The stables have become an equestrian center for Wilmington horsepeople. Some locals jog on the outdoor track, which has been covered in bluestone chips, while others fish in the pond inside the track or play tennis on the many courts. The way people enter the property has even changed. Visitors now come in through a back entrance off Carrcroft Road instead of the Philadelphia Pike. The average visitor sees Bellevue Hall Park as a popular recreational facility, hardly noting the one or two historic markers about the du Pont family located near the mansion. They do not realize that du Pont created a markedly different landscape meant solely for the recreation of members of the social elite –or how working-class people made invisible within the estate’s landscape from the moment of its conception enabled Bellevue Hall to function.<sup>46</sup>

This research paper examined du Pont’s racing stable workforce and the development of his training facilities at Bellevue Hall to repopulate the landscape with working-class people. It serves as a starting point for reconsidering how class, race, and gender functioned within Gilded Age and early-twentieth century estates where the focus remains on the owners and their elite material culture. Du Pont’s construction of a state-of-the art thoroughbred training center was an essential part of his transformation of Bellevue Hall because it reflected the centrality of horseracing in du Pont’s life, his identity as one of the leading figures in the American thoroughbred industry, and functioned as a statement of his immense wealth and elite social status. Du Pont’s creation of his racing stable necessitated the development of a workforce to care for and train the horses. While his racing stable could not have existed without the labor of dozens of men and women, du Pont downplayed the importance of his workers who he treated paternalistically. Centering the research on a cultural landscape study of Bellevue Hall instead of

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<sup>46</sup> William du Pont, Jr. Papers Finding Aid, Hagley.

purely conducting architectural, social, and labor histories revealed how du Pont's minimalization of his workers was mirrored in his construction of his estate. He used park-like landscapes influenced by British estates and Colonial Revival architecture to create an estate that showcased the extensive amounts of labor and capital du Pont had at his disposal while trying to make workers invisible. The landscape of Bellevue Hall demonstrates how racehorse owners used the built environment in crafting perceptions of horseracing as a pursuit of the elite while excluding the working-class people who took care of, trained, and raced their horses.

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