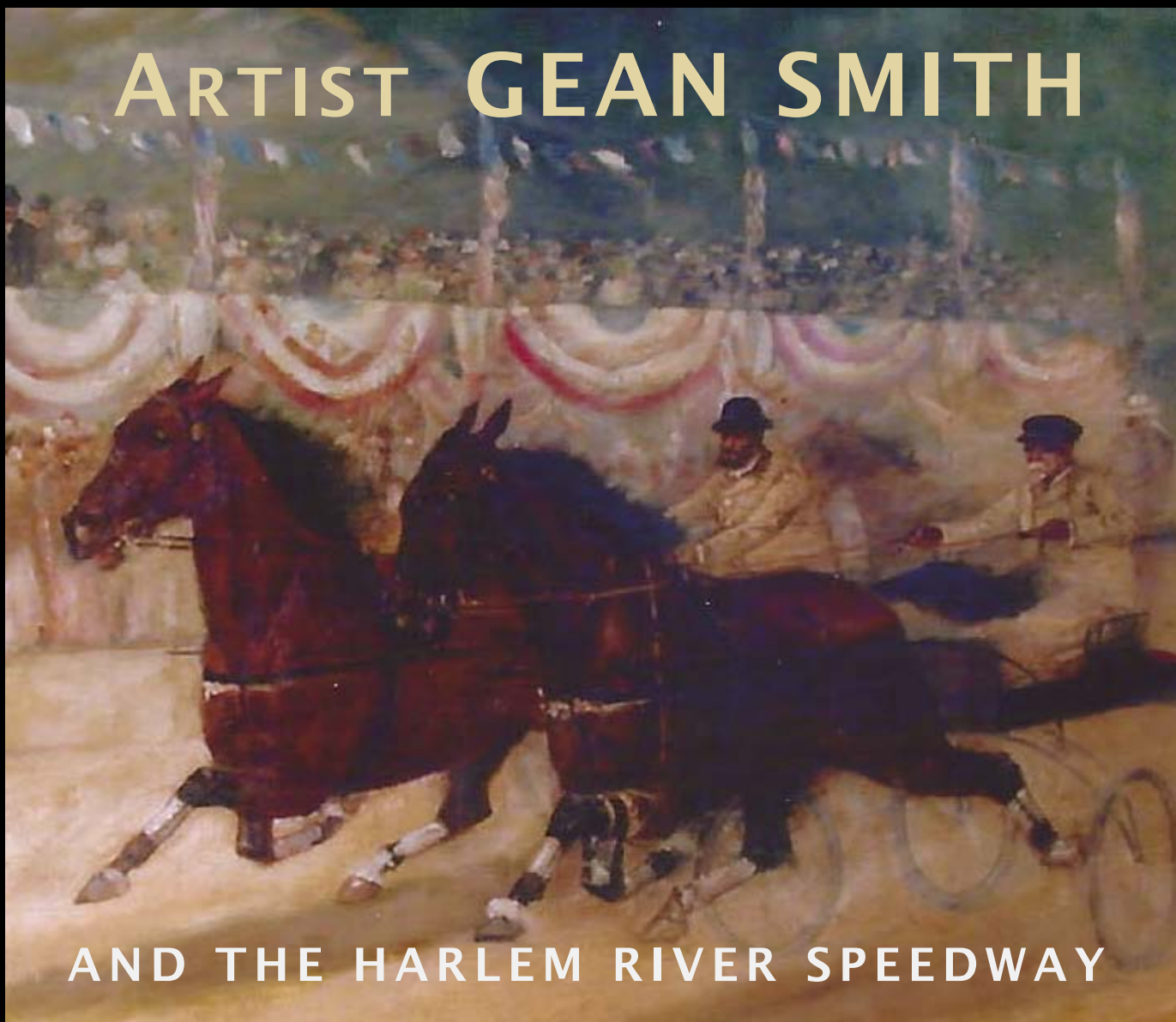


ARTIST GEAN SMITH



AND THE HARLEM RIVER SPEEDWAY

**In late 19th century New York City,
during the last extravagant days
of the Gilded Age, a thoroughfare
more than two miles long was
carved out along the western
shoreline of the Harlem River.**

Passing beneath dramatic outcroppings of rock and the engineering wonders of the Washington and High Bridges, the Harlem River Speedway, designed by architect and landscape designer Calvert Vaux, was the playground of the city's trotting horse aficionados.

**Gean Smith (1851–1928),
a self-taught and self-described
“sports painter,” was on hand to capture
the dynamic colorful scene created by
the sportsmen and their steeds.**

**In the following selected works,
Smith's spirited depictions
of notable horses and drivers,
in competition or at leisure,
provide a colorful record of the
brief (1898–1919) but vibrant
history of the famous Speedway.**

CONTEST BETWEEN THE FIRST AND GREATEST CHAMPIONS



OIL ON CANVAS BY ARTIST GEAN SMITH, 1901

A successful merchant Nathan Straus helped forge a partnership between his family's glass and crockery business with R.H. Macy's department store which eventually led to the Straus family becoming sole owners of Macy's famous store. Straus's interest in trotting horses began in the 1880's and as a member of the board of New York Public Parks between 1890 and 1894 he helped build the movement which eventually led to the construction of the Harlem River Speedway. On June 4, 1899 Nathan Straus drove his chestnut gelding Cobwebs on the Speedway against John F. Cockerill's team, Rival and Honor Bright. Against a panoramic backdrop, including the dome of New York University's library (now part of Bronx Community College) and the New York and Harlem Railroad, Straus bested Cockerill's team in a race Straus would say was the hardest contest Cobwebs ever faced.

STAMBOUL



In 1892 E.H. Harriman paid \$41,000 for champion trotting stallion Stamboul. The horse would prove himself worthy of the price both on the track and as a progenitor. Harriman however did not buy horses only to watch them be driven by his stable's trainer but to enjoy a turn of speed himself. On at least one reported occasion, Harriman ordered Stamboul to be brought by train to New York City from Harriman's Orange County estate. Upon arrival the horse was hitched to a sleigh and Harriman set off for a brush on the Harlem River Speedway.

EARLY 20TH CENTURY OIL ON CANVAS BY ARTIST GEAN SMITH

FRED B. & MOHICAN



A founder of the Central Grain and Stock Exchange in Chicago, Illinois, James A. Murphy amassed a fortune in business. Murphy, a native of Rome, New York, however was also an avid horseman and noted to be a keen judge of horses. He was the owner of Star Pointer, the first harness horse to beat 2:00. Eventually Murphy eschewed his Chicago home and farm for the busy picturesque Speedway. Moving his horses into a private stable at 157th Street and Amsterdam Avenue, including his crack team Fred B. & Mohican.

OIL ON CANVAS BY ARTIST GEAN SMITH, 1900

LOU DILLON



In 1903 construction of millionaire industrialist C.K.G. Billings' 25,000 square foot upper Manhattan stable was completed. The site location for the stable and magnificent home that would follow was chosen for its proximity to the Harlem River Speedway. Billings considered the Speedway "...incomparable to any other driveway in the world." It was the perfect place to showcase Lou Dillon, Billings' queen of the trotting turf, in contests against other gentlemen horsemen.

EARLY 20TH CENTURY OIL ON CANVAS
BY ARTIST GEAN SMITH

SWIFT WINS FROM JOLLY BACHELOR



OIL ON CANVAS BY ARTIST GEAN SMITH, 1902

The spectacle of the New York Road Drivers' Association's annual parade and races drew huge crowds to the Harlem River Speedway each year. The reviewing stand, festooned with bunting and flags in the nation's colors, filled to capacity with well-dressed "ladies and their escorts" to watch the festive scene. In 1902 the Speedway parade drew 400 participants and more than 40,000 spectators. Frequent rivals, John F. Cockerill, president of the Drivers' Association and real estate magnate H.C. Mapes are depicted by artist Gean Smith before the backdrop of this colorful panorama.

This exhibition also highlights the Harness Racing Museum's award-winning conservation programming with three of the five 100+ year old paintings having been cleaned and repaired with funding provided by the Museum's annual Restoration Raffle.

THANK YOU FOR JOINING US

THE HARNESS RACING MUSEUM & HALL OF FAME

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