

ON EXHIBIT AT THE HARNESS RACING MUSEUM



TROTTING ON THE AVENUE

"THE NOW FAMOUS HARLEM RIVER SPEEDWAY IN NEW YORK IS WITHOUT QUESTION THE MOST REMARKABLE ROAD IN THE WORLD," OBSERVED LONDON'S *SKETCH* MAGAZINE IN AUGUST 1901. FROM 1898 TO 1919, THIS PICTURESQUE DRIVE PROVIDED A PLAYGROUND FOR NEW YORK CITY'S TROTTING HORSE ENTHUSIASTS. RESTRICTED TO USE BY VEHICLES BUILT FOR THE DRIVING OF LIGHT HARNESS HORSES, THE SPEEDWAY WAS THE SITE OF THRILLING "BRUSHES" AND SPECTACULAR PARADES IN A SETTING OF EXTRAORDINARY BEAUTY. A TRIBUTARY OF THE OLDER HARLEM LANE, THE 2.3 MILE DRIVE WAS CONSTRUCTED ALONG THE WESTERN SHORELINE OF THE HARLEM RIVER AMONG COLORFUL OUTCROPPINGS OF ROCK AND PASSING BENEATH THE ENGINEERING WONDERS OF BOTH THE WASHINGTON AND HIGH BRIDGES. LITHOGRAPHS, POSTCARDS AND TURN OF THE CENTURY PHOTOGRAPHS ILLUMINATE THE HISTORY OF THE SPEEDWAY IN THIS NEW EXHIBIT BY THE HARNESS RACING MUSEUM.



GEAN SMITH HIGHLIGHTS THE HARLEM RIVER SPEEDWAY

IN THIS COMPANION PRESENTATION TO "TROTTING ON THE AVENUE," ARTIST GEAN SMITH'S DYNAMIC OIL PAINTINGS OF HORSES AND DRIVERS, IN COMPETITION OR IN LEISURE, PROVIDE A VIVID RECORD OF THE BRIEF BUT VIBRANT HISTORY OF THE FAMOUS SPEEDWAY. A SELF-TAUGHT AND SELF-DESCRIBED "SPORTS PAINTER," SMITH WAS BORN IN PHILLIPSPORT, SULLIVAN COUNTY, NEW YORK IN 1851. HE ESTABLISHED HIS FIRST STUDIO IN CHICAGO BUT RELOCATED TO NEW YORK CITY IN 1885. THE HARLEM RIVER SPEEDWAY, OFTEN REFERRED TO AS THE NEW YORK SPEEDWAY OR SIMPLY THE SPEEDWAY, BECAME THE PERFECT BACKDROP AND MARKET FOR SMITH'S ART. KNOWN FOR THE RAPIDITY WITH WHICH HE COULD TRACE A SCENE ON CANVAS, SMITH WORKED ON PAINTING COMMISSIONS, AS A BOOK ILLUSTRATOR AND EVEN APPLIED HIS TALENT TO THE VAUDEVILLE STAGE, WHERE IN THE GLARE OF THE SPOTLIGHT, THE ARTIST WOULD PAINT FOUR PIECES, EACH IN FOUR MINUTES OR LESS. THE GEAN SMITH 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.



HORSE-DRAWN: THE SLEIGHS OF CURRIER & IVES

UNTIL THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY, HORSE-DRAWN SLEIGHS WERE AN ESSENTIAL MEANS OF WINTER TRAVEL. FROM THE PRACTICAL HAULING OF GOODS TO THE JOY OF TAKING PART IN A "SLEIGHING CARNIVAL," THE ARTISTS OF THE ESTEEMED CURRIER & IVES PRINTING FIRM CAPTURED IT ALL IN CHARMING, WHIMSICAL DETAIL. THESE COLORFUL, FESTIVE SCENES PROVIDE US A GLIMPSE OF THE WINTER FASHIONS OF THE PERIOD AS WELL AS THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE HORSE IN SOCIETY OF THE TIME. THE HARNESS RACING MUSEUM, HOME OF ONE OF THE WORLD'S LARGEST COMPILATIONS OF CURRIER & IVES EQUINE LITHOGRAPHS, IS PROUD TO PRESENT THESE HIGHLIGHTS FROM OUR COLLECTION.