



by Ken Dyer

Joseph Hamilton Coulter – The Last Historian

As the first half of the 20th century ended there were but three writer historians left to continue as the trinity of knowledge of the first hundred years of the standardbred in Australia.

Joe Coulter, Tas Williams and Vic Dullard were acknowledged as the font of all knowledge of harness racing's foundations in Australia when they were appointed in 1950 together with William Larcombe of New Zealand as members of the Stud Book Committee by the Inter Dominion Trotting Council when the first national Australian Trotting Stud Book was to be edited for publication in 1954.

In February 1959 the trio were awarded inscribed Gold Medals by the Inter Dominion Council for their invaluable assistance in launching the first volume of the Australian Trotting Stud Book and for previously assisting the Royal Agricultural Society of NSW which had been responsible for publishing the original series of Australian trotting stud books in the early years of the 20th century up to 1950.

Their long rein was cut short by deaths of Vic Dullard in Melbourne in June 1959 and Tas Williams in Hobart in the late 1960's. The demise of the Australian Trotting Record in 1978 where they had recorded their historical research and stories—mostly from first hand knowledge, created a void and no regular place for budding historians to publish their research and stories. Veteran journalist and historian of an earlier generation James Walford had retired from journalism in 1939 and then died 1966 at 91 years of age his involvement in both thoroughbred and the Standardbred going back to before the turn of the century and so another earlier link to the past was lost.

This huge gap has only intermittently been filled to the present time although, currently, *Harness Racing International* is doing its best to encourage the writing of history by accepting researched historical stories for publication.

In a time and place prior to 1974 when there was no method in place to recognize long term meritorious service and achievement to the harness industry and with the exception of the trio above even their names and those of preceding historians and journalists, have largely passed into history with only Graeme Goffin's contributions being commemorated of recent times.

Many others who made worthwhile journalistic contributions have been largely forgotten—the list is not long, however, the current authorities should carry out a survey of old time journalists and writers - and even other categories of administrators and horses - and make retrospective awards to our erstwhile forgotten pioneers and champion horses.

In 1974 the newly formed Australian Harness Racing Council decided as one of its first tasks to set about establishing annual awards to then current drivers, horses, journalists etc. each award category being named after a prominent elder related to that category in years gone by.

Appropriately, Joe Coulter's name was commemorated with the naming of the Joseph Coulter Media Awards. In 2005 some 30 years after his death many in the industry might well ask now who was he and what was his history.

Born Joseph Hamilton Coulter at Donald, Victoria, and named after his father's brother, Joe was the only boy of two children born to Hugh Coulter and Helena Murray (b1874) who themselves were born at nearby Clunes and married there in 1893. Hugh Coulter was a first class horseman and in the days before his marriage was much in demand in a time when horsemanship was a prerequisite to existence in bushlife. Hugh and his brothers would drive huge herds of cattle from Clunes and Talbot to the market at Ballarat very seldom losing any of the cattle in their care. Hugh's father was also called Hugh Coulter an immigrant from County Antrim.

In 1893 Hugh and Helena moved further north to Donald located in the Wimmera region to manage JA Meyers station where their children Eileen May (b1894) and Joseph (b1898) were born. However, at the close of the of



Joe Coulter at age seventeen years and eleven months, 1916.

the 19th century Hugh and Helena Coulter together with their children had moved closer in to Melbourne by accepting a position at "Lyndhurst", Woodend, to manage JA Johnston's cattle property and horse stud and stables.

At this time in Australia's history industry and transport were still horse intensive and good horsemen combined with good management skills were a valued commodity. Consequently Hugh Coulter with his talent for accomplishing anything to do with horses gradually moved up to manage larger properties. In his younger days Hugh had taken part in activities such as thoroughbred racing, athletics, hunting, eventing, jumping and came across the first trotters of those days racing at shows, race, sports meetings or wherever trotting owners could arrange a trotting race.

Hugh was extremely well known throughout the Wimmera and had horses of all kinds to participate in racing, jumping and hunting events. He began to race trotters in the 1890's and as graziers generally had a trotter or roadster or two Hugh's expertise at breaking in and training the rough trotters of those days became the talk around the small towns in those vicinities.

Almost as soon as he could walk Joe was riding his father's horses accompanying his father to shows, race, hunt and sports meetings—Joe went



Miss Huon, by Prince Huon-Doll. Driver, H.Coulter.

wherever his father went and in this way Joe became a horse lover forever and with his remarkable memory he was able in later years to transcribe the events of those old times from his own personal experiences. There can be no doubt that Hugh Coulter nurtured his son to be a horseman following in his own footsteps but could not have known that Joe would develop into a historian of the trotting industry.

Looking back, Joe, in his own words said in the twilight of his life "From my earliest days my life was practically limited to or surrounded by horses and horsemen. My world was comprised of horses, stables, training and racetracks, horse shows, auctions, blacksmiths and saddlers shops. The conversations I heard, the papers or books I read were about horses. In those early years I was fortunate to be in the company of the most famous men connected with the breeding and racing of the light harness horse - the Standardbred."

During the 1890's and early 1900's Hugh Coulter had an agency to purchase horses for India and the South African War and was a familiar figure in the hunting contests at Royal Melbourne Shows and at many of the principal Victorian and Riverina Shows. At the Grand National Show at Maryborough, Victoria, in October 1900 J O Inglis described as one of the finest all round horsemen of an earlier period awarded Hugh Coulter a special prize for the best rider in heavy or light hunters. The Lieutenant Governor of Victoria, Sir John Madden, was also there at the presentation and congratulated Coulter on his horsemanship.

J O Inglis an amateur was a special horseman and a great judge of horses. He was the owner of two Melbourne Cup winners in Don Juan (1873) and Malua (1884). As well as the Melbourne Cup Malua won the 1886 Australian Cup, the VRC Newmarket, the Oakleigh Plate etc and in 1888 ridden by his amateur owner won the Grand National Hurdle at 11 stone 7 pounds. Inglis had previously bred and sold as a yearling the 1879 Melbourne Cup winner Darriwell. Hugh was especially proud of this award from such a splendid horseman. In 1913 the Inglis family bred the pacer Asheville Lad the winner of the 1919 Melbourne Thousand.

Coulter won trotting races at Woodend, Kyneton, Hanging Rock, and Trenton for Johnston and others before moving on in 1905 to manage The Ranch Stud at Glenroy for Alex Robertson and WB Veirs where the paddocks were full of imported sires and dams and their progeny. Coulter also did much of the preliminary work on breaking in young stock for the several short years the family was located at The Ranch Farm. At this time Joe Coulter then seven years of age met WB Veirs and Will Whitbourn and his memory of these two icons of trotting in those years stayed with him for the rest his life.

In 1907 The Ranch Farm was dispersed but Hugh Coulter was retained by WB Veirs to tend his imported horses at his St Kilda Road lodgings where Dixie Alto USA, Diana Rose USA, and Mary Daly USA were stabled when out of training. In 1908 Dixie Alto USA was put back into work initially by Coulter but the stallion was moved on to Clayton where Will Whitbourn put on the finishing touches for his race in the historic 1908 Fleet Cup at Flemington Racecourse which he won by 40 yards.

Towards the end of 1908 Hugh Coulter accepted a position at a new Trotting Stud being developed by the Meyerhoff Bros (previously of Maitland SA) at Stradbroke Park near Magill, South Australia. Coulter trained and drove some winners for the Brothers including Pride and Otahuhu and managed the sire Frank Harold at their stud. It is worthy of note that the stud contained a full mile training track in a woodland setting.

Coulter had made several successful trips to Richmond, Victoria for the Meyerhoff's with Pride and Otahuhu in 1912 where he met up again with John Wren the Manager of the Melbourne Trotting Club. On these trips to Melbourne young Joe was an interested traveler with his father, however, his headmaster in giving his father credit for taking his son on trips to broaden his mind may have changed his mind if he had known that the pair attended race meetings in Melbourne.

Wren and Coulter had an antagonistic history. In the days when Coulter was still at The Ranch Stud Farm—according to Max Agnew in "Australia's Trotting Heritage", WB Veirs had driven into the farmyard visibly upset and shaken by an incident he had with Wren. "Never again do I wish to race to race a horse at Richmond while we have jailbirds running the show". He instructed Coulter to prepare all his horses for sale. Later at a Richmond trotting meeting Coulter had a confrontation with Wren in front of some of Wren's influential friends which ended on a threatening note Wren saying "You won't be round long enough, Coulter to see it".

Frank Harold was not a success as a sire for the Meyerhoffs and the stud was broken up in 1913 the Brothers moving off to Enfield to a smaller farm. Through sheer force of necessity the Coulter family moved again establishing a fifteen acre farm at Gandy's Gully near Magill where he trained his trotters as well as developing a horse agency and livery stables in Adelaide.

At the beginning of 1913 Coulter bought a brown trotting gelding he saw pulling a milkcart around Smithfield and on inquiry found the gelding was by Baron Rothschild NZ and bred by MG Smith of the same town. The gelding had been tried before but had been discarded to deliver milk around the Smithfield/Enfield area.



Hugh Coulter with Dixie Alto (Imp.), Winner Fleet Cup 1908.



In 1913 after much improvisation and great improvement in a short period of time Coulter managed to get the gelding to a stage where he began to think in terms of racing in Melbourne. Before setting off to Melbourne he organized a trial against an experienced horse driven by his son Joe then fifteen years of age. Winning the trial in great fashion Hugh named the gelding County Antrim after the place of his grandfather's birth and set off to Melbourne with high hopes.

Travelling companion for County Antrim was the experienced and well known pacer Buckeye which had raced in Adelaide for the previous eight years. Also travelling with Hugh and the two horses was Joe Coulter then in his last year at Adelaide High School.

Stabling his horses at Richmond Racecourse, County Antrim, a trotter, had his first start on 5/6/1913 from 55 yards behind to finish 4th in a Lady's Bracelet over 9 furlongs. Two more unplaced runs then occurred at Richmond before the gelding's first win on 24/7/13 at Richmond. Newspapers of the day reported that County Antrim was judiciously supported down to 10/1 in a field of fifteen in a Trotters Handicap. Kept up near the lead County Antrim got the better of the odds on favourite Maurie M owned by JB Zander in the run home. All County Antrim's races for Coulter were under saddle.

Amid the jubilation in the Coulter camp there was also disquiet concerning his fellow traveller Buckeye. Victoria Trotting Club officials had detected a small irregularity in the registration application and had stood over approval. How there could be any irregularity staggered Coulter as Buckeye was one of the better known horses in Adelaide. Nevertheless the inquiry lurched on for another three months before a decision was made.

In the meantime County Antrim was sold for an excellent price to Thomas McCrow of Woondoo near McArthur in western Victoria. Eventually County Antrim won over twenty races for McCrow around the metropolitan and country racetracks in Victoria.

Before returning to Adelaide Hugh Coulter purchased with his winnings the pacing sire Basil B to stand at his Gandy's Gully property which was near Penfolds winery.

The inquiry into Buckeye's registration continued over six meetings of the Victorian Trotting Association from 28/6/13 to 6/11/13 when finally the VTA officially refused registration of Buckeye to race in Victoria. John Wren was the Manager of the Melbourne Trotting Club affiliated with the Association and he had a big say in the direction of affairs of that body. On 25/11/13 the VTA decided to disqualify Hugh Coulter for life for corrupt practices in connection with the application for registration of the bay gelding Buckeye. The corrupt practices complained of were of a trivial nature but Wren had a long memory and evidently saw an opportunity for retribution when Coulter fell into his hands but "life" was overkill for the trivial matter complained of.

Hugh Coulter returned to Adelaide and once again became a studmaster this time for himself with his new purchases Basil B and King William. At that time a person's life outside racing was separate to racing and despite disqualification he could continue in the life of a studmaster and selling horses as an agent of NSW owners provided he did not attend race meetings. Coulter endured his disqualification for three years until 1916 when Wren gave an amnesty to all people disqualified by the Victoria Trotting Association.

For his part the young Joe Coulter after leaving school secured a junior position with the Australian Pastoral Company in 1914 in Adelaide under Sir John Duncan. Joe vividly remembered in the same year watching the street parade of the Light Horse prior to embarkation for the Middle East. However, after a year he decided to spend twelve months boundary riding at one of the Australian Pastoral Companies large stations in outback South Australia.

By 1918 Joe had returned to Adelaide and obtained an administrative position with Cooper's Brewery. Joe also decided to take up a veterinary science course after work hours and in 1918 met up with another student the later well known Fred (Pop) Kersley at the School of Mines in Adelaide where the Diploma Classes were conducted. Within a year or two Joe with his experience with horses and equine veterinary qualifications had graduated to be the stable and delivery manager for Coopers a position he held until 1948.

The Coopers Brewery stable contained between 40 to 50 Clydesdale horses and part of his duties was to arrange beer deliveries and roster staff



Joe and Mary on their wedding day, 1935.

and horses to achieve this. This position enabled him to freely move around South Australia and despite his young age he soon made himself well known and liked at thoroughbred and trotting tracks and their committees.

Joe's history since his families' 1908 move to Adelaide again followed his father's desire to educate his son in the ways of the horse industry. Joe and his father were always to be found at the Adelaide Show each year and attended as many trotting meetings and exhibitions as could be found. The disqualification of his father from 1913-16 hardly made any difference to his life as he went by himself and met up with committees of various clubs and associations. In 1918 he was able to organize pony trotters and pacers races at race meetings for the young children of trainers and drivers.

In 1919 at age twenty one he participated in the Preliminary Meetings of the S A Trotting Association (later the SA Trotting Club). In 1921 Joe was the only member of SATC still alive of the thirteen that attended the first meeting of the Club. In 1920 Joe journeyed to Perth and meeting up with James Brennan came home to Adelaide convinced that Brennan's strong opposition to proprietary racing in Perth was the only way forward.

On this trip to Perth Joe also met Jack Skull for the first time. Jack Skull was a former leading official for John Wren in Western Australia but later worked for James Brennan as Chief Stipendiary Steward of the Western Australian Trotting Association.

It was in Perth that Joe Coulter realized the extent of the tentacles that stretched all the way from John Wren's offices in Melbourne to the officials and management of Wren's registered and unregistered proprietary clubs in Western Australia. Joe saw how Wren's proprietary clubs put the screws on non proprietary registered clubs by destabilizing the clubs and the controlling body. This was achieved by doubling the prizemoney of his own

racing clubs activities and allowing disqualified persons and horses at registered racetracks to race at his unregistered tracks.

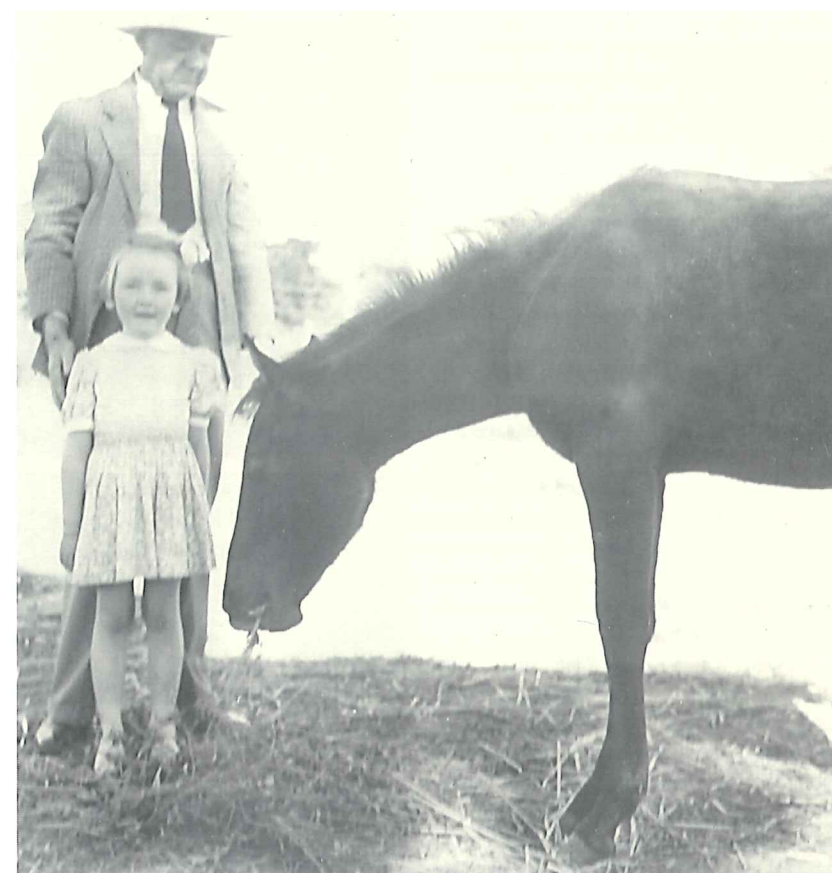
In the period 1920-25 Joe attacked proprietary racing through the Australian Trotting Record that circulated widely throughout Australia and through articles in daily newspapers in South Australia and elsewhere. These articles must have been bitingly unanswerable for John Wren the owner of many registered proprietary and unregistered Racetracks in Victoria, Western Australia, and Queensland and who complained bitterly about Coulter's activities causing Wren to close down several sporting newspapers.

Around 1920 Joe Coulter had started to send articles to the Australian Trotting Record for publication but with no name attached except the notation "from our SA correspondent". It was not until 1923 that Joe Coulter's pen name "Tuxedo" was appended to his weekly report and thus began fifty years of articles and stories in the Record plus many articles contributed to the daily newspapers of the day.

Strangely there is no record of John Wren owning any racetrack in South Australia, however, Joe Coulter had his suspicions about a mystery proprietary Club which opened suddenly in Adelaide in April 1920. Called the SA Trotting Club - an organization that predates the current SA Trotting Club - the Club was headed by Manager/Secretary L Le Cornu and it also attempted to set itself up as a Controlling Body. The constituent members of the committee of this organization were never named.

Joe Coulter suggested some years later after this mystery club closed down that the Club had been supported by interstate funding inferring that the club's activities had all the earmarks of the John Wren machine propping up the finances of the club as not only was it believed to be financed from interstate but the unethical tactics were the same as Wren's Western Australian ploy to destabilize the WA Trotting Association a few years earlier.

In 1924 the following appeared in The Australian Trotting Record "LIBEL ALLEGED". SA Trotting Owners Claim. On behalf of Joseph Hamilton Coulter of Amherst Avenue, Prospect, SA, who owns several trotting horses Messrs Denny, Daly and Travers solicitors have issued two writs of 3000 Pounds each-the one against "The Adelaide Sun" and the other against "The Adelaide



Joe Coulter with his daughter Geraldine.

Sun Limited" in respect of alleged libels published in their issues of May 17 and 24. The alleged libel complained of in the first issue is under the heading "News and Comments" by ES McIntyre, Owner disqualified, and relates to an allegation that JH Coulter was disqualified by the SA Trotting Club. The second makes reference to an appeal against such disqualification having been dismissed".

Joe Coulter knew nothing of the disqualification and the supposed appeal. He said much later that he believed that the SA Trotting Club tried to shut him up with trumped up charges laid in secret and without notice. He believed that the Club had acted on instructions from afar to deter him from making any more criticism concerning proprietary racing both in South Australia and elsewhere.

In 1925 the SA Trotting Club quietly closed down its trotting meetings and disappeared from view. The name SA Trotting Club was eventually re-used by the SA Trotting Association and is still used by the Club in 2005 that now races at Globe Derby Park.

In the 1920's Joe trained several horses which his father had purchased for him from James Munro of Yeoval, NSW. Both pacers were by Winn Alto and in 1925 Joe sent them to Perth to race at the WACA and then at Gloucester Park. He also bred from the mare Clematis from 1929 to 1941.

Hugh Coulter continued in the trotting game for many years while his son Joe was making a bigger name for himself. Up to the war years Joe continued reporting the South Australian trotting news and publishing articles about South Australia's trotting history from its earliest days - still the only record of its foundations.



Joe and his sister Ellen, 1964.



In July 1930 in the Australian Trotting Record, Joe Coulter made a plea for the formation of a Federal Council. This was the second of such proposals that had graced the pages of the Record the first being made by the then young editor of the Record Jim Meehan in 1922. The proposals recommended Recognition and Reciprocity of interstate Trainers and Drivers Licences and Disqualifications, uniform handicapping, uniform clearance documentation from State to State Controlling bodies, Uniform measurement of tracks, and so on.

The matters were of great concern to trotting administrators throughout Australia who were generally in favour of resolving these issues, however, these matters constituted big changes and Controlling Bodies in 1922 and again in 1930 were not in full charge of their own destinies in their respective States and in one State (Victoria) the other States were so suspicious of John Wren's influence that they would not be a party to be seen acting with him.

However, the Secretary/Manager of the Victoria Trotting and Racing Association (VTRA) was war hero Gilbert Dyett and when he offered in 1924 to take personal control of a proposed Central Registrar of Names all other States accepted him without question or raising any doubts. Gilbert Dyett in 1919 had become the President of the RSL and was later knighted. He is still not to be thought of in the same breath as any of his so-called colleagues in trotting of those times. During all the furor over many decades concerning the influence of John Wren in trotting there is not one word of criticism then or now about Sir Gilbert.

The establishment of the Central Registrar was the first step in uniformity and reciprocity and Joe Coulter was one of the first to recognize its significance and what it might lead to but alas it was to be many years before the other items on his wish list came to fruition.

In the 1930's Joe reported among other issues the control of trotting in South Australia being vested in the SA League and the opening of the SA Trotting Club's meetings at Wayville with bookmaker betting condoned. In the 1920's Joe had begun to keep records of pedigrees of South Australia's trotting horses and where they had come from and this was to of great value to him later in assisting the publication of the second series of Stud Books published in 1954. His involvement in



Clint Hodgins with Joe Coulter ("Tuxedo") after the former had won with Elaine Rodney



Mr. and Mrs. E. Roland Harriman, J. H. Coulter and Phil Pines (curator of the Hall of Fame, Goshen). Mr. Harriman gave a trotting stallion to Mr. Chris Howe.

trotting since the earliest days and his remarkable memory of pedigrees stood him in good stead for establishment of pedigrees of trotters that raced before registration became necessary.

In 1935 Joseph Hamilton Coulter married Mary Elizabeth Minahan at St Francis Xavier Cathedral in Adelaide- Joe being 37 years of age whilst his bride was 30 years old. Their only child Geraldine Theresa was born in Adelaide in 1936 but moved to Alice Springs in 1962 when married to Ian Pirie. A granddaughter of Joe Coulter - Annie McLeod born in 1963 still lives in Alice Springs.

Joe's wife Mary was sister to Mona Minahan a lady who in her time was recognized as the leading business woman in Alice Springs and owner of the Riverside Hotel there and other businesses.

In 1934 Joe renewed acquaintances with Jack Skull who had a disputation with JP Stratton President of the WA Trotting Association and who was appointed Chairman of Stewards for the South Australian Trotting Association (later SA Trotting League). Joe was a great fan of Jack Skull's strong control of trotting in South Australia and



Australasian Representatives at Yonkers Raceway, New York, 1960. Famous identities include George Gath (second from left), Noel Simpson (far right), Clarrie Rhodes (second from right), Joe Coulter (fifth from left).

gave him credit for a lot of the great general improvement that took place in trotting in that State in the period 1934 to the early 1950's. For further information about the relationship between Jack Skull and Joe Coulter see the Jack Skull Story in a previous issue of *Harness Racing International*.

In the war years 1939-45 trotting was virtually closed down but Joe kept himself busy by liaising with his friends Vic Dullard and Tas Williams hunting down old mysterious pedigrees for the Royal Agricultural Society of NSW which had conducted a trotting stud book since 1902.

At wars end Joe continued his weekly reporting of current affairs in Adelaide but in 1948 he decided he wanted to be closer to trotting and thoroughbred racing and left Coopers Brewery after 32 years to take up a position with Coles Brothers, South Australia's premier livestock agency, to prepare their annual thoroughbred and trotting yearling catalogues.

In the same year Joe Coulter published privately the South Australia Trotting Register a record of all trotting races in South Australia from 1948 to 1951.

Appointed by the Inter Dominion Trotting Council in 1950 to the Committee that was overseeing and editing the first Australian Trotting Stud Book taking over from the Royal Agricultural Society of NSW, Joe and his fellow historians, Vic Dullard and Tas Williams, spent many months assisting Joe Butler in its editing.

In 1957 he attended a meeting of the Stud Book Committee that was held in February and organized by Norm Hollier the new Secretary of the Inter Dominion Trotting Council to coincide with his visit to Perth for Radiant Venture's Inter Dominion Championship. The Conference was attended by Dillon Kenny, John Hodgins, and Ray Holloway of South Australia, and Ken Dyer and Norm Hollier from New South Wales.

As mentioned earlier the Inter Dominion Trotting Council presented Coulter, Dullard and Williams with inscribed Gold Medals in 1959 for their Stud Book efforts. Joe Coulter's Gold Medal was presented by Fred Needham Chairman of the SA Trotting League and its representative on the Inter Dominion Council. However, Vic Dullard's medal presentation was cut short

by his death in June 1959.

By 1959 Joe Coulter was probably the most widely known and read journalist/historian throughout Australia and there was no subject in trotting and even thoroughbreds that he could not converse with authority. His Library which had been started in his very young days and looked after by his mother at that time comprised well over 500 books of horse literature. In addition his mother looked after his scrapbooks that she had started in 1908.

At the end of 1959 Chris Howe of Moorooopna, Victoria, and Edgar Tatlow of Epping, Victoria, started a fund to raise enough to send Joe Coulter to visit North America. The reason for the trip apart from visiting stud farms and racetracks etc., was to travel with an official party from Australia which had been invited to send two representatives to compete in the 1960 International Pacing Championship Series at Yonkers Raceway eventually won by Australian gelding Apmat beating the great American pacer Bye Bye Byrd. Daily throughout the trip Joe sent back a diary of each days events for publication in the Australian Trotting Record and his travels reveal his meetings with well known trainers/drivers and major breeders and owners.

From one of these latter meetings at Historic Park he met E Roland Harriman a breeder owner much revered by North American trotting horsemen. Invited back to his house Joe casually inquired whether Harriman knew of a trotting stallion suitable for Australian conditions-Harriman replied "I have a well bred horse an excellent trotter and trotting bred on both sides of his pedigree. Come back after the races and I will have details". Harry Pownall was present when Joe returned and questioned him about where such a trotter would be going and whether the proposed studmaster fostered trotters. Harriman thought for a while and then said "Mr Coulter I would like you to accept this horse as a gift from America to Australia." The horse was Bank Note Tr.2:02.2 by Phonograph from Rosemary Hanover and Harriman arranged his transport from his farm to Victoria without cost to Joe Coulter.

Other studs he visited in the Blue Grass included Hamburg Place, Castleton, Walnut Hall. Joe met up with young Australian Ross Simpson who was on a work experience visit to Kentucky spending a year with Castleton



Joe Coulter and Frank Smith with the Champion Minor Derby.



Farm before taking up some assignments with Horseman and Fair World. Joe visited many tracks in Kentucky, New Jersey and New York but the one visit he valued above all others was his visit to Goshen and the Hall of Fame and it was this visit to the HOF that later set Joe on the road towards pushing for an Australian Hall of Fame.

Joe was treated as a guest of Yonkers Raceway being well looked after by Yonkers officials and was included in all social events of the two week International Pace Carnival another highlight of his visit was the running of the International Trot won by Hairos. Afterwards Joe continued on his round the world trip visiting studs and racetracks in UK, France, Germany and Italy before returning home.

Tracks that Joe visited included Hollywood Park, Churchill Downs, Belmont Park, Monmouth Park, Goshen/Historic, Yonkers Roosevelt, Monticello, Good Time Track whilst he met many famous people including Delvin Miller, Rex Larkin, Elgin Armstrong, Harry Pownall, Roland E Harriman, Tommy Murphy and many others.

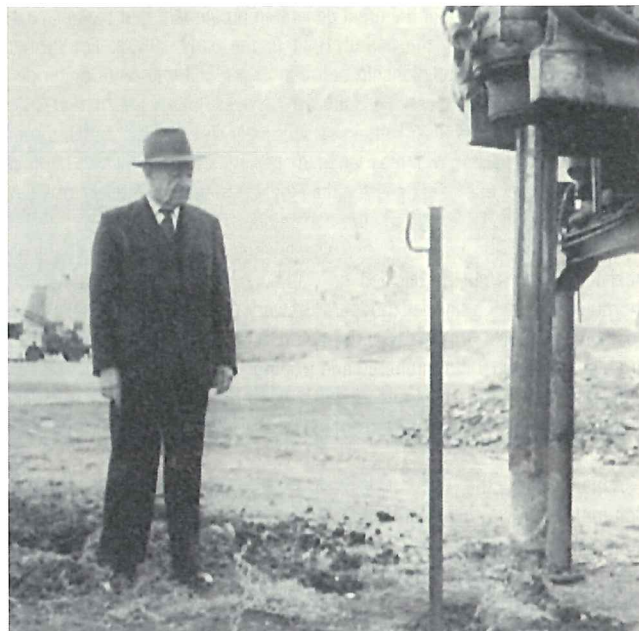
On his return to Adelaide he immersed himself in the writing of stories of his trip and making plans for his own future. In 1961 Joe and his wife took a holiday in Alice Springs for 9 weeks staying with his wife's sister at the Riverside Hotel. Joe was surprised to learn about horse activity in the area surrounding Alice Springs. In his "Notes from Alice Springs" in July 1961 Joe describes his visit to an outback race meeting over two days at Hart's Range 130 miles north east of Alice Springs. About 700 people made the rough trip to the bush meeting.

Eleven races conducted each day of an old time Australian bush race meeting severely tested the stamina of Joe but he came back invigorated by the effort the bush people put into their race meeting which also included a polo match and a bush ball. Weights for the horses were 11 stone 7 pounds minimum. There was no transport service no rail, bus or plane the only means was by car or truck over rough territory roads. The horses were described as bush bred and fed territory horses of no pedigree but Joe thought that most of them had some blood in them somewhere. Accommodation was in your own tent.

Joe also discovered the Alice Springs Pony Club and the Racing Club were thriving and that up and down the road to Alice Springs there were venues for rodeos which were conducted infrequently. As his notes were written in 1961 just over 34 years ago it is wondered whether these same events are still conducted.

Back in Adelaide Joe Coulter left his position with Coles on 30/6/61 after 13 years and established a Bookshop at 22 Bentham Street in the CBD of Adelaide. The business was called Tuxedo Bookshop and his assistant was Arnold Ewens a former ABC radio announcer and at that time was still the racecourse announcer at Wayville trotting meetings.

Still concerned with trotting affairs in South Australia Joe put considerable effort into the establishment of the Hall of Fame at Globe Derby Park with his friend Jim Spiers. Had he lived Joe would have been saddened



Joe Coulter watches the first holes for the foundations of the Trotting Hall Of Fame, 1973.

by the closure of the Hall of Fame some years later. The building enclosing the Hall of Fame still stands and is used by Harness Racing SA as its office.

Joe Coulter's favourite horse was the champion South Australian pacer Minor Derby winner of 44 races including a 15 1/2 furlong heat of the Inter Dominion Championship in Sydney in record time after losing 40 yards at the start and after the racecaller said Minor Derby has got away with the field tonight. After the retirement of Minor Derby from the racetrack and a few changes of ownership Minor Derby was found at a knackery awaiting destruction. Joe and his old friends Chris Howe and Jim Spiers rescued the old gelding that was to spend the last of his days with Jim Spiers at his property in Port Augusta.

Gradually declining in health Joe still continued with his weekly notes and comments on trotting in South Australia but in May 1973 he entered Queen Elizabeth Hospital suffering some heart problems and finally decided to retire in early 1974 when he would have completed 50 years as a writer for the Australian Trotting Record.

Joe must have had some inkling of his future because in December 1973 Joe sold his beloved Tuxedo Bookshop to RF Messner as from 17/2/74 with Arnold Ewens remaining with the business and on 15/4/75 his famous library comprising 673 lots was to be auctioned.

After completing arrangements for the auction of his complete library to be held on 15th April, Joe died suddenly on Easter Saturday 29th March, 1975.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: I personally first met Joe Coulter in February 1957 when I was 24 years of age and later when I was Secretary of the Inter Dominion Trotting Council and Australian Harness Racing Council I had occasion to meet with him frequently over the years until his death in 1975. In all those years I never heard him denigrate any person-if he had something critical to say he would normally give you the full story from which you could make up your own mind. This small biography cannot tell the full life story of Joe Coulter a book he promised to write but never quite got around to it. I have selected a group of miscellaneous bits of his life that I like and perhaps along the way righting some wrongs printed elsewhere. He was a kindly knowledgeable old gentleman the like of whom you would very seldom come into contact with in our current era. My thanks to Annie McLeod of Alice Springs the grand daughter of Joe Coulter whose inquiries triggered this story and for the provision of family photographs of 80 years ago.



Joe Coulter and Dick Webster on the night of Dick's retirement, 1973.

