



The American Driving Society, Inc.

## **A Short History of the American Driving Society**

By Natasha Grigg, July 14, 2006

The sport of carriage driving is thriving in our country. It is not a large sport like the Hunters or the Reining Horses, but has been steadily growing, especially since the inception of the American Driving Society, Inc. (ADS) which came into being in 1974.

Actually, there are two carriage driving organizations in the U.S. – the Carriage Association of America, known as the CAA and the American Driving Society, the ADS. The CAA was the first carriage association in this country, founded in 1960 by twelve people. The main interest of this group was and is the preservation, restoration and exhibition of antique carriages, as well as historical data on the origins of particular vehicles and the history of horse drawn vehicles.

The first Carriage Journal was published in 1963, with Paul Downing as editor. After Tom Ryder became editor, he encouraged more interest in horses as well.

In the early seventies, a number of members of the CAA wished for better guidelines and consistency in the judging of pleasure shows. A meeting was held at the Greenbriar in North Carolina in conjunction with a CAA meeting to discuss this. There was no real interest at that time on the part of the CAA in the driving horse, so a group got together in 1974 at the Stonybrook, Long Island driving show to form an organization – the ADS – patterned after the BDS (the British Driving Society). Interested people were invited to join – they were the Founding Members – and they contributed money to start the Society. About 35 people did so. A sportswriter for a Connecticut newspaper, Charles Kellogg, became the volunteer editor of *The Whip*, the official publication of the ADS. This journal was the glue that kept the fledgling membership together and growing. *The Whip* is now edited by Abbie Trexler. *The Whip* has



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won numerous awards in multiple categories. In fact, there are 12 publications annually: four Whips and eight Wheelhorses, the Wheelhorse being the newsletter, is a tip of the hat to our Canadian brethren, being the name of the former newsletter of the Canadian Driving Society.

These Founding Members devised Pleasure Driving rules that created “working classes” which emphasize the horse, and “reinsmanship classes” with emphasis on the good driver, so that not only the most expensive harness and antique turnout would always win. Driving Patterns, precursors of the driven dressage tests were developed. There were guidelines to driving in the AHSA (now USEF) rule book, but they largely pertained to show ring breed driving, so an ADS committee was formed to revise these rules and to submit them to the AHSA for their 1975/76 rule book. A Licensed Officials Committee was established to help make judging more uniform, a handbook was published to spell out some of the requirements for a fair competition. And thus the seeds for competitive driving in this country took root and began to grow.

More and more pleasure shows sprung up around the country, mainly in the Northeast. Some like Walnut Hill and Lorenzo still take place and have grown into destinations. Many other wonderful ones have ceased to exist. There are also now some superb newer shows in Pennsylvania, Tennessee and other points South as well as in the Midwest and California.

In the early seventies, Phillip Hofmann, CEO of Johnson and Johnson, bought a four-in-hand and went to Europe. There he met HRH Prince Philip, who was giving up polo for driving and was helping create a new sport, Combined Driving, using rules based on Combined Training (Eventing). Mr. Hofmann was quite taken with all of this, came home, and organized the first Combined Driving Event (CDE) in the United States in Johnson Park in Bedminster, N.J. He was to become the first president of the ADS. Soon after that, Victor Shone, a Welshman, living and training horses in Millbrook, N.Y., started a CDE there as well, and it continued for many years. Deirdre Pirie and Holly Pulsifer who were pleasure driving singles, pairs and fours of ponies,



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went to England at about this time and there they met George Bowman, the English 4-in-hand champion. George took them to a CDE and they came home to organize the first Myopia Driving Event in 1975 in conjunction with Ledyard, a combined training event in Wenham, Massachusetts, to which Princess Anne had come to compete, attracting much attention to both the riding and driving competitions. The Myopia Driving Event continued for another 25 years, still holding the record for the longest CDE under the same management in our country.

The ADS trains and licenses its own officials and is the conduit to the national federation driving license for people who wish to achieve the highest national licensing level which is required to officiate at advanced level CDEs and to continue onward to become a candidate at the international level with the FEI (Federation Equestre Internationale).

The first ADS Rulebook (the Handbook) pertained only to pleasure driving. Combined driving rules were published in prize lists and varied to some degree. By 1980 or so, combined driving rules as regulated by the FEI were printed in the ADS Handbook as well. The ADS recognizes numerous pleasure shows and combined driving events. These come in many formats, offering opportunities to all – from the beginning neophyte to the seasoned competitor with international aspirations. We are also a Society of local clubs and regional representation. We have numerous committees, seeing to the various disciplines and interests of the Society and people on the board of directors and committee members from all over the country. We are a member organization, with the membership having the opportunity to vote for candidates of their choice and the possibility of addressing the Society directly during its meetings as well as through its office.

The ADS is a non-profit corporation with 501c3 status allowing donations to be deducted from Federal Income Taxes to the extent allowed by law.