

People of Historic Prominence Connected to Pimlico

Preakness Forefathers: William P. Riggs Raises the Preakness's Profile

This sporting visionary was born on Aug. 11, 1864, to Lawrason and Laura Bright Riggs of Newport, R.I. The family, including his six brothers, moved to Baltimore, Md. the following year, and Riggs would put down roots there permanently after graduating from Princeton University in 1885. A lifelong bachelor, Riggs became involved in a number of activities during his life in Baltimore. As part of the city's society scene, he was a leader in the Baltimore Horse Show Association and was one of the men who formed the Maryland Steeplechase Association in 1898. Seeking a location for racing, Riggs and friends leased Pimlico from its owners to hold short three-day meets featuring both flat and steeplechase races.

Thanks to Riggs's leadership, racing returned to [Pimlico](#) after a multi-year hiatus.

Riggs is also credited with saving horse racing during the anti-gambling movement by introducing pari-mutuel betting machines, or "French Pools," in 1913.

<https://www.americasbestracing.net/the-sport/2025-prekness-forefathers-william-p-riggs-raises-the-preknesss-profile>

Samuel D. Riddle

The owner of [Glen Riddle Farm](#), Riddle bred and raced [Thoroughbred race horses](#). His most famous horses were [Man o' War](#) and his son, [U.S. Triple Crown](#) winner [War Admiral](#).

In partnership with [Walter M. Jeffords, Sr.](#), the husband of niece Sarah, Samuel D. Riddle purchased and operated [Faraway Farm](#) on Huffman Mill Pike near [Lexington, Kentucky](#), where they stood Man o' War. In 1939, Riddle turned down an offer of a then-unheard-of \$1 million for Man o' War.

NYTimes obituary

Samuel D. Riddle, internationally known turfman and owner of many famous race horses including Man o' War and War Admiral ...

https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1951/01/09/89778223.pdf?pdf_redirect=true&ip=0

Glen Riddle Farm was a large horse farm in the United States. Located in Berlin, Maryland on what today is Route 50 between Ocean City and Berlin, it was owned by a wealthy textile businessman Samuel D. Riddle who named it for his home town Glen Riddle, Pennsylvania which in turn had been named for his grandfather.

In addition to the stables and large mansion, Glen Riddle Farm had a one-mile racing oval for training thoroughbred racehorses.

The farm was home to Hall of Fame racehorses Man o' War, U.S. Triple Crown winner War Admiral, Crusader as well as other successful thoroughbreds such as Massachusetts Handicap winner War Relic, and American Flag, a son of Man o' War who won the 1925 Belmont Stakes and was voted Champion 3-year-old Male Horse.

War Admiral (May 2, 1934 – October 30, 1959) was a champion American Thoroughbred racehorse and the fourth winner of the American Triple Crown. He was also the 1937 Horse of the Year winning the inaugural Pimlico Special. In the 1938 edition of the race, he faced Seabiscuit in the "Match Race of the Century" at Pimlico Race Course. War Admiral won 21 of his 26 starts with earnings of \$273,240 and was the leading sire in North America for 1945. He was also an outstanding broodmare sire whose influence is still felt today in descendants such as Triple Crown winners American Pharoah and Justify.



War Admiral in a work out at Pimlico. (DRF Photo)

Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt Jr. (September 22, 1912 – November 12, 1999) was a British-born member of the prominent [Vanderbilt railroad family](#), and a noted figure of American [thoroughbred horse racing](#). He was the youngest-ever member of [The Jockey Club](#), president of [Belmont Racetrack](#), New York, and [Pimlico Race Course](#), Baltimore, and chairman of the board of the [New York Racing Association](#). In World War II, he was decorated for bravery in the South Pacific.

Vanderbilt was one of the original members of the [Westchester Racing Association](#) and a driving force behind [thoroughbred racing](#) in America for most of the 20th century. His mother, [Margaret Emerson](#), took him to his first race, the [Preakness Stakes](#), in 1922. He often said, "After that, I was hooked." On his 21st birthday, his mother gifted him [Sagamore Farm](#), her racing operation in [Reisterstown, Maryland](#), which had been left to her by her father, [Isaac Emerson](#), who was the inventor of Bromo-Seltzer and

founder of the Emerson Drug Company, which later became Warner-Lambert.

Vanderbilt personally oversaw the breeding and training of his stable. He bought [Pimlico Race Course](#) and was President of Pimlico twice, the first time when he was 20. As a stable owner, his first major acquisition was [Discovery](#), one of the great handicap horses of the age who became his foundation sire.

Vanderbilt was elected to [The Jockey Club](#) as the youngest member in its history in 1935 and eventually campaigned four national champions: [Discovery](#), Next Move, [Bed O' Roses](#) and [Native Dancer](#). During the late 1930s and early 1940s, he owned and ran Pimlico Racetrack outside Baltimore and arranged the famous match race between [Seabiscuit](#) and [War Admiral](#) in 1938. He was President of Belmont Park and Pimlico at the same time before joining the Navy. During the Second World War, he captained a PT boat in the South Pacific and was awarded the Silver Star for bravery under fire. He then returned to racing, bringing his greatest champion, Native Dancer, to the track in 1952. Native Dancer won all 9 starts as a 2-year-old and was named Horse of the Year. He won every start as a three-year-old too, except the [Kentucky Derby](#), which he lost by a head to [Cain Hoy Stable's Dark Star](#). However, Native Dancer was named 3-year-old Male Champion and was [Horse of the Year](#) again in his 4th year. All told, he won 21 of 22 starts, with the single second-place finish in the 1953 Kentucky Derby his only career loss. Many consider [the Grey Ghost of Sagamore](#) to have been the first Thoroughbred television star, and [TV Guide](#) ranked him as a top icon of the era". ^[8][\[page needed\]](#)

Vanderbilt continued racing throughout his life and served as chairman of the board of the [New York Racing Association](#) from 1971 to 1975. The New York Turf Writers voted him "The Man Who Did The Most for Racing" a record four times, posthumously renaming the award in his honor.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_Gwynne_Vanderbilt_Jr.

At Least Nine Humans Chose Pimlico As Their Final Resting Place.

The first to be noted was Percy Longstreet Barry in 1944. A musician and businessman, Barry had been an avid horseplayer who spent many a happy hour in the Pimlico grandstand.

<https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/bs-xpm-1990-11-11-1990315125-story.html>

In 1950, Willie Doyle who won the 1909 Preakness aboard Effendi Doyle became an entry clerk and patrol judge and watched the Preakness grow into a classic. It made him happy to be a part of the big race.

So, when he died in 1950, his request to have his ashes spread there was honored.

When the configuration of the track was changed later, track officials wanted to dignify the ashes ceremonies. Before the first race was run over the new route with the finish line farther down toward the first turn, they solemnly took a shovelful of dirt from the old location, then walked to the new line and spread it there.

Their act symbolized all of the old ceremonies dedicated to the people who loved racing and wanted to be a part of it always.

Washington Post, October 20, 2009

Joe Kelly won't go as far as calling Baltimore's Pimlico Race Course a burial ground. But the 91-year-old track historian is quite sure that Willie Doyle, who rode Effendi to victory in the 1909 Preakness, isn't the only guy whose remains are mingled with the turf where the great Seabiscuit and War Admiral famously battled.

"Oh yeah, it has happened fairly often, including a couple of bettors who were very well known," Kelly said in The Washington Post. "They figured they'd spread their money around there; may as well spread their ashes."

While Doyle's choice of Pimlico's finish line as his final resting place is among the more colorful episodes in horseracing lore, it's hardly unique. To read more click here.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/.../10/30/AR2009103002362.html>

Trainer Dillon Grey's ashes were buried at the base of the flagpole in 1949. Grey, who had worked for years at the half-mile tracks, died at Charles Town, W.Va. His ashes were buried at Pimlico after two of his friends went to the home of Jack Needles, secretary of the Maryland Jockey Club, late one evening. Needles held a flashlight while Grey's friends dug a small hole for the urn.

The friends decided that even though Grey hadn't been able to win races at the mile tracks such as Pimlico, they would put him there in death.

Read more about his story here.

<https://www.theracingbiz.com/2021/05/18/home-is-the-horseman/>

Chick Lang, "Mr. Preakness," were scattered in front of the replica of the cupola by his wife with ceremony in 2010.



Anthony Cossentino in 1982;

Bill Gillespie in 1990, Bill Gillespie

<https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/bs-xpm-1990-11-11-1990315125-story.html>

2015 an Unknown Pimlico Fan's last request which her daughter lovingly carried out.

*Mom's Ashes

https://www.dailykos.com/stories/2015/8/10/1410646/-The-Grieving-Room-Scattering-the-Ashes-Part-I-Mission-Accomplished?fbclid=IwAR1xGKJQak9gL7G-C6bjpJcxmVxv21v9QSqQ_1TID-GkJAfW7dHoUb93ec

Down through the years, perhaps a dozen more have been honored there.
Several were employees. Some were horsemen.