

Winter 1997

Out of Sight, Out of Mind: Recovering the History of Cockfighting in Kentucky

Joseph R. Jones
University of Kentucky

Follow this and additional works at: <https://uknowledge.uky.edu/kentucky-review>

 Part of the [United States History Commons](#)

Right click to open a feedback form in a new tab to let us know how this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Jones, Joseph R. (1997) "Out of Sight, Out of Mind: Recovering the History of Cockfighting in Kentucky," *The Kentucky Review*: Vol. 13 : No. 3 , Article 2.

Available at: <https://uknowledge.uky.edu/kentucky-review/vol13/iss3/2>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the University of Kentucky Libraries at UKnowledge. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Kentucky Review by an authorized editor of UKnowledge. For more information, please contact UKnowledge@sv.uky.edu.

Out of Sight, Out of Mind: Recovering the History of Cockfighting in Kentucky

Joseph R. Jones

For Charles P. Roland, eminent historian and keen
observer of Southern life, and the ideal traveling
companion

A popular encyclopedia of sports from the 1940s¹ has a short, clear, and blandly neutral article on cockfighting that describes it as the oldest known sport in which humans use animals. Asians pitted male partridges and quails for centuries before fighting chickens emigrated from India to both East and West. It is a universal amusement (says the encyclopedia), was common in the eastern United States in the late eighteenth century, and has maintained its popularity in America "down through all the generations, despite efforts of authorities to stamp it out. . . . Cock fights are frequent in the smaller communities, especially in the South. . . ." The excellent new *Kentucky Encyclopedia* (1992), on the other hand, does not even contain the word cockfighting in its survey of the sports of Kentuckians ancient and modern.² This omission, undoubtedly an oversight, seems all the more inexplicable when one considers the avalanche of articles, editorials, and letters provoked by the 1990 controversy over the ambiguous legality of cockfighting in the Commonwealth. Perhaps the *Encyclopedia* compilers preferred to suppress references to a sport, however traditional, that contemporary scholars term "socially disvalued" because it makes Kentuckians look unsophisticated.³ But Kentucky is, in the minds of many of our fellow-citizens, the cockfighting capital of America. The two most recent national perpetuators of this inaccurate stereotype are a TV exposé and a *Wall Street Journal* story. The highly unflattering television program on CBS's "48 Hours" (14 December 1989), which Governor Wilkinson suggested must have been filmed elsewhere (presumably by anti-Kentucky elements), showed a cockfight—theoretically illegal in 1989—attended by the predictable audience of rednecks. About two years after this program aired, and after the Attorney General had issued an

opinion in 1990 declaring cockfights legal, former *Herald-Leader* reporter Alecia Swasy returned to Lexington from New York City to gather material for a human-interest piece on cockfighting which duly appeared on the front page of the *Wall Street Journal*.⁴ Swasy's story begins with an attention-grabbing description of a Winchester cocker named Joe McCord licking the blood off metal spurs removed from a dead rooster, preparatory to fastening them to his next entry.⁵

The CBS crew and perhaps even Ms. Swasy may have gotten the idea to do their journalistic research in Kentucky rather than, say, Louisiana (one of the states where cockfighting is legal) or Mississippi, the gamecock-breeding heartland, from a 12-minute movie on cockfighting made by Kentucky's own Appalshop in 1973 with NEH money. This little film appears in all up-to-date bibliographies on the subject of cockfighting and is readily available. It is an entertaining example of contemporary folklore-collecting, done with pseudo-home-movie *verité*: an unnamed farmer shows his roosters to an interviewer, talks about them, takes them to a fight, and, after a rather anticlimactic battle in a parking lot, holds up his winning chicken and smiles into the camera. The movie is called "Feathered Warrior."

In all of the recent articles on the sport, it is *de rigueur* to say that cockfighting is an old Southern tradition. (Swasy, for example, refers to the difficulty of suppressing a sport practiced in the Appalachian valleys for centuries.) But anyone who wants a serious history of Kentucky's part in the much-mentioned tradition will find little on the subject, beyond unsubstantiated claims that Henry Clay, Lincoln, and other illustrious Kentucky-born personages were avid cockers.⁶ The obstacles to recovering a documented chronicle of cockfighting in Kentucky are twofold. First: sporting Kentuckians of the pre-Civil War period, following British tradition, took for granted that horse-racing of all sorts and cockfighting were so natural a pair of amusements that there was no need to say much about the chickens. This old association continued until quite recent times. Local cocker McCord (he of the bloody spurs) says that until the 1950s, "There wadn't no racehorse barn without a cock in it." Carl Cone, the author of a work on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century English sports,⁷ says that cockfights were the usual evening entertainment after a day at the races, both in Britain and in the States. A consequence of this pairing of horses and gamecocks is that one can find scraps of

information about Kentucky cockfighting in old racing and sporting magazines, though most of them are now rare and—worse—unindexed. Perhaps an even more significant aspect of this connection between horses and gamecocks is that as cockfighting disappeared in the rest of America, or went underground as a result of the anti-cruelty legislation of the late nineteenth century, wherever horse racing remained vigorous, with its customary gambling activities, cockfighting did not lose its devotees or prestige so quickly or completely. It is due, apparently, to what Kentuckians call the “horse industry” that cockfighting has survived (out of sight, of course) and kept at least a vestige of its aristocratic associations.⁸

The second and more obvious difficulty in recovering Kentucky’s cockfighting history is that since the start of vigorous prosecution of illegal matches after the Civil War, local gamecock fanciers have rarely been willing to admit, much less write about, their own participation or their fellow cockers’ activities, except in the specialized journals printed for hobbyists that are virtually unknown outside cocking circles. Occasionally, however, one finds signs of activity (e.g., ads in poultry magazines) or complicitous newspaper reports, ostensibly from intermediate sources, of important fights. (There are examples of this two-faced journalism from the Lexington papers of the late 1800s quoted below.) Still, in spite of the difficulties, it seems useful to collect and preserve data that have survived, for some future historian of sports in Kentucky—or even for the second edition of the *Kentucky Encyclopedia*. What follows provides at least an outline.⁹

The Colonial and Federal Periods

Technically, the history of cockfighting in the Commonwealth would have to begin with an account of the sport in Virginia, of which Kentucky was part until 1792. Fortunately, Carson’s *Colonial Virginians at Play* covers the topic satisfactorily.¹⁰ According to Carson, the earliest accounts of fights are from the 1720s, when horse-racing was the only “manly exercise” and cockfighting the only diversion of well-off farmers. Mid-eighteenth-century newspapers regularly advertised fights, such as the popular inter-county matches, and by the latter part of the century, cockfighting meets were almost as important as race meets, with high stakes, holidays for servants, and balls for the gentry. No doubt Carson’s descriptions of fights at remote taverns in rural Virginia are true of

the amusements of pioneers in the far western county of Kentucky. But there seem to be no printed allusions to such activities before the nineteenth century.

The 1830s

One of the earliest direct references to Kentucky is the statement that a special breed of chicken enjoyed a "high reputation among cockers of Kentucky" in the years between 1825 and 1830: "The Dusty Millers are good fighting stock. These originated in Kentucky, but they are not so well known eastward as in Virginia, Pennsylvania and Ohio. They were grey in color at first, but they throw reds, duns, and less of the grey in plumage, of late years. They are considered a very superior bird in the pit, however—wherever they are known."¹¹

In this period, for which there are few or no documents on local cocking, one assumes that cockers on the East Coast represent their fellow-sportsmen in Kentucky. If this is true, then at least some of the local fans, in the 1830s, must have seen cockfighting in a period of decline. In *The American Turf Register*, a magazine published from 1829 to 1844 in Baltimore, a Maryland enthusiast writes an article on Sumatran rules for the pit, which he recommends as an improvement over European rules, and a boon to "that kind of amusement—*once* so genteel, so noble, and so fashionable! and which I hope to see in vogue among sportsmen of the turf once more, assuming its wonted respectability" (vol. IV [1832], pp. 290-291). Cockfighting's loss of vogue may be in part the result of disreputable public matches at big race meets, where track owners had resorted to " 'Mule-races,' 'Gander-pullings' and 'Cock-fights' to swell the receipts" (X [1839] 439-440). More likely, the declining respectability of cockfights was a result of the growing strength of the anti-cruelty movement here and abroad, which eventually brought about the outlawing of all blood sports. The year before the Marylander's letter appeared, an opponent of cockfighting had written to the editor of the magazine denouncing the sport, whose "antiquity rather proved than relieved it from the charge of barbarity" and which must "in the progress of refinement" be replaced by pastimes calculated "to *socialize* the heart;—such as hunting, fishing, shooting . . ." (II [1831] 618). The inconsistency of this opponent of cockfights, who finds pitting chickens barbarous but killing fish and game commendable, still drives cockers to a frenzy.¹²

In 1834 the editors of *American Turf* preface a long essay on cocking with an ironical disclaimer: "It is not by way of encouragement of the cruel sport of cock-fighting, that we publish a tract on the subject. We may be curious to know many things that we would not practice, as divines describe the haunts and ways of the vicious, by way of instructive exhortation to the innocent who may never have dreamed of the vices they portray" (V 570). These editors continue, however, to publish articles on gamecock husbandry (IV 29, VII 446), challenges to high-stakes matches (VIII 124; XV 128), new rules for the pit devised by Virginian and North Carolinian sporting men (VIII 406-409), and descriptions of important "mains," the term for matches between two owners or clubs (I 359).¹³ In 1832, at Newcastle, English cocking activity reached its zenith when the season included a thousand matches (IV [1832] 190). Perhaps as a result of such excesses, by 1844, the English debates over treatment of animals were at their most strident, and *American Turf* reprints a defense of the sport from the *London Sporting Review* of 1843 which refers obliquely to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. The writer uses the same arguments to defend his hobby that one hears today. He questions the logic of condemning cockfighting while ignoring the force-feeding of capons, caging birds, cropping a dog's ears and tail, castrating cats, vivisection, the collection of insects, and the "every-day practices of purveyors of food, or caterers of delicacies, as far as the . . . destruction of animal life is concerned." Today's animal rights activists are generally thorough-going vegetarians who oppose the use of animals for any purpose whatsoever; so they cannot be accused of the inconsistency of these early English reformers.

From the 1840s to the Civil War: The Anti-Cruelty Movement

The earliest British statutes against cruelty appear in 1822 (to protect cattle) and 1833 (to ban bear-baiting and cockfights from London). The famous Cruelty to Animals Acts of 1849 and 1854 include penalties for "dubbing" cocks (cutting off the comb, wattles, and earlobes), cropping the ears of dogs, polling cattle, and for organizing fights between animals. These bills prohibited cockfighting in Britain and her colonies. The legislation was a triumph for the SPCA, founded in the early 1820s. (The American Society was not organized until 1866, in New York.)

From this same period comes the earliest anti-cocking law in America, a Pennsylvania statute of 1830 that prohibited cockfighting where gambling of any sort took place. In 1849, Massachusetts passed laws to penalize owners, promoters, and spectators of fights, based on the theory that it was the legislature's duty to inculcate principles of humanity. The Massachusetts solons lumped cockfighting with degrading sports like bear-baiting and "prize fighting with the fists."¹⁴ The first anti-cruelty legislation in Kentucky is from 1852.¹⁵

In the mid-nineteenth century, according to Dr. J. W. Cooper, author of one of the earliest and most important American books on cockfighting, Kentucky's most eminent breeder of gamefowl was a Dr. Van Meter of Bowling Green (called "Old Nick" by intimates), whose expertise was the source of certain unspecified contributions to Cooper's own book. This Van Meter must be the same Dr. S. K. Van Meter who accompanied a group of rich American cockers to England in 1854 to see and buy breeding stock. On his return, Dr. Van Meter gave gamechickens to Dr. Cooper.¹⁶ In his discussion of the origins and development of breeds in America, Cooper mentions a type that "has great celebrity in North Carolina, Tennessee, and Kentucky," called Waggoner gamecocks, one strain of which was named in honor of Dr. Van Meter (Cooper 98). Van Meter developed a type that he christened the "Copperhead" ("probably because of political bias," adds Cooper);¹⁷ and he presented Dr. Cooper with three enormous chickens of a breed that he called Kentucky Games (a spectacular nine-pound cock "in color black red with green legs" and two hens equally showy, of "deep blue with a rose comb"). Their pedigree could be "traced back to the cock-fighting days of General Jackson." From these three, Cooper bred a number of champions, including a cock undefeated in New York (172). Cooper's own special breed were called Rattlers, and he reproduces (from an unnamed periodical) an account of a "Gallant-Cock-Fight in Louisville, Ky." which transpired in 1860: "The city of Louisville, Ky., is at all times a great place for cock-fighting, and no more gallant battles are known in the Union than some of those which take place within its limits. Yet of all the days dedicated to this sport, Easter Monday is the most popular; and almost every game [cock] in fighting condition is then brought to the 'scratch' . . ." The Louisville fans discover that a champion cock, one of Dr. Cooper's Tartar-Rattler crosses, is in town, and they take a selection of

fighters to make a match. The "old champion of Louisville" happens to weigh about the same as the Cooper chicken, which is smaller and has smaller gaffs; but the two cocks have at each other, and in eight minutes, the little Rattler cuts the champion to pieces, winning \$550 for his owner (104-105).¹⁸

Americans continued to show an interest in outlawed British cocking, even during the Civil War, which began a year after Dr. Cooper's triumph in Louisville. *Wilkes' Spirit of the Times* (a long-running magazine on sporting and theatrical entertainments) for 18 July 1863 (VIII 316) reports on an English court-case that would set an important precedent. It was nicknamed "The Battle of Hastings" because the Marquis of Hastings and three of his gamekeepers had been convicted of conducting a cockfight: not because they chose to hold the match on Sunday, and not because of the anti-cocking law, which only prohibited fights in established cockpits, but under the anti-cruelty laws. Both English and American cockers saw the implications of this conviction. The *Spirit* denounced the private society (SPCA) that appeared have benevolent aims but in fact intended to set up an "inquisition into the doings of their neighbors, which is a much greater evil than the practices they pretend to prevent"—not to mention its inconsistency in condemning one activity for cruelty while ignoring, for example, fishing with live bait or boiling lobsters alive. Within three years, New York had the first SPCA in America and effective anti-cruelty laws that would be copied by most of the other states in the Union.

Occasionally, there are news-items on cocking in *The Spirit of the Times*. Dr. Cooper, as the American oracle on all aspects of the sport, was its special correspondent, writing under the name of "Tartar Cock." In 1859 he published his famous book, *Game Fowls: Their Origin and History*, which contains some useful data on Kentucky.¹⁹ Cooper is still in print.

Cockers in Kentucky and Tennessee liked the "Warrior" strain in the 1860's (Cooper 140). A fancier named Baker, whose fowl came to be called "Baker's Games," produced cocks that won numerous mains in Kentucky and surrounding states; and they were featured "in a main against Alabama and Kentucky," like the matches between English counties mentioned in British sporting journals. Off-hand remarks in Cooper's book illustrate the fanciers' custom of taking their champion birds all over the country to pit them against local favorites. The inducement was, undoubtedly, the huge purses.

James Shy (1802-1892) of Lexington, who was one of the founders of Churchill Downs, was pitting his special breed of gamecock on river boats that plied the Ohio and Mississippi rivers in the 1850s and '60s. He kept his cocks at the farm of Jim Price of Pine Grove, Kentucky (about 8 miles from Lexington), and around the time of the Rebellion, he sold his stock (and eventually gave his equipment) to Sid Taylor, another "horse and chicken man" famous in racing circles.

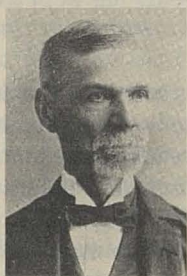
The Civil War caused upheavals in the economy and affected every aspect of Southern life, including cocking. In retrospect, the tough-minded survivors could make light of their difficulties. Marauding soldiers ate the pedigreed chickens or stole the cocks. When the city of Washington celebrated the Union's victory with a huge parade, "many pure game cocks were seen mounted upon mules and horses. These were captured in the Gulf States of the South by Sherman's bummers, while Sheridan's raiders had not a few gathered from the valleys of the Shenandoah and Cumberland. . . . Similar losses were common to Southern and Western sportsmen, especially in all the Border States [like Kentucky]; but these are gradually renewing their stock . . ." (Cooper 191).

From the 1870s to the Turn of the Century

The leading Kentucky cocker of the post-Civil War era was Colonel Thomas J. O'Neal of Louisville, who was pitting his birds in Louisville, Cincinnati, and New Orleans by 1871 and developing his own strain, "Kentucky Dominiques," in the 1870s.²⁰ Thirty years later, he was still active, and around 1902, O'Neal gave a testimonial to the excellence of the gaffs of George Huff (address: Clifton Ave., Louisville), who claimed that he had been making them in Louisville "for nearly a quarter of a century," that is, since *circa* 1880. The endorsement for Huff's spurs has a short account of O'Neal's exploits at New Orleans and a list of his famous opponents.²¹ McIntyre's *The Game Fowl* has scarcely enough superlatives to describe O'Neal's Doms: "In this feather the Kentuckians beat the world."²² According to McIntyre, after O'Neal's victories, "A Dominique fad spread like an epidemic." But a combination of inferior imitations and a financial crisis ("the great Pacific Railway bubbles" of 1873) brought the strain into disrepute until another Kentuckian, Roland Minton, "restored general confidence in Kentucky Dominiques." Minton died, and his stock

of "Minton Doms" went to a Chicago breeder (232-3). Among the "Well Known Feeders [i.e., trainers] of This Generation" McIntyre puts Henry Flock as part of "the great trio [with O'Neal and Minton] that gave the Kentucky Dominiques their reputation" (251).

In these same years, Dr. Cooper names Charles A. Kenney of Paris as "the distinguished breeder of Kentucky" (Cooper 191). In 1904 McIntyre devoted two highly flattering pages to Kenney and his Esllin Redquills, Cincinnati Racehorses, and Top Knots. Kenney had fought a noteworthy main at Paris, at an unspecified date.²³



Thomas O'Neal



C. A. Kenney

The post-bellum renewal of gamefowl stock mentioned by Cooper must have proved successful, even in the hard times of Reconstruction: "Since the war, the sport of cock-fighting has been revived among leading turfmen, planters, merchants, etc., and mains have been fought which lasted several days."²⁴ *The Game Fancier's Journal* of December 1886 has an exchange between C. P. Talbot of Danville²⁵ and Mike Garrigan of Pulaski County on the relative merits of a strain known as "Fardowns" (*Histories of Game Strains* 83).

Kentucky authorities apparently began to enforce the anti-cocking laws in the 1870s or early '80s, as one may infer from comments on an 1888 cockfight near Lexington. The *Lexington Leader* for December 16 published an article full of the verbal equivalents of winks and elbow-nudges: the "earnest inquiries of reporters" failed to discover the cause of barely suppressed excitement throughout the city, which turned out to be the feverish anticipation of "an old fashioned chicken fight, which came off in Scott County, near the Fayette line." There were twenty-five matches from Fayette, Bourbon, Scott, and Madison counties; even

the correct names of breeds featured in the matches appear in the report—certainly an odd fact for a non-cocking reporter to include or even to recognize. But his information, he claims, is all second-hand: "As our sporting editor was not on the ground it is impossible to file a detailed report of the main." Our sporting editor informs us, however, that "the Fayette county boys" won. And he concludes with a barely-veiled defense of the amusement: "It is the first main fought in Central Kentucky for several years, and it may have a tendency to revive a sport which in days past was the pride alike of Kentucky's sporting and political element . . . The law, however, in recent years has kept a check on this class of sport. . . ."

Six years later, another reporter sounds more convincingly indignant at the flouting of the law, but he is still extremely fuzzy on the details of a fight that either had already taken place at a well-known (but unnamed) suburban farm near Lexington, for the amusement of an important visitor, or was going to take place. The reporter noticed a local gambler on the 8:35 a.m. train from Maysville and somehow learned that there were gamecocks in the baggage car. He spied on the "Bourbon county sport" and his suspicious companions as they removed their chickens from the train in the Louisville & Nashville rail yards (strangely deserted, one must suppose) and dutifully placed this distressing information in the hands of the sheriff (*Leader* 8 Feb 1894).

Chronologically, the next piece in the *Lexington Leader* (22 January 1896) is more proof both of the continued vitality of the sport and of the collusion of those whose jobs prohibited them from attending illegal amusements without denouncing the culprits—notably, of course, newspaper men. Except for the slightly antiquated language, the article might have appeared as recently as the 1980s. It has all the ingredients, including a makeshift cockpit in a remote area, a semi-secret gathering, and respectable but unnamed citizens:

"All night and on into the early morning, the flutter of the cockpit is heard. Lexington and Paris birds matched. Possibly one of the greatest cocking mains ever fought in the State took place in a temporarily constructed pit in an old barn on the Bourbon and Fayette country line near the Maysville pike last night. The main was begun early in the twilight and only concluded a short while before day break. The fight was between Lexington and Paris birds,

for a purse of \$500 which fell to the side winning a majority of the pits. Besides the purse individual money was bet upon each pit, and a goodly sum is thought to have changed hands. A] delegation of Lexington sports attended the party, but up to the time The *Herald* goes to press none have returned and the result cannot be stated. It is probable that the regulation four inch gaffs were used."

The legal "check" on Kentucky cockfights alluded to in the 1888 news item above must have been inadequate, since Dr. H. P. Clarke, a prominent Indianapolis breeder and expert on the rules of the pit, sounds nostalgic when he recalls the "great Louisville tournaments thirty years ago," that is, around 1897 and thereafter (*Histories of Game Strains* 83).

By the end of the nineteenth century, cockfighting was enjoying a renaissance in Kentucky and elsewhere. One obvious index is the appearance of magazines for gamecock breeders, fighters, and hobbyists. In 1885, in Rushville, New York, the *Game Fowl Monthly* began its career; and in 1899, in Gaffney, South Carolina, Ed DeCamp began publication of *Grit and Steel*, the oldest cocking magazine in the country, still going strong and an important potential source of historical material for cocking in general. Another journal still in existence is *Feathered Warrior*, which began sometime before 1907 in Lisle, New York, but is now published in Arkansas. Kentucky had its own journal, devoted in part at least to gamefowl, if one can judge from the engraving of a dubbed, de-spurred cock used in its advertisements. The magazine was published in Hopkinsville, beginning in 1897, with the title of *Fancy Fowls*, and it continued until 1915 (with a new name after 1907: *Poultry Fancier*).²⁶

One last curious bit of evidence of the unabated enthusiasm for cocking at the tail-end of the century is the patenting of a new brand of whisky in Bourbon county in 1897. It was called "Chicken Cock Whisky" and bore on its label a belligerent-looking rooster in fighting trim.²⁷

The 1900s-1930s

Recovering the lost history of cockfighting in Kentucky becomes easier in this century because of the popularity of specialized publications devoted to the sport. An example is *The Derby Game Bird*, which takes its name from the town of Derby, Indiana, and was already in existence by 1902.²⁸ Twelve Kentucky breeders published

ads in *The Derby Game Bird* for December of that year.²⁹ A number of breeders who were friends of the publisher of the magazine also donated chickens as premiums for a new-subscription campaign. Kentuckians whose names appear among them are V. O'Bryan and Son of Rhodelia and Charles J. Tanner of Louisville.

In 1905, when the most famous Kentucky cocker of the latter half of the nineteenth century, Sid Taylor, died, he left his fowl to J. D. Gay of Pine Grove, who fought them until at least the 1920s. Jacob Douglas Gay (b. 1874) was a compleat sportsman. He was an olympic-level trap-shooter, owned winning trotting horses, and around the turn of the century, he emerged as the leader of Lexington area cockers. J. H. Mooney, author of an article about Gay in *Grit and Steel* (May 1933, pp. 5-6), tells of a tournament at the Deer Island Game Club (20 miles west of Orlando) in which Mr. Gay's Sid Taylor cocks won so much money that it made the strain "famous all over the country." Gay developed "the Log Cabin strain [of Sid Taylors] which has proven to be one of the leading strains of the United States." Gay's reputation as a great chicken-breeder was a mixed blessing, however. Ambitious cockers began to steal the famous chickens, and Gay was forced to tattoo his stock and offer rewards for missing chickens. Gay's son apparently did not share his father's enthusiasm for cocking; according to Joe McCord, "Doug" Gay once said that "only gamblers and whores went to cockfights." But the Gay family's Sid Taylor chickens still survive at Brookview Farm, now practically on the outskirts of Lexington.³⁰

The year 1905 is memorable for another reason. On 19 January 1905, Ed Burke of Louisville and D. J. Pierce of Appleton, Wisconsin, faced off for a main in Covington, Kentucky, between the South and the North. Burke, who represented the South, was backed by John E. Madigin, a New York-Texas oil millionaire and one of the grandees of the cocking world. Pierce defended the honor of the North, on his own. Since there was a difference in the size of the metal spurs used in each part of the country, the fights alternated short and long gaffs. Burke won for the South with his "Ginn Grays." *The Dixie Game Fowl*, published in Columbia, Tennessee, featured pen drawings of this momentous event in a subsequent issue. The memory of this fight was still fresh four years later, in 1909, when New York sportsman Richard Fox published his handbook for cockers: "Louisiana, Kentucky, Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina at the present time fight annually Inter State mains for as large a sum as \$5000 a side the

odd fight and \$1000 a side the main. One of the most important mains in the East was that fought privately in Kentucky. The stakes were reported to be \$2,500 on each battle and \$10,000 on the odd fight. Old Tom Heathwood, whose birds at one time were famous, furnished the fowls for the New York contingent. At this main bets of \$500 and \$1000 were not unusual" (Fox, *Cocker's Guide*, 17-18).³¹

Grit and Steel for 1906 gives an idea of the lively status of the sport in the Commonwealth during the years before the First World War.³² There are ads for a dozen breeders and gaff-makers.³³ The chronicle of fights shows a full calendar. Sporting gentlemen from Paducah and Craneyville took their chickens into Illinois on Thanksgiving Day, 1905, for a main. E. L. McGhee of Trenton and Charley Fox of Hopkinsville had cocks on opposite sides in a Thanksgiving main at Clarksville, Tennessee. On December 22, 1905, in Lexington, there was an eleven-cock main between Georgetown and Frankfort. Mr. Gay refereed, and the Georgetown cocks ("represented by Mr. Harper with his Kentucky Feudist") won with the seventh battle.³⁴ There is an announcement of a main between G. F. Snider of Cincinnati and H. G. Bauer of Louisville, to be held at Covington.

The big news of January 1906 was a twenty-one cock main held at Covington on the 16th between Georgia and North Carolina. Henry Flock, a famous Georgia breeder, fought Kentucky chickens and won the main with the seventeenth battle. The prize money was \$100 per battle and \$1500 on the odd. On the same day, E. L. McGhee and William Phipps of Hopkinsville fought a main near Trenton. McGhee won. On January 17 there was a main at Winchester between Mr. Setters of Mt. Sterling and W. G. Rice of Winchester. Setters and Clay pitted Setter's own chickens; Rice had help from J. D. Gay, Hubbard B. Spencer of Winchester, William Beasley of Clintville, and a Mr. Jones. On January 21, K. H. Byers and a McCune of Paducah fought five battles. H. Flock challenges Mr. Allen to a twenty-one cock main in Louisville or Covington in late March, with \$1500 or more on the odd; the following issues of the magazine are silent on whether Allen took up the gauntlet. But on January 27, Flock was back from Rossville, Georgia, to handle his own birds in a seventeen-cock main against Paul Barnhorn of Covington and Gus Stoll of Aurora, Indiana (*Derby Game* March 1906). Flock had lost only one main in eleven years but Gus Stoll's chickens were superior. "Pauly" Barnhorn "heeled" (put spurs on) his group's cocks and handled them. They wore special gaffs of his

own making. In January or February, "One Who Was There" reports on "hack fights" at Lexington among three cockers known by their initials, J., R., and L. (*Derby Game* March 1906). On March 24 there was a fifteen-cock main at Covington between J. B. Respass of Cincinnati and Gus Stoll and Paul Bornhorn.

The April issue of *Grit and Steel* has an account of "cocking at Colby and Allen's pit at Lexington, Ky. There is fighting there every Friday night and each evening there are some fifteen to twenty-five pairs of cocks fought. This is possibly the best arranged pit in all the country and is patronized by the very best class of people. . . . Fighting [on March 2] started about 9 p.m. and the largest crowd that has attended this season was present. . . . There have been more cocks fought in Lexington this season than any time in the past ten years." The correspondent signs himself "Full Drop" of Pine Grove, Kentucky.³⁵

"Mugwump" of Frankfort writes to the editor of the June issue to provide "a little account of several hack fights which the Frankfort sports enjoyed last night, as some fine birds were shown and some splendid fighting seen. Mr. Albert Blanton, manager of the O. F. C. distillery, just outside of the city limits, where they make the purest of old Kentucky whiskey, is an ardent cocker and in the quiet seclusion of his big plant he had constructed a pit. He kept the engines running all night long to supply electric lights for the occasion and dispensed hospitality to all with a royal hand. The pit was built in the cellar with four large 100 candle power incandescents swinging overhead, furnishing an abundance of light. A large crowd was present, composed of prominent men of the city, who enjoy a little quiet cock fighting on the side, and the evening passed off most enjoyably for all, winners and loser alike." Dr. McKee Hardie, "the well known druggist," pitted cocks bred by H. C. Wilson, "the genius insurance man," and handled by Mr. Goins. Unfortunately, Mr. Wilson's cocks were dazzled by the brilliant electric light, as they were used to the gentler glow of gaslight, and made a "rather mediocre showing." W. F. Nickles was referee and timekeeper. Nickles' brother Mike handled cocks for Dr. Hardie's opponent, the distillery manager Albert Blanton. Mike Nickles also handled cocks for Mr. Saulfley, while "Con" Haly, "considered to be the best heeler in this neck of the woods, tied the spurs on these . . . cocks."

As if this were not enough action to keep the mostly male fans of the sport entertained for the entire season, the April issue has a

letter from Mrs. Ettie Jasper of Dayline, Louisiana, asking other "lady fanciers" to identify themselves in *Grit and Steel*. Mrs. Jasper enjoys the sport, along with her husband and seven-year old son, both enthusiasts. This strangely-worded letter³⁶ is an early sign of one of the late twentieth-century developments of the sport: the emergence of women as cockers in what has until now has been exclusively a man's activity. Current editions of *Grit and Steel* regularly carry accounts of "Powder Puff" cockfights and photos of the female cockers and their families.

The years around the First World War are relatively blank, though the dearth of available published material does not mean that breeding and fighting gamefowl had necessarily diminished. R. R. Raines of Middlesboro (*Histories of Game Strains* 35) traces the origins, c. 1913, of a strain called by the sinister name of "Gray Tormentors." A 1924 oil portrait of a pair of these fowl, painted by Hans Hubbard, hangs in Clemens Caldwell's kitchen. These cocks took part in mains in Winchester and Lexington on unspecified dates. Frank Shy, a descendant of James Shy and a prominent New England cocker from the 1940s to the 60s, tells that in 1917, bored because of war-time restrictions, the black stable hands on a horse-farm near Lexington belonging to E. R. Bradley pitted some untried cocks with chickens belonging to the stable boys from a Bourbon County farm. In their haste to get away from the farm, the Bradley employees neglected to lock a gate, and two stallions nearly killed each other. As if this were not bad enough, the stable hands lost all their money because the new chickens all ran away from their opponents. When the head stable hand was fired by Mr. Bradley, he retorted that he had never worked on a farm where the chickens ran and the horses fought.³⁷

In 1918, Harry Clay, owner of a cockpit in Paris, staged the first Bluegrass Tournament, which became an annual event, scheduled to coincide with the Kentucky Derby. In 1922, bad weather prevented a sufficient number of fighters from bringing their cocks (fifteen each for the mains) to the tournament. Instead of canceling, Bob Dryer, manager of a Frankfort cockpit at the end of Bald Knob Road, (on the banks of the Kentucky River), his partner Forrest Moore (like Dryer, a Frankfort saloon keeper), and perhaps others, devised rules for a newfangled match, which they named a "derby." The derby has become the most popular kind of match, replacing the main and other types of fights. The derby, as opposed to the main, is a fight between more than two opposing cockers.

The cocks are matched by weight and the cocker who wins the most fights gets the money. E. A. Brophy of Paris won the first derby.

If the inauspicious tournament of 1922 turned out well after all, the "1925 Grand Tournament" did not, alas, come off as expected. The *Courier-Journal's* lead story on January 9, 1925, is an account of the fiasco of a "\$6,000 Main Staged at Winchester." The sequence of events seems to be the following. The over-confident promoters of the tournament advertised it in *Grit and Steel*. The ad caught the eye of the ever-vigilant Santa Barbara, California, Humane Society. The Society wrote to the Lexington-Fayette County chapter to warn it of this outrage but received not even an acknowledgement. The Santa Barbara chapter then contacted Kentucky's Governor Fields, who started an investigation, but too late to stop the match. At the same time, a *Courier-Journal* reporter named Gus Roeder got wind of the fight and found his way to a barn on the farm of Harry B. Clay, on the Winchester-Paris road, in Clark County, where 450 men, women, and children from nine states were watching the action in twelve pits. The din of the crowd "rivalled the most chaotic scenes of the New York Stock Market." When those present learned that the "gink" who was openly taking notes was a reporter and that he had left the barn, they began to depart in haste. The *Courier-Journal* milked the story for several days. It editorialized on the "degrading" nature of the sport, and it published the names of those participants who pled guilty. Harry B. Clay and Hubbard B. Taylor Spencer,³⁸ a pit-owner from Winchester, were the only persons who appeared in court. Fourteen others sent a lawyer to plead guilty and pay the fine.³⁹

The big tournaments and the innovations of these years are typical of the "cockfighting craze in the twenties" that involved even Hollywood stars. Will Rogers, according to tradition, is the man who introduced the sport among movie actors and hangers-on like William Randolph Hearst (Page and Daniel 106). No doubt the participation of film stars gave the sport a certain glamour; but snobbish members of East-Coast society found a way to one-up the Hollywood parvenus. In 1922, "a group of Boston and Long Island socially prominent 'blue bloods,' " at least half of them also involved in racing, founded the Heel Tap Club, intended to be the most exclusive fraternity of cockers in America. The members met annually for a fight, gambling, and parties. The Heel Tap Club survived until *circa* 1940, when it fell apart because of

disagreements between the members and the founder (Shy 14). The Bluegrass, with its constant stream of personalities during Derby season and horse sales, and its connections with both the old money of the East and the entertainment industry could hardly fail to be affected by this revival of the old sport.

Grit and Steel's 1927 book on gamefowl breeds features prominently Alva Campbell, a clothing merchant from Middlesboro, who produced a new strain called "Blue Boones," probably out of Sid Taylor chickens (*Histories of Game Strains* 5). The sire of Campbell's strain, named Daniel Boone, won twenty-two fights before retiring to his stud duties (called "treading" hens, in the colorful language of older books on poultry breeding). The article mentions recent (i.e., early '1920s) mains at Stanford, Henderson, and Ashland ("on the boat at Ashland, Kentucky" on the Ohio River). And it alludes briefly to "[Hubbard] Spencer and [Emmett] Swift of Winchester."⁴⁰

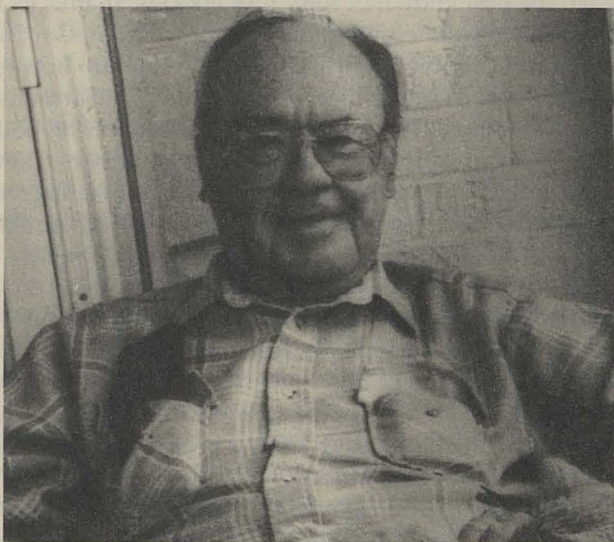
John E. Madden (1857-1929), the founder of Hamburg Place, still one of Lexington's best-known horsefarms, had a large gamecock operation, with "as many as 500" birds, and a private cockpit.⁴¹ Madden did everything with flair, and around 1926, pursuing his friendly rivalry with J. D. Gay, he hired a professional cocker named Harry Carney, who brought his own breed, "Carney Brown-reds," to Hamburg Place for a main with Gay at the private pit. Gay's birds won. John E. Madden's son, "Ed" Madden, disapproved of the sport and dismantled the operation on the farm, where the third generation now raises thoroughbreds. Mrs. Winifred Morriss, widow of Ed Madden, recalls that in spite of her husband's lack of enthusiasm, he occasionally put on fights for curious visitors. On one such occasion, in the early '30s, the fight took place in a farmhouse across the Winchester Road from Hamburg Place, and the hosts rolled up the rugs of their living room and brought in the cocks, which had so much trouble keeping upright on the polished floor that the match had to be canceled. Hospitable members of the Iroquois Hunt Club had a similar match for visitors in the ancient Grimes' Mill, now their clubhouse, in a pit made of bales of straw. No one remembers the match, but older members of the club recall that the pitters got so drunk during the festive evening that when they left, they drove off the steep, winding road that leads out of the valley where the mill is located and had to be rescued. The site of the match is now a dining room, and two large black-and-white photographic portraits of cocks,

probably from the '20s, hang over the serving table. Joan Pursley Mayer, MFH, believes that the cocks were Madden's and that the pictures once graced the walls of the Lexington Polo Club. They illustrate better than words the old partnership of horses and cocks: they are the only two pictures in the club's collection that do not depict fox-hunting subjects.

At the end of the "roaring" decade of the '20s, C. A. Finsterbusch published *Cock Fighting All Over the World* (Gaffney, SC: Grit and Steel, 1929), which as its name implies surveys the status of cockfighting but also includes a history of gamefowl, rules of the pit, how-to information for breeders, and numerous photos. The chapter on American cocking fairly glows with pride in the superiority of American knowledge, publications, equipment, authorities, and fine chickens. But Sid Taylor is the only Kentuckian mentioned among illustrious breeders of the past.⁴²

Another Bluegrass personality began his cockfighting career at the end of the 1920s. At the age of twelve, Clemens Caldwell of Danville witnessed a curious and very brief match between a cock and a half-tame captive eagle. Its owner, cockpit-proprietor George McRoberts, had received it from a neighbor's wife, who had found the eagle (which she took to be a hawk) entangled in a bush and had captured by wrapping it in her apron. Young Caldwell also watched farm hands pit cocks in his father's mule barn, and he was soon taking his own roosters (in a sack, the approved, traditional way) on his pony to pit them against the chickens of other kids in the vicinity. When Clemens was fourteen, one of his roosters attacked his father,⁴³ and Mr. Caldwell took Clemens to meet J. D. Gay, who sold him some of O'Neal's "Orchard Doms" and started him on a long career as a devoted cocker and collector of cocking memorabilia. Clemens' sister and Mr. Gay's son married in 1936, and the association between the two families became even closer. Clemens went into military service in 1942 as a B-17 crewman in the 8th Air Force, flying out of England. He took the opportunity to visit—against everyone's advice—County Down to watch a cockfight in an area from which so many Irish gamecocks and cockfighters had come to America. He returned to the USA before the invasion of Normandy to recuperate from injuries. While at a hospital at Coral Gables, he managed to attend fights at important Florida pits in Orlando, St. Augustine, and Leon, which were enjoying a brisk business. (Caldwell believes that returning soldiers had developed a taste for gambling, satisfied by the wagering at

cockpits.) In 1946, after his discharge and once again in Kentucky, he took up his own breeding and fighting activities and decided to learn to make his own gaffs (pronounced by Caldwell to rhyme with "calves"). Caldwell systematically visited all of the famous makers in America.⁴⁴ He also began to collect examples of American and foreign types, and gaffs worn in important fights or that belonged to distinguished cockers like Washington and Jefferson. His collection of around 1,000 pairs begins with sixteenth-century European gaffs and incorporates two other famous collections, those of Herbert Atkinson, a British artist and cocking expert, and of Dr. H. P. Clarke of Indianapolis, one of America's best known writers on cocking rules. Caldwell, in order to improve his knowledge of poultry nutrition and training, worked with America's best known "feeders."⁴⁵ At the peak of his fighting activities, he matched roosters with Tom Ballard, owner of the Cherry Hill Farm and a private pit near Danville. During the years 1948 to '51, Caldwell and Ballard fought six mains, of which Caldwell lost only one. Caldwell married in 1956, and he found that his growing family took most of his attention. He still breeds for the Sunset Pit, near Lafayette, Louisiana. But he no longer attends local cockfights. The introduction of "slashers," the razor-like knives favored in the Far East and the Phillipines, has



Clemens Caldwell

ruined the sport for him. He also deplores the introduction of steroids and other chemicals to produce artificial growth or aggressiveness. He comments that in his youth, it was customary to eat or sell dead cocks. Now, he believes, it would be dangerous to eat the hormone-laden flesh. Caldwell is part of an unbroken tradition that begins with Sid Taylor—if not earlier—and comes through Gay and other important cockers to the late twentieth century.

In 1946, Caldwell was invited to attend the annual fights of the Claymore Club, the successor of the aristocratic Heel Tap Club. Bayard Tuckerman, Jr., of Westport MA, founded the Claymore in 1940, when the Heel Tap was dissolved, and the members met first at Troy, New York, on the second Saturday in May (the Saturday next after Derby Day), then at Saratoga (at an inn, "Smith's Interlaken") for ten years, and after 1952, at the Casey Hotel in Scranton PA. Members of the club during this period included Thomas W. Murphy, "the Babe Ruth of harness racing" (Shy 17), Dan O'Connell, "the absolute Czar of the Democratic party in upper New York state" (said to be responsible for F. D. Roosevelt's successful bid for the presidency), and other equally colorful personalities (Shy 22).

Somewhat younger than Caldwell is Joe B. McCord of Winchester, the best known of Kentucky cockers, thanks to TV, who started raising gamefowl in the early thirties. McCord was born in 1916 and still lives in his family's ante-bellum house, on 300 acres, in a part of the county that his ancestors have farmed since the eighteenth century. The interior of the Greek-revival house is a complete archeology of the taste of prosperous farmers from the 1860s to the present: from its high, molded-plaster ceilings to brand-new plush wall-to-wall carpeting and a hot-tub on the back porch. The surrounding yard is cluttered with implements, dilapidated out-buildings, pens, trucks, and the detritus of serious farming. The house is not restored, and the yard is not the manicured lawn of country estates rescued from decay by city professionals. At the hub of this "outfit," as he calls it, is a vigorous man whose language is a textbook example of Bluegrass rural speech, liberally salted with four-letter words and off-color similes, wise and funny at the same time. (One of the more innocent examples collected: "Naw, them blue roosters ain't worth shit. They were good enough years ago. But now they'd be like a Model T at

the Indianapolis 500.") McCord lives with his second wife, who is African-American, and their teen-age children, near the farms of his middle-aged sons. In the field behind the drooping fence that surrounds the house are hundreds of gamecocks, scratching, crowing, and molting, each attached by a six-foot cord to its own barrel or doorless refrigerator. McCord does not know how many chickens he has, since he considers it bad luck to count them. But he admits that he has probably the largest gamefowl farm in the state. McCord has been breeding cocks since he was fourteen, when "Hub" Spencer, "one of the best cockers in the USA," gave him a trio of the "Dom" strain. Appalshop should make a movie about Joe Brown McCord, to preserve him for posterity, and not leave it to hostile journalists like Swasy. McCord, like Caldwell, is a living link in the tradition of cockfighting in this part of the country. He still has breeding stock from famous local cockers like Spencer, and among his collection of memorabilia are cages from E. A. Brophy.⁴⁶

In 1936, eleven years after its sensational story about the 1925 Grand Tournament, the *Courier-Journal* did another major piece of journalistic investigation on cockfighting. It devoted the opening pages of a Sunday magazine to a story called "These Duels Are Always to the Death," enhanced with photos of pens, gaffs, two cockers "billing" their entries, and cocks in a state of fighting frenzy. John Stengel, the author of the story, could claim to be Kentucky's first historian of cockfighting, and his account has names and places not found elsewhere. After discussing temporary sites for matches, like the basements of mansions in Louisville's best neighborhoods, he records cockpits that have long since disappeared: "Several seasons ago [in the early '30s], on Cave Run Road, a short distance from the business section of Louisville, a gamecock arena was constructed that was one of the most elaborate set-ups ever seen. In its span of operation, this pit was the most popular in the nation." Among Louisville's "famous pits of the past [are] Riverside Park, Clay and Main, Story and Pocahontas, Story and Frankfort, 12th and Oldham, 4th and Jefferson, two on Taylorsville Rd., the Frenchman's and later Wolff's near Iroquois Park, and others on the New Cut Rd. and the Dixie Highway . . ." Stengel recalls Osa Lentz of St. Matthews, the dean of Louisville cockers and breeders in the previous generation.⁴⁷ The rest of the article is a step-by-step description of readying a cock for battle, including the bizarre "keeps" (training diets) to which feeders subject the wretched birds. Stengel claims that at the time of

writing, the leading cocking states were Texas and Louisiana, with New York and Pennsylvania the locales of the most important tournaments. (CJ 20 Dec 1936)

Though one would think that the local readership could hardly tolerate another cockfighting exposé, only three years later Tom Smith did a story for the *Courier-Journal's* Sunday magazine, emphasizing the number and active state of local cockpits. From it, one learns that in early 1938 there had been "a sizeable tournament . . . in a Bluegrass pit" and that in 1939, there were cockpits functioning in Louisville, Lexington, Shelbyville, Bowling Green, Paducah, Horse Cave, Hopkinsville, and Guthrie. Louisville cockers could also patronize establishments in Andersonville, Indiana; and Paducah cockers could take advantage of facilities across the Mississippi in Wyatt, Missouri. (CJ 12 Nov 1939)

In the period before World War II, there was a modest but significant amount of publishing activity on the subject of gamefowl and fighting which attests to the steady popularity of the sport around the country. Two more journals for fanciers appeared on the news stands: *Gamecock* (begun in Illinois in 1936) and *Gamefowl News* (Asheville NC, 1941). The important British cocker and painter Herbert Atkinson published his book on *Cock-fighting and Game Fowl* (Bath: Geo. B., 1938).⁴⁸ Atkinson's career is evidence that cock-fighting had by no means disappeared from British sporting circles in the eight decades since the passing of the anti-cruelty laws. Another apologetical book from the same year is Tom Pridgen's *Courage: The Story of Modern Cockfighting* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1938), a rambling account of the author's conversion from mild disapproval to enthusiasm for the sport. Neither Atkinson nor Pridgen mentions Kentucky.

During these years, Lexington had several cockpits. R. W. P. Johnston and Clemens Caldwell recall Henry Knight's pit on Viley Road, in a fine barn heated by a fireplace, fights advertised by means of a lantern. The farm is now part of Calumet Farm. B. Stewart had a pit in the basement of his house on the Versailles Road. Stewart lost his clientele, around 1930, when he threw a live cock into the furnace in a fit of rage. The story is that someone challenged Stewart to pit a rooster of which he was extremely proud. He fetched the chicken, bet heavily, and when the chicken turned tail, Stewart lost all his money and his temper. Mrs. Winifred Morriss says that there was a pit belonging to "Waddy" Stoker across the road from Hamburg Place on Winchester Road.

Clemens Caldwell adds to this list another pit on Winchester Road owned by Jim Nolcini, and one known as Oliver's pit, which adjoined Hamburg Place on Todds Road. Mrs. A. B. Karsner says that her husband attended fights at pits on the Harrodsburg Road, across from the present-day Lexington Clinic, and on Georgetown Road at Ironworks Pike.⁴⁹

Outside Lexington, pits that operated from the '20s into the '40s in some cases, and which must be a fraction of the total number in business, include J. M. Frymire's pit at Webster, the Clear Creek pit at London, Millard West's pit at Athens, near the Kentucky River, Tom Hackley's pit at Stanford, and "Plug" Wagner's pit at Blue Licks.⁵⁰



In the foreground are Doug Davis and Samuel Look. The group in the background includes Horatio Mason, Hank Adams, A. B. Karsner, and John Wesley Marr.

1940s: The Goose Affair

It is hard to take seriously the self-righteous language of articles on cockfighting in local newspapers during the months before America's entry into the Second World War. The ominous stories of Hitler's attacks on Finland and Greece, the bombing of Parliament and Westminster Abbey, Stalin's rise to power—these accounts, read in the light of subsequent events, cause everything else on the page to fade into insignificance. Among other bits of information in the *Courier-Journal* of 9 February 1940 is the story that the Louisville Humane Society has acquired a flier announcing a cockfight to be held in Bullitt County on Tuesday, February 13. A handy map is included. The promoter's name is J. W[illiam] Goose.⁵¹ On this occasion, the county sheriff has obtained the information in time to visit the area and tell the locals that "if anyone [is] fixing to have a cockfight" he should know that officers of the law will be in the vicinity on the day in question. The sheriff's practical approach seems to have put a stop to the matter.⁵²

Perhaps because the world was becoming such a depressing place, Kentuckians threw themselves into the frantic activities of the 1941 Derby season with unusual verve. The state newspapers are crammed with fawning accounts of the visits of movie stars and millionaires. And on the day after the great race, in the very county in which the sheriff had so recently discouraged illegal activities, scoff-laws held "The Annual Kentucky Derby of Cock Fighting" at Mitchell Hill, in a well-furnished barn five miles west of Shepherdsville. History then repeated itself. A member of the Humane Society and Animal Rescue League, Mrs. E. L. Henderson, appears to have been the agent in this case. The promoter, none other than Mr. Goose, had again published ads for his derby in several of the cocking journals, requesting interested parties to send their entry fees to him in Louisville, "at 2d and Central Streets," the address of his saloon. It was to be "the biggest money fight of the season," viz., \$10,000 in purses. Once again, a reporter managed to get into the barn, this time with a smuggled camera, to photograph the entire scene. On his way into the barn, which had eight tiers of seats around the pit for the three hundred men and women in attendance, he received a handbill with the list of entries. Among Kentuckians were Harry Best of Maysville, E. A. Brophy of Paris, and Goose. There were twenty owners and 150 cocks. This time, the affair came off without a hitch. The cockers got their purses, and

the reporter got several columns of turgid prose out of his experience. County officials, always the last to know about local sporting events, met to decide on a course of action. Goose had to pay a fine of \$50 (the maximum was \$100), and Mrs. Henderson had the satisfaction of prosecuting the lawbreakers, even though an irate letter-writer claimed that the fines themselves and their application were laughable and useless as deterrents. Finally, a grand jury received as part of its commission the task of investigating cockfighting in Bullitt.⁵³

A few months after the jury began its inquiry, America was at war, and there is apparently only one case of an arrest for cockfighting during the 1941-1945 period. Inserted among gripping accounts of Russian "Pincers Closing On Axis Troops At Stalingrad," Allied advances in New Guinea and Tunisia, and the invention of the Walkie-talkie, there appears a short account of the arrest of twenty-two men and the impounding of fifteen cocks (later returned to their owners). With those arrested were Chief of Police Oscar Coldiron and Police Judge John Clem of Evarts, near Harlan. The fight seems to have taken place in very late December of 1942 or early January 1943. The article announces a trial date, but there is no follow-up in later issues (CJ 5 January 1943).

The 1950s and 60s: The Hilander Affair

When the war was over, many American soldiers returned to their homes with a new enthusiasm for fighting chickens. Often they had never seen a cockfight until they came to the South or until they were shipped to the Philippines (where it is still the national sport) or to other parts of the Pacific or Latin America. These new fans had none of the pre-war American social prejudices against cockfighting because they often met it out of the context in which it had survived in the rural South. Arch Rupert's 1949 manual for cockers is evidence of a widespread demand for up-to-date information on technical aspects of cocking. The popularity of cockfighting, in part as an exotic sport, is also apparent from a *Sports Illustrated* issue of the 1950s, in the monthly column called "Jimmy Jemail's Hotbox," which reports a poll taken among Americans at the Hotel Nacional in Havana. The question was "Is cockfighting cruel and sadistic?" Seven respondents said they liked the sport; one said it was cruel and sadistic; one said cruel, possibly, but not sadistic. In contrast, a recent Lexington poll—"Should cockfighting be legal in

Kentucky?"—got four no's and negative comments out of four persons questioned (*HL* 29 March 1992).

The most telling evidence of this waxing enthusiasm for fighting chickens is the ever-increasing number of newspaper accounts of police raids. In fact, after the 1920s, the easiest and most abundant documentation accessible is the dreary list of raids, arrests, citations, and trials.

On the day Harry Gold was arrested as a spy and stealer of atomic secrets, in a newspaper full of the McCarthy controversy and Harry Truman's problems with Congress, the editorial of the *Courier-Journal* wonders about the sources of gambling money revealed in a Marx-brothers-comedy incident near Henderson in May of 1950. Six bandits wearing false noses went to a cockpit—where according to the manager a purely social gathering was in progress—and at machine-gun-point held up twenty-five men, forced them to remove their trousers, and got away with between thirty and fifty thousand dollars. The thieves were in such a hurry that they overlooked forty thousand more in the back of a car parked next to the barn. A. J. "Hooch" Crawford, the manager who arrived too late to be robbed, reported the incident. But the State Police decided not to take the matter further, partly no doubt because it was hard to decide which crime to pursue (*CJ* 23, 24, 26 May 1950).

The year 1953 saw considerable activity for law enforcers. It began with an illustrated front-page article in the *Courier-Journal* headlined "Hundreds Turn Out To Egg On Bloodletting At Savage Cockfights In Barn Near Paris: Raucous Shouts of Betters [sic] Heard As Birds Rip Each Other's Flesh In Primitive Battle" (*CJ* 18 January 1953). After seeing the story, a judge in Paris, Kentucky issued warrants against "dapper . . . landowner" William Hilander, Jackstown Road, for "keeping a place to be used for chicken fighting and causing chicken cocks to fight for profit." Included in the story was a photograph of the printed announcement of bi-weekly cocking events, running from November 21, 1952 (Thanksgiving being the usual time, after the cocks have recovered from molting, to begin the fighting season) to July 3, 1953. The judge summoned thirty-five witnesses in an effort to obtain more information on the fighting. Among those called was the editor of the Paris *Daily Enterprise*, who testified that the two local newspapers had printed schedule-cards and handbills for the events, "indicating there was no secret about the fights" (*Lexington Leader* 23 January 1953).⁵⁴ At the hearing, one of the high-spirited

spectators released a bedraggled cock in the courthouse, causing "a wild chase" around the marble staircase. The judge eventually charged Hilander with conducting three fights: in December of 1952 and January of 1953 (CJ 20 and 31 January 1953, 26 February 1953). The Hilander affair ended with fines and the demolition of the 400-seat cockpit in Hilander's well-lit and heated barn, by order of the grand jury (Lexington *Leader* 21 March 1953).

Meanwhile, the flap over Hilander's barn had reached the desk of the publisher of *Grit and Steel*, Mrs. Ruth DeCamp, who wrote to the *Courier-Journal* thanking it for its accuracy and for what she considered positive publicity. She also inquired about a cockpit known to her only by hearsay (the "Bluegrass pit"). The editors note coldly that "at no place in this correspondence is there any recognition of the fact that cockfighting is illegal in Kentucky" (27 January 1953).

Hilander's conviction also stimulated "Tex Lee," *alias* Wallace S. Brammell of the Circle B Ranch, Franklin County, a breeder of gamefowl, to begin a personal campaign to make cockfighting legal. Brammell told reporters that legalized events would produce "plenty of revenue and publicity for the state" (CJ 3 February 1953; Lexington *Leader* 3 February 1953).

Hilander himself, in the harsh light of unwanted publicity, granted an exclusive interview to the Lexington *Leader* (3 February 1953) to explain his actions. It is hard not to see the unfortunate Hilander as an unwitting object of satire in this article. He states that he built the cockpit on the advice of four business associates—he himself had scant familiarity with cockfighting previously—to help pay for his farm. He ran the pit "without the attendant vices found in most sports," and his clients made donations to charitable causes, including a church. He had scrupulously paid Federal amusement taxes and income taxes, owned no gamecocks, attracted patrons mostly from outside Bourbon county, was a member of the Carlisle Baptist Church, and the father of five. A photo of his cockpit published the next month shows printed admonitions like "Please refrain from VULGAR LANGUAGE for the sake of Ladies and Children (*Leader* 20 March 1953).

The uproar in Bourbon County set off what appears to have been a law-enforcement contest between Lexington and Louisville. The authorities in Jefferson County launched a grand jury investigation because of a story in the Lexington newspaper, which had retaliated against the Louisville newspaper that had scooped the

story on the Bourbon County caper, only three miles from Lexington. The Lexington *Herald* revealed that both cockfights and a dogfight had been staged in St. Matthews, in Louisville's own backyard, in mid-January (*Herald* 21 January 1953). Then, from photographs that had accompanied the original Bourbon County story, two Louisville reporters identified a local used-car dealer, Hamilton Morris Sr., as the referee at the Bourbon County fights.⁵⁵ Mr. Morris appeared under subpoena before the grand jury and denied that he had been the referee. Other witnesses at the hearing averred that they knew nothing of cock or dogfights around Louisville. By a strange irony, the foreman of the jury was Earl Ruby, sports reporter and editor of the *Courier-Journal* for twenty-seven years, who (he claimed) had never seen or even been invited to a cockfight (*CJ* 22 January 1953). The Lexington *Herald* had also published details of fights at West Frankfort (at the home of a tavern-keeper), Bowling Green, and somewhere "near the Nicholas-Robertson county line," and in Daviess, Henderson, and Jessamine Counties, or "at least half a dozen Blue Grass communities" (*Herald* 21 January 1953; *CJ* 22 January 1953).

Simultaneous with the Hilander revelations, on January 19, the police raided a tobacco barn at Richmond, from which twenty-five persons quickly retreated, leaving "no positive evidence to indicate there had been a cockfight" and only a few chickens that "looked too old and not trained for fighters" (*CJ* 20 January 1953). On January 31, the *Courier-Journal* reported in scandalized language that the state Department of Agriculture had allowed its monthly bulletin to publish a classified ad announcing the sale of fighting cocks by a person named Bud Head, of Chenoa, in Bell County. Perhaps inspired by the Hilander case, Cadiz lawmen made seven arrests in late March (*Herald-Leader* 22 March 1953 and *Leader* 25 March 1953). They caught R. C. Thomas, owner of a store five miles from Cadiz on Kentucky highway 272, and forty spectators. In April, police surprised eighty-nine spectators and twelve participants in a barn owned by Coburn Rigsby, Rt. 1, Catlettsburg, near Ashland. The barn had a pit and five tiers of benches for spectators. Police did not confiscate the gamecocks found on the site (*CJ* 20 Apr 1953).

The conversion of Hilander's commodious barn into a dance hall sent Bluegrass cockers to a more secluded place in Clark county, which operated for a year, until a disgruntled participant (Foster West), battered by the unnamed owner of the farm and another

cocker (Virgil Curry), denounced them to the police. The barn was a half-mile off Athens-Boonesboro Road, three miles from Athens (HL 4 July and *Herald* 9 July 1954).⁵⁶

In 1955, *Grit and Steel* republished its *Histories of Game Strains*, which first appeared in 1927, with a hefty supplement and a sort of picture album of highlights of the 1954-1955 cocking season. The Woods Pansy Farm of Webster is represented by feeder J. M. Frymire and handler Ham[ilton] Morris. According to the caption under Frymire's photo, "his father [Dick Frymire] was the originator of the famous Smokeball fowl" (210, 212). Woods Pansy's triumphs must have occurred in states where the fights were not illegal. Woods Pansy Farm belonged to Fred Booker and a Mr. Kinnaird of Louisville, both active in the sport for many years.

These accounts of fights are proof of the irrepressible determination of Kentucky cockers to ignore the law; and a long article in *Sports Illustrated*, "Gamecocks and Gentlemen meet in Dixie," shows how widespread this non-compliance was in the 1950s and 1960s. The *Sports Illustrated* feature (27 March 1961), with drawings by John Groth, makes a colorful addition to the drab police reports and provides data on the status of cocking in other parts of the country. The story is about a championship match in an unidentified Southern town, probably somewhere in South Carolina. Robert H. Boyle, the author, estimates that there are (in the late 1950's) as many as 100,000 fans in the USA, from Alabama dirt-farmers to New York stock brokers. And he rates American cocks the best in the world, since professional breeders were exporting 12,000 a year to countries where cockfighting was legal.

The 1970s and 1980s: The Move to Legalize

About a decade later, *Sports Illustrated* again called attention to American cockpits with a review of a curious novel, *The Cockfighter* (Crown: NY 1972), by Charles Willeford. Willeford's work is an accurate, even technical account of fighting in the south, especially Florida. The review provoked several indignant letters from readers who wrote to condemn what they considered favorable publicity for an illegal and cruel sport in a respectable national magazine. Yet in spite of the scathing letters, both the novel and the book review suggest that the national attitude toward the sport had become slightly less hostile. The modest success of Willeford's story about a contemporary cockfighter and the notoriety it achieved as a result of the highly visible review may have been the catalyst for a

relatively sympathetic article about a Kentucky cocker in a Lexington paper in the spring of 1975. "Joe" Delmar Owens, graduate of Eastern Kentucky University, fence-builder, farmer, and gamecock breeder, is the subject of a feature story in the *Leader* (3 April 1975). Owens describes cocking as an art or a cultural activity and defends his right to pursue his hobby. Owens says that in 1975, the police raided half of the fights in which he participated, although he avoided having his birds confiscated by decamping and leaving the fighting chickens to his wife, who, as a spectator, was not liable to arrest. He speaks of frequent trips to Tennessee, where the law does not interfere and where permanent cockpits and larger purses draw better fighting stock. Owens, like John Purdy of Scott County (the breeder with two academic degrees in science who took Alecia Swasy to the infamous 1992 cockfight), is what the *Louisville Eccentric Observer* has recently called a "pinkneck," by which term of opprobrium it means an educated Kentuckian with uncouth tastes.

Popular opposition to cocking may have been weakening, but officials charged with the prosecution of offenders continued their campaign against it. Shortly before the interview with Owens, Lexington police raided Panola Farm, on Spurr Road, and found two hundred spectators from at least five states. The judge fined three people (*Leader* 25 February 1975). The leniency of judges like this one shows that the bench was also tiring of the unsuccessful and time-consuming war on what many considered a harmless pastime.

In 1980, a Bluegrass cocker named Tommy DeMoss, who died in 1992, converted a barn on his Jessamine County farm, near Spears, into the Cedar Ridge Game Club, with a cockpit and capacity for three hundred spectators. The farm is not far beyond one of the fast-growing suburbs of Lexington, on the Tates Creek Pike, a once-rustic, stone-wall-lined road that is now almost permanently clogged with traffic pouring in from the expensive compounds for young professional families. But in 1980, before the building-boom started, DeMoss's farm was remote enough to be safe for a cockfighters' club. On Saturday, June 2, 1980, state police arrested thirteen persons (including Tommy, his brother Ernest W. DeMoss, and Michael W. Perkins). The reporter (John Woestendiek, *Leader* city editor), who must have been the person that tipped off the police, quoted one exasperated officer as saying, "You can make a dent in it, but you can't stop it."

Woestendiek's story about the raid, which alternates melodramatic italicized descriptions of a bloody match⁵⁷ with factual journalese, appeared soon after two state senators sponsored a bill to alter the cruelty to animals statute to make an exception of birds. Governor John Y. Brown (said to be a gamefowl fancier himself, and, as wags pointed out, the nemesis of chickens as the first promoter of Kentucky Fried Chicken) had vetoed the bill because he or his staff understood the hidden intention of its wording. What Woestendiek could not know, however, was that the governor's veto was two days late and therefore technically invalid (according to some legal authorities), and that a future Attorney General would declare the bill to have become law by default.

In the same issue of the *Leader* (2 June 1980), Woestendiek has a long editorial ("Commentary: Where do you draw the line on cockfighting? It is cruelty or culture?"). In it, he quotes at length from sociology professor Clifton Bryant, who was on the point of publishing a book on the subject and who believes that cockfighting is so old, ingrained, and universal a tradition that it would be better to tolerate it and devote law-enforcement efforts to the prevention of "out-and-out animal oppression." Bryant's views seem to have been shared by Judge Michael E. Strout, who levied a minimal fine against Hayman R. Oaks, of Newcut Road, Montgomery County (near Mt. Sterling), in March of 1986. Oaks' cockpit building contained 1,000 to 1,200 spectators and 500 to 600 cocks when police arrived in response to a false tip that there had been a shooting.

In fact, from 1980 to 1990, there were few prosecutions because, according to a legal officer for the Kentucky State Police, in Kentucky the offense is a misdemeanor. The officer, Larry Fentress, says that in spite of the concerns of animal rights activists, he has not seen evidence that drugs, concealed weapons, and big-time gambling are a problem. Informal gambling is not illegal in Kentucky (*HL* 8 August 1993).

The 1990s: Legalized Cockfights and the Anti-Cockfighting Campaign

On St. Patrick's Day, 1990, Attorney General Fred Cowan issued a stunning opinion: that because of the governor's late veto, cockfighting had been legal since 1980, when State Senator Benny Ray Bailey (D-Hindman) and Senator Kelsey Charles Berger

(D-Pineville), both gamecock fanciers, introduced the bill to except birds from the anti-cruelty law. The transparent excuse for the bill was that farmers who killed pesky blackbirds, which roost in flocks of millions in parts of Kentucky, might incur the wrath of over-diligent law enforcers. A few weeks later (*HL* 1 April 1990) a gamefowl breeder from Beattyville named Pridemore, now free to identify himself as a cocker, wrote a defense of the sport in the newspaper's "Appalachian Voices" column, warning other fanciers that if animal rights activists succeeded in outlawing chicken fights again, they would eventually "attack our rights to hunt and fish, or hunt with dogs. Think of that." He applauds the basic purpose of the Humane Society, but condemns "animal activists" whose successful campaigns depend on large tax-free donations that pay for implementing anti-cocking and other programs. Pridemore's opponent in the debate is Arie A. Bates of Hindman, who apparently had first-hand knowledge of cocking activity in Letcher and Floyd Counties, in the mountains. Bates tries to put the fights into a larger picture, and he condemns it on moral grounds, such as the "greed" of cockers. Bates says enough to suggest that he is at least consistent in his views: he opposes the use of animals for food or entertainment of any kind (e.g., horse-racing).

Not every supporter of cockfighting, however, was as ready as Pridemore to come out of the closet. In an interview with the *Herald-Leader*, a Louisville attorney who was defending persons still awaiting trial for cockfighting offenses claimed that the new publicity over the legality of fighting had, contrary to expectations, caused a decline in sporting activities because cockers did not want their names or faces publicized by reporters avid for follow-up stories (*HL* 24 September 1990). But in the spring of 1992, in the middle of the cockfighting season, *Herald-Leader* staffers went back to Tommy DeMoss's cockpit at Spears, which was in full swing on a Sunday morning, and snapped Derrick Foresman of Richmond refereeing a match between cocks owned by Bill Thomas and Thomas Begley, also of Richmond. Foresman's fourteen-year-old sons were about to pit their first cocks. DeMoss, Joe McCord, and others present spoke willingly about their hobby. McCord: "The game chicken is the poor man's racehorse. We take better care of these chickens than we do of our wives" (*HL* 15 March 1992). The lawyer's gloomy assessment was wrong, according to a cockpit owner in Jeffersonville (Montgomery County), who claimed that business in 1993 had risen by 25%.

During the 1992 legislative session, on February 13, Lexington Representative Pat Freibert (R) introduced a bill to ban cockfights. The bill never came to a vote. According to Freibert, the reason was that Democratic leaders sent it to a hostile committee headed by Herbie Deskins, Jr. (D-Pikeville), who admitted to attending and enjoying cockfights, and who insisted that the only opposition to the sport comes from "extremists and the editorial staff of the Lexington *Herald*." Freibert stated in an interview, with apparent surprise, "that a lot of highly placed and influential citizens in Kentucky participate in cockfighting. I think it's barbaric . . ." Andrea Reed, of the Fund for Animals, also claimed that a few influential legislators had managed to frustrate the will of the majority (*HL* 8 August 1993). Reed has been coordinating the anti-cocking movement in Kentucky. In November of 1992, she led a group of picketers outside a 700-seat cockpit in Montgomery County described as the "Rupp Arena" of cockfighting, the Spring Brook Game Club. This pit in Jeffersonville belongs to Marvin Watkins. Watkins confirms Joe McCord's claim that the arena brought new prosperity to Jeffersonville: the visiting spectators fill the county's motels and restaurants on cockfighting weekends. None of Reed's picketers were from Montgomery County or were local taxpayers, as Watkins noted (*HL* 1 November 1992). But Reed and her group from the Fund for Animals were picketing the Spring Brook Game Club again in August of 1993 to inaugurate a new campaign to ban cockfighting.

In April of 1993, Judge Lewis Nicholls of Greenup County dismissed charges against "South Shore chicken-fight organizer" Marvin Munn on the grounds that the "statutory language is unambiguous" in excluding birds in the anti-cruelty law. County Attorney Mike Wilson, however, maintained that the definition of the term "animal" used to exclude birds was never recorded in the statutes and that cockfighting was still illegal. Wilson drafted a new law, now in force in Greenup County, which defines an animal as "any warm-blooded living creature except a human being" (*HL* 3 April 1993; 7 November 1993). So chicken fights became once again illegal in the county. Mr. Munn, undeterred by the renewed ban, continued his organizing of fights and was charged with two counts of cruelty to animals on 9 August. On 26 October, the Court of Appeals granted a motion for a discretionary review of the county circuit court's decision that supported the new law against the sport. Appeals Judge James Lyon reasoned that the original

bill's intention was to allow extermination of black birds only and that furthermore there was insufficient proof that Governor's Brown's veto was invalid. The *Herald-Leader's* account of this tangled question reveals that both parties in the debate have serious misgivings about the up-coming review. Cockers like Munn naturally fear a change in the current interpretation of the law. The county attorney of Greenup opposed the motion apparently because he was satisfied with the county's successful drafting of its own anti-cocking law, which may be struck down. If higher courts do not rule that the state law takes precedence over county ordinances, then it appears likely that this county-by-county legislation will provide a weapon for anti-cockfighting forces to use against the sport, which for the present at least is no longer out of sight.



(Above and below) John Purdy (page 32) and companion. Fastening spurs on a gamecock.



The story has come full circle: from the eighteenth-century custom of pitting gamefowl, so universal that few raised their voices against it (and those mainly because of associated gambling or nuisance, not cruelty to the fowl), through the later nineteenth-century period of anti-cruelty legislation and its enforcement, and now back to a—no doubt temporary—period of legal, unsupervised fighting. Cockfighting will never be eradicated, however, if the English experience is any guide to the future: it will become, once again, our invisible sport.⁵⁸ [April, 1994]

Post-script

In December of 1994, a three-judge panel ruled that the "1980 amendment exempting birds from the state's animal-cruelty law had never been published in the Kentucky Revised statutes." (Lexington, *Herald-Leader* 20 February 1995) As a result of this ruling, cockfighting was once again an illegal activity. In February of 1995, after a two-month investigation, state and Laurel County police made a Saturday night raid on a cockpit fifteen miles west of London, where they found a crowd of 400 spectators, arrested eight men and three women on cruelty charges, and confiscated equipment, money, and a trophy. Defenders of cockfighting reacted immediately. "Marvin C. Watkins of Jeffersonville filed a lawsuit last week in Franklin Circuit Court contending cockfighting should be legal and asking the court to stop police from charging cockfighters." (*Herald-Leader* 23 February 1995) The judge hearing the case of those arrested in the Laurel County raid continued the case for six months, pending the outcome of Watkins' suit. Meanwhile, state police officials announced that they intended to "launch investigations" statewide, and journalists interviewed Andrea Reed of the Fund for Animals and Jean Flechler of the Kentucky Gamefowl Breeders Association for their views of each side of the question.

Two months later, on a Sunday afternoon, March 26, acting on a telephoned complaint that there was a fight—not a cockfight—in progress, "authorities rushed in" on 100 to 150 spectators at Eli Campbell's Fowl-Creek Game Club off state highway 15 near Bonnyman, northeast of Hazard, in Perry County, where they discovered a cockpit that had "false walls that could be closed quickly to hide the pit and make it look like the theater was used for boxing matches." (*Herald-Leader* 27 March 1995, and 28 March 1995) The authorities confiscated and apparently destroyed the

unclaimed chickens found in cages (40 or 80, depending on the story) "because they were bred and trained for nothing but violence," according to the reporter, Eric Gregory. Gregory also states, without giving his source, that the cocks are "raised on steroids to increase aggressiveness, and injected with drugs so they won't feel pain." He then quotes John Foran, chief administrative officer for the American SPCA: "These birds are mutants . . . They['ve] come up with a bird that's totally out of control. . . . It's a terrible thing what's been done to nature."

The troopers who made the raid did not actually see any fights, however, so no arrests were made. Fourteen persons were cited to appear in district court on April 18. The hearing eventually occurred on May 11, and at the request of the county attorney, the judge dismissed charges for lack of evidence, to the annoyance of Andrea Reed: "This is absolutely ridiculous. . . . It's as though they are totally ignoring the law of the land." The newspaper account (*Herald-Leader* 12 May 1995) quotes a state police officer on his plan to use undercover agents to catch delinquents and his observation that citizens who witness cockfights may swear out a complaint. But until Watkins' challenge is settled in court, it seems impractical to expend tax money and police energy raiding clandestine fights. And as of mid-May 1995, the Laurel countians, who have not had their day in court, are still biding their time.

NOTES

¹ Frank G. Menke, *New Encyclopedia of Sports* (New York: Barnes, 1944, 1947), pp. 335-6.

² The *Kentucky Encyclopedia* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1992), "Sports," pp. 842-4. The *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture* (University of North Carolina Press, 1989), pp. 1477-8, has a concise, well-documented entry on the subject: "Cockfighting is the most common organized blood sport in America and may have as many as several hundred thousand devotees." The author, Harold A. Herzog, Jr., lists among the scholarly sources of his article the Appalshop movie mentioned below. *Foxfire 8*, a collection of articles written by Georgia schoolchildren, has a remarkable essay on every aspect of cockfighting, from the egg to the pit, and two biographies of cockers, all copiously illustrated. Though it is about contemporary cockfighting in Georgia, conditions in Kentucky are probably similar. It seems premature, however, to class cockfighting with other "vanishing" Appalachian folk-customs, as *Foxfire's* dust-jacket advertising does.

³ Or, in the latest jargon of professional journals, "deviant." See, for example, Steven Worden and Donna Darden, "Knives and gaffs:

definitions in the deviant world of cockfighting," *Deviant Behavior* 13 (1992) 271-289, for a study of cocking in western Arkansas, where it is illegal, and eastern Oklahoma, where it is legal.

The current American authority on the sociology of cockfighting is Professor Clifton D. Bryant of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute. His most recent article is "Deviant Leisure and Clandestine Lifestyle: Cockfighting as a Socially Disvalued Sport," *World Leisure and Recreation* 33 (1991), no. 2, pp. 17-21. According to Dr. Bryant, contemporary Americans who have no experience of cockfighting accept as accurate "grossly distorted" accounts of the sport and its participants. He cites two psychologists, one of whom claims that watching a fight might induce acts of violence, another of whom seriously compares cockers to rapists and "disenfranchised, unemployed losers." In spite of conflicting legal sanctions and social disapproval, Bryant estimates that there may be as many as 500,000 persons involved, with 20,000 to 40,000 active participants; 70,000 breeders who export 20,000 fighting chickens per year; "thousands" of other people in ancillary businesses such as feed, medicine, equipment, magazines (three, with a circulation of 10,000); "maybe over 1,000 or more 'permanent' pits (there are estimated to be 250 in New York alone)." In sum, it creates "a multi-million dollar, largely 'invisible' industry and national recreational pattern." Bryant quotes a "recent national survey" that establishes the demographics of cockfight enthusiasts. It found that they are "average," "mainstream," and differ only in one characteristic: 90% are white. They are slightly above the national educational level, including 6% with graduate or professional training. They are "rural and small town dwellers, married with children, . . . have middle and lower middle class vocations . . . [have a] better educational background . . . and belong to the major religious faiths."

⁴"Family Fun: Buffs gather on Sundays for legal cockfights," *Wall Street Journal*, 17 January 1992. This story appears in the annual *Index* of the *WSJ* under "Kentucky."

Swasy could have saved herself a trip had she been interested in cockfighting *per se*, since it is currently practiced in her state by Cuban, Puerto Rican, and Dominican *galleros* ("cockers"), perhaps in the basement of her own apartment building. The story of *peleas neoyorquinas* would not, of course, provide such gripping reading for jaded commuters if the subjects were Hispanic immigrants, who are too close to home to be romanticized. In New York state as late as 1960s, there was big-time cockfighting among non-*latinos*. The *Lexington Leader* of 28 May 1964 reprinted an account by Red Smith ("Writer Smith visits 'Cathedral of the Chicken Fighters'") of a New York match that could have taken place anywhere in the South. The influx of Cubans after 1959 must have included many expert *galleros* from a land where the tradition is very old and still popular, in spite of Castro's efforts at suppression. In 1980, Dr. Bryant estimated that there were 600 pits in the city. He reduced his estimate in '91.

The history of cockfighting in New York would be an interesting study in itself. "New York was a center for cockers and cockfighting, both before and after the American Revolution," as Page Smith and Charles Daniel

observe (*The Chicken Book* [San Francisco: North Point Press, 1982], p. 103), and they outline the rise of the sport in the nineteenth century. American sporting magazines of the period contain numerous references to cocking in New York, even during the Civil War. My information on current *peleas* in the city comes from Federico Contreras, M.D., a Dominican gamecock breeder and regular at cockpits in Kentucky, where he now resides. The most recent issue of *Grit and Steel*, the oldest continuously published magazine for *aficionados*, lists New York gamecock breeders in its directory; there may be more activity than even Dr. Contreras suspects.

Since the Humane Society is said to offer a \$2500 reward to informers in states like New York where fights are illegal, one can understand why Sway found it easier to come to Kentucky to find material for a story about such widespread but normally clandestine activity.

⁵CNN also interviewed McCord, probably in March of 1993; but I have been unable to pinpoint the date of the broadcast.

⁶A typical claim is that Lincoln got the nickname "Honest Abe" because of his impartiality in refereeing matches. None of the standard biographies mentions cockfighting among Lincoln's amusements. Lincoln's works, in the standard edition, do not have "cockfighting" or any related term in the index. The newest biography of Henry Clay, a notorious gambler and lover of horses, says nothing about cockfighting; and one of the editors of the Clay papers, Dr. Mary Wilma Hargreaves, cannot recall any references. Idem for the papers of Jefferson Davis, another native Kentuckian. For what it is worth, George Washington *did* attend cockfights. See Jane Carson, *Colonial Virginians at Play* (Williamsburg, 1965) p. 154.

⁷*Hounds in the Morning: Sundry sports of merry England: Selections from the Sporting Magazine, 1792-1836*. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1981.

⁸C. R. Acton, *Silk and Spurs*, (NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), has two chapters ("The Palmy Days of Cocking" and "Outside the Law") that show parallel developments between the English and American experiences with the outlawed sport and its connection with horses, at least up until the First World War.

⁹Lawrence Thompson, *Kentucky Traditions* (Hamden, CT: Shoe String Press, 1956), has a short account on pp. 46-8, with interesting anecdotes. He confirms that in the 50s, horse farms were still keeping gamecocks. R. Gerald Alvey's new *Kentucky Bluegrass Country* (University of Mississippi, 1992), 208-10, 306 (bibliography), discusses the current status of the sport.

¹⁰See "Cocking," pp. 151-64.

¹¹John W. Cooper, *Gamefowls, Their Origin and History* (West Chester, PA, 1869), p. 169. First issued in 1859 as *A Treatise on Cocking*.

¹²Readers of *American Turf*, as fans of racing and related activities, had no need to consult a dictionary for the meaning of such now arcane cocking terms as Welsh main, pile, banter, gaff, and a number of other technical words that appear on its pages. *Barbecue*, however, was unfamiliar to them. Its association with cocking and political rallies may come as a surprise. In 1831 a correspondent from Georgia describes a tour through the northern part of the state, during which he passed "through

Hancock, to visit an old friend . . . [who] informed me 'that Mr. A--, one of the candidates for the legislature . . . was to furnish a barbacue [sic] the next day, and as I was fond of fun, I must accompany him. . . . As many of your readers may not know what is meant by a barbacue, I will give a brief description. It is a rural feast, given by one of the canvassing candidates, of which all are invited to partake. . . . At one of these rustic entertainments, every man who has a quarter nag, or a true game cock, is expected to bring him . . .'" (III [1831] 66).

¹³George P. Burnham, *Game Fowl: For the Pit or the Spit* (Melrose, MA, 1877), p. 22. This is part III of a series on poultry.

¹⁴Arch Ruport, *The Art of Cockfighting* (NY: Devin-Adair Co., 1949), p. 170.

¹⁵*Animals and their legal rights: A survey of American laws from 1641 to 1990* (Washington, DC: Animal Welfare Inst., 1990). For more details on the growth and success of the anti-cocking movement, see Ruport, "The Art of Cockfighting, Appendix B; George Ryley Scott, *The History of Cockfighting*, 2nd ed. (Hindhead, Surrey: Triplegate, 1983), chs. XII-XIV; Smith and Daniel, *The Chicken Book*, pp. 95-7, 104-10.

¹⁶Mary Hobson Beard, *Old Houses in and near Bowling Green*, 1964, pp. 55-7, gives information about the family of Jacob Van Meter, whose descendants still live in the area; but there are not enough data to identify the doctor with anyone mentioned. Information on Van Meter's trip to England comes from Cooper's *Histories of Game Strains* (Gaffney, SC: Grit and Steel, 1955), p. 73. The first version of this book appeared in 1927. It is a collection of letters and columns on the subject of breeds, all written by amateurs, and is maddeningly vague in matters of detail.

¹⁷According to Clemens Caldwell of Danville, Kentucky's authority on cockfighting history, Copperheads contributed their genes to the successful Dominiques—"Doms"—bred by Louisville cocker J. M. Frymire as late as the '50s.

¹⁸In England and Spain, Shrove Tuesday is the traditional day for cockfights, not Easter Monday. I have seen no other reference to this tradition.

¹⁹Until Cooper published his work, American cockers had to depend on British writers for guidance. For a selective and idiosyncratic list, see John E. Norris, *Books on Poultry and Cock-Fighting: A Collector's Bibliography*. (Kenneth Square, PA: KNA Press, Inc., 1977), pp. 27-33. Cooper's predecessors were (1) William Augustus Osbaldiston, *The British Sportsman* (London: J. Stead, 1792); (2) *Hoyle's Games*, rev. Dr. Charles Jones (London: W. Baldwin, 1808); (3) Anon. [A Distinguished Amateur], *The Game Cock* (London: Thomas Dolby, 1825); (4) T. B. Johnson, *The Sportsman's Cyclopaedia* (London: Sherwood, Gilbert, and Piper, 1831); and (5) Pierce Egan, *Pierce Egan's Book of Sports* (London: W. Tegg and Co., 1847).

²⁰*Histories of Game Strains* (Gaffney, SC: Grit and Steel, 1955. First ed., 1927.) pp. 73, 188. According to Clemens Caldwell, O'Neal sold off his stock early in this century. Colonel O'Neal's address in Louisville, c. 1902, was 648 Fifth Street.

²¹George C. Huff's catalogue, c. 1902, in the Caldwell collection. The only other Kentucky cocker whose name appears in Huff's handsome little

catalogue as an endorser is Jefferson County magistrate George C. Shadburne (who "raises a private strain for his own use").

²²McIntyre, *The Game Fowl* (Gaffney, SC: Grit and Steel, 1904), p. 232. (The title page and consequently the author's first name are missing from the only copy available to me.)

²³Kenney must have died around 1905, because the January 1906 issue of *Grit and Steel* has an ad placed by his son, Dr. William Kenney, who was perpetuating the family's breeds. There is, however, a "C. A. Kenney" of Glenkenney, KY, who also advertises: perhaps a brother of Dr. Kenney (McIntyre 216-217).

²⁴Richard K. Fox, *The Cocker's Guide: How to breed, train, and feed game birds for the pit. Rules for All Mains*. (New York: Richard K. Fox, 1909), pp. 17-18. Fox was owner of the Police Gazette publishing house and author of numerous booklets on sports, muscle-building, and famous athletes (e.g., Jack Johnson, the black boxing champion). *The Cocker's Guide*, with illustrations taken at Simon Flaherty's farm on Long Island, is no. 25 in the series and cost 25 cents. The guide itself and the list of New York gamecock breeders appended at the end show that the SPCA and anti-cruelty laws were not effective in suppressing the sport.

²⁵According to Clemens Caldwell, Talbot was a member of the family that built the Talbot Inn in Bardstown, one of the oldest still in service west of the Alleghenies.

²⁶I am grateful to R. W. P. Johnston of Lexington for calling this unknown magazine to my attention. The University of Kentucky's rare books collection has one issue of *Fancy Fowls* from March 1899 (vol. III, no. 3). The editor was Charles M. Meacham. Meacham fills his pages with practical articles mostly on harmless chickens, not gamecocks. But there is a noteworthy report from a poultry fancier in Manila. In 1899, the Spanish-American War had just ended, and there was an American Army of occupation in the Philippines. Maj. Theodore Sternberg writes that after the sorry chickens he had seen in Honolulu, he found the stock in the Philippines in a flourishing state: "All are game fowls, the common fowls being of that race. . . . General Otis, commanding here has closed the cockpits . . . Still, I have seen natives carrying in their arms magnificent cocks . . ."

Sternberg observes that the Philippine cockers do not put their cocks in separate yards but have an original and practical solution to the problem of keeping many cocks in the same yard: "By the way, the native method of picketing cocks could be adopted often with good results at home by our fanciers. A string is fastened to one leg, a couple of yards of string is ample, and a small pin pushed in the ground holds the bird. By this method cocks have a chance to pick grass and get the air without the expense of a house and yard. A box or barrel will suffice for shelter at night" (19). Tethering many cocks in one yard is now the normal practice all over the world.

Most of Meacham's ads are above reproach, but there is a sprinkling of advertising of game chickens. Sherman Woodall, Craynesville, KY, offers "Pure Pit Games. . . . Will win for you." E. C. Lilly, Fairfield, KY, "C. I. Game Cockerels" and pullets. The most uninhibited: "PIT GAMES Huddlestons, Warhorses, and Ky. Dominiques. Cocks, early stags and

breeding stock for sale. Morrow & Crabb, Hopkinsville, Ky. Mention Fancy Fowls."

There is undoubtedly a rich vein of historical material in such magazines. Most of them are rare or exist in libraries that do not lend. The *National Union List of Serials* had numerous promising titles (*s.v.* fancier, fowl, gamefowl, poultry). Racing, sporting, and entertainment magazines must also contain data that would add interesting details to this account. There must also be a few that never appear in bibliographical repertoires: Clemens Caldwell's library has the first issue (vol. 1, no. 1, 1 November 1922) of a one-page monthly flier published at Murrell's Inlet, South Carolina, called *Johnson's Game*.

²⁷E. I. "Buddy" Thompson, Fayette county historian and collector, owns one of the rare surviving labeled bottles. Mr. Thompson is a fabled raconteur, and two of his stories include this once-famous whisky, whose name lends itself to off-color puns. The punch-line of one of the tales has an illiterate worker who has been told that the barrel he is moving contains Chicken Cock Whisky say, "My three favorite things." For folklorists and linguists, these naughty jokes are documents of changing *mores* and vocabulary. My informants tell me that in the Southern slang vocabulary of sex until at least WWII, "cock" meant not only penis but also vagina and intercourse, to which the first joke alludes. Thompson's second tale has a lady express her amazement that distillers can make whisky out of such strange ingredients. For a discussion of the inevitable question of whether the slang term cock = penis evolves from cock = rooster, see Smith and Daniel's learned comments (index, under "sexual connotations").

²⁸The 1902 issue is the earliest I have seen. The periodical literature of cocking is hard to trace. Possibly the oldest title is *Game Fancier's Journal*, Battle Creek, MI, 1879-1910. I have not been able to consult a copy. McIntyre's elusive book on *The Game Fowl*, pp. 184-187, has a list of journals available in 1904: "*The Game Fancier's Journal*, published in Michigan; *The Dixie Game Fowl*, published in Tennessee; *American Game Keeper*, a weekly paper published in New Jersey; *Southern Pit Games*, published in Georgia. There have been other papers published, but discontinued from time to time. Of the magazines, the eldest is *The Game Fowl Monthly* established in 1885 [at Sayre, PA] McIntyre has an amusing account of the vicissitudes of a journal published by P. W. Carew, "the veteran breeder of Indiana," which was taken over by a cocker who got religion and turned the magazine into an organ of the Salvation Army: "this translation of *Game Breeder* to the realms of church literature was even more marvelous than that of Elijah lifted from earth in the flesh, to glory; and the reader may faintly imagine the surprise of game chicken cranks that morning after the translation, when upon opening *The Breeder*, their eyes feel [sic] upon—"Peace, good will among men," . . . where they had expected an account of the last main between Eslin and Kearney." The former publisher of *Game Breeder* then started *Chanticleer*. "*The Derby Game Bird* has been published for many years in Indiana."

See Norris, *Books on Poultry and Cock-Fighting*, for American monographs on cocking from the date of Cooper's book to the First World War, including the following: (1) Ed. James, *The Gamecock* (New York,

1873); (2) George P. Burnham, *The Game Fowl* (Melrose, MA, 1877); (3) F. W. McDougall, *Treatise on the Game Cock* (Indianapolis, 1879); (4) R. S. Trask, *My Way of Feeding for the Pit* (Battle Creek, MI: Buckley and Onderdonk, 1882); (5) H. H. Stoddard, *Book of Games* (Hartford, 1886); (6) Richard K. Fox, *The Cocker's Guide* (New York: Richard K. Fox, 1909); and (7) George W. Means, *The Game Cock from the Shell to the Pit* (Tell City, IN: Alex W. Cummings and Co., 1911).

In the Caldwell collection there is a copy of McIntyre's *The Game Fowl*, which is so rare that Norris knew it only from an incomplete description by Dr. H. P. Clark. The Caldwell copy, on crumbling wood-pulp paper, bound in morocco, is missing the first nine pages. The first section, pp. 9-27, is a history of the origins and status of cockfighting; section two, 28-196, is about breeding, training, fighting; section 3 is about "famous strains and their breeders of recent times."

²⁹ George Steitler of Owensboro, E. L. McGehee (also spelled McGhee) of Trenton, John C. Cart of Union Star, Squire Aldridge and son of Hawesville, C. A. Kenney of Bourbon Co., R. O. Ward of Georgetown, Nash and Stone of Versailles, Charles J. Tanner, and John H. Kuhn, both of Louisville, Dr. J. B. Frymire and son of Frymire, W. F. Hook of Hardinsburg, and Lawrence Hildreth of Pine Grove. George Huff, the gaff-maker from Louisville, also has an ad.

³⁰ Gay himself provided a short biography and chronicle of his cocking exploits to P. P. Johnston of Lexington for the *Histories of Game Strains*. Gay attended the main in Lexington in 1888, where he met Sid Taylor of Million, Madison Co., Kentucky. Taylor allowed Gay to walk some of his stags, unfought young roosters, and by 1898, Gay had become so good at handling and breeding that Taylor himself bought some of Gay's cocks for his own yards. In 1898 Gay won a main against another Lexington cocker, D. Saugham. In 1901, Gay persuaded Taylor to sell hens to Dr. Jim Yates of Richmond, Kentucky; but by 1927, the date of the article, Yates had dispersed his stock. In 1903, Taylor gave his chickens and equipment to Gay, who bred and sold the Sid Taylors until 1922, when he sold his stock to a Chicago breeder named E. W. Law, agreeing not to sell in competition with Law. According to Clemens Caldwell, Law, one of the best-known cockers in the Mid-West, had a remarkable knack for judging prospective fighters. Lexington gossips said that Law, though charming and handsome, was unreliable, had never paid Gay for the stock, and had been forced to leave Chicago to avoid prosecution for embezzlement.

Sid Taylor's cocks derived from pre-Civil War stock owned by Jim Shy of Lexington. Another cocker, Jim Price of Pine Grove, kept Shy's chickens; and one of Mr. Gay's uncles remembered "walking" (i.e., keeping) cocks for both men in the 1850s. Taylor was Shy's associate until Shy's death in 1892, at the age of 90. In the 1870s, Taylor crossed a blue Shy cock with "black imported Irish hens" bought from a racehorse trainer named George Cadwallader. Around 1880, Taylor added blood from "Wadle Irish" (developed by a man named Wadle "who controlled most of the gambling houses in Louisville") and from "O'Neal Doms." Taylor kept the two strains, those with Wadle Irish and those with O'Neal Doms, in separate pens, and Mr. Gay followed the practice.

Gay selected a brown-red champion in 1912 and bred him until the cock died in 1920. Since Gay kept the cock in an old log cabin on his farm, he called the chicken "Log Cabin," and the cock's progeny are known as "the Log Cabin family of Sid Taylors." Log Cabin offspring won national tournaments in 1922 and 1924 (at Orlando). Other Kentucky cockers mentioned in the article are "the Clay brothers of Bourbon county"—according to R. W. P. Johnston, Alf Clay, owner of a trap-shooting club called the Hilltop Gun Club, and his brother.

³¹In a 'main,' two cockers (or two clubs) pit their chickens, usually eleven or more, and always an uneven number. There may be bets on each pair, and as soon as one side's chickens have won a majority of the battles, that side becomes the winner of the main. The winning fight is the "odd fight." In some cases, the two cockers may agree to fight all of the matches, whether the odd fight occurs early in the main or at the end. In theory, the odd fight might occur in the sixth battle of an eleven-cock main. Reporters who are not cockers use the word "main" as a synonym for cockfight. Individual fights are called "hacks."

³²I am grateful to Clemens Caldwell for the use of his library of journals, including the following rarities: a bound volume of *Grit and Steel* for January to June, 1906; January to March, 1920; June 1922, and September 1940; *The Derby Game Bird*, published at Derby, Indiana, by Alex W. Cummings, for January 1902 and March 1906; *Pitcraft: Devoted to Game Fowls and Game Dogs*, edited by John C. Adams, Houston, for June 1930.

³³William Kenney of Paris, William Hook of Hardinsburg (also gaffs), J. D. Gay, Thomas Hackley, Jr., of Stanford, J. J. Basford of Trenton ("I have been a breeder for 50 years"), George Huff of Louisville (gaffs), E. L. and Gaither McGhee of Trenton, Ben T. Lucas of Georgetown, James Picket of Covington, H. D. McElwain of Trenton, Guy Harper of Paducah.

³⁴Six hack fights followed this main. The cockers, sometimes identified by last names only, were Scrugham and Johnson of Georgetown; Harper and Noble; Downing of Lexington; Brasley; Dr. Jim Yates; J. D. Gay.

³⁵"Full Drop" describes fights on successive Fridays, March 2 and April 25, 1906. The pitters named are Brasley, J. D. Gay, Frank Sloan, Dr. Jim Yates, Bates of Madison County, Sam Downing, W. Harper, Carson, Dr. R. Bryan, Jim Hall, Frank Sloan, Gumbert, Roger Pryor, R. Strater, Will Beasley, Shaw, and Dave Noble.

³⁶Example: "Oh, just think how dreadful it is for a husband to go out in his chosen society and his wife so bitterly against his own pleasure. If your companion gives you plenty to eat and wear, and carries you out to your society, why not be pleased with his society? Now ladies, I don't say you are that way, but I say just suppose you were. You know your husbands could not enjoy themselves half so well as if they could leave you pleasant and gay."

³⁷Frank S. Shy, *The History of the Claymore* (East Greenwich, RI, 1966), p. 37.

³⁸H. B. Spencer was another of the gentleman-cockers who seem to have flourished from the 20s to the 40s. He was born in 1892 at Spring Hill

(a remarkable Federal house now owned by William Spahr), the descendant of an early Virginia settler of Clark County. Spencer and his brothers were breeders and trainers of trotting horses. In the 20s, Spencer moved to a farm near Boonesboro, called Seven Pines, where he converted one of his barns into a cockpit, with bleachers for onlookers and cages for the cocks, which always arrived, according to his daughter, in burlap sacks. His daughter recalls frequent matches in the 1930s, often attended by the sheriff, and supervised by a doorman who took admissions and kept out undesirable persons. Soft drinks and food (including an interesting-sounding sandwich of turkey and dressing that sold for the rather high price of \$.50) were provided by the Spencers' cook. Eventually, Spencer dismantled the pit—its fittings were acquired by Jim Nolcini, another Winchester cocker—and restored his horse barn. In addition to operating the pit, Spencer's cocking activities included selling fertilized eggs to American and foreign enthusiasts.

³⁹ Namely: Baure Preston; Smith, West & Co.; Gordan & Williams; Hazelett & Burgess; Fred Grips; Stodtbeck & Denham; David, Coughen & Co.; Len P. Larue; E. W. Law; Duncan, Shanks & Co. (*CJ* 9 Jan, 10 Jan, 13 Jan, 24 Jan, 1 Apr 1925).

⁴⁰ Another Middlesboro cocker of the same period as Campbell was R. R. Raines. Emmett Swift, mentioned with H. B. Spencer, had a farm on Wades Mill, near Winchester, and was a member of a large county family that still lives in the area. A leading Winchester cocker, often mentioned, was C. H. Balof, but there seems to be no record of his activities (*Histories* 88, 89).

⁴¹ See John McGill *Kentucky Sports* (Lexington, 1978), 114-146, for details.

⁴² More American cocking literature from the '20s: Charles E. Lanz, *The Game Cock as I knew Him* (Asheville: Commercial Publishing Co.); (2) "Tan Bark," *Game Chickens* (Philadelphia, 1924); (3) Solomon P. McCall, *Conditioning Cocks Correctly* (Gretna, LA, 1926); (4) A. C. Dingwall, *Handling and Nursing the Game Cock* (Chicago, 1928); (5) Andrew P. O'Connor, *Forty Years with Fighting Cocks* (Goshen, NY: E. W. Rogers, 1929).

⁴³ Roosters that attack their handlers are called "man fighters". Some authorities believe that a good handler can correct this vice with persistence; others believe that it is a genetic defect, and they destroy the roosters.

⁴⁴ Two of the most notable were Tom Spurrier of Fort Worth and E. H. Elkins of Indianapolis, whom Caldwell considers his mentor.

⁴⁵ Max Thaggert, J. D. Perry, Herbert "Sweater" McGinnis.

⁴⁶ For its possible utility to the future historian, I here copy McCord's list of important current members of the cocking fraternity: Russ Dotson, Clay City; Tuck Owens and his son Therron, Woodford Co.; Joe "Black Cat" Owens; Leo Howard, Lacky; Don Mullins, Georgetown; Orrie Hunt, Pikeville; Emmet Swift, Stoner Creek; Romeo Norton, Winchester (Swift and Norton are "the best feeders I ever saw"); Hal Holbrook; Marvin Watkins, Jeffersonville, owner of the pit that, according to McCord "has turned Jeffersonville into a boomtown"; Terry Hudson ("the best pitter I know"); Walter Stone, another famous local feeder.

⁴⁷Osa Lenz's name is connected with an extraordinary event in "cock" fighting, namely, a "hen main" between himself and Fred Booker of Louisville. Lenz's vicious Irish hens, with specially made short gaffs, crowed and killed like cocks. Clemens Caldwell, when discussing this fight, recalled two fine examples of local folklore: (1) A proverb: "A whistling woman and a crowing hen / Never come to a good end." (2) A superstition: If a hen crows, you must kill her before sundown or someone will die.

⁴⁸Paintings and memorabilia from Atkinson's estate are now in Kentucky, in the Caldwell collection, as is noted above.

⁴⁹According to Mrs. A. B. Carsner, cockfighting in the Bluegrass from the 20s to the beginning of the war was a wholesome, respectable, and family-oriented activity, with little gambling. During the war the atmosphere and behavior at fights deteriorated. Many people in the horse business kept game chickens, and because of the Depression, they entertained themselves with matches because they could not afford more expensive amusements. Occasionally, cockers from Lexington travelled to Ohio pits or to Clinton, Tennessee. Mrs. Karsner says that cockfighting was so common that a satirical expression for something unfashionable was "I wouldn't wear that to a chicken fight."

⁵⁰This is perhaps a convenient place to record the names of cockers active in this period and among the acquaintances of Clemens Caldwell but otherwise undocumented: Stuart Levy, a prominent Louisville clothing merchant; Charlie B. Gentry, member of an old Lexington family, popular, honest, and fond of gambling; Elmer Denham, Stanford.

⁵¹Goose owned a pit at Bullitt's Lick. His better known brother Roscoe was a Derby-winning jockey.

⁵²Clemens Caldwell remembers being in Louisville around the time of this occurrence. He observed how two men reacted with astonishment when they saw a flier announcing the fights. One said to the other, "I thought this had died out with the Romans."

⁵³CJ 5 May, 6 May, 9 May, 11 May, 12 May, 22 July 1941.

⁵⁴Others who appeared at the closed hearing were "wealthy landowners" and "well-known citizens" of the region: Douglas Clay, James Clay, A. B. Karsner, Walter Hodge, Ernest Bobbitt, James Toohey, Teddy Clinkenbeard, Charles S. Spears, Bill "Curly" McKenney (trainer for Mrs. Yount, widow of the Texas oil millionaire who brought in the Spindletop field and mistress of the Lexington estate called Spindletop Hall), and B. M. Stagner of Richmond (a respected breeder, referee, and pit-manager), (*Courier-Journal* 23 January 1953).

On the same page (20) as this article, there is a three-inch column about unsuccessful efforts of a reporter to interview Paul E. Asbury, of 653 S. 41st Street, Louisville, who advertised himself as a maker of leather muffs ("boxing-gloves" for cocks, used when they are sparring for exercise) and who declined to speak about his activities. Louisville had a tradition of making cockfighting equipment. The Caldwell collection has a small, handsomely printed catalogue of gaffs for sale by George Huff (Clifton Ave., Louisville), who claims that he has been producing fine Damascus steel gaffs "for nearly a quarter of a century," that is, from c. 1880 to c. 1902, probable date of the catalogue.

⁵⁵ Morris was also a bookie, dog-fight promoter, and famous in Louisville for altering a convertible so that a trained horse could drive it (c. 1939).

⁵⁶ Mrs. Joan Pursley Mayer informs me that a barn near her farm, Nursery Place, on the Athens-Boonesboro Rd., was the site of matches in the 1950s when it belonged to Obie Coyle: perhaps this is the barn in question.

⁵⁷ Sample: "The red rooster appears to have achieved the upper hand on the gray one. Three times he has sunk his gaff into his foe—twice through the neck, once in the wing."

⁵⁸ For help in preparing this essay, I am indebted to Prof. Harry Vélez of the University of Puget Sound (who started it all by sending me a dissertation on cocking in the Spanish colonies) and to Spanish-American *aficionados* Dr. Federico Contreras, Luis Alberto Angulo and his father, and Genaro Abraham; to breeders, fighters, and gentlemen amateurs John Purdy, Joe McCord, Jerry Leber, Wick Johnston, and Clemens Caldwell; to friends interested in Kentucky's sporting history Monnie Gay Long, Randy Kemper, Edna-French Johnstone, Winnie Morriss, Joan Mayer, and Clara Spencer Wiedemann; to historians Buddy Thompson, Burton Milward, Boynton Merrill, and Carl Cone; to the librarians at Keeneland and the libraries of the University of Kentucky, especially James and Martha Birchfield, Barb Hale, and William Marshall. For patiently enduring my cock-fighting stories for months while I worked on this project, I would like to thank the members of the famous Wednesday *Stammtisch* of the Boone Faculty Club, presided over by C. P. Roland.

I hope that this essay will encourage readers who have additions or corrections, documents, photos, or cocking memorabilia to send them to me at my academic address (Department of Spanish and Italian, University of Kentucky, Lexington 40506). I will deposit photos and the like in the University Archives.

An addition to the bibliography: Alan Dundes has recently edited a collection of reprinted and new essays on the "fascinating and somewhat neglected topic" (to quote a reviewer) of cockfighting. Dundes' gathering includes a valuable group of studies on cockfighting in Spain and her former colonies. Among the sociological papers in the editor's own essay on the equation *gallus-phallus*, in which he finds that cockfights are unconscious autoerotic displays, a conclusion that the dust-jacket reviewer finds brilliant, bold, "and, of course, controversial." Alan Dundes, ed., *The Cockfight: A Casebook* (University of Wisconsin 1994).