

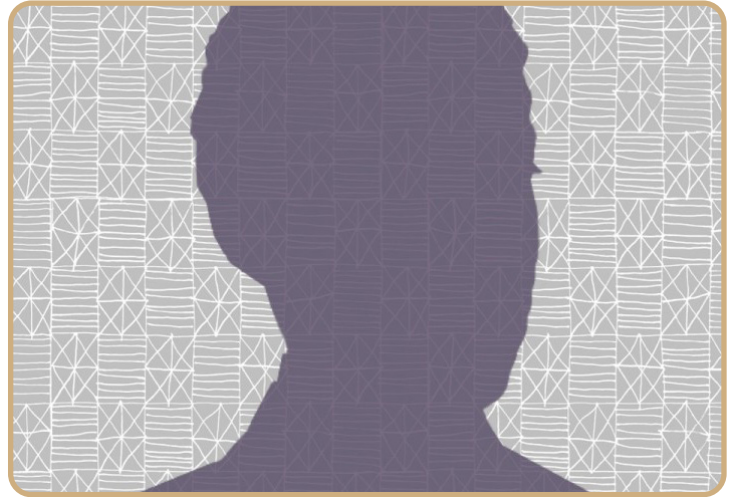
Abe Hawkins

Author: Emily Libecap,
Graduate Student Intern

Places: New Orleans, Louisiana;
Paterson, New Jersey

Birth: Unknown **Death:** June 1867

Professions: Jockey



Childhood

Abe Hawkins may have been born in Mississippi. Adam Bingaman, based in Natchez, Mississippi, might have enslaved Hawkins.¹

Hawkins was also known as:

- Old Abe
- Uncle Abe Hawkins
- The Black Prince
- The Dark Sage of Louisiana
- The Slayer of Lexington

Researchers are seeking more information about Hawkins' early life.

Career Beginnings

In 1851, Hawkins raced at the Metairie Course near New Orleans, Louisiana. Hawkins was already a well-known jockey by 1854. Duncan Farrar Kenner, owner of the Ashland Plantation in Southern Louisiana, purchased Hawkins due to his expertise and reputation. It was during Hawkins' time at Ashland that he rose to national prominence.²

Hawkins and the Lecomte - Lexington Rivalry

Hawkins' fame began with the April 1, 1854 Great Post Stakes in New Orleans.³

Two well-known, undefeated horses -- Lecomte and Lexington -- faced each other in the first race, which Lexington won by four lengths. Hawkins had ridden the horse Arrow in this first race and suffered a dramatic defeat. Hawkins and Arrow finished so far behind Lexington and Lecomte that Arrow was officially disqualified.⁴

Yet, this loss did not hurt Hawkins' reputation. Lecomte's owner requested that Hawkins ride him in the rematch against Lexington. Hawkins, aboard Lecomte, won the rematch. He also set the world record for the four mile time at seven minutes and twenty six seconds.⁵

Career Highs

Hawkins had many more impressive wins.

- He won the Jersey Derby twice, at its first location at an unnamed track in Paterson, New Jersey.⁶
- In 1866, Hawkins won the inaugural Jerome Stakes in Queens, New York.⁷
- Hawkins claimed another win in 1866 at the Travers Stakes at Saratoga. He rode Woodburn's Merrill, trained by Ansel Williamson.⁸

During this part of his career, Hawkins' competition with the Irish jockey Gilbert Watson Patrick ("Gilpatrick") made national news. Theirs was the first, notorious, long-running rivalry in modern American sports.⁹

The Legacy of "Old Abe"

The May 4, 1867 issue of Turf, Field and Farm falsely reported that Hawkins died of consumption. Days later, he read of his own demise in the St. Louis Republican.

After a brief recuperation, he felt well enough to travel to Cincinnati to ride in the Buckeye Jockey Club's spring meet. Unfortunately, here the consumption returned. Hawkins died on May 27, 1867. His body was shipped back to Ashland. Hawkins' former owner, Duncan Kenner, buried him in a site overlooking Ashland's training track.¹⁰

Additional Research Provided By

Bill Cooke, Research Consultant

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Footnotes

¹Johnson, "A Legacy of Triumph."

²Johnson, "A Legacy of Triumph."

³Hotaling, *The Great Black Jockeys*, 143.

⁴Hotaling, 150.

⁵Hotaling, 148.

⁶Shifman, "The Jersey Derby: Now and Then."

⁷Hotaling, 205.

⁸Mooney, *Race Horse Men*.

⁹Hotaling, *The Great Black Jockeys*, 188.

¹⁰Mooney, *Race Horse Men*.