

Abraham Perry

Author: Emily Libecap,
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Places: Midway and Lexington, Kentucky;
New York

Birth: 1842 **Death:** 1908

Professions: Trainer



Childhood and Early Life

Researchers are seeking documentation of Abraham “Abe” Perry’s early years or family origins.

Training Career

Perry began his Thoroughbred trainer career at Abraham Buford’s Bosque Bonita Farm in Woodford County, Kentucky. There, he trained the horse McWhirter from 1876 to 1878. Soon after, Perry worked as the assistant trainer for Leonard W. Jerome in New York. In 1881 Perry trained the horse Onondaga whose offspring also won many races.¹

Career Highlights

Perry’s greatest achievements as a trainer came in 1885 with the Thoroughbred Joe Cotton. Erskine Henderson jockeyed the horse and won the Kentucky Derby that year.²

Perry and Henderson were one of the few African American trainer-jockey pairs to win the Kentucky Derby. Joe Cotton also won the Tennessee Derby and the Coney Island Derby that year.

Perry also trained the Thoroughbred racehorse Longfellow. Longfellow was one of the top sires of 1888 and whose offspring won a combined 751 races.³

Family Life

Perry married Clara Taylor on March 1, 1880 and lived at 216 Eastern Avenue in Lexington, Kentucky which still stands to this day. They had two children: a son and a daughter. Their son Abraham Murphy Perry graduated from Howard University and became a physician. Their daughter graduated from Fisk University with a music degree.⁴

Association with Isaac Murphy

Many African American horsemen during this era knew each other and socialized together. Before the season's meets in 1886, the Perrys went to events in Louisville with Isaac Murphy and his wife Lucy. On one trip, the four were guests of Mr. and Mrs. Sadonia Wrightson, prominent members of the Louisville African American community.⁵

Death and Legacy

Perry passed away in 1908 and was buried in African Cemetery Number 2 in Lexington, Kentucky. The cemetery added a marker at his grave in 2017 to inform visitors about his life and accomplishments.

Sources

"Abraham Perry (1842–1908)." 2017. African Cemetery No. 2.

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Yvonne Giles. 2019. "African American Horsemen in Kentucky 1825–1950." In *Tales from the Turf*. Louisville, KY: J.B. Speed Art Museum.

Footnotes

¹"Abraham Perry (1842–1908)."

² Hotaling, *The Great Black Jockeys*, 251.

³"All About Horses: Interesting Turf Items Gleaned by a Well-Known Authority."

⁴ Yvonne Giles, "African American Horsemen in Kentucky 1825–1950."

⁵ McDaniels, *The Prince of Jockeys*.