

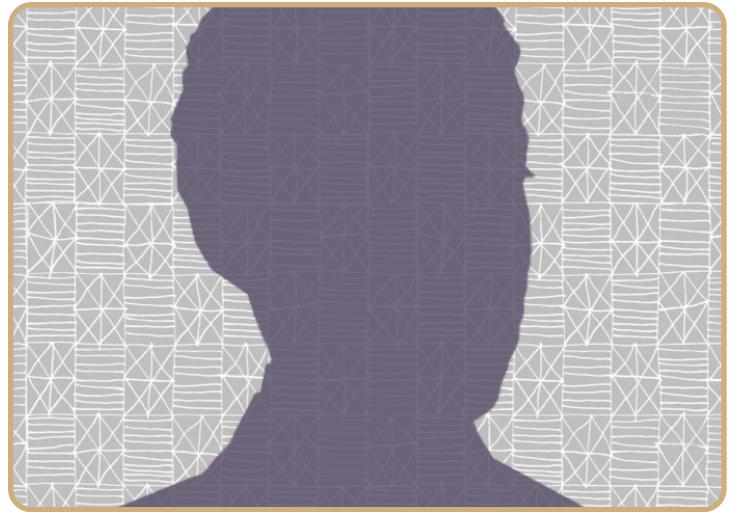
Courtney Mathews

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Places: Keene, Jessamine County,
Kentucky; Lexington, Fayette County,
Kentucky

Birth: August 15, 1868 **Death:** May 29, 1940

Professions: Hostler, Groom, Trainer,
Breaker



Birth and Family

Courtney Mathews was born in 1868, three years after slavery ended in the United States. He was the first child of Robin and Louisa Turpin Mathews and the oldest of three sisters and a brother. Mathew's father was a hostler and his mother was a cook in a private home. They lived on a farm in Keene, Jessamine County, Kentucky.¹

Mathews, at the age of twenty-six, married Louisa Elkins in 1896.

Childhood Start

Mathews, at the age of ten, worked as a hostler. His job was to bring fresh water and feed to the horses and to keep the stalls clean by removing old straw and replacing it with new straw. He helped his father who had become a horse trainer.²

At sixteen years of age, Mathews went to work for Sam Smith in Fayette County, Kentucky. He next moved to Larchmont Farm in Woodford County, Kentucky to work for Sanford C. Lyne, Thoroughbred breeder and trainer. Mathews 'broke' the horses - got them used to having someone ride them. He and Lucien, Lyne's son, were given a few Thoroughbreds to train and race in area county fairs. One time they won the Nicholasville Derby held at the Jessamine County Fair.³

Trainer at Ashland Stud

In 1897, a twenty-nine-year-old Mathews became an employee at Ashland Stud which was owned by Major Thomas Clay McDowell. Mathews' job was to break and train yearlings. He worked for thirty-eight years with McDowell's Thoroughbreds.⁴ Some of the most successful of them were:

-Rush, foaled 1896

- The Rival, foaled 1899
- Alan-a-Dale, foaled 1899
- Woodlake, foaled 1900
- King's Daughter, foaled 1903
- Ellen-a-Dale, foaled 1905

The Manager, foaled 1907

- Waterblossom, foaled 1912

As two- and three-year old colts and fillies, they won the:

- Alabama Stakes
- Brighton Junior Stakes
- Clark Handicap
- Clipsetta Stakes
- Commonwealth Handicap
- Debutante Stakes
- Kentucky Derby
- Kentucky Oaks

The Rival and Alan-a-Dale were entered for the running of the 1902 Kentucky Derby. Jimmy Winkfield, the jockey, rode Alan-a-Dale to win. The Rival finished third.

Following McDowell's death in 1935, Mathews went to work at Spendthrift Farm where he groomed the yearlings for the annual sales.⁵

Legacy as an Expert Horseman

In 1938 Mathews gave an account of his life with horses. Brownie Leach interviewed him. He described Mathews as "an expert horseman whose judgement of Thoroughbreds and knowledge of breeding and caring for horses is respected by all who know him."⁶

When Courtney Mathews died in 1940, he was buried in Greenwood Cemetery, now Cove Haven Cemetery in Lexington, Kentucky.⁷

The house Mathews and his wife bought in 1928 still stands. It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2011. The local newspaper printed a feature article about Mathews and his former home. From that article, readers learned of Mathew's life achievements as a trainer.⁸

Sources

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County Deed Book 254, 142. Fayette County, Kentucky. December 3, 1928.

Leach, Brownie. Blood-Horse. 1938. "Major McDowell's Courtney." 218, 219

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Lexington Leader. 1940. "Colored Notes." Death of Courtney Mathews. June 5, 1940

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Footnotes

¹1870 United States Census, population schedules. National Archives and Records Administration microfilm publication M593 Washington, D.C..

²Tenth Census of the United States.¹⁸⁸⁰.Records of the Bureau of the Census.Record Group 29.National Archives. Washington, D.C.:

³Leach, Brownie. Blood-Horse 218,219. "Major McDowell's Courtney."1938

⁴Leach

⁵Leach

⁶Leach

⁷Death Certificate: Courtney Mathews. May 29, 1940. Fayette County, Kentucky. #11896

⁸Patton, Janet. Lexington Leader. 2011."Landmark Opens Door to Historic Life:Horseman Courtney Mathews Left Unique Home and Legacy." July 24, 2011