

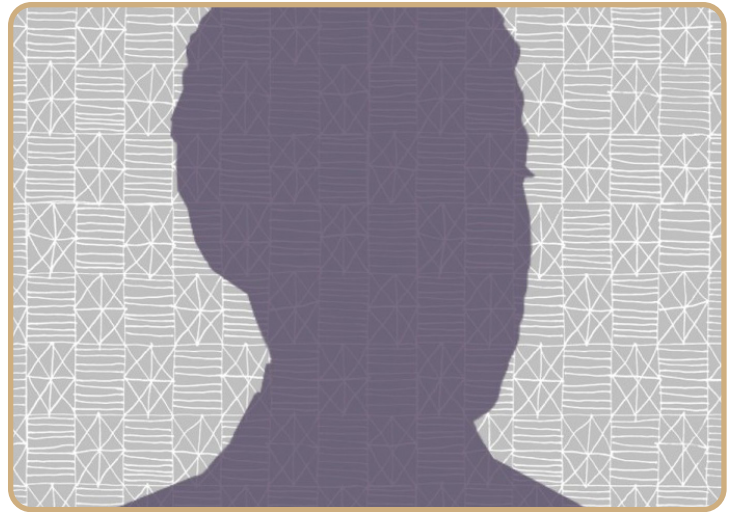
# Raleigh Colston, Sr.

**Author:** Emily Libecap,  
Graduate Student Intern

**Places:** Midway, Lexington, Kentucky

**Birth:** 1837    **Death:** After 1898

**Professions:** Trainer, Owner



## Childhood and Family

Raleigh Colston, Sr. was born to Henrietta and Thomas Colston. The Harper family enslaved the Colstons on Nantura Stud Farm in Woodford County, Kentucky.<sup>1</sup> Colston had two brothers: Harry, a horse trainer and Joseph, a jockey.

Raleigh Colston married Elizabeth “Betty” Branch. They had four children: John Thomas, Raleigh Jr., America, and Malachi.<sup>2</sup> Presumably after Betty’s death, Raleigh married Susan Stewart in 1893.<sup>3</sup>

## Establishing His Training Career

Colston became a trainer at Woodburn Farm, in Woodford County. The farm’s owner, Robert A. Alexander, died in 1867, and care of the horses passed to Daniel Swigert. Colston continued working at the farm until Swigert moved to Lexington, Kentucky.<sup>4</sup>

In 1871, Colston, along with his wife and children, moved to Lexington. He continued to work as a horse trainer for Daniel Swigert at his Elmendorf Farm. James F. Robinson, another horse owner based in Lexington also employed him. In the late 1880s, Colston worked with the Chinn and Morgan Stable of Harrodsburg, Mercer County, Kentucky.<sup>5</sup>

## Career Highlights

Colston trained many successful horses, including:

- Kingfisher, who won the 1870 Belmont Stakes with African American jockey Edward Dudley Brown up
- Searcher, who ran in the 1875 Kentucky Derby with Colston’s son, Raleigh Colston, Jr. up
- Bob Wooley, who also ran in the 1875 Kentucky Derby, with African American jockey William Walker up<sup>6</sup>

-Leonatus, who won the 1883 Kentucky, Illinois, and Latonia Derbies as well as the Dearborn, Hindoo, Green, and Tobacco Stakes<sup>7</sup>

Colston's skill as a trainer is evident in these high-profile wins.

## Thoroughbred Horse Owner

Colston opened his own stable in 1877 at the Kentucky Association Track in Lexington, Kentucky. He owned at least seven horses. His racing colors were blue with red diamonds.<sup>8</sup> His son, Raleigh Colston, Jr. rode for him during the 1878-1879 seasons.<sup>9</sup>

## Death and Legacy

Researchers are seeking information on the date of Raleigh Colston, Sr.'s death. The city directory lists him until 1898.

His two sons, John Thomas and Raleigh Jr. became trainers and owners of horses, one of which they named Colston. The horse ran in the 1911 Kentucky Derby and finished third.

Additional Research Provided By

Yvonne Giles, Research Consultant

## Sources

"1870 United States Federal Census." 1870. Census. Woodford County, Midway, Kentucky.

"1880 United States Federal Census." 1880. Census. Fayette County, Lexington, Kentucky.

Campbell, Lois. 1972. "1883 Derby Still Has Something in Common for Two Kentuckians." *Lexington Leader*, April 25, 1972.

Crickmore, H.G. 1878. "Owner and Colors." In *Kirk's Turf Guide*. St. Paul, Minnesota: G. Dunn & Co.

Daily Racing Form. 1908. "Most Skillful of Colored Trainers," April 30, 1908. University of Kentucky Libraries. [https://drf.uky.edu/catalog/1900s/drf1908043001/drf1908043001\\_1\\_6](https://drf.uky.edu/catalog/1900s/drf1908043001/drf1908043001_1_6).

———. 1928. "Noted Trainer Is Dead," May 21, 1928. University of Kentucky Libraries. [https://drf.uky.edu/catalog/1920s/drf1928052101/drf1928052101\\_21\\_4](https://drf.uky.edu/catalog/1920s/drf1928052101/drf1928052101_21_4).

Fayette County Clerk. 1893. "Marriage Record of Raleigh Colston and Susan Stewart." Book 8, p. 498. *Colored Marriage Records*.

Goodwin Brothers Firm. 1894. *Goodwin's Official Annual Turf Guide*. New York, NY.

International Museum of the Horse. 2018. *Black Horsemen of the Kentucky Turf: Companion Book to the Exhibit at the International Museum of the Horse*. First. Kentucky Horse Park.

Kentucky Livestock Record. 1875. "Horses in Training," February 19, 1875.

Peter, Robert, and J. H. Battle. 1882. *History of Fayette County, Kentucky*. Edited by William Henry Perrin. Chicago, Illinois: O. L. Baskin & Co. Historical Publishers.

Thoroughbred Record. 1928. "Turf Notes," May 19, 1928.

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

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Noted Trainer Is Dead."

<sup>2</sup>1880 United States Federal Census."

<sup>3</sup>Fayette County Clerk, "Marriage Record of Raleigh Colston and Susan Stewart."

<sup>4</sup>"Turf Notes.,"; Peter and Battle, History of Fayette County, Kentucky, 716.

<sup>5</sup>Horses in Training."

<sup>6</sup>Horses in Training."

<sup>7</sup>"Most Skillful of Colored Trainers.,"; Goodwin Brothers Firm, Goodwin's Official Annual Turf Guide.; Campbell, "1883 Derby Still Has Something in Common for Two Kentuckians."

<sup>8</sup>Crickmore, "Owner and Colors," viii.

<sup>9</sup>Horses in Training."