

MOUNT UP!

Submitted by Village of Richfield Springs Historian Harriett Geywitz

Colonel Lawrence Kip was looked upon as the main support of every manly recreation that occurred in Richfield during the age of elegance. The fact that he was the head of any enterprise or amusement was a guarantee that the project would be a success.

He was an ardent lover of outdoor recreation and was recognized as an authority on almost all athletic sports.

Here is what he had to say about such events held locally in the 1890s. Perhaps he was relaxing on the veranda of the Spring House where he was a frequent summer visitor when he offered his opinions to others.

When asked, his opinion was that flat races were more popular among our visitors than trotting races and that they would be held every Saturday during the season. He explained that if we did not have trotting matches now in early summer, we could not have any during the season as all the horses that now compete here will go on the circuit about the first of August. The opening contests would begin at Waterville on that date and continue at various towns close by, until all held their meetings. He states that ample purses would be offered in the flat races so that it will pay men owning good horses to send them here. The winning horse will get half the money and the remainder would be divided between the second and third. Horses entered for the contests and kept at the club stables would get hay and

straw free so that their owners have only to pay for the oats. This way they would not have the expenses normally incurred and could afford to take risks on account of the large purses given and the small number of competitors.

When asked about hurdle races, Col. Kip thought that there were gentlemen enough to be found here to ride a hurdle race occasionally and that paper chases could be readily organized. There would be at least fifteen riders on such a run and a run of seven miles could be made with the course laid out so that it would be in sight of the spectators all the time. The distance could be run in about thirty-five minutes but call it an hour, as we do not ride to break our necks, and we want to rally occasionally as we would if we were riding after a fox and lost the scent now and then. We do not want to kill our horses in a wild race, so make it a pleasant ride which will be a pleasure to the spectators as well as the horsemen. The Colonel felt that paper chases are more in the line of the younger men and would leave that amusement to them. (A paper chase was also known as Hare and Hounds and was a racing game for the outdoors. At the start of the game, one person was designated the 'hare' and everyone else in the group were to be the 'hounds'. The 'hare' starts off ahead of everyone else leaving behind a trail of paper shreds which represented the scent of the

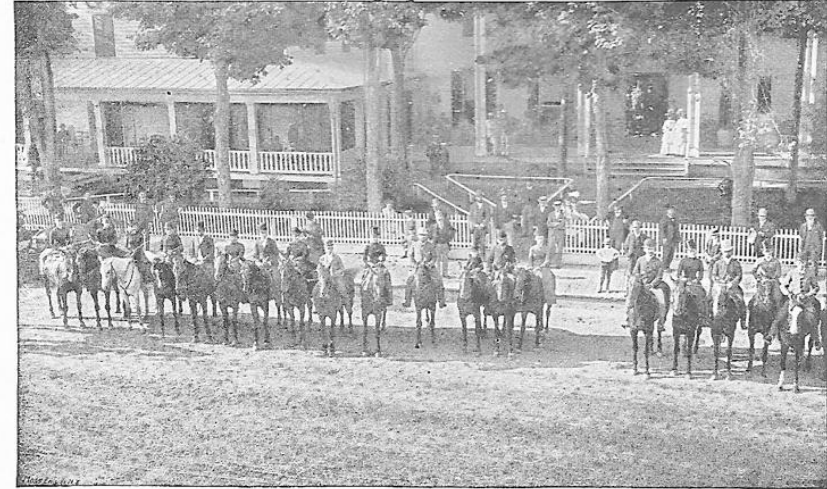
hare. As the scent is carried on the wind so were the bits of paper, sometimes making for a difficult game. After some designated time, the 'hounds' must chase after the 'hare' and attempt to catch it before reaching the ending point of the race.)

What about polo? The Colonel said we have no trained horses and few polo players here, so it would be difficult to have that amusement. The same is true with pigeon shoots. That sport is rapidly dying out in the United States because of change of interests. They may be able to keep it up near the seaside where some old lovers of the sport pass their time.

And what about boating? Of course, Colonel Kip reported that it is quite feasible as there are boats enough on Lake Canadarago. If the right man took hold of it, it could be made a success.

The Colonel would report that the season would be a lively one and that every effort would be made to entertain the visitors. The proposition of making the coaching parade a fete des fleurs was a very good idea and one that could be easily carried out here as flowers are abundant. Every person in town who had a carriage would probably join in such a parade and make it one of the most inspiring scenes ever to be held in Richfield.

Colonel Kip truly enjoyed chatting with those who were interested in any form of



RIDING PARTY FROM SPRING HOUSE, RICHFIELD SPRINGS, N. Y.



Vehicles in front of Spring House, about 1892

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recreation, especially horses. He had resigned from the military in 1867 and became president of the Coney Island Jockey Club, the first turf racecourse in the United States. He, of course, owned many road and track horses, some of which he brought



to Richfield.

The Colonel died in 1899 at the age of sixty-three.