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Goodrum, Alison (2015) The Style Stakes: Fashion, Sportswear and Horse Racing in Inter-war America. Sport in History, 35 (1). pp. 46-80. ISSN 1746-0263

DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/17460263.2014.926286

Publisher: Informa UK Limited

Version: Accepted Version

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The Style Stakes: Fashion, Sportswear and Horseracing In Interwar America

Alison Goodrum
Department of Apparel
Hollings Faculty
Manchester Metropolitan University
Righton Building, Cavendish Street
Manchester
M15 6BG
England

Tel: +44(0)161 247 2631
Email: a.goodrum@mmu.ac.uk

Acknowledgements

This work was supported by the National Sporting Library & Museum, Virginia, under the John H Daniels Fellowship programme; and the Bard Graduate Center, New York City, under the Visiting Fellows programme. My grateful and warmest thanks to both.
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Abstract
Despite an acknowledgement that, historically, the relationship between horseracing, women and fashion was important, existing literature provides little detail on the actual clothes that women wore as race-goers. The aim of this article is to add missing depth on the clothing of fashionable women at horseraces, focusing on the United States during the interwar period. In so doing, the discussion extends understandings of the history, and the material culture, of sporting spectatorship more generally. The article also introduces original work on the male spectator and his race-going wardrobe. Climatic considerations to do with dressing appropriately for the great outdoors are discussed along with other influential factors on spectator dress such as contemporary fashion journalism and photography. The industry supplying fashion consumers was in transition at this time also and New York acquired prominence as a centre for a new mode of sporty, all-American, fashion that was termed 'sportswear'. As well as dealing with the clothes and the individuals who wore them, then,

the article tells the story of the broader socio-economic conditions of American fashion, sport and sportswear that formed – and informed - their wearing.

Keywords
Fashion, horseracing, interwar years, spectators, sportswear

Prologue: eighty years on

On a wintery afternoon during a trip to New York City in late 2013, I found myself at a charity thrift store on Manhattan's Lower East Side, which sold secondhand clothes, household items, furniture and other bits of *bric-a-brac*. A couple of glass display cabinets near the front of the shop contained a tangle of costume jewellery, some old spectacle frames, a stack of well-thumbed photographs and, significantly for the horseracing – and dress - historian, a grandstand admittance badge issued at Epsom racecourse in Surrey, England, bearing the date 1936. On the face of it, my 'find' may not appear to be so remarkable: a mass-produced pin badge, about two inches square in size with little monetary worth (I purchased it for the sum of five dollars). Yet, on consideration, this badge allows the historian to access, and unpack, rich narratives concerning the sport of horseracing during the interwar years and, as is the focus of my article here, the material culture of dress related to it. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Halton tell us that human beings are, to a large extent, a reflection of the things and objects they use and interact with: that things and objects, just like the entry badge, matter. 'To understand what people are and what they might become, one must understand what goes on between people and things. What things are cherished, and why, should become part of our knowledge of human beings'.[1]

One may suppose that the admittance badge under consideration here was kept as a souvenir by an American tourist and racing enthusiast, taking in the action as a spectator at Epsom on Derby Day itself (as the badge tells us, on Wednesday May27 1936). An easily portable item, the badge may have been transported back across the Atlantic by its New York-based owner to be stored as a keepsake of a day at the races almost eighty years ago. And in this act of preservation, what was purposed as a mundane item has been repurposed as an artefact with the capacity to hold memories, feelings and experiences: a cherished object indeed. The material construction of the badge adds further insight. Made of stiffened card with a metal safety-pin clasp arrangement on its underside, the object is the essence of horse racing ephemera: it was not intended to be durable beyond the few days of a race meet. Having been kept for many decades as a souvenir trinket by its owner, and despite its cheap construction, the badge was valued as having a meaning and an immaterial worth outside of its actual purpose: a disposable artefact that was *worth keeping*. The geographer, Yi-Fu Tuan, has written extensively on the way that people form emotional and psychological attachments both to places and to artefacts, and the way that ephemeral, past, experiences – memories – are grounded through things. He writes of the human desire 'to give those fleeting moments of pleasure and pain a narrative outline or visual shape'. Rather than a cardboard pin badge, Tuan offers an equally prosaic example, that of the rubber band, and its ability to 'stir our minds' through recall.[2]

The badge itself offers logistical information concerning the event at which it was worn and the related culture of contemporary spectatorship and race-going. It bears the date, the price of admission to the grandstand area (£2.2.0, including tax), and, on the back, the issue number, 3736 (contemporary news reports state that half a million people attended that

particular Derby Day in 1936).[3] Printed text on the back of the badge also gives some of the rules and regulations that governed the conditions of entry to the racecourse: 'Issued subject to the Rules of Racing. C. F. Oughton, Sec., Epsom GrandStand Association. This badge is issued on condition that it is worn so as to be distinctly seen by the officials. No money returned for lost or mislaid badges'. Worn prominently on, say, the lapel of a jacket, admittance badges were (and remain as) visible markers of race-going identity in both literal and sociological senses. The badge or tag was part and parcel of recognised race day attire, demarcating status either bestowed or bought. In this case, access to the higher class grandstand area at Epsom was demarcated and sanctioned through the bodily display of the badge (figure 1). There was a gendered discourse to badges and badge-wearing, also. Often, the scenario was that men purchased an annual membership to a racecourse and this was conveyed through a badge made from more robust, say, hammered or enamelled metal that lent itself to permanency. An annual membership subscription, however, frequently included one or two guest badges per meet as part of the package and these were able to be distributed to occasional invitees at the discretion of the member. These guest badges sometimes took the form of flimsier cardboard swing tags, and may be decoded as both material and symbolic signifiers of inferiority in the sporting hierarchy.

Dress, the definition of which may extend to all manner of bodily adornments, such as badges, but also tattoos, headgear, jewellery, perfume, cosmetics and hairstyles was, then, a key signifier of social belonging at the races and demarcated sporting identity and status in both visual and material ways.[4] The horseracing pin badge may be read as one of Erving Goffman's 'tie-signs', providing evidence of a shared relationship with, and a social tie to, a particular faction of sporting attendees.[5] Belonging to the exclusive environs of the grandstand meant presenting oneself accordingly through a dressed display of membership. Sometimes this was regulated formally by the governing body of a course via a written dress code. Other times, dress was controlled by informal sanctions such as peer group consensus and societal expectations. Whatever the case, at the racecourse, codes of dress, be they formal or informal, material or symbolic, mattered.

Insert figure 1 about here

Fashion matters: clothes and horseracing in review

Writing on current-day sports fandom, Garry Crawford calls for greater attention to be given to the active roles that spectators play at sports events and the way they may be considered as co-producers of them. It is, he argues, 'the consumers of cultural products, such as sporting events, who help to give these their meaning and social importance'.[6] Wray Vamplew's important body of work is instructive with regard to discussions of the crowd in the historiography of sport. He repeatedly draws on horseracing (in Britain and also in Australia) to illustrate how the professionalisation of sport at the turn of the twentieth century impacted the social and economic character of spectatorship where the new imperative was 'to get people through the turnstiles'.[7] Vamplew's treatment of the modern history of sport shows how crowds were vital to the making – and profit-making – of the racing spectacle. Dennis Brailsford pushes the scholarly timeline back in history still further with his panoramic collection of writing charting the formalisation of sport in general (and horseracing specifically) during, and since, the Restoration. The regulation of sport in the late seventeenth century meant that the roles of jockey, owner and (what Brailsford terms as) backer became increasingly defined and separated from each other so that the sports event,

along with the functions of individuals at it, were systematised. According to Brailsford, the distinctive function of spectating emerged and blossomed under an historical project to formalise the sport of horseracing and the crowd became part of a now choreographed performance of sporting spectacle.[8]

In his expansive and evocative text on horseracing and the British between the two World Wars, Mike Huggins makes reference to what he terms 'racegoers' clothing'.[9] In his discussion, he supports the close relationship between fashionable clothing and horseracing and shows how its wearing was a significant part of the race day experience and of being a spectator. The centrality of spectators to the races, and, even further, the importance of the clothes that they wore as a constitutive element of the sporting event, is key to the thesis advocated in this article. Dress historian, Valerie Steele, explains how fashion 'can only exist and flourish in a particular kind of dramatic setting with knowledgeable fashion performers and spectators'.[10] The race course formed one such dramatic context in which to display the stylish attire of elegant ladies, creating 'enclaves of sartorial spectacle'.[11] As far as the history of horseracing is concerned (and as with many other sports), fashionable spectators were not a mere adjunct to the action, relegated to the side-lines as an annex to the runners and riders. Rather they were part and parcel of it. The crowd, and particular well-known style leaders or unusually attired individuals within it, was as much a sight to be studied, followed and speculated on, as the form of the mounts themselves. Huggins posits the consumption (the retailing and buying) and reporting (in newspapers and magazines) of fashion as forming part of the broader set of ancillary activities in the run up to, and aftermath of, a meeting. He couches his snapshot of clothing at the races in a class-based analysis, suggesting that the aristocratic, and fashionably attired, attendees at British race meets during the interwar years were a proximate source of taste-making for the socially aspirant, so that

> papers at all levels flattered women readers and boosted their self-esteem by allowing them to participate vicariously in the fashion dilemmas and choices of the upper classes attending the racing at Ascot, Goodwood and other society events … Towards Ascot, the high spot for feminine fashion in the Royal Enclosure, these reports were reflected in London with displays of 'Ascot dresses' in dress shops and costumiers aimed at building up female demand. There were similar features in the provinces.[12]

The rarefied environs of the Royal Enclosure, as described above, invoke a classic, Veblenian, model in which fashions in clothing and consumer goods were set by a wealthy and élite leisure class, the influence of which proceeded to trickle down over time through the social strata, to the masses, in a process of high-class emulation.[13] Heidi Brevik-Zender similarly asserts this model, writing of the racecourse (albeit in the context of late nineteenth century Paris and the Longchamp *Grand Prix*) as a space of ostentatious, fashionable, display by the patrons of contemporary *couturiers* such as Charles Frederick Worth (1825-1895). The racing at Longchamp, she writes, 'was a well-known showcase for unveiling the newest styles in fashionable garments' and, therefore, was a site often linked with sartorial novelty and risk.[14]

This idea of risky, a*vant-garde*, and even shocking, style statements is an associative theme in the race-going attire of spectators past and present, facilitated, perhaps, by the festive, fun, atmosphere of the throng.[15] One's everyday reserve might feasibly be suspended for the duration of a meet, given the party spirit, and flamboyant sartorial flourishes were both accepted and warranted, albeit within certain limits of propriety and good taste. Risk taking and the removal of inhibition also extended to bodily comportment and behaviour. An

illustrative example is supplied in the capers of smartly dressed females at the Raceland track in Framingham, Massachusetts, as reported by fashion correspondent, Willa Jerdone, in the following extract from a 1927 news article:

> Miss Louise Fessenden, frocked in green with a floppy hat of open-work straw seemed entirely at ease on her somewhat precarious looking perch atop one of the rails overlooking the course. Miss Cornelia Hallowell, who was dressed in yellow, enjoyed a similar position, while Mrs Philip Saltonstall, costumed in Petunia Pink, was of the many on-lookers risking a tumble by standing on chairs as the thoroughbreds took the jumps.[16]

The emphasis on the colouring of female dresses in Jerdone's depiction here is worth a note of explication since it is a typical feature of fashion reporting, somewhat symptomatic of the interwar period. 'By 1925' write Valerie Mendes and Amy de la Haye 'black and white photography had replaced illustration as the chief recorder of fashion expression. Clear lighting and sharp focus allowed cut, construction and fabric textures to be shown with clarity, though editorials had to provide colour details'.[17]

Leaping across time and space, one of the most infamous examples of sartorial risk at the races was played out at Melbourne's Derby Day, Flemington, 1965. Sylvia Harrison tells of the stir caused by British model Jean 'The Shrimp' Shrimpton's choice of outfit when presenting prizes at the annual *Fashions On The Field* best-dressed competition at the event.[18] Coined as the 'four-inch furore', the twenty-two year old Shrimpton sported a mini-skirt that sat high above the knee. She also went hatless, gloveless and stockingless. *The Sun News Pictorial* reported on the incident thus: 'Flemington was not amused. Fashion-conscious Derby Day racegoers were horrified. "Insulting" ... "a disgrace" ... "how dare she?" ... ! If the skies had rained acid not a well-dressed woman there would have given The Shrimp an umbrella'.[19] Shrimpton was criticised for her daring, which was regarded by conservative, middle-class, Australians as being not only *gauche* but a threat to the very *status-quo*. Her flesh-revealing, unconventional, yet extremely fashionable, mode of dress was considered a provocative symptom of changing sexual and gender normativities imported from the United Kingdom: this was something to defend against. Yet younger Australian females embraced the exciting new look from Swinging London along with the modern freedoms it represented. They 'headed straight for the sewing box and took up their school uniform hems' in an act of copycat styling.[20]

What these examples from both the existing literature and from contemporary sources tell us is that equestrian spectatorship and fashion have gone hand-in-glove. The racecourse, in various national and historical contexts, has acted as a crucible for fashionable people, taste-making and the exhibition of latest styles: a place where designs have been launched, met with consternation, subsequently adopted, and around which, too, an entire business system of supply and demand has been forged. The fashion industry realised the potential of the races as a marketing opportunity and of spectators on race-day as forming a captive and appreciative audience for fashion. Designers would (and still do) dispatch models to the horseraces decked out in their latest creations as a way of showcasing their work against a vibrant, exciting, glamorous backdrop.

Given the enduring connections, then, it might be argued that the relationship between fashion and horseracing is curiously underrepresented as a topic of research in academic literature on the history of sport.[21] This article takes up the subject of spectator dress at the point where the existing literature breaks off. The aim is to add missing depth and detail on

the clothing of fashionable women at the races during the interwar period, and, in so doing, extend understandings of the material culture of sporting spectatorship more generally. In order to progress the debate further, and to provide light and shade to the argument, the article also introduces original work on the male spectator and his race-going wardrobe. Alternative perspectives like this are important because they can round out the picture of interwar racing culture, the persons inhabiting it, what they looked like, what they wore, and how they wore it (figure 2). Some of that rounding out is achieved in this particular article through the geographical locus of study: the United States of America. The interwar years were an interesting moment for American fashion design (as we shall see over the unfolding discussion) *and* for the sport of horseracing, which experienced mixed fortunes. At the turn of the twentieth century there were some three hundred racetracks nationwide but by 1908, following a series of race-fixing scandals and subsequent legislative change that outlawed betting, only twenty-five remained.[22] Aqueduct, Saratoga and Belmont Park formed a high-level triumvirate of courses in proximity to New York City and Churchill Downs played host to America's most celebrated race, the Kentucky Derby. The 1930s witnessed something of a racing *renaissance* in the USA and is identified by the National Steeplechase Association as its 'Golden Age'.[23] State-level authorities supported gambling at tracks, viewing this as a much-needed source of revenue generation in the austere climate of the Depression. Crowds flocked to the races, be they national headliner events at, say, Santa Anita Park in California, which opened in 1934, or smaller scale, regional point-to-points that took place over a temporary, makeshift, course. *Seabiscuit* (1933-1947) was a thoroughbred with a rags to riches story that captured the nation's imagination, and the *zeitgeist*, and drew an ardent following. Spectators went along to the races, then, to view the horseflesh and to take in the intoxicating atmosphere: they gambled, socialised and were entertained.

Insert figure 2 about here

The discussion continues here with some broader scene-setting and supplies background material particular to fashion in the context of the United States between the Wars. It tracks the creation and development of a national, American, design industry during the period and shows how it was composed, in large part, around a sporting stanza. The discussion then goes on to paint three pen portraits of contrasting, but nonetheless representative, spectators and to deconstruct the clothing cultures that surrounded each of them: namely, Dorothy Neyhart, Jane Watters and Ambrose Clark. Mustered together, these three micro-studies add depth – and flesh, if you will – to the subject of fashion at the races by supplying detail on what was actually worn there.

Designs of the times: a Trans-Atlantic history of sport and fashion

As a point of historical accuracy it is worth stating here that the United States entered the Second World War on December 8, 1941, declaring war on Japan. However, the accepted dates of the Interwar Era span from 1919 to 1939. Spanning a timeframe of approximately two decades, then, it is a tall order to capture the nuances and variations of female fashion in the US during the interwar years succinctly or with any true precision. By and large, American style at this time was considered sporty and relaxed albeit with a 'great variety among early designers, designing for a wide range of tastes, pocketbooks, climates, types, as well as for city and country living'.[24] Fashion aside, and more generally, the period from 1919 to 1939 bore witness to manifold diversities and the nation's barometer swung wildly.

Twenties America is often referred to in terms of the 'Jazz Age', a time of hedonism and permissiveness that roared with prosperity. The Volstead Act, enforcing prohibition, was passed in 1919, while 1920 saw the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment that enfranchised American women. In sharp relief, the America of the 1930s is often thought of as the 'Depression Era', a time of fiscal hardship, mass unemployment and conservatism. Women's fashions in America have frequently been mapped onto the prevailing macro, socio-political, climate, and explained away as reflecting it. The 1920s youthful 'Flapper' is characterised as having a boyish figure, bobbed hair and clad in a dropped-waist chemise. The fashionable woman of the 1930s is drawn as significantly different. 'The archetypal beauty' observes Caroline Reynolds Milbank 'was languid and serene'.[25] Being far more feminine in appearance and with a natural waistline, dresses were longer-hemmed, softer and more sculptural in silhouette, nodding in influence to the glamour of the Hollywood silver screen. Valerie Mendes and Amy de la Haye caution against the (some time) idea that this shift in women's styles, and notably the drop in hemlines from the knees (in the 1920s) to almost the ankles (in the 1930s), is attributable to a corresponding drop in Dow-Jones averages on Wall Street at the decades' turn and, with it, the arrival of an allied sense of moderation.[26] Valerie Steele presses this point more forcefully still, stating that 'there is no one simple reason why fashion changes'. She urges the fashion researcher to 'pick off inflated theories' with the 'sniper's ammunition' formed of primary source materials, and continues

> There is no obvious and direct chain of cause and effect between, say, the First World War and the fashions of the 1920s or between the Depression and the fashions of the 1930s. Rather, there apparently exists a complex web of interlocking influences, ranging from attitudes towards sex to ideas about technology… There was no abrupt break between nineteenth and twentieth century fashions, still less between the fashions of the 1920s and those of the 1930s.[27]

It is fair to say, however, that the influence of sport on the fashionable dress of American females was a common, and perhaps defining, feature across the two decades that comprised the Interwar Era. Women's interest, and active participation, in sports, which had been ignited in the late-1800s, gathered pace, with Reynolds Milbank going so far as to assert that 'American women had always been more athletic than their European counterparts'.[28] Rowing, skating, tennis and golf were popular pursuits, along with equestrian activities such as showing and dressage, fox hunting, and riding holidays on dude ranches or long-distance trekking vacations. 'If sport captured the imagination of America in the nineteenth century', writes Patricia Campbell Warner, 'it caught fire in the twentieth'.[29] However, it was the interwar period that brought forth a particular constellation of social and economic ingredients – one of Steele's complex, interlocking webs of influences (see above) – that cemented the relationship between America, fashion retailing and casual clothing for active women. This was a time, as no other before, when sports, sportswear and fashion overlapped. Richard Martin goes as far as to have termed the relationship 'an incontrovertible truth', claiming sportswear to have been 'an American invention, an American industry and an American expression of style'.[30]

Martin's assuredness may be tempered through the insertion of a European perspective. Britain originated much active sports clothing while French couturiers, designing and making high class, individually tailored pieces, in the fashion capital of Paris were of tremendous influence in pioneering a crossover between active sports uniforms and

fashionable daywear for women. French designer, Gabrielle 'Coco' Chanel (1883-1971), 'was the acknowledged dominatrix of fashion during the period between the wars', and is most remembered as an exponent of easy, unstructured, corset-less, mannish fashions that borrowed from the world of sport.[31] Jean Patou (1880-1936), Chanel's contemporary in the Parisian industry, and 'at least as famous for women's sportswear' developed knitted swimwear for the style-conscious and also designed an eyebrow-raising sleeveless tennis dress for the trend-setting French champion, Suzanne Lenglen.[32]

Charlie Scheips provides a 'best-dressed' list of American women of the 1930s, citing tobacco heiress Doris Duke, Barbara Hutton of the Woolworth fortune, Wallis Simpson, Singer sewing machine heiress Mrs Reginald 'Daisy' Fellowes and Mrs Harrison Williams (later Mona Bismarck).[33] These stylish American socialites and heiresses, who were arbiters of taste and sophistication lookedto Paris during the Twenties for fashion leadership and accessed these foreign dictates and details in numerous ways. For example, they took Trans-Atlantic vacations to the source itself in order to consume the latest couture *in situ* (and, importantly to be custom-fitted for it). Additionally, they purchased imported Parisian models, or copies of Paris-made originals, in the department stores and boutiques located in America's urban centres, notably New York City's fashion emporiums on Fifth Avenue such as Lord and Taylor, Bergdorf Goodman and Bonwit Teller. They also cultivated a voracious appetite for written reports on what was being exhibited and worn in the French capital, and what new arrivals were fresh off the steamer ships that carried stylish goods in (what was during the 1920s at least) a flourishing retail trade across the Atlantic. The print media, including specialist newspaper columns, press cables and weekly or monthly women's periodicals supplied rich, lengthy, tracts on the latest thing in, and from, Paris. One such example is presented in *The New Yorker* magazine, a weekly literary and satirical publication established in 1925. Its regular 'On and Off the Avenue' fashion feature, edited by 'L.L.', carried a (more or less) fortnightly cable from an American correspondent based in Francewriting under the *nom de plume* of Parisite. Parisite was the pseudonym of Elizabeth Hawes (1903-1971), an American fashion designer who produced both made-to-measure and ready-to-wear clothes at different moments in her career, the zenith of which was during the early 1930s. The name, 'Paris-ite', refers to her residency in the French capital at the time when she was engaged as a cable writer, and is typical of the pithy tone that she favoured. It may also be that Parisite was an obtuse reference to the way that Hawes felt about the contemporary fashion industry and what she believed was its many ideological shortcomings. In one of several book-length treatises that she penned in her multi-faceted life as a designer and journalist but also as an author, activist, radical and factory worker she, famously, made a case for style over fashion, the latter she regarded as being *a parasite*. Parisite's *New Yorker* cables appeared throughout 1927 and 1928 and supplied what was addressed as a female readership with a wry commentary (and also stern instruction) on what, and what not, Parisian fashions to take up. The April 30 1927 edition featured a cable that drew its content from the smart set spied at the Longchamp races:

> The new feminine bob comma the large straw hat flower trimmed comma the vogue for diamonds so thoughtfully launched by Chanel comma the fox fur carelessly thrown over one shoulder stop all these may be observed at the races particularly of course Longchamps where hundreds of chic women gather every Sunday[34]

The cable illustrates the pivotal role that the racecourse had to play in the exhibition of contemporary fashions but also how the reporting of fashion from it was disseminated to a far-flung audience eager to learn of, and from, race-goers. In this regard it is interesting to note the attention given by Parisite to the styling of the items under description. This perhaps indicates the didactical role assumed by some fashion journalists of the day, imparting information on the clothes themselves but also on how they should be worn on the body in order that Parisian affectations might be channelled most authentically by its American fellowship. A fur wrap, for example, was to be slung nonchalantly over the shoulder, *à la Parisienne*. In light of Parisite's observations, it is worth noting here the constancy of fur as a prevailing material in fashionable clothing post-World War One and photographic evidence alone testifies to the abundance of fur sported by women at the races both in Winter and Spring (figure 3).[35] Furs of all types such as moleskin, squirrel, ermine, Indian lamb, sable and marmot were in great demand and mostly used as luxuriant trims or as collars and cuffs but the hallmark of the 1920s and 1930s was, without doubt, the silver fox. This grey fur was the star of America's National Fur Week in November 1936, for example, grabbing all the headlines as the favoured choice of Wallis Simpson who had planned to wear a full-length evening cape to the (aborted) coronation of King Edward VIII made from ten foxes topped off with an ermine collar.[36] A copy of the much-anticipated cape was exhibited in America as the centrepiece – the crowning glory – of Fur Week and pundits on radio and in the press commented on its smart credentials (none the wiser, it would seem, of the impending abdication).[37] Following Simpson's lead as a highly influential trend setter on both sides of the Atlantic, silver fox 'became almost a uniform among the well-dressed'.[38]

Insert figure 3 about here

All American: a modern sportswear tradition

Until the early 1930s, as the foregoing discussion suggests, there was no question that Paris was the world capital of fashion. Paris was, as Phyllis Madgison puts it 'infallible, eternal, sacrosanct'.[39] Paris, however, specialised in high-end couture and produced made-to-measure clothes using the most luxurious of fabrics, produced to exacting standards with painstaking, traditional, handcrafted methods: everything about it was rarefied and exclusive. The Wall Street 'Crash' of October 1929 was one of several triggers, however, that meant by the turn of the decade, the '"Made In Paris" label no longer had a stranglehold on American women'.[40] Extant orders from American department stores and private buyers were cancelled and the US government imposed trade restrictions on the importing of French fashion. Scheips takes up the story:

> The grim economic truths of 1930s America…afforded designers an unexpected benefit – a great demand for domestic clothing. Paris fashion may still have reigned critically, but the fact was that imported fashion was simply too expensive for all but the very rich.[41]

The 'homegrown' American fashion industry of the 1930s disengaged itself from that of the French and was keen to put metaphorical distance between itself and what had come to be regarded as its European rival. American fashion design and manufacturing, centred on the city of New York, was placed in binary opposition to the Parisian system of couture. The project was 'predicated upon the idea of a rejection of couture's Old World artificiality and

spectacle, in favour of America's New World democracy and practicality'.[42] This fracture is evident in the copy from an advisory piece on racing fashions written by Prunella Wood in *The Chicago Herald and Examiner*, 1934. The fussiness of French fashion is alluded to in contrast to the modern and varied choices offered by contemporary American design:

> Clothes for the paddock and the rail are important this year, even for women who don't know that Cavalcade is not merely another moving picture. Racing is by no means a matter of tweeds alone, sartorially speaking; nor in this country is it an occasion for fluffs and laces as it is at Auteuil … White suits, woolen [*sic*] or linen, look grand and competently chic about an inclosure [*sic*]. Pastel crepes, with or without coats, are very feminine and pretty under trees or clustered about tea tables between races. A hat which can be pulled down to protect the eyes will help a lot.[43]

America consciously endeavoured to become, and to be, the spiritual home of sportswear. The economic situation played a significant part in the logic behind this realignment of New York and Paris. So too did factors as broad ranging as America's manufacturing prowess (with its flair for mass-production and innovative technologies), its industry structure (based around the spaces of New York department stores, their dynamic leadership and influential trade bodies), and a desire to grow a national industry connected to patriotic ideals of modern American-ness. Before addressing these factors in further detail, however, it is useful to present some notes here on defining the ambiguous term that is 'sportswear'.

In short, sportswear, in its permutation as a fashionable mode of 1930s dressing, may be summed up by what is sometimes termed today as 'smart-casual'. The term 'sportswear' encompassed male and female clothing and often referred to versatile separates that could be mixed in a variety of co-ordinating ways. 'Separates' writes Campbell Warner, 'are the foundation of sportswear. Fashion and sport combined'.[44] The comfort and utility afforded by specialised, active, sporting attire in the field came to have a more general relevance so that items of sports clothing, or adaptations of them, became increasingly acceptable as casualwear and were incorporated into the everyday wardrobe. 1930s American sportswear emerged, then, 'from the radically simple clothing that was free of linings, understructures, confining fit and unnecessary decoration that sport and athletic activity demanded'.[45] 'Passive sportswear', 'semi-sports' and 'spectator sports' were terms also used to describe this mode of dress on occasion.

Editorials and fashion features in daily newspapers across the United States enjoyed the apparent contradiction, and even perversity, of fashion consumers dressed in so-called sportswear. The discourse of inaction on their part, and of a stylish kind of sporting removal and rejection, was a wry theme in the print media of the day and was used with knowing effect in marketing and promotional pieces that acknowledged, and endorsed, smart women as glamorously phlegmatic non-athletes, and addressed them as such.[46] An illustrated piece, written by fashion editor, Margaret Feagin, in the *Houston Post* of April 11 1934, bears the title 'Sports Things With Dash and Color' and opens with the following gambit

> Sports activities may be more strenuous than the tossing down of a fruit punch and counting the score in calories. Nevertheless, sports clothes are the day in, day out wearables of the well-dressed woman. She shops and window shops; she bets and kibitzes on the races; she goes to the office or the shop; in rare instances she actually looks on at a sports event. But she wears in all instances spectator sports clothes.[47]

The female sportswear consumer and her longstanding disinterest (imagined or otherwise) in sport, was also used as a wily ploy by the Harry S. Manchester store in Madison, Wisconsin. A print advertisement in *The Capital Times*, September 17 1933 presented outfits suitable for roller-skating, cycling and going to a football game, selling them under the headline 'Becoming New Sports Things That Will Make You Go (Mildly) Athletic!' The copy continued 'You may be the most feminine un-athletic woman in the world up to date but you'll go a bit "sporty" the very day you see these positively bewitching sports things, just made to induce you out in the open!'.[48] The rhetoric lampooned traditional sporting gender divisions and its intention was to offer little else than an amusing take on the rising sportswear trend (as well as to sell clothes, of course). Yet, contemporary tensions did exist around changing lifestyles, prescribed gender and social roles, and how, and if, traditional feminine ideals were to be preserved.

Steele writes that by the 1920s and 1930s 'there were thousands of fashion businesses in New York, many of them run by women'.[49] Reynolds Milbank similarly argues that 'America's first real crop of designers was predominantly female'.[50] Jo Copeland, Nettie Rosenstein, Elizabeth Hawes, Hattie Carnegie, Muriel King, Adele Simpson and Edith Reuss were among a raft of creative women who pioneered New York sportswear. Working in the city's Midtown 'Garment District', they collaborated with forward-thinking fabric technologists and manufacturers to produce modern designs, made from modern materials. America excelled in mass-manufacturing and led the way in clothes that were produced from simple-pattern pieces, as part of large runs, in standard sizes: 'an American dress can be considered less a work of art than a solution to a design problem'.[51] Scientific advances in man-made fibres were viewed as positive developments for design, and rayon, Lastex and synthetic silks were widely utilised in sportswear due to their relative economy and easy-care properties. In turn, these material characteristics offered value-adding attributes to be promoted to consumers seeking products that would facilitate their busy, active, modern lifestyles.

In addition to its material properties, sportswear was woven through with symbolic and ideological sensibilities, too, most notably to do with American national identity and the construction of modern America. Its versatility and practicality was seen to reproduce nationalised characteristics, as was both its affordability and availability to men and women outside of the high-ranking social elite. Sportswear was translated as symptomatic of American democracy itself. The nationalised message was reinforced, in part, through a series of promotional campaigns spearheaded by the New York department store, Lord and Taylor (among others), under the watch of, its then Vice-President, Dorothy Shaver (1893-1959). Shaver used merchandising rhetoric such as 'American Fashion for American Women' (1932), 'The American Designers Movement' (1933) and 'The American Look' (1945) as devices around which to forge and define a national style ethic with sporty fashion at its core.[52] Her many tasks included the scouting of young American designers, bringing them out of obscurity by marketing them as the embodiment of their all-American designs. A cult of personality blossomed around American sportswear designers and they came to be figureheads, representative of American womanhood incarnate: casual, confident, open, modern, sporty and well-dressed.[53]

Elizabeth Hawes (refer to the above discussion of *Parisite* and *The New Yorker* cables of 1927 and 1928) was one such sportswear designer whose ready-to-wear clothing was manufactured and sold via the retail channel offered through Lord and Taylor. Hawes was, however, Paris-trained as a *couturière* and concurrent to her off-the-peg business she also operated a high-endmade-to-measure label in New York, first as 'Hawes-Harden' and then,

by 1930, as 'Hawes Inc'.[54] In her autobiographical text, *Fashion Is Spinach*, Hawes confessed that 1930 was a difficult financial year that saw her 'in the red on the books'.[55] She explained that

> the loss in sales was directly ascribable to the fact that many of my first customers lost everything in the 1929 crash. The fact that I got by at all, I think, was largely due to picking up a fair number of new customers by advertising.[56]

With a need to drum up trade in a depressed market, Hawes personally penned her first advertisements for Hawes Inc. in 1930. In her autobiography she states that all of the ads were lodged in the widely read, *The New Yorker* magazine, however, the museum archives show that Hawes Inc. advertising was also placed in *Polo* and *Town and Country* magazines at that time, too.[57] On the face of it, this may appear to be a small detail but it is significant to the discussion here because it suggests that the spectators at horseracing meets and the allied readership of special interest 'horsey' periodicals such as *Polo*, were courted by Hawes in a targeted campaign, such were their potential as clients in the prevailing hard times.[58] And the campaign was, indeed, targeted. The ads that appeared in *Polo* were specifically tailored in terms of both copy and illustrations to recruit a textual and visual language that spoke directly to fashionable, wealthy, female followers of the horses. Equestrian spectators, it seems, were a crucial artery in the lifeblood of Hawes's fashion business. In the October 1930 issue of *Polo*, Hawes 'cordially invited' readers to come along to her West Fifty-Sixth Street showroom, because, as her advertising slogan pointed out 'For the polo wife – it's hard to be as well-dressed as a polo pony'.[59] In the July 1931 issue, the Hawes Inc. advertisement engaged a discourse of spectatorship most profoundly, by asking 'Who goes to a horse race to see horses?' It continued:

> The majority of women who attend horse races are really smart. Ninety-nine percent of the time spent at any race is consumed looking at them. Almost every woman is human enough to enjoy being looked at. It's difficult enough to be looked at twice as often as the next woman, and it's done, not with mirrors, but with clothes.[60]

The discussion continues here with a consideration of three individual racing spectators each caught on camera at the contemporary races: Dorothy Neyhart, Jane Watters and Ambrose Clark. Each of the three individuals is taken in turn and a vignette painted of their dress, its significance, and the techniques related to its wearing. These particular spectators have been singled out here because they offer rich comparisons and contrasts between each other and also because they are able to act as agents through which to unpack significant, broader, narratives on interwar sportswear, fashion and horseracing.

Details and dilemmas of spectator dress: Three sartorial portraits

Dorothy Neyhart

Insert figure 4 about here

Dorothy Neyhart (1905-1990) was an ardent and committed equestrian, practising her sport in a fulsome manner at Framingham Center, a location outside of Boston formed by a crossroads of sporting estates including the Neyharts' own Redgate Farm. The Neyhart family were ensconced in the equestrian culture of the region. Dorothy was a champion steeplechase rider (both side-saddle and astride), an accomplished show-jumper (exhibiting at, among others, the Boston Horse Show) and a member of the local Millwood Hunt, serving as its joint Master for the period between 1925 and 1928.[61] Dorothy took responsibility for the Hunt's kennels and came to be a breeder of some repute. She also schooled horses at the nearby Raceland estate in Massachusetts and had entries in the annual Country Club races held at the Raceland track.[62]

Dorothy's assorted talents and achievements, as amassed here, show her versatility and the way that she was able to move, seemingly effortlessly, between a broad-ranging set of positions (assisted, no doubt, by her privileged background and Society connections). What is more, those same positions – those of trainer, owner, side-saddler, hunt master, breeder and so on - informed each other. As a spectator, then, Dorothy was able to engage her accumulated equestrian wisdom and apply it to the art of looking. This point is reinforced in the captioning of a newspaper photograph from the Jacob's Hill Horse Show, *circa* 1927. Featuring Dorothy Neyhart (dressed in riding attire) and her friends, Mrs Clarke T Baldwin and Mrs Robert D Almy (both wearing smart, tubular, dresses and cloche hats), the photograph's strapline reads 'Interested Spectators' and elaborates, 'Society leaders eyed critically the riders and their mounts in the various classes at the second annual horse show'.[63]

Dorothy's fashion credentials were equally a subject of comment, and she was described variously in the contemporary press as being 'prominent in Boston Society's young set' and as 'one of Boston's Society girls'.[64] Figure 4 shows Dorothy parading her horse in the ring at the Eastern Horse Club races in Brookline, June 1930, and accounts of the meeting printed in the Press were replete with the colour, clothing and beauty of the females in attendance. *The Boston Globe*, for example, ran with the headline 'Fashion's Fancies at the Race Meet' and singled out Dorothy as one of several notably-attired females.

> …choosing a dark shade of brown was Dorothy Neyhart, who [*sic*] entry captured another first prize. Her dress was of printed silk in brown tones, and she wore with it a coat of plain brown silk and a darker brown hat.[65]

The outfit described here, and seen in figure 4, is archetypal. Mendes and de la Haye state that the close-fitting cloche hat, as sported by Neyhart, was nothing short of 'ubiquitous' in the period between 1914 and 1929.[66] And Dorothy's mid-heel, 'T'-bar, shoes were classic to the period also. Reynolds Milbank tells us, too, how the form fitting 'little print dress' was at the height of popularity in the 1930s, its prevalence assisted by the development of artificial silk that made it more accessible and brought the delicate look to a wider clientele.[67]

Technological advances and economic concerns notwithstanding, a second report on this particular racemeet at Brookline, filed by the fashion correspondent, Olga Stiles, noted another, all-consuming, influence on race-going fashion: the weather. Indeed, the weather contributed the headline to her article: 'Rain Holds Off Until Final Event' and Stiles's prose went on to assure readers that 'because the weather gods considerately held back the rain until the last day was over, the filmy frocks [and one may include Dorothy Neyhart's gauzy outfit here] worn by many of the feminine spectators gained shelter in ample time'.[68]

The elements were indeed a significant cause for concern among those hoping to impress with their smart clothing choices at the races. 'Amory', for example, the fashion

columnist in the monthly periodical *The Sportsman*, cautioned in June 1933 that 'the most impeccable raiment can be ruined by the raincoat as easily as the rain.'[69] She went on to offer the female racing enthusiast the following advice and recommendations as a way of combating what were regarded as potential threats to fashion: these being showery weather or a sudden downpour.

> Your interest in the weather will be purely extrovert on the race track if you move in the Impermeable from Bonwit Teller. The long sleek flare of the hips is possible because it is cut from the lightest silk rubberized crêpe that is made. Nor need you bother with an umbrella to guard that hat. It is a Dichelle crêpe aqua-sec processed to shed the rain with ducklike efficiency.[70]

Spectators had to plan for a day (or days) watching the action in the great outdoors and therefore needed to strike a balance between the sometimes conflicting demands of practicality, comfort and fashion. Fashionable sportswear lent itself favourably to these meteorological dilemmas since it was formed of what Martin refers to as a 'syntax of separates', meaning that layers of clothing could be added or discarded to an outfit as the weather allowed.[71] Contemporary advances in technical fabrics and performance textiles - like those of the silk rubberised crêpe from which the 'Impermeable' raincoat (above) was constructed – assisted in protecting against the elements. Whether it was warmth, waterproofing or shade from the sun, those spectators that wore outfits adroit both with versatility - and suitability - were lauded. At the Framingham races of June 1928, for example, Olga Stiles bestowed plaudits on Mrs Alexander Henry Higginson, declaring her 'properly prepared for the bad weather with galoshes and a light blue raincoat'.[72] One's skill in the art of fashionable spectatorship was measured, then, through a raft of competencies including adaptability to climate and smartness in the face of adverse climatic conditions.[73]

Jane Watters

Insert figure 5 about here

In figure 5, Jane Watters is pictured at the National Cup Steeplechase, held in Fair Hill, Maryland in, what the accompanying archive notes approximate as, 1938.[74] Both Watters and her companion, Sarah Bosley, are seen here sporting cardboard admission tags. Anchored through the buttonholes of their dresses, the tags are just discernible in the photograph as they flutter in the breeze. Sarah's unusual choice of outfit, with its 'SB' motif, Girl Scout-type neckerchief and suede-effect ranger hat, has more than a passing sense of quasi-military uniform, something that Mendes and de la Haye tell us was an emerging trend in Collections eyeing the onset of War in Europe.[75] Jane's clothing, equally, signals the late-1930s, albeit through a dramatically different set of design cues. Her choice of clothing represents a classic item in the pantheon of American sportswear: that is, the shirt-dress.[76] Writing of the relationship between women's education and sport during the early 1900s, Campbell Warner identifies the shirtwaist as the forerunner of the shirt-dress and 'perhaps the first fashion that could be called truly American'.[77] She suggests that women's colleges in the US, such as Smith and Mount Holyoke, were important seedbeds of fashion innovation at the time. Athletic provision in the curriculum encouraged modern college girls to embrace both sport and its functional attire, and the shirtwaist, a 'practical and popular blouse' was borrowed from male shirting and widely adopted as a sporting uniform but also as a symbol of the modern, progressive, female.[78] Its popularity, prevalence, and legacy, was assisted,

without doubt, by the American cartoonist, Charles Dana Gibson (1864-1944). His turn-of-the-century 'Gibson Girl' made the image of the young, sporty, American female 'contemplating her golf stroke dressed in her ankle-length trim skirt and shirtwaist, into an international icon'.[79]

The shirt-dress, as worn by Jane Watters, was a simple item in terms of its design and manufacture. It did not, for example, require the insertion of a waistband – an intricate procedure – and its uncluttered lines called for fewer than average pattern pieces. These factors meant that the shirt-dress lent itself to Taylorist principles of manufacturing on a mass scale. This style of dress was versatile, not just in the smart-casual sense of being wearable in a variety of contexts (moving from the office, to home, to, say, an informal dinner or party) but also in terms of the modern, ready-to-wear wardrobe. Ready-to-wear clothing was made in standardised sizes, and unlike made-to-measure outfits, was purchased by consumers from a pre-determined range without being fitted and altered to the specific shape of an individual. American ready-to-wear was very much about uniformity and conformity. The shirt-dress, however, offered women clever solutions to the dilemma of a perfect, individualised, fit. Its signature full-length placket opening, running the length of the garment, gave women varying choices of both neckline and kick: the dress could be buttoned and unbuttoned in innumerable combinations at the throat, but also the knee, to accommodate individual preferences and needs. The belt, too, which was a key part of the ensemble and stood in for a tailored waistband, similarly assisted the pursuit of good fit and could be cinched in, or out, depending on the desired silhouette or body-shape of the wearer. As the example of Jane Watters shows, fashion during the 1930s dictated that the belt sat on the natural waistline (not dropped at the hips, as in the case of the 1920s Flapper). The female waist, which was ideally meant to be slim and toned, was a physical characteristic to be emphasised, and therefore belts became all the rage. Some, however, achieved the belted look with more panache than others, as this extract from a report in *Polo* on female fashions seen at the spring races, June 1931, reveals.

> Admittedly, the odds are against horsey clothes. The very things which make them right for seeing horses run, make them wrong for feminine figures. The curves which are just right for a satin evening model are just wrong for a tweed suit. Above all, a tweed suit with a belt! Ye gods, why will women wear nicely bunched tweeds, huddled about their middles with a tight belt? The beauty of English tweeds is that they never fit. It is the law. The law was probably made because to make a tweed fit is to add six inches to one's girth. When it doesn't fit, it gives that pleasant impression that the figure underneath may be slim.[80]

The report (above) also goes to highlight what were two further contemporary – and fashionable – preoccupations among women of the day: dieting and slimming. The vogue for svelte waists, and an open disparagement of lumpen ones, was the result of physical activity, body maintenance and self-discipline. As such, a lifestyle regimen that merged exercising with losing weight and looking beautiful became the means to a fashionable end. The modern American female was constructed corporeally around a sleek, lean, long-limbed, tanned look, and was an ideal to be pursued and cultivated. Jane Watters, as pictured at the National Cup, goes some way in embodying that ideal. Her blond, sun-bleached, hair is tamed into a gentle coif, her bare legs are toned and smooth and her fingertips are carefully painted. Her body is a well-maintained body and is one of sport and sportswear, of American-ness and modernity. Even the photographic style used to capture Jane on film is redolent of

the prevailing American aesthetic. Athletic lives were promoted and reflected in fashion photography at this time through a visual discourse of action that portrayed women with dramatic fluidity. Movement, mobility and gesture were used in photographs to create and capture a sense of the 'American Look', one representing a forward-thrusting, vital, nation.[81] Yet again, the dichotomy between American and French fashion sensibilities, as discussed above, surfaces here. America's 'honest' and 'energetic' style of natural snapshot might be viewed as the antithesis to the restrained and carefully posed approach associated with its Parisian equivalent.[82] Although the photograph of Jane Watters is not intended as a piece of fashion photography *per se*, it nonetheless was taken with a view to documenting her clothed, and bodily, appearance, holding her up as a fashionable mannequin whose image was to be disseminated for public consumption in the pages of the sporting press. [83] She is snapped in flight, in motion. She is striding out - indeed almost striding out of the frame, ever onwards. And adding to the momentary, fleeting, and informal, essence of the shot is the shadow cast by the photographer across its central foreground. As the shutter is depressed, the photographer becomes a shadowy, uninvited, ghost in the frame whose presence goes to show that the photograph is anything but posed.

Ambrose Clark

Insert figure 6 about here

Frederick Ambrose 'Brose' Clark (1881-1964) inherited an immense fortune from his grandfather who acted as attorney to the Singer sewing machine empire in the 1850s. Clark enjoyed a life of leisure due to his wealthy background and, as a young man, was a well-celebrated amateur jockey and foxhunter. In later years, he enjoyed tremendous success as an owner and was a prominent figure in steeplechasing both in the United States and the United Kingdom. *Kellsboro Jack*, his wife's horse (which she bought for a sum of one pound from Clark) won the Aintree Grand National in 1933. Clark was twice president of the United Hunts Racing Association and a private patron of sporting art and artists.[84] 'In the small US sporting aristocracy, the Ambrose Clarks have a niche of their own' wrote *Time* magazine.[85]

Figure 6 shows Clark at the National Cup Steeplechase in Fair Hill, Maryland in *circa* 1938. He cuts a singularly arresting figure in the photograph. His entire being – what Bourdieu refers to as *habitus* - is striking.[86] The combined effect of his clothes, his demeanour and his physicality mark him out as a noteworthy person (and, indeed, a person of note). Clark's appearance, both physical and material, was often a subject of remark. For example, in a catalogue of Clark's sporting paintings from 1958, the essayist noted: 'Ambrose Clark today, doughty, ruddy and vigorous'.[87] *Time*, reporting on the 1933 Grand National and *Kellsboro Jack's* victory, wrote of Mrs Clark's 'dearest rival – her ruddy, jolly, loud-voiced husband'.[88] The British newspaper, *The Evening Standard*, also covering the Clark's win at Aintree, noted that '"Brose", who is also very rich, is a grand fellow, wears a billycock hat and a covert coat, and looks like a figure out of Whyte Melville'.[89]

Clark's appearance was in keeping with a race-going tradition for the exuberant and head-turning. A key distinction to be made here is that Clark's clothing was eccentric rather than fashionable. It drew attention for being idiosyncratic rather than offering directional leadership for men's fashion.[90] If anything, Clark's outfit, as seen at the National Cup, was somewhat unfashionable and far from what might have been considered smart. In the photograph, he sports his signature light-coloured bowler hat, a style that even by the 1920s had, according to Daniel Delis Hill, mostly been replaced in the US by the homburg as the favoured item of headgear.[91] The trousers of his suit are tailored to be narrow in the leg

when, among the fashion conscious, the tendency was for a voluminous style called 'Oxford Bags' that ballooned with fabric.[92] Straining over his portly belly, Clark's jacket is ill-fitting and its tautly-buttoned closures disrupt what should be perfectly tailored, smoothly contoured, lines. Even so, Clark was regarded as a dapper gent in racing circles, which suggests the adage of not what, but how, something was worn rang true in his particular case. The idea of there being a certain attitude bound up in the wearing of clothes is significant to the interpretation of Clark as a type of interwar dandy figure.[93] The campus of the race track certainly lent itself to the dandyish behaviours of posing and peacock-ery because it was a site of spectacle and spectatorship where the practice of looking was sanctioned and encouraged. Clark appears to have understood this, intuitively or otherwise. For example, an article on the Raceland Cup at Framingham in Massachusetts in June 1933 noted that F. Ambrose Clark, wearing his grey bowler was 'conspicuous in the judges' stand'.[94] Dressed in his sartorially unconventional outfits, Clark may be regarded as attempting to locate himself outside of, or away from, fashion: a sort of eccentric, anti-fashion hero who stood out from the crowd (deliberately or otherwise) and was noticed for it. This anti-fashion position, as inhabited by Clark, in turn opens up some interesting conceptual terrain. Anti-fashion is not the same as fashion disinterest. On the face of it, the former is a deliberate, reactionary, stance, the latter, on the other hand, is unintentional. Yet fashion is more complex still. As Elizabeth Wilson argues, it is an impossibility to be fully removed from the fashion system:

> Even the determinedly unfashionable wear clothes that manifestly represent a reaction against what *is* in fashion. To be unfashionable is not to escape the whole discourse, or to get outside the parameters…To dress fashionably is both to stand out and to merge with the crowd, to lay claim to the exclusive and to follow the herd.[95]

Clark was something of an exception in his idiosyncratic way of dressing. For sure, male and female spectators viewed the races as an opportunity to dress up but, for most American men, this was a uniform affair dominated by the conservative suit in plain cloth and sombre colours and the smart but serviceable overcoat. Jennifer Craik offers an explanation of these skewed codes of gender and dress, arguing that the male relationship to fashion was one traditionally articulated around a set of denials in which concerns of effeminacy were writ large. Interestingly, one such denial itemised by Craik – that men do not notice clothes – was the topic under consideration in the female fashion column from *Polo*, October 1930. 'A few American horsemen know a well-dressed woman when they see one' began the article 'but most of them are a great deal surer (and care a deal more) about their horses' bandages than about their wives footwear'.[96] Fashion journalists, almost all of whom were women, clearly believed that there was little worth commenting on when it came to male spectator dress, or, alternatively, that their readership was not unduly bothered about the subject. As far as written reports went there was, then, a dearth of material on male spectator fashion in the equestrian press that chose instead to concentrate on offering protracted and lingering descriptions of female race-goers.

Conclusion

The discussion comes full circle at this point and returns to the present day, specifically the year 2012. In June 2012, Royal Ascot issued a new, and stricter, dress code for visitors, a move prompted by what was considered to be falling standards of sartorial etiquette among race-goers both male and female.[97] Female fashions, particularly in the exclusive spaces of the Royal Enclosure at Ascot were considered to have become too daring and *gauche* and

traditional conventions of appropriate, modest, attire were increasingly being flouted. To moderate these unseemly displays and rule contraventions, a short instructional film was produced by the organisers of Royal Ascot.[98] The film outlined the revised codes of dress and presented exemplar outfits and styles modelled by attractive and youthful mannequins (both male and female) in a pseudo-fashion shoot scenario. For the Royal Enclosure, there were three main points of contention vis-à-vis women's dress: that skirt lengths were to be no more than one inch above the knee; that dresses must have straps of at least one inch in width and, that hats should be worn at all times and have a base measuring four inches or more in diameter. The details of acceptable, and unacceptable (such as spaghetti straps and halter necks), clothing is, of course, pertinent in broad terms to the discussion of race-going fashion presented over the course of this article. But what is particularly interesting is the artistic format and editorial styling of the Ascot film itself. A little over 90 seconds in length, the film was accompanied by raucous jazz music heavily accented with a trumpet and cymbal rhythm synonymous with the sound of a Twenties' dance band. Interspersed between the present-day portraits of 'ideal' outfits, too, were edited slices of black and white flickering movies borrowed from the Ascot archives of the 1930s. In its evocation of the Twenties and Thirties, then, these filmic choices suggest that the interwar years were considered to be the pinnacle of spectator dress: a true Golden Age. For the organisers of Ascot, at least, the Interwar Era and the codes and conventions of dress related to it, were to be admired and current-day race-goers were encouraged – directed, indeed - to recapture and rekindle them (or face possible debarring, or ejection, from the Enclosure). The case of Royal Ascot 2012 functions here to highlight, and reinforce, the thesis central to this article: that the relationship between fashion and horseracing retains a long and significant heritage and is one ripe with opportunity for further investigation. The relationship, as mapped out here in the particular context of interwar America, has an array of permutations and illustrates the potential of spectator dress as a segway into debates that criss-cross the fields of sport history, gender studies, material culture and political economy.

The racecourse itself was a spectacular site of fashionable display and provided a glamorous setting for the wearing and viewing of new, exciting, and even provocative, styles. Many of these wearers were from high-ranking echelons of elegant Society and were women who enjoyed a privileged lifestyle in which leisure, sport, fashion and shopping went hand-in-hand. Yet it is important to remember that the crowds on race day were formed of individuals each with their own sartorial stories, preferences and idiosyncratic flourishes. The figures of Dorothy Neyhart, Jane Watters and Ambrose Clark testify to this and, importantly, supply substance and grounding to what are sometimes abstracted - anonymous, even - discussions of sporting spectatorship. Neyhart provides a glimpse of the attire favoured by a fashionable, and knowledgeable, spectator from the 1920s, someone who was deeply entrenched in equestrian life and lifestyle and who understood the nuances of dressing for particular sporting occasions and roles. Watters is Thirties style personified. In her belted, casual, shirtdress she embraced a modern American form of dressing that was materially and symbolically suited to a day at the races: fun, functional and fashionable. And, in the case of Clark, a marginal, and, indeed, marginalised story of men's fashion emerges from the spectator terraces, one where ambiguities of gender, sexuality and identity are woven through its clothing cultures.

In supplying depth and detail on what was worn at the races and who wore it, the intention of this article has been to state the active role that spectators played on race-day itself – as well as before it and beyond it – and thus to reconsider the neatness of the division between sporting text and audience. At the races, just where did the field of action begin and end, and who was involved in constituting it? The racecourse was, for example, just one

nodal point in a bigger contemporary system of sporting fashion comprising sites as diverse as the department store, the equestrian periodical, the production line, the textile laboratory and the design studio. This system, too, stretched across the Atlantic both in real and imaginary terms. Artefacts and goods were transported from Europe to a discerning American audience but so too were more ephemeral ideas and influences about race-going fashion and how to wear it. Moreover, during the interwar years the United States played host to a transient and dynamic set of socio-economic circumstances that recruited sport and sportswear to a national project involving the definition of the American character itself. American sportswear lent itself to a day at the races because it was easy-to-wear, smart yet comfortable and constructed from performance fabrics that met the challenges of an outdoorsy lifestyle. Although regarded as simple in design, the social, political and material meanings embedded in these garments were anything but. In combination, then, the ingredients of interwar America, horseracing, fashion and spectatorship are a potent mix, extending and complicating understandings of the material culture of sport history.

Notes

[1] Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Halton, *The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 1.

[2] Yi-Fu Tuan, 'The Significance of the Artifact', *Geographical Review* 70, no. 4 (1980): 462-9.

[3] 'Pathé Gazette Presents Advance Pictures of the Derby', *British Pathé*, 1936. Available at http://www.britishpathe.com/video/the-derby-1936/query/epsom+derby (accessed January 4, 2014).

[4] A raft of introductory texts on dress, clothing and fashion offer a survey of definitions and the relative distinctions between these terms. See, for example, Christopher Breward, *Fashion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Jennifer Craik, *Fashion: The Key Concepts* (Oxford: Berg, 2009); Yuniya Kawamura, *Fashion-ology: An Introduction to Fashion Studies* (Oxford: Berg, 2004).

[5] Erving Goffman, *Relations in Public: Microstudies of the Public Order* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971).

[6] Garry Crawford, *Consuming Sport: Fans, Sport and Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004), 3.

[7] Wray Vamplew, *Pay Up and Play the Game: Professional Sport in Britain 1875-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 5; Wray Vamplew, *The Turf: A Social and Economic History of Horse-Racing* (Allen Lane: London, 1976).

[8] Dennis Brailsford, *Sport and Society: Elizabeth to Anne* (London: Routledge, 1969).

[9] Mike Huggins, *Horseracing and the British 1919-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 136.

[10] Valerie Steele, *Paris Fashion: A Cultural History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 247-264.

[11] Agnès Rocamora, *Fashioning the City: Paris, Fashion and the Media* (London: IB Tauris, 2009), 44.

[12] Huggins, *Horseracing and the British*, 47.

[13] Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (New York: Penguin Books, 1899 [1994]).

[14] Heidi Brevik-Zender, 'Tracking Fashions: Risking It All At the Hippodrome de Longchamp' in *The Places and Spaces of Fashion, 1800-2007*, ed. John Potvin (London: Routledge, 2001), 21.

[15] It is interesting to note that the sometimes extravagant and elaborate dress of spectators at the races was in sharp contrast to the codes of dress that governed much equestrian riding attire (with the colourful silks of jockeys being something of an exception). From the Victorian period onwards, riding dress was pared down in style and of restrained cut and colour. For further discussion refer to Alison Goodrum, 'A Severity of Plainness: The Culture of Female Riding Dress in America During the 1920s and 1930s', *Annals of Leisure Research* 15, no. 1 (2012): 87-105.

[16] Willa Jerdone, 'Society in Costumes of Vivid Hue Turn Out for Framingham Races' Unreferenced newspaper cutting, 1927; Dorothy Neyhart scrapbook collection, National Sporting Library and Museum, Virginia.

[17] Valerie Mendes and Amy de la Haye, *20th Century Fashion* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1999), 66.

[18] Sylvia Harrison, 'Jean Shrimpton, "The Four-Inch Furore" and Perceptions of Melbourne Identity in the 1960s' in *Go! Melbourne: Melbourne in the 1960s*, ed. Sean O'Hanlon and Tanja Luckins (Victoria: Circa, 2005), 72-86.

[19] 'The Shrimp Shocked Them', *The Sun-News Pictorial*, November 1, 1965, 1.

[20] 'Book Review: Go! Melbourne', *The Age*, January 21, 2006.

[21] There are exceptions that prove this rule, notably: James Sherwood, *Fashion at Royal Ascot: Three Centuries of Thoroughbred Style* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2011).
The argument for research on the topic of spectator dress is made elsewhere, too. See Alison Goodrum, 'A Dashing, Positively Smashing, Spectacle…: Female Spectators and Dress At Equestrian Events in the United States During the 1930s' in *Fashion, Design and Events*, eds. Kim Williams, Jennifer Laing and Warwick Frost (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 25-43.

[22] 'American Experience: Racing In the Depression', Public Broadcasting Service (PBS). Available at http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/general-article/seabiscuit-racing-depression/?flavour=full (accessed January 12, 2014).

[23] 'Chasing History', National Steeplechase Association. Available at http://www.nationalsteeplechase.com/chasing/history/ (accessed January 14, 2014).

[24] Caroline Reynolds Milbank, *New York Fashion: The Evolution of American Style* (New York: Harry N Abrams, 1989), 125.

[25] Reynolds Milbank, *New York Fashion*, 98.

[26] Mendes and de la Haye, *20th Century Fashion*.

[27] Steele, *Paris Fashion*, 247-264.

[28] Reynolds Milbank, *New York Fashion*, 106. Reynolds Milbank's assertion may be cross-referenced with Fiona Skillen's work on female sporting participants in interwar *Britain* and the clothing that they wore. See: Fiona Skillen, 'It's Possible to Play the Game Marvellously And At the Same Time Look Pretty and Be Perfectly Fit': Sport, Women and Fashion in Inter-War Britain', *Costume* 46, no.2 (2012), 165-79: Fiona Skillen, *Women, Sport and Modernity In Interwar Britain*, (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2013).

[29] Patricia Campbell Warner, *When the Girls Came Out to Play: The Birth of American Sportswear* (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006), 242.

[30] Richard Martin, *All-American: A Sportswear Tradition* (New York: Fashion Institute of Technology, 1985), 8.

[31] Steele, *Paris Fashion*, 246.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Charlie Scheips, '1929/1938 Dramatic Beginnings: Hollywood and New York Designers Bring Luxury and Sport to Depression-Era America' in *American Fashion* (New York: Assouline Publishing, 2007).

[34] 'On and Off the Avenue: Feminine Fashions' *The New Yorker*, April 30, 1927, 72.

[35] This statement is made with reference to the Gerald B Webb Jnr. archive held in the collection at the National Sporting Library and Museum, Virginia. The archive comprises some sixteen photo albums of equestrian events, riders and also spectators, the bulk of photos being from between 1937 and 1941. Webb was editor of the specialist newspaper *The Chronicle of the Horse* and many of the photographs are of high 'print' quality and show the detail of contemporary spectator dress with clarity.

[36] '"Certain American's" Wrap Will Arouse Envy At Big Coronation' *The Times-Press* (Ohio), November 11, 1936; Held by Brooklyn Museum Libraries. Elizabeth Hawes Scrapbook Collection, Special Collections.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Elizabeth Ewing, *Fur In Dress* (London: BT Batsford, 1981), 129.

[39] Phyllis Madgison, 'Fashion Showdown: New York Versus Paris 1914-1941' in *Paris/ New York: Design/Fashion/Culture/1925-1940*, ed. Donald Albrecht (New York: Monacelli Press, 2008), 104.

[40] Patricia Campbell Warner, 'The Americanization of Fashion: Sportswear, the Movies and the 1930s' in *Twentieth-Century American Fashion*, eds. Linda Welters and Patricia Cunningham (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 79.

[41] Scheips, *American Fashion*, 37.

[42] Rebecca Arnold, *The American Look: Fashion, Sportswear and the Image of Women in 1930s and 1940s New York* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009), 4.

[43] Prunella Wood, 'Off to the Races or an Alfresco Luncheon', *Chicago Herald and Examiner*, June 24, 1934; Held by Brooklyn Museum and Libraries. Elizabeth Hawes Scrapbook Collection, Special Collections.

[44] Patricia Campbell Warner, 'From the Clothing for Sport to Sportswear and the American Style: The Movies Carried the Message, 1912-1940', *Costume* 47, no. 1 (2013): 45-62.

[45] Campbell Warner, *Twentieth Century American Fashion*, 80.

[46] On a more general level, Christopher Breward offers comment on the apparent dissonance between the worlds of sport and fashion in the catalogue accompanying the 'Fashion V Sport' exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 2008-9. He makes the observation that 'fashion, with its adherence to ephemeral cycles of taste and the rhythms of the marketplace, would thus seem to stand in opposition to the timeless qualities of athleticism… The "pure gesture" of athletic prowess simply magnifies the impure character of a contemporary culture in thrall to base fashion'. Christopher Breward, 'Pure Gesture: Reflections on the Histories of Sport and Fashion' in *Fashion V Sport*, ed. Ligaya Salazar (London: V&A Publishing, 2008), 17.

[47] 'Sports Things With Dash and Color', *Houston Post*, April 11, 1934; Held by Brooklyn Museum Libraries. Elizabeth Hawes Scrapbook Collection, Special Collections.

[48] 'Becoming New Sports Things That Will Make You Go (Mildly) Athletic!' Harry S. Manchester print advertising, *The Capital Times*, September 17, 1933 Held by Brooklyn Museum Libraries. Elizabeth Hawes Scrapbook Collection, Special Collections.

[49] Valerie Steele, 'Women Fashioning American Fashion' in *Women Designers in the USA 1900-2000: Diversity and Difference*, ed. Pat Kirkham (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 186.

[50] Reynolds Milbank, *New York Fashion*, 100.

[51] Ibid, 100.

[52] Arnold, *The American Look;* Campbell Warner, *Twentieth-Century American Fashion*; Magidson, *Paris/New York*; Martin, *All-American*; Norma Rantisi, 'How New York Stole Modern Fashion' in *Fashion's Worlds Cities*, eds. Christopher Breward and David Gilbert (Oxford: Berg, 2006),109-122; Reynolds Milbank, *New York Fashion.*

[53] Tiffany Webber-Hanchett, 'Dorothy Shaver: Promoter of the American Look', *Dress* 30 (2003), 83-7.

[54] Bettina Berch, *Radical By Design: The Life and Style of Elizabeth Hawes* (New York: EP Dutton, 1988).

[55] Elizabeth Hawes, *Fashion is Spinach* (New York: Random House, 1938), 154.

[56] Ibid, 154-8.

[57] The archives referred to here are the holdings of *Polo* magazine at the National Sporting Library and Museum, Virginia; Elizabeth Hawes scrapbook collection at the Brooklyn Museum Library.

[58] The relationship between Hawes and *Polo* magazine is multi-layered and comprises not only a commercial, but also a social, connection. The founder and editor of *Polo* was Peter Vischer, an equestrian writer and journalist of some repute. In a fleeting reference from her autobiographical text *Fashion Is Spinach* (1938), Hawes mentions 'pal Vischer of *Polo*' and this note, albeit cursory, casts light on the pathway trodden by Hawes to this magazine.

[59] 'For the Polo Wife – It's Hard To Be As Well-Dressed As A Polo Pony' *Polo*, Elizabeth Hawes advertising, October 1930, 48.

[60] 'Who Goes to a Horse Race to See Horses?' *Polo*, Elizabeth Hawes advertising, July 1931, 39.

[61] For a discussion of Dorothy Neyhart in relation to female side-saddle attire of the 1920s and 1930s, see Goodrum, *Annals of Leisure Research*.

[62] Dorothy Neyhart Scrapbook Collection, 1922-1935, held by the National Sporting Library and Museum, Virginia.

[63] 'Boston, Providence and New York Smart Set Out In Force At Jacob's Hill Horse Show' Unreferenced newspaper cutting, Dorothy Neyhart Scrapbook Collection, 1922-1935, National Sporting Library and Museum, Virginia.

[64] 'Prominent in Boston Society's Young Set'; 'Boston Society's Own Grandstand' Unreferenced newspaper cuttings from Dorothy Neyhart Scrapbook Collection, 1922-1935, National Sporting Library and Museum, Virginia.

[65] 'Fashion's Fancies at the Race Meet, Women Add Color to the Brilliant Spectacle' *The Boston Globe*, June 18, 1930.

[66] Mendes and de la Haye, *20th Century Fashion*, 60.

[67] Reynolds Milbank, *New York Fashion*, 100.

[68] Olga Stiles, 'Boston's Elite Display Latest Smart Fashions At Second Day's Program – Rain Holds Off Until Final Event' Unreferenced newspaper cutting, Dorothy Neyhart Scrapbook Collection1922-1935, National Sporting Library and Museum, Virginia.

[69] Amory, 'The Sportswoman Observes' *The Sportsman*, June 1933, 44.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Martin, *All-American*, 20.

[72] Olga Stiles, 'Turf Enthusiasts Brave Rain to See Wind-Up of Race Meet', June 1928, Newspaper cutting from unknown publication, Dorothy Neyhart Scrapbook Collection1922-1935, National Sporting Library and Museum, Virginia.

[73] For further discussion of the broader relationship between sport and the weather, past and present, see the body of work by Joyce Kay and Wray Vamplew. For example, Joyce Kay and Wray Vamplew, *Weather Beaten: Sport in the British Climate* (Mainstream: Edinburgh, 2002); Joyce Kay and Wray Vamplew 'Under the Weather: Combating the Climate in British Sport', *Sport in Society* 9, no. 1 (2006), 94-107.

[74] The archives referred to here are those forming the Gerald B Webb Jnr archive at the National Sporting Library and Museum, Virginia. The original image caption offers the only source of biographical information about Watters: 'Misses Jane Watters and Sarah Bosley are shown as they attended the National Cup Steeplechase at Fair Hill, Md…both girls are well known in the hunts and racing set in the section and in the Long Island area'.

[75] Mendes and de la Haye, *20th Century Fashion*.

[76] The shirt-dress also comprises a part of the discussion of race-going fashions in Goodrum, *Fashion, Design and Events*.

[77] Campbell Warner, *Costume 47*.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid, 48.

[80] Parasite, 'Sport and Clothes: A Few Items Concerning Smart Women Seen at Recent Sporting Events' *Polo*, June 1931, 53. Note that the author of this article signs themself as 'Parasite', which is a different spelling to 'Parisite' (a.k.a. Elizabeth Hawes), who contributed to *The New Yorker*.

[81] Rebecca Arnold, 'Movement and Modernity: New York Sportswear, Dance, and Exercise in the 1930s and 1940s', *Fashion Theory* 12, no.3 (2008): 341-358.

[82] Arnold, *Looking American*, 56.

[83] Albeit informal in style, the photograph of Jane Watters is a professional shot, comprising part of the Gerald B Webb archive held at the National Sporting Library and Museum, Virginia. Webb was founding editor of the specialist equestrian newspaper, *The Chronicle of the Horse*, and many of the photographs held in the collection take the form of pre-print proofs from Webb's professional years as a journalist. Some photographs are accompanied by typewritten captions from, or for, the Social Register.

[84] F. Ambrose Clark Scrapbooks, 1921, 1933. Held by the National Sporting Library and Museum, Virginia.

[85] 'Sport: Grand National' *Time*, April 3, 1933.

[86] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London: Routledge, 1984).

[87] Emanuel Rousuck, *The F. Ambrose Clark Collection of Sporting Paintings* (New York: Privately Printed, 1958).

[88] *Time*, 1933.

[89] 'Kellsboro Jack's Owner' *The Evening Standard*, March 25, 1933.

[90] Edward, the Prince of Wales, was a key figure in forging men's fashion at this time and he endorsed the Thirties trend for fashionable sportswear. He is often attributed with bringing about the contemporary vogue for Fair Isle sweaters, for dark navy suiting and a relaxed 'look' that borrowed from the British country wardrobe and an American sense of casual dressing. He also lent his name to the classic 'Windsor' knot, a method of tying the male necktie that particularly suited his favoured broad-collared shirts and the Glen Check fabric, nicknamed the 'Prince of Wales check', which he popularised. His influence on male fashion was keenly felt in Britain and the USA and his legacy on the male wardrobe endures today.

[91] Daniel Delis Hill, *American Menswear: From the Civil War to the Twenty-First Century* (Lubbock Texas: Texas Tech University Press, 2011).

[92] Laura Ugolini, 'Clothes and the Modern Man in 1930s Oxford', *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body and Culture* 4, no.4 (2000): 427-46.

[93] It is interesting to note here the broader historical connections between the male dandy and equestrian dress. George Bryan 'Beau' Brummell (1778-1840) is credited as the originator of the sartorial philosophy of dandyism during the English Regency period. He was socially ambitious and created a novel mode of male dress that referenced the English gentry based on the clean lines and severe tailoring of riding attire: the swallow-tail coat and form-fitting breeches.

[94] *Boston Evening Transcript*, June 20, 1933.

[95] Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned In Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* (London: I B Tauris, 2005, 2nd edition), 5-6.

[96] Parasite, 'Men, Women, Sport, Clothes: How Many American Horsemen Know a Well-Dressed Woman When They See One?' *Polo*, October 1930, 49.

[97] Kim M. Williams, 'Millinery and Events: Where Have All The Mad Hatters Gone?' in *Fashion, Design and Events*, eds. Kim Williams, Jennifer Laing and Warwick Frost (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 131-147.

[98] 'Royal Ascot Dress Code', Available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jpmUtXuUqxM (accessed January 31, 2014).

Figure 1
Unknown man and woman at the National Hunt Steeplechase, Fair Hill, Maryland, *circa* 1938. The smart outfits pictured here feature all the accoutrements of race day: lapel and swing badges plus natty hats, gloves, bag, binoculars, race cards and cigarettes. With permission from National Sporting Library and Museum, Virginia.

Figure 2
A fashionable group of spectators at Rolling Rock Races, Pennsylvania, *circa* 1938. Original caption reads 'Mrs Alan M Scaife (nee Mellon) of 1047 Shady Ave Pittsburgh PA – sister of Mr R K Mellon. George Brooke 3rd – son of Mr Edward Brooke of Birdsboro, PA. Franklin B Voss of 'Merriefield', Hewlett, LI; Mrs R K Mellon (Constance M Prosser-McCaulley) wife of MFH of the Rolling Rock Hunt. Lord Barnby of England and the Hotel Barclay, 111 East 48th St. NYC. Miss Banning George – daughter of Mrs William Drayton George of 'Brook House', Bryn Mawr, Pa; Mr Richard K Mellon, MFH of Southampton, LI, Ligonier & Pittsburgh, Pa. Murray E P Fleming of Pittsburgh, Pa – are all shown as they attended the Rolling Rock Hunt's race meet at Ligonier, Pa. With permission from National Sporting Library and Museum, Virginia.

Figure 3
Sportswear and furs at the races. Mrs Frank Bowman and Mr Herbert A May at Rolling Rock, Ligonier, Pennsylvania, *circa* 1938. With permission from National Sporting Library and Museum, Virginia.

Figure 4
Dorothy Neyhart in the parade ring at Brookline Country Club, Massachusetts, June 1930. With permission from National Sporting Library and Museum, Virginia.

Figure 5
Jane Watters (left) steps out at the National Cup Steeplechase, Fair Hill, Maryland, accompanied by Sarah Bosley (centre), *circa* 1938. With permission from National Sporting Library and Museum, Virginia.

Figure 6
Ambrose Clark at the National Cup Steeplechase, Fair Hill, Maryland, *circa* 1938. With permission from National Sporting Library and Museum, Virginia.