

William Gibbons' Horse Journal

[Gibbons Horse Journal](#) (Scanned Documents)

Preserved in the Drew University Library archives is a small, bound unlined book -- apparently purchased on Wall Street in New York, according to a label inside the front cover -- in which William Gibbons records in his own handwriting notes on his horse purchases, breeding, and racing.

Gibbons lists the pedigree horses he owned beginning in 1829 (p.9). He provides a description and records their lineage. Other relevant notes are added with dates over time such as breeding attempts, resulting offspring, stud fees, etc. Racing histories including clock times and betting results are recorded in the most detail for his most well-known champion mare, Fashion (pp. 47-52). Fashion made history as a mare defeating Boston, a stallion, in an upset race in 1841 and reinforced her fame by setting a four-mile record in 1842 that stood for more than 13 years.

Gibbons made entries in his journal until at least 1849 (p.39), three years before he died in 1852. His notes on Fashion, however, end in 1843, even though we know for fact from letters and other historical records that she raced until 1848, and subsequently was bred.

Besides his own racing horses which he either purchased or bred, Gibbons lists and describes the ancestry of American thoroughbreds through which many American race horses at that time descended.

William Gibbons's horse journal is a valuable historical document. It not only provides first-hand information on Fashion, but is also a primary source for understanding the unique history and development of American thoroughbred breeding and racing, at a pivotal time in the early 19th century when Americans were establishing their own mark in this sport.

The pencil scribbles and florid script of "Miss Elizabeth Rogers" (pp.24-25) is the young daughter of one of Drew Seminary's most well-known professors, Robert W. Rogers. The journal, which was probably among the Gibbons papers found in the attic after Mead Hall was purchased for the seminary in 1867, found its way somehow into the hands of little Miss Rogers after 1893 when her father arrived and occupied one of four faculty homes on campus that had been built by Daniel Drew.