2018

Ban The Carriage Industry? Yea or Neigh: An Examination of the Arguments Around the Carriage Industry by a Certified Carriage Driver In-Training

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Bard College

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Ban the Carriage Industry? Yea or Neigh
An Examination of the Arguments Around the Carriage Industry by a Certified Carriage Driver In-Training

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of Social Studies
of Bard College

by
Emma Greenberg Rehfeld

Annandale-on-Hudson, New York
May 2018
Acknowledgements

“It takes a village to raise a child.”

This project has truly been a team effort. There are several people I need to acknowledge and thank before we start:

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To everyone in the Dean Of Students Office at Bard: thank you all for supporting me, cheering me on, and providing snacks, especially on Thursday afternoons. Carol and Bethany, especially, have been my second moms these past few years— I’m so lucky to have you all on my team.

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And to my beloved Sue: you have inspired so much of this project and have been a stabilizing being for me for the past seven years. Looking forward to spending the next decade and beyond with you.
Dedication

This project is dedicated to the horses and drivers on 59th Street and Central Park during the Winter of 2018.
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Introduction

I spent the summer of 2017 taking two classes for credit at NYU. It was my first time in New York City. I felt more alive and invigorated that July than I ever had before. There is just something about the bustle of the city, the drive and aspirations of purposeful walkers striding across the rigorous pavement of Manhattan that inspires a person to a new level of excellence. Yet after spending a few weeks in the concrete jungle, I could feel something was missing, that sort of nagging suspicion that one has forgotten a simple yet essential task.

I found myself wandering the streets of New York at twilight, meandering through midtown towards an inexplicably familiar smell—my favorite smell, in fact. There, on 59th street and Columbus Circle, I found the source of the smell: horse poop. Not a huge pile, just a small scrape of it in the gutter along the road. Curiosity turned to eager anticipation as I continued down 59th Street, towards 7th Avenue, where I could faintly make out the shadow of one of the famous horse-drawn carriages of New York City. I reached the horse, a buckskin with sleepy eyes and warm breath and reached out my hand, an invitation. The driver quietly watched us as my hands moved over the horse’s body, feeling the silk of summer and sweat. After a while, the driver introduced himself and began to chat with me about the horse, the job, and my experience in New York. In the span of what ended up being a three-hour-long conversation, I went from getting a much-needed horse-fix, to decisively deciding to become a licensed carriage driver by the end of that summer.

The first step to becoming a carriage driver was passing several tests: one multiple choice test, one written test (both of which would take place at the Health Department on the same day), and one practical examination to be arranged at Clinton Park Stables distributed to participants
who had passed the previous two exams. Registering for the tests and obtaining study materials
proved to be quite challenging. In fact, I never got the official handbook that potential drivers are
supposed to study. Thankfully, I had worked with horses for most of my life, so I was already
familiar with the information covered in the educational video shown before the first two
administered tests.

I stepped into the Health Department classroom that morning and was greeted by seven
men. I sat down next to one of them, who promptly stood up and moved to the other side of the
room, thus alienating me, the one woman, from the rest of the group. This was my first taste of
working in a primarily male dominated industry, one full of a diverse collection of cultures,
some of which promoted paranoia and suspicion particularly around women. Out of the eventual
fourteen of us that sat for the tests, only four of us made it to the hands-on practical with a
veterinarian and draft horse. At the end of August, I was given a certificate (see Fig. 1) from the
Health Department that cleared me for the hands-on training needed to obtain a permit. I returned
to Bard to begin my senior year with the intention of returning to the city over winter break.
After a five-month hiatus I came back to New York City to begin my training with drivers.

Figure. 1. My certificate issued by the New York City Health Department. [Provided by Author]
My alarm goes off at 5am each morning. Weather.com reads: 18°F. I stumble out of bed, and into almost every article of clothing I own: underwear, tights, long johns, leggings, jeans, tank-tops, long sleeved blouses, T-shirts, sweaters, turtlenecks, and sweatshirts. To top the outfit off, I pull on three pairs of wooly socks, under hefty winter boots, a few scarves, gloves, a winter hat, sometimes earmuffs or a ski mask, and my warmest winter coat. After one or two days on the job, my entire ensemble smells sweetly sour, a combination of sweat, hair, slobber, and snot, all courtesy of my four-legged colleagues.

At 7:30 in the morning, I find myself on a platform waiting for the 4-Train to take me downtown. The ride to work always makes me uncomfortable. After a few days of disgusted glares in my general direction, I ask some of the carriage workers how they deal with hostile stares on the MTA. One driver tells me that he always takes a cab to work. Another suggests that I find a train car with a person who appears to already smell and stand by them so that people will assume it is that person, not me, stinking up the entire car. Yet another driver laughs, saying that he sits down next to people on the train and makes a whole production of sniffing the air and frowning. He makes a scene out of checking his shoes for dog poop. When people sitting next to him move down a seat, away from the bad smell, he moves with them– always pretending that he cannot pinpoint where the awful smell is coming from. Regardless of the various commuter strategies, I notice from the very beginning of my work day that carriage drivers are subtly stigmatized in New York City’s society.
Figure 2. 52nd Street Stable (officially named Clinton Park Stables): Here, horses are housed on the top two floors, while carriages are stored on the ground level and lockers are in the basement.¹

I arrive at the barn at 8:30am. The morning routine is one of comforting consistency. Generally, drivers pull on their tough winter gear in lockers located in the basement of the stable. Carriage drivers collect their trip cards, a piece of paper where they record their rides throughout the day, and use the time-punch machine to check in for the day. Figure 3 depicts the logbook and time-punch machine. Every day, each driver records the number assigned to the horse they are working,² their own name, their license number, and the medallion number of the carriage itself. Drivers record the time stamp from the time-punch machine on their trip card (Fig. 4)

² This number is branded into the horse’s hoof, making process of branding pain-free.
when they go out, and they repeat the process when they come back to the barn. Meticulous records help the Health Department and Mounted Police Unit regulate the industry.\(^3\)

![Logbook and Time-punch Machine](image)

**Figure 3.** Left: Logbook; Right: Time-punch Machine.\(^4\)

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**Figure 4.** “Trip Card.” [Provided by Author]

\(^3\) Young, "Behind the Scenes," Untapped Cities.
\(^4\) Young, "Behind the Scenes," Untapped Cities.
While the carriage drivers prepare inside the office, the horses are readied by stablemen on the second and third story of the stable. Each horse is given a quick brush down so that the stablemen can check to make sure each horse is healthy. The shinier a horse appears, the more likely he and his driver will get rides in the park, which gives everyone in the industry an incentive to make sure their horse is well tended to. Every horse has their own unique set of tack,\(^5\) which has been tailored to their conformation, and every bridle has the horse’s identification number on it.\(^6\) The tack hangs on a wall near the horse’s stall for efficiency when tacking up in the mornings. Stablemen then escort each horse down the ramp to the first floor where the carriages are stored overnight (Fig. 5).\(^7\)

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\(^5\) Tack is what is put on horses when they work: harnesses, bridles, blinders, halters, and the like.

\(^6\) Some horses, for example, wear Dutch collars instead of Yoke collars. Each collar must be specially fitted to the horse to allow the horse to move freely without obstructing his or her windpipe. In every case, each individual horse’s needs are taken into consideration.

\(^7\) Young, "Behind the Scenes," Untapped Cities.

At 9:15am, last minute preparations are underway: drivers store a bucket of grain from the silos underneath the carriage to give the horse snacks throughout the day. Together, a driver and a stableman back the 2,000-pound animal into the shafts of the carriage and fasten buckles connecting the harness to the carriage. The driver double checks that everything fits correctly and tips the stableman for his trouble. Generally, $4-$6 are expected per horse. All carriages are equipped with brakes, a whip, and a lead-line in case of emergency. Horses and their drivers wait outside 52nd street stable until around 9:30 am.

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9 Young, "Behind the Scenes," Untapped Cities.
10 A lead-line is a rope that can be clipped to the halter so that drivers can hold onto their horses without pulling on the bit in the horse’s mouth. Sometimes drivers use lead-lines to move their horses between parking spaces.
11 Young, "Behind the Scenes," Untapped Cities.
Central park opens to carriages at 10 am, so carriages join the tail end of New York City rush hour traffic. Since I am in training, I ride in the box\textsuperscript{12} with another experienced driver.\textsuperscript{13} Navigating the streets of New York is tricky enough in a car. Imagine trying to weave around unloading trucks and taxis while avoiding speeding cars without any seat belt, windshield, dashboard, or airbag for protection. Not only must drivers be aware of traffic around them, they must also anticipate potential stressors to horses multiple blocks ahead. Some horses are wary of metal plates on the streets, while others can squeeze through a construction zone without batting an eye. Horses themselves are generally eager to start work. Many of them prefer to trot to the park, while their drivers remind them to slow down at lights and not run over pedestrians.

The biggest problem for the carriages in traffic is simply that cars around them forget to give the horses space. Sometimes cars will get too close to the carriages. On our way to the park, one driver tells me of the only time he ever used a whip: one car had gotten far too close to his horse, impatiently waiting for the light to change. The carriage driver took hold of the whip and politely reach out to tap the window of the car below him. The driver of the car rolled down the window, and the carriage driver explained that horses need a few feet of space for safety reasons. That, the carriage driver tells me, is what I call, ‘road rage, carriage driver style.’ We continue up the road to 59th street and park along ‘sixth’— the stretch of 59th street between 5th and 6th avenue.

There are a general set of rules drivers abide by in the industry. Carriages operate on a line system on 6th, 7th, and 8th avenues. When drivers are first in line, they are called “head out,” meaning they are the head of the line and will get the next ride, or customers. As people

\textsuperscript{12} The front seat of the carriage where drivers drive from.
\textsuperscript{13} I drove with as many different people as possible while I was in training. Each driver has his or her own personal style of driving, and I learned a ton watching each of them in their element.
break\textsuperscript{14}, the line moves forward. Drivers in these lines need not worry about getting rides until they are head out because any rides they catch will automatically go to the person at the head of the line. Horses, drivers, and carriages do not need to look as formal in these lines because the lines move in sequential order. Carriages in other parking spots have more competition. The five line refers to the little segment of curb between 5th avenue and Grand Army Plaza. Ironically, the five line only holds four carriages. The nine line is behind the five line on Grand Army Plaza (see Fig. 7). These two spots are highly competitive because customers are able to pick the carriage they would like to take. Thus, horses and drivers have to look their best in order to attract passengers.

\textsuperscript{14} If someone “breaks,” it means they got a first ride. Drivers call to each other, “hey, did you break yet?” In the winter, some drivers never break, meaning that they put in a full 9-hour shift and do not get any rides that day.
Most of the day is spent standing around in the freezing cold, waiting for a rare ride to pass by. Around 11am, I am already freezing, despite my many layers. I ask questions, and I slowly begin to learn the tricks of the trade. Light posts are the natural enemy of all carriage drivers, for pigeons perch upon them, contributing globs of poop to the general carriage aesthetic, whether on the horse, the carriage, or the top hats of drivers. Pigeons also enjoy the free feast of spilled horse oats, so most of the oat buckets beneath the carriages have wooden covers on them to prevent pigeons from stealing all the horse’s food. One driver tells me about choosing passengers: avoid giving foreigners rides because they tend to not tip. Americans will respond to drivers who solicit for rides, so, he tells me, spend more energy hacking\textsuperscript{15} rides from fluent English speakers.

The carriage industry has an on season and an off season. From January - March, even the beginning of April, rides are scarce. A driver tells me that most tourists who visit New York during those times have waited until the cost of travel has decreased. Aside from their reluctance in venturing out into the miserable cold, they are generally unwilling to splurge on carriage rides and are conservative with tips, another driver adds. Therefore, drivers tend to push for “long rides” in the winter because the likelihood of having more than two or three rides in one day is slim to none. Holidays are when the industry makes the most money. Around Christmas time, drivers push for short rides because they make better money in tips, and there are always more people wanting to take rides when they return to 59th street.

Carriage rides are expensive, but the money is distributed carefully within the industry. Employees of the industry are paid primarily in cash. A driver tells me that stablemen are paid minimum wage and are tipped by carriage drivers each morning. Street cleaners, or sweepers,

\textsuperscript{15} Hacking a ride means successfully soliciting customers on the street.
who pick up after the horses are tipped by drivers. Additionally, the tips even out to about $7 per carriage each day. Drivers are paid by commission only, and split their earnings, not including tips, with their employers. Some owners ask for 60% of all fare, while others ask for $32 from the $54 short ride, $60 from the $118 long ride, and $70 from the $140 hour ride (see Fig. 8 for a better sense of the routes). The winter is particularly brutal for drivers, especially when they do not break. Tips are essential for drivers, as they get to keep their tips, as opposed to sharing the money with their employer. A driver tells me that while splitting wages in half may seem to exploit drivers, the cost of owning a horse in the city is tremendous, ranging from $1,000-$5,000 per month. Owners of horses pay the landlord or co-op members board once a month and take care of all farrier and vet care for their horses. Some owners also lease out carriages which can be owned by people not directly affiliated with the industry. Many owners are also drivers, and pocket all the money they make.

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16 Drivers are employed by owners of the horses.
Waiting for a ride on sixth, my toes begin to feel numb. It is already lunch time, but I have to wait to eat until after my shift. To distract myself from the pain of frigid temperatures and my empty stomach, I ask one of the drivers to tell me a bit about a conflict on the news: how animal rights activists want to shut down the industry. “Do you guys interact with them out
“Where are we going here?” I ask. The driver looks upset and launches into a story. Animal rights activists come to the park and heckle drivers and patrons of the industry. In one particular case, a woman from one of the animal rights groups came and began to yell at a driver while he was on a ride. She called him names, racial slurs. At one point, she even threw things at him. We called the Mounted Police, and we had her arrested. Well, a week after the incident, the driver she had been going after was arrested and deported. Animal rights activists threaten our lives. Those are the stakes.

Around 1:45pm, the driver hacks a ride, and I hop up into the box with him as we enter Central Park. The passengers are older, four friends visiting New York together. They have decided to take a long ride. Part of my training is to learn how to give a good tour of Central Park. The driver nods to his left: This is the Plaza Hotel. Movies like *Eloise* and *Home Alone 2* were filmed here.

The two women gasp in back, and one of them says, “Look, hon, those are the same pigeons from Home Alone Two!” The driver hands me the reins as we enter Central Park. I have driven this route with 20 other horses and drivers before, but still, I choose to listen, focusing most of my attention on not crashing the carriage. As we pass by Yoko Ono’s home, the passengers notice a cluster of about eight ambulances sitting outside the building: What do you think is happening there?

The driver answers: Oh, probably someone just tripped. New York is one of the safest cities in the world. Cops get bored, and if someone tripped, I wouldn’t be surprised if all the ambulances in the vicinity raced to the scene, just for something to do.

At roughly 2:30pm, we drop our passengers off by the hot dog stand on the corner of 59th and Grand Army Plaza and decide to head down to 7th Avenue where the line seems to be moving quickly. As we pull in, I notice a group of drivers huddled together. One of them hurries
out to greet us and tells us that there was an accident. A new horse, Arthur, crashed his carriage. Since each driver is responsible for his or her own horse, none of the drivers on 7th avenue can run down to 5th where the accident had taken place to offer help or bring back news. Instead, an intense game of telephone ensues. The driver I am working with calls a few friends down on 5th and periodically updates the rest of us on 7th. None of the drivers on 5th seem to know exactly what happened. No one was hurt, although the passengers were shaken and had accepted rides to the hospital. All the drivers are worried.

A little while later, one of the drivers has an updated account of what had happened: Arthur, a new horse in training, had spooked when an umbrella opened. His driver had been on the ground to give the horse a drink of water when Arthur took off toward the Plaza Hotel. The white Percheron bolting between two parked cars and two unloading taxis, successfully totaling all four cars and his own carriage. Neither Arthur nor the passengers were hurt. Arthur was caught, calmed down, and untacked by his driver, and then was transported back to the stable in a trailer. We all took a collective breath as a semi-truck drove past with the crumpled remains of the purple carriage.

Around 5:30pm, we head back to the stable. Horses get excited on their way home, similar to a mild case of barn-sour horses I have worked with in other equestrian settings. We roll up to the barn, and I help the stableman unhook the horse. The carriage itself must be put away carefully: the seats must be turned upside down (or else a sheet is tossed over them), the top must be pulled over the seats to prevent pigeons from pooping on them. The carriage is inspected to ensure the safety of the next driver and passengers. The driver I worked with today calls his employer to touch base about the day, the horse he worked with, and Arthur’s accident.

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17 Percherons are a type of large draft horse bred for their strength and stamina in war. Judith Dutson, Storey's Illustrated Guide to 96 Horse Breeds of North America (North Adams, MA: Storey Pub., 2005).
I am starving, but I help make sure the horse I worked with is safe and content, eating in his stall before I can leave.\textsuperscript{18}

Finally, around 7:30pm I head home. The train ride back lasts an hour. My feet are sore from standing all day, but I have a few more blocks before I reach my housing. Shivering and drained, I eventually make it back to my room around 9pm. I order delivery, and in a desperate attempt to warm up, I hop into a scalding shower. I eat my first meal all day at 10:45pm, but I can only manage a few bites of spaghetti before exhaustion overwhelms me. I have to be up in less than seven hours to get to work on time tomorrow morning.

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Originally, I had planned to write an ethnography on the carriage industry, based on participant observation and interviews. I developed questions for carriage drivers, and I wrote up a consent form that would protect all of the participants in my research. Initially, my central question was “how do carriage drivers find meaning in and experience their work?” My project was approved by the Institutional Review Board of Bard College. During the first week of training, I reached out to a fellow carriage driver to see if he would be interested in being interviewed for my project. I was upfront about the nature of my research, and he was excited to participate. He told me that other drivers would love to talk about their experiences in the industry as well.

I met him at a bar after work the following evening and quickly realized that I had been set up. He had no intention of being interviewed. Instead, he sat me down at a table and proceeded to intimidate me. He told me that drivers were particularly wary of me because they had been deceived by another woman. She had posed as a new driver for half a year before vanishing to write a negative piece on the carriage industry for the Humane Society. That woman had manipulated one of the carriage drivers, “and he ended up killing himself.”

The driver at the bar was especially suspicious because I was a stranger to the industry and had no one to vouch for me. He also mentioned that activists had threatened the life of one of the carriage drivers, and that he “took care of” the threat. When I asked him to clarify what he meant by “took care of,” he crossed his arms, looked down at me, and said, “Just that. I took care of it.” Given the circumstances, I was fearful of the carriage driver. While my project was never about attacking the industry, I was hesitant to present the materials I had; I was concerned that elaborating on the specifics of my project would escalate the situation. I did not feel safe.

I did my best to diffuse the situation, and we talked for a bit after his warning. But it was late, almost midnight at that point, and when it was time to head home, he insisted on getting me a cab. I accepted, but when the taxi pulled up, he got in with me. Since I was living in student housing, protected by several armed police officers and police dogs, I decided that my best option was to give the taxi driver my address. I did not want to make a scene and be stuck on the eerily empty streets of Hell’s Kitchen alone at night. The last bit of the threat, then, was that the driver then knew exactly where I lived.

Because of the risks involved for me as a researcher in my own study, I had to be flexible in the way I approached my project. To clarify any concerns that the driver had raised the

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19 In order to preserve potential participants’ confidentiality, I suggested we meet in a public yet anonymous location.
previous night, I sent that same driver all of the questions and consent forms the following day. After reading through the details, the driver apologized, and sincerely offered to help me with my project. He signed off on the consent form, agreed to be interviewed and offered to be a liaison between me and other drivers in the industry. The carriage industry is a tight knit community of people who look out for one another and defend each other. Because I was only able to obtain one interview, I could not structure my entire project through qualitative research. Instead, I have approached this thesis from a historical standpoint, including elements of philosophy, sociology, anthropology, and biology to explore the controversy surrounding the carriage industry.

The driver’s warning left me with many questions: what were the animal rights activists writing about? What were their main arguments? What issues did they have with the industry? Who were the main people in the debate? Why were carriage drivers aggressive and paranoid, so much so, that they would think intimidating a young woman was acceptable and necessary? Ultimately, what was the problem, if any, with the carriage industry?

The media has covered the debate between animal rights activists and the New York City carriage industry since the early 2000’s. Animal rights activists claim that industry workers are abusive towards their horses and should be shut down. Carriage drivers contend that they provide a good quality of life for their horses. Therefore, carriage drivers believe that animal rights activists have fabricated a non-existent problem. All forms of media, be it local radio stations, papers, and news broadcasts, even national news have covered protests and accidents like Arthur’s. Various animal rights organizations like P.E.T.A., the A.S.P.C.A., and the Humane

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20 All of the other drivers were reluctant to engage with me directly.
21 People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals
22 American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
Society have gotten involved in the debate. Each side is passionate about their argument and believes that they are doing what is best by the horses. A super PAC posing as an animal rights organization called NYCLASS has donated to campaigns which support animal rights, thereby pulling politicians into the fray. The current mayor of New York City, Bill de Blasio, supports a city wide ban on carriage driving. Marches, protests, posters, and videos have made their way through the streets of New York and into proposed legislation surrounding the industry. Whether a real problem exists in the industry or not, the carriage industry has been a popular topic of controversy for the past decade.

All the while horses remain nearly invisible to the media. Many articles written on the subject, on both sides and by reporters, have almost entirely ignored individual horses in the industry. Animal activists and journalists project human emotions onto animals. Carriage drivers are forced to constantly defend a “non-issue,” and generally lose the horses in their arguments as well. Politicians seek re-election and turn to the industry as a way to rack up votes, rarely ever encountering the horses themselves.

The carriage driver who intimidated me that night did not randomly wake up one morning and decide to frighten a young woman. He was acting proactively defensive, which was interpreted as aggressive behavior from my standpoint. His reaction speaks to how incessantly carriage drivers are persecuted for something they believe to be harmless, contributing to the health and happiness of the equines they work with. Animal rights activists threaten the livelihood of the drivers they attack and have turned trusting, stable humans into paranoid, fearful individuals.

Many questions arise from the controversy around carriage horses. First, are horses abused in the carriage industry? What does the care and treatment of horses look like for horses
What are the various relationships humans have with horses? Why keep the carriage industry in New York City? What are animal rights? What are the specific concerns animal rights activists have with the industry? The ultimate question this thesis will examine is: should the carriage industry continue to exist in modern day America? By answering these questions, I aim to examine the significance of horses in America’s history and culture. This is relevant to American Studies because using the case study of New York provides parallels for examining carriage industries across the country in American urban settings. This thesis is designed as a call to action for activists and employees of the industry to reflect upon their relationships with animals.

I argue that the carriage industry of New York City should continue to persist for three reasons: first, the carriage industry is an example of a mutualistic relationship between horses and humans and is therefore mutually beneficial to both creatures involved in the relationship. Second, Central Park was designed around carriage horses, which are still necessary to fully experience the park in the 21st century. Finally, the carriage horses live a high quality of life within the industry, the difference between animal rights and animal welfare. By using the carriage industry as a case study, one may be able to interpret other relationships with other animals in a more positive light in the future.

My thesis is divided into three chapters. The first chapter, “Symbiotic Relationships Between Horses and People,” is broken into three sections. Section one is titled Pure Mutualism Before the Industrial Revolution and explores mutually beneficial relationships between horses and humans before the Industrial Revolution. Section two is titled Exploitative Mutualism During the Industrial Revolution which examines how mutualism changed form during the Industrial Revolution, illuminating the exploitative mutualistic relationship that bloomed from
the invisibility of horses as living beings. The third section is titled *Commensalism and The Great Epizootic of 1872* and investigates how horse and human relationships evolved into a commensalistic relationship after the flu. Section four of chapter one is titled *Parasitism Within the Feral Horse Population* and touches on the parasitic feral horses and horse slaughter. The last section is called *Pure Mutualism: Present-Day New York City Carriage Industry,* makes a case for mutualistic symbiotic relationships with humans and animals in the carriage industry today.

The second chapter, “The Benefits of Horse-Drawn Carriages for Visitors of Central Park,” is divided into three sections. The first section is called *Olmsted’s Vision* and explores Frederick Law Olmsted’s original vision of Central Park as an oasis for wearied workers in the heart of the Industrial Revolution. The second section of chapter two is called *A Dream Realized Through Horses* and explores the role in which horses were key for making Olmsted’s dream a reality. The final section is titled *The Relevance of Olmsted’s Vision in Present-Day New York City* and examines why keeping such a historical institution is essential in the 21st century.

The third chapter, “Animal Rights v. Animal Welfare: The Case for Carriage Horses,” has been divided into two sections. The first section, *Animal Rights v. Animal Welfare,* distinguishes animal rights from animal welfare within the context of the carriage industry. The second section, called *The Agency of Carriage Horses* encourages animal rights activists to see horses as individuals who have agency and invites them to learn how to “speak horse” before speaking for horses. Ultimately, my thesis presents a way in which humans can view purely mutualistic and commensalistic relationships with animals in positive light.
Chapter 1: Symbiotic Relationships Between Horses and People

The argument of this thesis is that the horse carriage industry should be maintained for the reasons described in the introduction. In this chapter, I explain why pure mutualism is important within human-horse relationships. This begins by cataloguing the different kinds of relationships that people and horses might have, and then describes how symbiotic relationships have historically changed in New York City. The chapter concludes with the argument that carriage horses share a purely mutualistic relationship with their drivers. Therefore, horses are not abused or exploited by employees of the industry in the way that animal rights activists claim.

The following chapter is framed around four types of relationships which are most commonly found in the field of biology. There are three types of symbiotic relationships: mutualism, commensalism, and parasitism. In a mutualistic relationship, both members benefit from the relationship. In a commensalistic relationship, one member benefits while the other is neutral to the relationship. Parasitic relationships occur when one member benefits while the other member suffers directly because of the first member’s actions. For the purposes of this thesis, I make a distinction between “pure mutualism” in which animals and humans benefit equally from one another, and “exploitative mutualism” in which humans use their power over horses to extract the most utility from horses while providing minimum care for them. Humans and horses have always had various symbiotic relationships with one another in North America.

The Industrial Revolution, which swept through America between the 1820s and 1910s, changed the way humans saw their relationship with domesticated animals. Prior to the Industrial Revolution, humans and horses benefited from a purely mutualistic relationship, where many humans relied on horses for their livelihood. But in the 1820s, the relation of humans to horses
turned into one of exploitative mutualism. Because of the demand to transport a greater number of goods from manufacturing across the country wrought by the Industrial Revolution, more horses were needed for longer hours to fulfill the greater needs. Thus, people needed to maximize the efficiency of each horse. Instead of providing proper care and rest for individual horses, people crammed as many horses as possible into the smallest amount of space. Any horse that got sick was quickly replaced by another horse. As a result of the increasing demands for equine labor, humans forgot that horses were living beings and viewed them, instead, as machines.23

While horses still depended on people for their survival, people forced horses to live in terrible conditions and worked their equine partners far past a healthy day’s work. In turn, horses suffered. The Great Epizootic of 1872 shut down America’s economy for four months and forced humans to consider the vulnerability of their horses. Though living conditions and laws were improved for equines, the invention of the automobile in the early 1920’s allowed humans to distance themselves from horses. Instead of taking responsibility for the cruelty they inflicted upon their animals, humans separated themselves from the maltreatment of horses. They decided that a commensalistic relationship with equines, one in which horses would benefit from humans while humans would have a neutral relationship with those same horses, would be the easiest way to remedy the abuses inflicted upon horses during the Industrial Revolution. Horses were then retired into either recreational riding partners or else released into the wild. Thus, the mid-20th century saw a great rise in the population of feral horses. Because humans chose to distance themselves from horses, 40,000 horses suffered greatly and became parasites on land designed for 2,500. The Bureau of Land Management spent the next 50 years trying to develop ways to

control the feral horse population. The BLM attempted everything from castrating stallions\textsuperscript{24} to injecting mares with hormones that would prevent them from becoming pregnant. None of the methods used by the BLM were sufficient. In the late 1990’s, horse slaughter became the main way in which humans could effectively control the population of feral horses. The exploitative mutualism that resulted from the Industrial Revolution made animal rights activists skeptical of human and animal encounters; their suspicion led to the question of whether or not the carriage industry of New York City should continue.

The carriage industry in present-day New York City defies the trend of distancing oneself from animals, which has caused tension between animal rights activists and employees of the carriage industry. Many animal rights activists worry that any form of mutualistic symbiotic relationships with horses in the 21st century will mimic the exploitative mutualism commonly seen during the Industrial Revolution. The carriage industry acknowledges the harm that humans inflicted upon animals during the mid 19th century. By engaging with the past, employees of the carriage industry have been able to overcome the abuses that horses endured during the Industrial Revolution and have successfully repaired and rebuilt their relationship with equines. Horses and humans in the carriage industry today enjoy the pure mutualism of a time before the Industrial Revolution in which both horses and humans benefited equally from their relationships with one another.

**Pure Mutualism Before the Industrial Revolution**

North America has a unique relationship with horses. The North American continent was home to horses that had evolved from small cat-like creatures no more than four inches tall, to

\textsuperscript{24} Stallions are intact males. Geldings are castrated males. Mares are female horses.
the first wild horses which resembled the Przewalski horse that can be seen today. As animals of
prey, horses roamed all continents and were hunted by a myriad of creatures, Homo sapiens
included. But something mysterious happened just over 10,000 years ago. Every horse on the
North American continent vanished without a trace.\textsuperscript{25}

To this day, scientists are still puzzled by the disappearance of horses in North America.
Perhaps the climate and flora changed, resulting in the death of every equine. Maybe a deadly
plague infected most horses, leaving those unscathed vulnerable to predators. Although an
unlikely view given that few horse skeletons of this time had any evidence of trauma caused by
Homo sapiens, some people even speculate that humans overhunted horses on the continent to
extinction. Even more curiously, horses on every other continent remained alive and well during
the time of the mysterious disappearance. Whatever eradicated all the horses in North America
was something specific and unique to North America. Regardless of the cause, the point stands
that horses were absent from North America for over 10,000 years. Roughly around the same
time, humans experienced some of the most formative centuries of development: a time that
witnessed the rapid expansion of agriculture, hunting practices, and relationships with animals in
general.\textsuperscript{26}

Since every other space on the planet was home to horses during these formative years of
the human species, two types of relationships were established between horses and people:
nourishment and utility. For years, humans hunted horses. They were an excellent source of
protein and provided nutrients for families and villages (more so than wispy little deer, squirrels,
and rabbits). But as humans began to understand their symbiotic relationship with nature, they

\textsuperscript{25} Tamsin Pickeral, \textit{The Horse Lover's Bible: The Complete Practical Guide to Horse Care and Management}
\textsuperscript{26} Judith Dutson, \textit{Storey's Illustrated Guide to 96 Horse Breeds of North America} (North Adams, MA: Storey Pub.,
2005), 1-20.
discovered that horses could be more efficiently used in society as domesticated partners than as food. The potential for horse power certainly did not stop the culture of eating horses from existing, but it did give rise to the domestication of horses on every continent other than North America.27

Horses were the perfect animals to domesticate. While horses were not the strongest, fastest, largest, or most efficient endurance workers, they were still one of the best candidates for domestication. Horses were non-territorial: far more passive than aggressive. Since they were members of herds, horses understood social hierarchies. This would, in turn, allow horses to be easily incorporated into human social structures. Additionally, reproduction came easily to horses as they could successfully breed in all different environments. Moreover, a mare's gestation period was also relatively short, about a year, as compared with larger animals, such as elephants, who gestate for over two years. Unlike larger mammals such as elephants and hippos, horses were also a manageable size and could be more effectively trained than their larger counterparts.28 Unlike deer, who also possess all of these characteristics, horses were brave enough to overcome their fears. Curiosity and courage meant that horses could potentially be taught to thrive in noisy and busy environments, while deer, on the other hand, would simply run away. Horses also have a specific spine shape that allows them to carry humans on their back, as opposed to cattle and oxen, who also have the strength to pull as much weight as a horse, but cannot support humans on their backs.29

Entire empires and nations began to revolve around horses. War strategies were planned around the use of chariots in Egypt and in Rome.\textsuperscript{30} Humans were able to plan out more advanced hunting strategies on horseback instead of on foot. By harnessing the sheer brute force of their four legged companions, people could travel faster and farther than ever before. Recognizing the diverse roles horses could fill, humans began to breed equines for specific tasks. Horses were bred for speed, endurance, stamina, or the like. Additionally, larger carts were hooked up to teams of horses to help pull heavy things like building materials to different locations. By accessing the power of horses, humans were no longer tethered to their own physical limitations. In spite of these vast changes, the practice of hunting horses never faded from most of the world. Humans continued to eat horses, even though horses continued to be bred and used to contribute to society. Around the world, humans were eating and domesticating horses left and right, all except the humans in North America.\textsuperscript{31}

From the late 15th century to the 1820s, horses enjoyed pure mutualism with their human companions in North America. In 1493, the first horses in over 10,000 years returned to North America with Christopher Columbus on his second voyage. As aliens to North America, horses thrived. There was plenty of lush grasslands to maintain horse populations. Breeders took advantage of the land to grow their herds of horses.\textsuperscript{32} Horses helped people build cities, travel between towns, protect buildings from fire, and neighborhoods from crime. In exchange, people cared for horses. Horses were fed, watered, sheltered, and exercised by their humans. City dwelling horses in particular relied completely on their humans, for they could not go out and graze if their person neglected to care for them. Without human care, large draft horses would

\textsuperscript{31} Rebecca Cassidy, \textit{The Sport of Kings: Kinship, Class, and Thoroughbred Breeding in Newmarket} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
\textsuperscript{32} Dutson, \textit{Storey's Illustrated}, 1-20.
not last long in the wild, especially during winter months. Horses relied on people for their livelihood in the same way that people relied on horses for their own prosperity. Since both horses and people benefited directly from the horse-human relationship, pure mutualistic symbiosis was formed.

**Exploitative Mutualism During the Industrial Revolution**

In the 1820’s the Industrial Revolution made its way to North America. The Industrial Revolution changed the type of symbiotic relationship between humans and horses from one of pure mutualism to one of exploitative mutualism. Before, horses had been properly cared for and could work to the best of their abilities. When advances in technology created more jobs for people, more horses were needed to help manage the influx in goods being shipped across the country. By seeking the most efficient way to harness horse power, humans soon began to lose sight of the requirements needed for horses to live relatively high qualities of life. Horses were still expected to work the same number of hours while people lowered their quality of care to a bare minimum. Thus, humans began to manipulate their power over horses because they took advantage of horses’ domesticity. Consequently, the relationship between horses and humans shifted from pure mutualism to exploitative mutualism.

Several questions arise from the movement from pure mutualism to exploitative mutualism: How did the shift in specific symbiosis occur? In what ways were horses exploited? How were horses mistreated during the Industrial Revolution? And what were the consequences of exploitative mutualism for both horses and humans?

Americans came to exploit horses in the 19th century more directly because they greatly underestimated their reliance upon them. The Industrial Revolution presented a paradox to
relationships between humans and horses. Technology had replaced many of the functions of horses. The steam engine, for example, was created in the early 1800’s, and replaced the need for horses to travel great distances. As the transcontinental railroad was built, Americans assumed that they were far less reliant on equines than they once had been. Railroads were much faster, could pull heavier loads, and were becoming increasingly prevalent throughout the North East. Horses were a thing of the past. Ironically, people began to depend more upon horses than ever before to help build infrastructure, and load and unload train cars. Specific jobs created for horses during the Industrial Revolution will be discussed below.

Humans’ relationship with horses also turned into exploitative mutualism because people began to view horses as machines as opposed to living beings. As more and more horses became necessary for maintaining large cities like New York, people saw them less as individual creatures deserving of quality care. One or two sick horses could be quickly replaced with a healthier model. Humans began to view horses more like inanimate objects than living creatures. On this topic, historian Ann Norton Greene writes, “horses are one of the very oldest kinds of technology. More precisely, horses are biotechnology, or organisms altered for human use. Through the process of domestication, horses became living machines.”

The Industrial Revolution repurposed equines as four-legged objects. Humans stripped horses of their life-like qualities, and began to encounter them as inanimate metal machines. Breeding practices contributed to creating a willing athlete, far more able than the average human. People confused the sheer power of horses with the power of the steam engine, even coining the phrase “horsepower” as a descriptor for the amount of work a metal machine could accomplish.

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33 Greene, *Horses at Work*, 4.
34 McShane and Tarr, *The Horse.*
The Industrial Revolution created a myriad of roles for horses in New York City during the mid to late 19th century. Equines provided transportation of goods and provided other services for different groups and communities. Horses were involved in several different types of economic exchange. Carts were pulled almost exclusively by horses (except for the occasional strong willed peddler). Horse-drawn carriages were the elite’s preferred form of travel, while larger omnibuses\(^{35}\) provided collective transit for those with lesser means. Almost all travel between multiple cities and towns was done on horseback.\(^{36}\)

Wagons carrying heavy loads—everything from hay to bricks for construction—were headed by horses. Children benefited from the working horse in the summertime when horses would pull sprinkler trucks spraying cool water for them to play in. In the winter time, people relied on horsepower to remove thousands of pounds of snow from the streets. A select few boats were powered by horses who would walk atop treadmills configured to send power to propellers below deck. Laundry, newspaper, milk, and beer deliveries were all executed by horses and their drivers. Giant rolls of paper required for the newspapers themselves were assembled in great trucks pulled by horses. Horses pulled heavy freight trains, which in turn, held many coveted goods and resources within them. Each train car and boat had to be unloaded and distributed by even more horses who would take smaller sections of packages to their rightful owners.\(^{37}\)

On top of that, horses kept the city safe. All fire trucks were pulled by teams of at least four horses, while firemen followed in transit of their own, pulled by at least two other horses. Fire horses were trained to run hard and fast through the streets, as opposed to other horses trained for slower but consistent work. Additionally, fire horses were taught to be fearless: while

\(^{35}\) An omnibus was essentially a small trolley, pulled by a team of at least two horses, which provided cities with one of the first forms of public transportation.


all horses living in cities had to be calm and desensitized to the hustle and bustle of everyday
life, smoke and chaos would greet the team of firemen and their dutiful equine companions at
nearly every call. Mounted police officers also roamed city streets, protecting the city and
“serving as crowd control.”  

Despite all of the work horses did for New York City, they lived in terrible conditions
during the Industrial Revolution. Horses lived in carriage houses throughout the city These
buildings were set up with tall ceilings on the first floor to allow for storage of the carriages
themselves. The upper levels were connected by a series of large ramps so that horses could
move between levels to get to their homes. All floors other than the first generally had low
ceilings and poor ventilation. Horses were piled next to each other in small tie stalls, usually only
4ft by 6ft to maximize the space and number of horses that could fit into any one barn (Fig. 9).
Horses who lived in these cramped conditions suffered from a myriad of ailments.

Figure 9. Carriage horses were housed in close quarters in New York, NY in 1910.  

38 McShane and Tarr, The Horse, 147-49.
2F3XC5152YLU.html
The infamous phrase, “tying up”\textsuperscript{40} was a condition in which horses’ muscles would seize up. Pain caused by tying up resulted in the inability of the animal to partake in any physical activity. Tying up would happen to horses on their days off: equines which had been working all week were rested on the seventh day of work in their tiny stalls. Without any room to move, horses’ muscles would stiffen and throb, making any sort of movement incredibly painful. Tying up could have been avoided if horses had larger stalls and turnout on their days off.\textsuperscript{41}

Poor ventilation also meant that horses would suffer from respiratory problems. Horses are wet creatures: “A 1000-pound horse releases 2 gallons of moisture into the air each day through respiration. A four-horse barn must thus deal with more than 8 gallons of water vapor per day, not counting the additional moisture created by the evaporation of urine and manure.”\textsuperscript{42} Over 200 draft horses (which weigh twice as much as the above quote) could be crammed into the space of a three-story building without windows or air vents. These conditions led to many respiratory issues that could be fatal if the horse was worked excessively.\textsuperscript{43} The Nation wrote an article about the treatment of horses during this time:

The windows are small, and are either not made to open or are never opened...In the city the working horse is treated worse than a steam-engine or sewing-machine. He is almost invariably, if his owner be a poor man, shut up during sixteen hours out of the twenty-four in a small, noisome den, every plank and beam in which is impregnated with foul exhalations....If he belongs to one of the great car companies, or omnibus companies, or livery stable keepers, he is either immured in a cellar several feet below the ground, into which the light and air cannot come, and which is probably damp, or else kept in large rooms with low ceilings and small windows, and in which light and air are not allowed to come and in which he is packed together with several hundred of his fellows, almost as

\textsuperscript{40} Tying up is also known as “Monday Morning Sickness.” Its official scientific diagnosis is called “azoturia.” John McEwen and Jane Glover-Hill, \textit{Vet Clinic Horses: The Owner’s Action Guide to Diagnosing and Treating Horses and Reducing Costly Vet Bills} (North Pomfret, VT.: Trafalgar Square Pub., 2004).
\textsuperscript{42} Cherry Hill, 102.
\textsuperscript{43} McEwen and Glover-Hill, \textit{Vet Clinic}.
closely as they can stand together, up to his knees in half-rotten straw, and with fermenting manure all around him.\(^{44}\)

New Yorkers who worked with horses in the city during mid 1800’s failed to see the issue of these living conditions because horses were mostly viewed as machines. There was little compassion for the living creature because humans had bred such a powerful animal that was seemingly impervious to illness or disease except for the odd horse here and there, or older animals who were slated to die anyways.\(^{45}\) Humans had entered an exploitative mutualistic relationship by capitalizing on working horses. People abused and neglected their animals because of the demands of the Industrial Revolution.

Some animal rights activists in present day America use history as an argument for abolishing the carriage industry: conditions were terrible for working horses in the past. To say that the carriage horses should stick around because of their historical connection to Central Park and NYC itself is, they claim, a poor argument because horses were clearly treated so poorly in the past. How could keeping horses for history’s sake be worth it for people or horses based on this barbaric treatment? Animal rights activists have a point. If things were so terrible before the 20th century, why should horses be oppressed and tortured with archaic and borderline abusive living environments? While their reference to the pre-epizootic treatment of horses is accurate, animal rights activists who use this argument fail to acknowledge huge policy reform that occurred in the late 1800’s.

\(^{44}\) The Position of the Horse in Modern Society,” *The Nation*, October 31, 1872, 278, microfilm.
\(^{45}\) Greene, *Horses at Work.*
Commensalism and The Great Epizootic of 1872

The Great Epizootic of 1872 was a virus which infected horses that swept across North America that fall. Much like human influenza, this disease presented the following symptoms: “shivering, coughing, runny nosed, streaming-eyed, and weak...Horses with influenza suffered symptoms familiar to any human victim of “the flu”–rapid onset of extreme fatigue, muscular weakness, fever, aches, and a general lack of interest in eating or moving.” The virus attacked the horse’s throat and lungs, similar to the flu as it is experienced by humans. Horse owners and handlers were well aware of when a horse became sick because the horse’s symptoms were apparent and obvious, unmistakably distinct from a mere cold. So many horses were infected across the continent, that the disease became known as The Great Epizootic of 1872.

When the outbreak of equine influenza hit Canada in late September, the severity of the disease wiped out most of the economy. While the disease drastically changed the lives of horses in their ability to work, to eat, and even to breathe, it was almost equally disruptive to the lives of many humans given their heavy dependence upon equines. When horses got sick, the entire economy shut down. Cities up and down the East Coast screeched to a halt while horses recovered. People could not travel. Entire trainloads stood full of supplies, waiting indefinitely for horses to unload their contents. Commerce stood still for three months while the disease ravaged the horse population. Durkin cites a story run by the New York Times during the fall of 1872 in his own article, quoting, “Large quantities of freight are accumulating along the Erie Railway in Paterson, New Jersey. The disease is spreading rapidly in Bangor, Maine. All fire department horses in Providence, Rhode Island, are sick.” People’s lives were put in danger

46 Greene, Horses at Work, 167 - 168.
when police officers could not control crowds and when firemen could not respond quickly enough. Boston suffered a huge loss in the fall of 1872 when 776 buildings spanning as far as 65 acres burned down in a fire that could have been stopped earlier and managed better with the aid of horses. However, horses could barely walk let alone race to the smoky scene of a fire that autumn.47

The aftermath of the Great Epizootic of 1872 served as a wake-up call for humans living in cities throughout the East Coast. First, humans were forced to face the fact that their society still predominantly revolved around and was reliant upon horses. Greene writes, “only when a crisis like the equine influenza epidemic exposed the structure of the energy system was [the] symbiosis between steam and horses fully recognized,” (2). Despite advances in technology, America still ran almost entirely on pure horsepower. Understanding Americans’ own reliance on horses was an essential realization because it humbled humans to a point of acknowledgment of the limits of even the most advanced technology of their time.

Secondly, people’s eyes were opened to the fact that horses were living beings and should be treated as such. For several centuries, horses had been viewed as technology: powerful machines to be wielded by their human owners. An article by The Nation written on October 31, 1872 stated:

...most of us have well nigh forgotten that the horse was an animal like ourselves – liable to pains and aches and death....We really ought, therefore, to be thankful that the present

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[epizootic] has brought us face to face with the startling fact, that the sudden loss of horse labor would totally disorganize our industry and our commerce, and would plunge social life into disorder, would threaten the lives of hundreds of thousands of human beings, especially if it occurred in winter, and might expose our great cities to destruction by fire. In short, we are now for the first time forcibly reminded that a plague might break out among horses, as plagues have broken out among men, which would sweep them away by the hundred or thousand every day, and which would momentarily baffle science.48

The Epizootic of 1872 illuminated just how vulnerable horses were, especially those kept in harsh living conditions. Consequently, America made several policy changes around the treatment of horses after this realization. Instead of performing reactive veterinary care on horses presenting symptoms, people created a system of proactive basic care to prevent outbreaks of equine influenza, or any other horse diseases for that matter. Living conditions were modified. In response to the epizootic, the editor of The Principles of Equity and Equality Pleading, H.C. Merwin, wrote an article titled, The Ethics of Horse-Keeping in 1891. This article presented a humane way of treating horses that included preventative measures for disease. For the first time since the Industrial Revolution, people were rethinking the treatment of horses, from training methods, to living conditions, to retirement responsibility. Instead of being tied up in shoots, horses now had to have their own stalls in which they could potentially be quarantined in the event of another mass outbreak. Stables were encouraged to provide better ventilation for their animals. More hygienic practices were implemented within stalls and on roads in order to better maintain sewage left behind by horses.49

People could not afford to pile horses into buildings with poor ventilation and little room for movement because it spread disease too quickly. Larger stalls were built to be a minimum of “sixty square feet, with a minimum width of 7 feet that [would] allow for carriage horses to turn

49 Rehfeld, "The Great."
around safely and lie down." Carriage houses were reformed to increase ventilation through the addition of windows and fans to the stables. Throughout the city, sewage management improved greatly as street sweepers took on the responsibility of cleaning up after horses. Later in the 20th century, working horses were required to wear something called diapers, which essentially caught any and all excrement in a large bag behind the horse’s tail. Keeping the city clean and improving living conditions for horses minimized the risk of another equine epizootic taking off and destroying the economy in New York City.

Humans’ symbiotic relationships with horses changed again after the flu and became commensalistic in their nature. While humans reformed the living conditions for all horses in New York City after the epizootic, horses were phased out of the city during the next 50 years as the automobile replaced their jobs. Animal rights activist groups began to point out the abuse people had inflicted upon horses during the mid 1800’s. Groups like the A.S.P.C.A. and The Humane Society of the United States encouraged horse owners to enjoy commensalistic relationships with their equine partners. Horses would not have to be their human’s main source of income, while still receiving the benefits of high quality care from humans. People no longer relied on horses to thrive in the mid-twentieth century. Horses lost their function in human society, but still relied on people for their care and treatment. While humans benefited from the loving partnership of their horses, most riding was now done purely for pleasure. Humans no longer needed horses in order to survive. Horses, on the other hand, specifically larger draft breeds, still relied on people for their own survival. Aside from equine professionals, people

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became relatively neutral participants in the horse-human relationship, while horses still actively benefited from their relationships with humans, for they simply could not survive without them.

**Parasitism Within the Feral Horse Population: 1959 - Present Day**

Though many horse owners kept their horses and continued to breed their partners for the show ring, there were simply too many horses in New York City for all to be financially provided for. As a result, many horses were released into the wild. As more and more horses were released into the wild, feral horses\(^{52}\) became parasites out west. The horses that survived on their own were not the heavy draft horses still seen in the carriage industry today— they were smaller, stockier breeds: mainly easy keepers\(^{53}\) that had solid feet.\(^{54}\) While feral horses seem on the surface to have little impact on humans, they have caused significant damage to the land they currently live on. Horses frequently get into farmer’s crops, harming their yield and hurting the environment. Over 40,000 feral horses roam land that can sustain 2,500. The horses on land out west live poor quality lives because the land cannot sustain their populations. Horses, therefore, suffer from malnutrition, consuming everything in their paths in a vain attempt to fill their empty

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\(^{52}\) Aside from the Przewalski’s Horse, there is no such thing as a modern day wild horse. Feral, by definition, means “in a wild state, especially after escape from captivity or domestication.” Wild, on the other hand, implies that a species has never been domesticated in the first place. Horses have not been truly wild for centuries. Thus, a distinction must be made within the terminology describing the “free” horse. "feral," in *The New Oxford American Dictionary*, ed. Frank R. Abate and Elizabeth Jewell (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 623.

\(^{53}\) “Easy Keeper” is a term that refers to a horse that can consume less food and gain more weight than other horses. Race horses like thoroughbreds, for example, are hard keepers because they were bred to keep weight off of them in order to run faster. Stockier breeds like the American Quarter Horse, were bred to work 12 hour shifts herding cattle on little food, most of which lacked nutrients. Thus, stock breeds of horses can eat less while retaining the same weight as another horse who has to eat more in order to simply maintain their weight.

\(^{54}\) “Feet” is an equestrian word for hoof. Many horses, even today, have poor quality feet because they were bred as domesticated animals to rely on humans to shoe their feet. Horses with delicate feet might struggle in the wild without farrier attention. In fact, many feral horses today have overgrown, cracked hooves. This is not to say that all horses need to be shod (have metal shoes on their hooves), just that many feral horses would benefit from routine trimming, even horses who walk as often as horses in the wild to reach their next source of water or food.
stomachs. See Figure 10 and Figure 11 for a comparison between a neglected, emaciated equine, and a healthy, domesticated horse.

Figure 10. Feral horses suffer from starvation, overgrown hooves, and sharp teeth.  

Figure 11. The domesticated horse enjoys a healthy body score of 3-5, displays a shiny coat, and exhibits well-trimmed hooves.

Feral horses are now a type of parasite that have been leeching off of human crops and land, leaving destruction and catastrophe in their wake. The Bureau of Land Management has been working since 1971 to solve the problem of overpopulation in feral horses. Several strategies have been implemented to manage the feral horse population. One such example can be found in roundups, which entail the counting of horses within a given equine population—this in turn allows for other management practices to take place. Fertility programs have sprung up to geld stallions and infuse mares with hormones which prevent studs from impregnating them for a period of time. Adoption, too, has been an attractive way for animal rights activists to manage the overpopulation. But these methods hardly make a dent in the population of feral horses.

Horse slaughter has become the solution to managing the feral horse population out west in the 21st century. Americans have never viewed horses as food and have instead only encountered horses in primarily mutualistic or otherwise commensalistic relationships. Equines have never been on the menu for Americans, which is part of the reason why Americans have found slaughtering horses to be morally burdensome. However, because those horses in particular have no direct mutualistic bond with people, humans can morally slaughter them.

In spite of humans distancing themselves from horses by releasing them into the wild, animal rights activists claim that people are still abusive to horses through the practice of slaughter. The slaughter industry is, indeed, inhumane. First, horses are rounded up by

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59 When humans are threatened, they have a moral responsibility to defend themselves, one which trumps consideration for other lives. Feral horses threaten human lives because their population numbers combined with their grazing habits could result in a modern day dust bowl. Thus, the killing of specifically feral horses is permissible.
helicopters and forced to run for hours on end before they reach the holding pens. Exhausted horses displaying any medical ailments are then loaded onto double-decker semi-trailer slaughter trucks. These trucks are the first form of abuse. When horses get scared and frightened, they like to stick their heads up in the air to better see any potential harm headed their way. The slaughter trucks are designed for animals much smaller than horses, like pigs and cows. Due to the chaos of strange smells and sounds along with separation anxiety arising from their detachment from other herd members, the horses that are pushed onto the trailer continuously slam their heads into the metal framework of the too-low ceilings, causing bloody messes. These wounds sometimes result in neurological problems such as a horse’s loss of control of his or her legs, or in some cases, a horse’s inability to stand up properly, which could lead to his or her being trampled by the terrified animals around it.  

Humans pile up to 100 horses onto a trailer designed for no more than 70 cows at most. Unlike cows, horses find little comfort in cramped quarters. The inability to move causes stress, which encourages the confused animals to kick out at each other. Needless injuries occur because of overcrowding. Since tractor-trailer slaughter trucks are not designed for horses, other problems ensue. Horses who lash out at each other by kicking frequently get their hooves and legs stuck through the circular air vents along the truck’s side. In a futile attempt to regain their balance, the horses thrash around, sometimes breaking their legs or snapping off parts of their limbs on the sharp edges of the trailer. On rare occasions, these trucks crash, and the horses sit on the highway for hours, dripping in bodily fluids as life seeps out of them.

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61 Rehfeld, "A Horse."
Since the United States has banned slaughter houses\textsuperscript{62}, these horses have to travel at least three days without food or water to get to Canada or Mexico where the killing of horses is permitted. All trailering (even trailers that are not going to slaughter) is exhausting for horses. They have to keep their balance as the truck bumps along the highway, over gravel lanes to auctions, and bends around curves in the road. All haulers of horses who are not going to slaughter are required to stop for an hour a minimum of every four hours to feed, water, and rest the horses. Horses must also be unloaded every eleven hours and left to rest for a recuperation period of 12 hours at layover facilities across the country. These luxuries are not afforded to the slaughter-bound horse, who must endure multiple days and nights of extreme physical exertion without any sort of sustenance.\textsuperscript{63}

Finally, the horses arrive at the slaughterhouse. Rancid smells and loud noises greet their senses as they are shepherded off the trailer. Often times, unloading the horses includes the whipping and beating of horses who are moving too slowly, sometimes due to injuries previously received on the double-decker slaughter truck. Many of the horses suffer from lameness as they enter the slaughter line, struggling to walk on excruciatingly painful feet.\textsuperscript{64}

They follow their fellows into a dark room where the slaughter takes place. Horses have a much harder time adjusting to light than humans do. Whereas it takes a person 30 seconds to fully adjust to an extreme change in light, it takes a horse about three minutes. Plunged into darkness, horses rely on their sense of touch to lead them forward. Piled together, one horse’s nose rests on the butt of the horse in front of it, and so on, such that when the blow from the nail


\textsuperscript{63} Rehfeld, "A Horse."

\textsuperscript{64} “Keeping Horse Slaughter in the Past,” video file, YouTube, posted by The Humane Society of the United States, March 20, 2013, accessed April 19, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1J250sHlodM.
gun kills the horse in front of another, the next horse in line is forced to plow into the carcass of
the former horse. In spite of the apparent morbidity of this part of the process, the actual killing
of the horse hardly seems like a significant problem. It is the difference between quality of life
and length of life.65

The horrors experienced by horses going to slaughter mimic the abuses equines had to
endure while working during the time of the Industrial Revolution. Horses are mass produced in
the sense that they are gathered and shipped in bulk to manufacturers who then sell their bodies
as products for buyers overseas or else local dog food and glue companies. Consideration for the
individual life of each horse is lost in the pressure to manage land. Horses suffer a low quality of
life even before going to slaughter because they cannot thrive in the wild without people. Many
of the horses seen in slaughter pens are emaciated, have overgrown hooves, and struggle to eat.
By distancing themselves from horses, humans have perpetuated a cycle of toxicity for the
animals they attempted to save from themselves.

**Pure Mutualism: Present-Day New York City Carriage Industry**

What does the slaughter of feral horses have to do with the carriage industry? Aside from
lobbying to shut down the entire industry, animal rights activists take issue with the laws, or lack
thereof, surrounding retired carriage horses. Currently, the only law that exists for older horses in
the industry is that every horse who reaches the age of 26 must be retired from the industry.
There are no clarifying laws which dictate what retirement entails. Activists fear that horses who
have spent their lives working in the city should be saved from slaughter.

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65 “Keeping Horse.”
The reason that sending a retired carriage horse to slaughter is morally wrong is because carriage horses are one of the unique cases in 21st century America where humans and horses still coexist in a mutualistic symbiotic relationship. I agree with animal rights activists that carriage horses should be saved from slaughter because of the mutualistic relationship humans have with their horses. At the same time, I do not believe that slaughtering feral horses is inherently bad, particularly when it comes to the parasitic relationship horses may have with people. Since humans rely heavily upon and benefit greatly from their four-legged partners in the industry, horses who enjoy that mutualistic bond deserve to be spared from slaughter. Just like their hard-working humans, carriage horses should be legally bound to retirement in places that will take them on for the duration of their lifespan.

The carriage industry of New York City is a case study of a present day purely mutualistic symbiotic relationship between horses and people. Some animal rights activists fear that any sort of mutualism with an animal will result in the exploitative mutualism reminiscent of the Industrial Revolution. To prevent further harm to animals, groups like The Humane Society, A.S.P.C.A. and P.E.T.A. have called for a ban on the carriage industry. I argue that horses and drivers in the carriage industry of New York City enjoy the benefits of pure mutualism. Horses in the industry have the chance to enjoy the policy reforms made for them in the wake of The Great Epizootic of 1872. Carriage horses rely on their humans for every day care. Equines still thrive on routine farrier work and are closely supervised by their owners and drivers to ensure their good health. The industry has a vet on call 24/7 who comes to the aid of every sick horse within a matter of minutes. Horses in the carriage industry truly thrive because of their relationship with humans.

66 There are plenty of other case studies in which horses work in purely mutualistic relationships with humans, including therapy riding for those who struggle with physical disabilities, and therapy encounters with horses on the ground for veterans with PTSD.
Humans who work in the carriage industry, on the other hand, thrive because of their horses. Drivers rely on their working companions to make them money; a driver without a horse is a driver out of work. Employees rely on their horses to support their own families at home, to buy their groceries, and to pay their rent. Many of the drivers who work in the carriage industry have language barriers as English is their second language. Fluency may make getting a job in another line of work harder and / or impossible for some of the workers in the industry. Others, such as older people, could not necessarily work anywhere else because of the physical demands of most other jobs. Horses, therefore, provide a diverse group of differently abled individuals with a source of income hard to come by in other lines of work.

In this chapter I reviewed the kinds of symbiotic relationships that exist between horses and people. I concluded that the carriage industry promotes a purely mutualistic relationship between horses and humans within the business, thus invalidating animal rights activists’ concerns that it exploits its horses. This is a conceptual and moral argument. In the next chapter, however, I use the specific case of New York City to demonstrate the way in which the purpose of Central Park creates a compelling case for keeping the carriage industry in New York.
Chapter 2: The Benefits of Horse-Drawn Carriages for Visitors of Central Park

In order to make a case for the carriage industry of New York City, it is first necessary to ask why the carriage industry must stay in Central Park specifically. In addition to the question of whether the industry itself is ethical— a concern addressed in following chapters— another issue emerges: mainly, why must carriage horses work in the heart of Manhattan as opposed to in upstate New York, or in some other borough? After all, is it not the case that equines are somewhat of a nuisance to traffic: both taking up parking space and making their routes smell like livestock? Their absence from the city would certainly have benefits.

The following chapter will argue why the carriage industry benefits patrons of the park. Through examining the role of horses in merging social classes, facilitating psychological reprieve from the stress of the city, and creating a rural oasis in contrast with the concrete jungle, I argue that horses are essential to maintain the park’s original intent. Here, one might question the value of maintaining the initial purpose of the park. After all, we live in a completely different world in the 21st century than that of the inception of Central Park in the mid 19th century.

In 1857, Frederick Law Olmsted had a radical vision to design a public park that was friendly to all social classes and that would provide respite to hard-working New Yorkers by mimicking the tranquility of the countryside. Olmsted used carriage horses to make his vision a reality. As a result of his efforts, people came to enjoy the park as a sanctuary from the pressures of city life. Today, Central Park continues to incorporate the carriage industry into its model in order to provide visitors with the same rejuvenation supplied for over 150 years. With pressures from advances in technology today, however, carriage horses have become increasingly
invaluable to maintaining Olmsted’s vision of Central Park’s purpose, a function still relevant and necessary in 2018.

**Olmsted’s Vision**

Olmsted saw the necessity for an oasis in New York City at the time of the Industrial Revolution. He hoped to provide a sanctuary for the people of New York City by creating a public park based on the model of the private gardens of Paris, France. In Olmstead’s mind, such a park—centered around the carriage horse—would maintain the feeling of rurality in the center of a bustling city, blend social classes, and provide psychological reprieve from the pressures of the Industrial Revolution.67

New York City was bustling with chaos. As work became ever more demanding, pressures from employment grew rapidly. Jobs in manufacturing required more people to work for longer hours. At this time, typical eight-hour shifts had not been invented yet, and were not socially acceptable. People routinely worked long hours, far surpassing even 10 hour workdays.68 There was tremendous competition for jobs. People who were able to work harder could make more money than weaker individuals. However, this did not spare the former group from sufferings, for the longer and harder a person worked, the more susceptible they became to disease and fatigue. The Industrial Revolution had swept the nation, reaching its pinnacle point on the island of Manhattan.69

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Every person living in the city was affected by the stress of city life. Poor families—among them first-generation immigrants—struggled to make ends meet. As a result, these kin could barely afford to live in the harsh conditions routinely found at Five Points and in tenement houses along the streets of New York. As many as twelve people would cram into one small, poorly-lit, and badly-ventilated apartment room to sleep at night. Even if every one of these individuals worked, it was still difficult to pay rent, let alone be upwardly mobile. There was scarcely a thought of any sort of holiday or vacation, because families lived paycheck to paycheck. The overwhelming demands of life in New York City were nearly unbearable.

The poor were not the only social class subject to the harshness of the city. Life was hardly easy for wealthier members of New York society. These people had to manage hundreds of workers, and would frequently lose their own identities in the pursuit of financial gain. This loss of identity, it seemed, was the opportunity cost of being upwardly mobile during the 1800’s, especially for children of immigrants. Because they were responsible for the management of every small detail regarding their businesses, rich shop owners and factory managers refused to step away from their work—even for just a few days of vacation. It was for this reason that wealthy New Yorkers desperately needed a place where they could both clear their heads and find beauty in life again. In short, they needed somewhere to escape from the shallow money driven culture of the rest of the city.

Never before had a public park existed in America. Olmsted sought to create a public place in which common people of all classes could congregate. Up until this point, the closest

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70 Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham: A History*, 543-558. Five Points was a neighborhood in the lower east side of Manhattan during the 19th century.
73 Foglesong, "Parks and Park," 93.
thing to public parks were the privatized parks and gardens of the royal class in Europe. These
gardens, however, were exclusive to the families of the social and political elite, and prevented
common visitors from viewing the grounds. Public squares had existed as places for the common
people to gather, but these spaces were also used as marketplaces, locations for local elections,
and settings for the public shaming. Since they were used for practical purposes other than
simply spending time in nature with other people, public squares neglected to provide the
benefits Olmsted would lay out in his radical proposal for a public park.\textsuperscript{74}

Olmsted used economic barriers to his advantage and successfully convinced the people
of New York City to build Central Park. The panic of 1857 allowed Olmsted to propose his idea.
Wealthy employers and impoverished employees alike lost their jobs as a recession hit the east
coast.\textsuperscript{75} Olmstead pitched his idea to the government, particularly emphasizing his ability to
create jobs for over two thousand individuals. However, many people questioned the practicality
of converting 843 acres of potential real estate land to the luxury of a park. Landlords wanted to
collect rent on the land, especially because of the recession. Olmsted reassured them by pointing
out that property values around the park would skyrocket. Everyone would want a view of the
park, and people would pay for such a peaceful scene to wake up to every morning.\textsuperscript{76}

The pitch was successful, and Central Park was founded in the fall of 1857. Olmsted
decided to run the park independently of the government, as a privatized unit because he worried
that corruption in Tammany Hall would work its way into the fibers of the park, thus ruining a
beautiful thing. Without the barriers and challenges that might have cropped up if the park had

\textsuperscript{74} Foglesong, "Parks and Park," 92.
\textsuperscript{76} Foglesong, "Parks and Park," 99.
been designed and run by the government, Olmsted and his team were able to imagine endless possibilities.\footnote{Burrows and Wallace, \textit{Gotham: A History}, 822-26.}

In order for Central Park to be accessible to all the people of New York, Olmsted proposed a radical idea: the park should be a welcoming space for both the wealthy and the poor. Few facilities in New York promoted such a blending of social classes. Generally, people kept to their own groups and cultures, finding it uncomfortable to mingle with separate communities.\footnote{Beckert, \textit{The Monied}.}

Yet merging socioeconomic groups was essential to Olmsted’s vision because blending social classes within the park would take the edge off of the cutthroat capitalism permeating the city. Olmsted believed that being in the presence of people from all walks of life would humanize everyone. Perhaps the sharp sting of capitalism could be softened slightly if individuals got in touch with humanity again rather than seeing people as the monetary value placed on their labor. Olmsted realized that the park held potential to integrate the wealthy and the poor in an innovative way that could be beneficial to working environments and relationships outside of the park.\footnote{Foglesong, "Parks and Park," 95-107.}

Olmsted also wanted to create a sanctuary in the heart of New York City that would provide psychological rejuvenation for visitors of the space. In order to relieve citizens of some of the weight placed upon their backs by the demands of the Industrial Revolution, Olmsted hoped to create a refuge for the general public. He made the case that “...parks were needed to counter the psychological drain of urban life and the commercial world.”\footnote{Foglesong, "Parks and Park," 96.} Here, mindful interactions could be held with people and nature without the pressures of everyday work life.
period when few could afford to travel outside of the city to get fresh air and perspective away from their jobs. Those few individuals who could afford such travel on a financial level would seldom dream of taking precious time away from their businesses. Central Park offered an opportunity for people of all means to enjoy the psychological benefits of rural living in a single afternoon.

To maximize the psychological benefits, Olmsted noted that while in the park, one must feel as if he or she were in the middle of peaceful unfarmed land that extended for miles in each direction: almost as if one were far away from the concrete jungle. He claimed that the park should always remind its visitors of a rural countryside with rolling hills, winding roads, and livestock. Olmsted’s vision would be carefully engineered similarly to the gardens in Paris and London, where the cultivated land had been manicured to look like meticulously tended greenery. By leaving the land unfarmed, Olmsted hoped to perpetuate the feeling of wealth and prosperity; here was extra land that no one needed to farm, giving patrons the illusion of fortune. For most visitors, this illusion was calming to the soul because it gave them a chance to drop the chains of poverty for a day and pretend to be someone of a higher status. The park had to paint the idyllic landscape of a countryside retreat in order to achieve Olmsted’s primary vision: to be “a restorative refuge from the hustle and bustle of urban industrial life.”

Olmsted’s concept of Central Park was visionary in and of itself and would provide New Yorkers with a desperately needed reprieve from the stresses of city life. Relative silence in the park was important, as “...the park’s primary purpose was to provide ‘the occasional relief of the quiet seclusion of rural scenes.’” In contrast with the noise and pandemonium of life on the

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81 Foglesong, "Parks and Park," 104.
streets of New York, Central Park promised to be a sanctuary for overwhelmed citizens to recharge in a muted area. The rurality would convey a sense of softness, constantly reminding the patrons of the park to enjoy the fresh air, and to forget, if even for an instant, the weight that was constantly on their shoulders at home. Since all locals suffered from the effects of the Industrial Revolution, the park needed to be as accessible as possible for people in all social classes.

Olmsted was thus faced with a tremendous challenge. First, Olmsted had to navigate the question of psychological benefits to the park’s patrons. How could visitors to the park maximize their sense of rejuvenation in the gorgeous setting of Olmsted’s dream? Second, how could a park of such proposed manicured beauty be born inside one of the ugliest, grimiest, gritty cities on the planet?

Prior to the construction of Central Park, the real estate upon which it would be built was littered with goats and abandoned shacks. There was little potential for the land to be converted into the rolling hills that Olmsted envisioned. Additionally, the question presented itself: how could Olmsted bring in members of all different social classes to the same space without alienating one group? There was a reason that the social elite kept to themselves— they wanted to maintain social distance from their employees, or else saw themselves above people of seemingly inferior social statuses. Likewise, people in lower and middle class groups found it difficult to find common ground with those who knew little of the struggle of being in a low-income family. How could Olmsted attract people of different classes to the park in the first place, and then get them to stay and to return again?

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A Dream Realized Through Horses

Olmsted’s fantasy came to life in 1857 when the park was founded and the first blueprints were drawn. These blueprints included the basic structure of the park, which was a framework that kept all of Olmsted’s requirements in mind: blending social classes and providing psychological reprieve, all set against the backdrop of rurality. While some questioned the practicality of his dream, Olmsted had a secret ingredient to ensure the success of his idea: horse-drawn carriages. Elaborate coaches would allow wealthier patrons to enter the park in a conspicuous fashion, thus allowing them to enjoy the same space as lower class individuals who otherwise might be indistinguishable from them on a socioeconomic level. The horses themselves gave psychological respite to those who encountered them. Horses would reinforce the feeling of rurality in the park. Carriages thus became central to Central Park’s design.

Horse drawn carriages were analogous with wealth in the 1850’s. Horses, alone, cost quite a large sum of money to board and stable in New York City. Most of these horses had jobs such as pulling trolleys or carts at market. To have a carriage was a sign of high social class because it announced to the world that the passengers had enough wealth to afford a horse or even a team of horses purely for the purpose of being seen around town. Travelling by carriage was a sign of wealth as well, because people in lower social classes could simply not afford to go between cities and towns. The carriages themselves became great marks of wealth within the upper class. The more elaborately and tastefully designed the carriage, the more money associated with the passengers. Olmsted realized that if he wanted to attract the rich to the park, he would have to build sufficient carriage roads to entice them to show off.85

85 19th Century American Carriages: Their Manufacture, Decoration, and Use (Stony Brook, N.Y.: Museums at Stony Brook, 1987), 1-10.
In order to maximize the potential for ostentatious carriage parades, Olmsted thought carefully about the park’s blueprint. Firstly, the park had to include carriage roads which were large enough to fit several carriages so that the wealthy could show off the extent of their affluence to other members of their class. Secondly, the carriage roads had to be visible to pedestrians and horseback riders, so that the rich could be seen prancing through the park by people of more modest means. Thus, walking paths were designed subtly around carriage roads so that pedestrians would always have a view of carriages going by. Olmsted noted that experiences of Central Park would be unique for different individuals: “a man who visits the Park on foot only, differing from that of one who sees it habitually from a carriage; and this again from the view of riders; and this yet again from ‘the silent steed.’”86 All of these experiences within the park would incorporate horses in some fashion: one might be pulled around by a group of them, ride on top of one, or simply observe them from afar. Central Park could be experienced in several different and fulfilling ways. Regardless of the way in which individuals experienced the park, however, all patrons encountered horses.

Consequently, Olmsted carefully crafted Central Park’s roads to the needs of carriages. More specifically, Olmstead’s “...design proposed 7.5 miles of carriageways, 60 ft. wide… [which] would allow six lines of carriages to move at moderate speed.”87 The roads were intended to maximize the number of carriages that could move effortlessly through the park while preserving the relaxed and peaceful nature of the park on any given day. Drivers could easily maneuver through the roads in the park with more traffic in less space, unlike the tighter, bustling streets of New York. There was a constant stream of horses and buggies undulating

through the park’s ribboned roads so that even pedestrians hiking through the park could hear, smell, and see the horses clip-clopping along throughout the day. In stark contrast to the cacophony of noise on city streets, the soothing sounds of harnesses jingling, of hooves and pavement, and of the breathing of working horses, created an ambiance of tranquility similar to that of the countryside.

Horses themselves also played a huge role in centering people; pulling them out of their stressful lives and into the present moment. Even those who could not afford to take a ride in a carriage could still interact with horses. Horses parked all along the south side of the park—primarily on 59th street. Any visitor who wanted some quality horse time could come up and pet the horses. Encountering horses was essential for Olmsted’s vision of psychological relief from the stress of daily life because horses provided numerous psychological benefits for all those who engaged with them. Many people developed meaningful relationships with horses on the grounds, simply by spending time with them in and around Central Park in the late 1800’s.88

Olmsted succeeded in maintaining his view of rurality through careful landscaping—taking particular care to plan accordingly around the carriages that would soon occupy the park. Horses played a key role in creating an atmosphere in opposition to the city. Farmland was routinely used as grazing grounds for many livestock. “Sheep Meadow” was built to house a flock of sheep which slept at night in what is now known as “Tavern on The Green” (Fig. 12). Goats and cows thrived in the dairy farm on the south end of the park. Watching horses move through the park was a constant reminder to patrons that they were in a rural setting separate to that of the city. While other livestock like sheep and goats served this same purpose, only horses were mobile throughout the park. Since carriage horses were not confined by fences to one

section of the park, drivers could cruise through the environment thus perpetuating the feeling of a rural environment consistent with the experience of farm animals.  

Figure 12. From 1864 to 1934, a flock of pedigree Southdown and Dorset sheep grazed in the Sheep Meadow. They were removed to Prospect Park in Brooklyn in 1934.

Figure 13 below illustrates the brilliant way in which Olmsted crafted Central Park into reality. The rolling hills were consistent with a rural landscape. The absence of tall buildings allowed endless access to the sky. Winding paths encouraged patrons to stroll leisurely through the park. The curving walkways were also juxtaposed to the strict grid system of New York City. By creating a physical space alien to the rest of the city, Olmsted was able to effectively draw people out of their minds and lives and back into the present moment. People could not make a beeline for any particular part of the park, which set a stark contrast to the straight and narrow efficiency of the rest of the city. By naturally forcing people to slow down and appreciate the walk, the roads and walkways of Central Park fostered a sense of natural relaxation. Notice, too,  

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89 Foglesong, "Parks and Park."
how closely intertwined the carriage roads were to the pedestrian paths. People could always see a horse drawn buggy from almost anywhere in the park.

The public carriage industry was founded in 1868 and opened in 1869. While carriages were primarily reserved for the rich who owned their own buggies, Olmstead wanted to encourage lower class individuals to imagine the possibility of wealth in their futures. Since the park designer also wished to merge and blend social classes, he recognized the need for a cab-like service that poorer people could utilize. Thus, the carriage industry of Central Park was

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born. These carriages were elaborate and were used by horseless visitors of the park, either to show off just like the rich, or else to celebrate grand occasions. Oftentimes, patrons of the industry would save up for quite some time in order to afford one ride around the park. Carriage rides were frequently utilized for marriage proposals, both because of the beautiful views offered and the larger insinuation that arose from spending such a large sum on one ride: mainly, that the courter was willing to spend money to give his fiancée a good life.\(^{92}\)

![Figure 14. Original Central Park Carriage Service flyer.\(^{93}\)](https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e1-069b-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99)

Despite challenges and skepticism, Olmsted was successful in crafting Central Park into the utopian oasis of his dreams. Roads designed around carriages allowed for the wealthy to mix

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\(^{92}\) 19th Century.

\(^{93}\) Central Park Carriage Service, Organized 1869, image, 1869, https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e1-069b-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99.
with lower classed individuals. Along with the park itself, horses promoted psychological respite from city stressors. Rolling hills, livestock, and horse-drawn carriages reinforced the projection of rurality in the heart of New York City. Olmsted’s park was exactly what New Yorkers needed in the mid-late 19th century.

The Relevance of Olmsted’s Vision in Present-Day New York City

Central Park’s success in the late 1800’s was undeniable. The sheer number of people who enjoyed the park is evidence enough: “Often fifty to eighty thousand persons came on foot, thirty thousand in carriages, and four to five thousand on horseback in a single day.”94 People of all different social classes and cultures basked in the beauty of the park and were able to encounter horses everywhere they went. Not only had Olmsted made a case for the park and the horses within it, but he had proven that all sorts of people benefited from the park in the ways he had foreseen. Without any doubt, the carriages within Central Park at this point in history were essential to ensuring the welfare of park-goers and maintaining the healing power of the grounds.

As time went on, however, animals were slowly removed from the park. In 1934–during the Great Depression– the sheep, which had been in the park for 70 years, were extracted from Sheep Meadow in order to protect them from starving street-dwellers desperate for a meal. Automobiles replaced most horses in the city throughout the first half of the 20th century Animals began to disappear from society as people became more and more uncomfortable with human-animal symbiotic relationships, many of which had become exploitatively mutualistic during the Industrial Revolution. In 1980, P.E.T.A. was founded and shortly thereafter, the carriage industry was legally required to use “diapers” on their horses. While the diapers were

instituted to keep the park sanitary, their main purpose was to minimize the smell of the horses. Encounters with animals became fewer and further between during the 20th century.

While Central Park was built in the context of the Industrial Revolution, the respite the park provides is still holds for all of its visitors today. Now, more than ever before, New York City is one of the most stimulating places in the world. Everywhere one goes, there is something to see, something to do, something to smell, and something to hear. Constant stimulation can overwhelm even the most extroverted human. To have an open, rural space in the heart of the “greatest city on Earth” is invaluable for this reason.

Horses are still central to Olmsted’s wish to merge together people of all social classes in Central Park, a phenomenon which still occurs today. On weekdays, hordes of children pass by the horses parked on 59th street on various class trips, most from New York City. Many of them are lost in conversations with their friends, or else absorbed in their phones. One day, while working as a carriage driver, I found myself watching a child as he conversed with some of his buddies. At the time, I was standing with my designated horse on the park pavement waiting to hack a ride. Upon noticing the horse I was working with, the boy suddenly jumped as if he was taken completely by surprise. His eyes got wide, and the group he was with stopped talking. He asked me if he could pet the horse, and I nodded. Together, the children approached the horse and hesitantly patted his forehead. As they waited with their class to cross the street, the children told me that they were from a school in the Bronx. None of them had ever seen a horse before, let alone pet one. These kids had never had the opportunity to meet or interact with an animal like a horse because of their financial situations at home. Not only was Central Park a much-needed reprieve from life back home for these children; it also served as a means for them to
interact with horses: an opportunity that may never have come to pass if the carriage industry did not exist.

Homeless people, too, enjoy the comfort of the horses in the park. There are many regulars who frequent 59th street to bond with the horses. Some carriage drivers have bags of carrots for just such occasions. When homeless people come by, they get to feed their favorite horse a carrot. Horses bring joy and companionship to people who have literally nothing. Drivers also offer human interaction to lonely souls on the street. Horses, of course, facilitate these interactions, for without animals, drivers would have no reason to talk to the homeless. Thus, carriage horses offer many benefits to people, even those of the lowest classes.

On the other end of the spectrum, however, are the people who still take carriage rides in the park. Many of the carriage drivers take pictures of their famous passengers. The Beatles, the Kardashians, Lady Gaga, and others have all enjoyed rides in the park. Carriage rides allow celebrities to enjoy the park and the people from a safe and ironically inconspicuous standpoint, as when pedestrians get excited about the horses and carriages, they rarely notice the passengers themselves along for the ride. These celebrities are wealthy individuals. Lady Gaga, for instance, rents the penthouse overlooking Central Park South for $22K a month on her $1.9 million yearly salary. People like the Kardashians have taken several carriage rides with the industry in the past few years, proving that the park’s horses draw the rich in, and are enough to bring them back to the park multiple times.

There are plenty of normal, not-famous-folks who enjoy the perks of the carriage industry as well. Many of these people are members of the middle class who visit the park on special occasions. These include but are not limited to vacations in which carriage rides are generally

planned in advance, or else celebrations of relationships. The latter might be an anniversary, a Valentine’s day event, or a proposal. Because of the planning that goes into these occasions, many of the passengers have saved up for a period of time before coming to the park. Thus, all sorts of people from different socioeconomic backgrounds congregate on the south side of the park, rallying around the horses which make mingling with other people from dissimilar socioeconomic classes accessible and comfortable.

Yet it can be hard to stay in the present moment— even in Central Park. Routinely, people walk through the park on their phones: texting, talking, and emailing with other people remotely. I have seen people trip over themselves or bump into other pedestrians while on their phones or otherwise preoccupied. But when humans encounter horses, especially while walking along 59th street, they are pulled out of their busy brains and into the present moment.

In present day America, more and more horses are being used in therapeutic settings across the country. Whether for veterans who suffer from PTSD, or children who struggle with physical and / or mental disabilities, horses have become the ultimate therapy animal. Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City, Karen Bachi explores equine therapy in a book called *Animal-Assisted Psychotherapy: Theory, Issues and Practice*. She distinguishes different types of equine therapy available to patients: Therapeutic riding is helpful for people with special needs to encourage emotional, social, or physical well-being. Hippotherapy involves horses who help people work on physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and speech therapy. Equine-facilitated psychotherapy, or EFP, encourages people to manage emotional and mental health challenges commonly dealt with in traditional “couch-therapy.” A natural question arises from the use of horses in therapeutic settings: *why* horses? Bachi addresses this question in her chapter, noting several characteristics unique to horses including
how horses are herd animals, are sensitive to others, and are powerful creatures. Equines provide a “therapeutic mobile setting” on their backs and facilitate a therapeutic environment in the stable. More specifically:

Horses are highly suitable for therapeutic work due to their being herd animals, for which cooperation is as important as competition, and the bonding among members is very strong. During the process of domestication horses have come to perceive humans as part of their herd in some aspects, which appears to provide the underlying basis for the bond between humans and horses. In order to maintain and utilize this bond, however, the human must take the role of the leader. Accordingly, the therapeutic process of EFP offers an opportunity to enhance elements of leadership, self-control, and the manner of addressing the other with respectful interaction, employing the developing motivation of the client to be in a leadership position toward the horse.

While all forms of equine therapy are fairly recent developments in history, horses have always provided people with psychological comfort. Olmsted’s use of horses for psychological nourishment has not changed in the past century. Moreover, the psychological benefits humans gain from being around horses is more relevant and popular in modern day America than ever before.

The encounters people have with horses today are still poignant. Since horses are now a rarity when compared to how numerous they once were before the advent of the automobile, most interactions with horses today are special. It is not every day that a New Yorker, or even a tourist, runs into a horse. To have horses easily accessible in Central Park provides a great psychological service to New Yorkers and tourists alike.

Horses continue to inspire images of rurality in Central Park. In New York City, the park becomes less and less of a rural landscape every year. Construction is ever evolving in the city.


Unless, of course, that tourist lives on a farm or otherwise has access to horses.
Just as one skyscraper goes up, an even taller one replaces the building next to it– the process cycles again and again. Anywhere one goes on the south side of the park, one can see buildings lining the perimeter of either side. It is hard to feel as though one is in a rural setting when towering high rises are always easily visible above the trees. Horses combat the suffocating feeling of the city. Since horses are no longer used as the main form of locomotion throughout New York City, many associate these animals solely with farmland. The sound of hooves on pavement has an entirely new meaning and feeling in the city. People look up when they hear a horse whinny, or when they smell horses at work. The uniqueness of spotting a horse in the city helps reinforce Olmsted’s concept of a rural sanctuary for the people of New York (and now visitors to the city as well). Without horses, the park would feel less like a countryside fit for rejuvenation, and more like a grassy patch of land with a few trees and some statues. To take horses away from the park would take the rurality of the park away from the people.

Animal Rights v. Animal Welfare

Animal rights activists have been campaigning against the New York City carriage industry for decades. The carriage horses, they argue, are abused. In 2011, Ed Sayers, the President and Chief Executive of the A.S.P.C.A., stated in a letter to the editor of the New York Times,

The typical carriage horse works long hours, while breathing exhaust, for a few years before it may be auctioned off for slaughter. When the horses aren’t working, they remain confined in inadequate stalls in New York City; they are often fed substandard food, and many are permanently scarred from wearing their halters too long. Even when the owners do properly care for their horses, the horses and the public face danger. Every day, concerned New Yorkers contact the A.S.P.C.A. to express their fears of an impending tragedy arising from the carriage horses being in congested traffic.99

Notice the language Sayers uses when referring to horses: “it may be auctioned off.” Keep the objectification by animal rights activists of horses in mind, as it will be more relevant in a later section. Along with the A.S.P.C.A., other animal rights groups have an opinion about the treatment of horses in the carriage industry. For example, the Chief Operating Officer of the Human Society of the United States, Michael Markarian, put the issue of the carriage industry simply: “It’s unsafe, it’s inhumane, and it’s a throwback in the past.”100 Some animal rights activists have even taken initiative to create their own groups specifically targeted at ending the carriage industry. The Coalition to Ban Horse-Drawn Carriages, for instance, argues that horses are a public safety concern and live and work in inhumane conditions which are impossible to

effectively enforce. The industry, they say, is one based on immorality because it is “from another century, [horses are] exploited for profit...this form of entertainment is...comparable to animal circuses and roadside zoos.”\textsuperscript{101} Much of animal rights activists’ objections to the carriage industry come from exploitative mutualism commonly seen in a myriad of human-animal relationships in the Industrial Revolution.

Yet other animal rights groups protest the industry. While many of their concerns overlap with other groups, P.E.T.A. uses particularly explicit language to communicate their issues with the carriage industry. A snippet from their main web page reads,

““There are no laws preventing old, injured, or spent horses from being sent to slaughter. Horses are considered property under the law, so owners can dispose of them in any way that they want. Since many may consider it cost-prohibitive to care for an animal who isn’t bringing in any revenue, the fate of discarded horses is grim.”\textsuperscript{102}

Notice the language P.E.T.A. uses to describe abuses of the carriage industry. Horses are “considered property,” a phrasing which implies slavery. In fact, much of the language used by animal rights activists mimic that of human experience: “oppression,” and “forced labor” are also words P.E.T.A. utilizes to get their point across.

Workers in the carriage industry, however, argue that they are providing a quality life for their four legged associates. Horses are sheltered from the elements with blankets and are not allowed to work if the weather is below 18° or above 89° Fahrenheit. Drivers are only allowed to work shifts for 9-hours, which means that their horses are working for less time. Since drivers could lose their licenses if they work their horses longer than 9-hours, one driver tells me, they

have an incentive to keep the shifts in accordance with the law. 103 All drivers are required to
clock in when they first arrive in the stable, and clock out when they leave. Records of their time
are kept in a book which the Health Department routinely inspects. Likewise, another driver says
that there is incentive to rest lame horses: horses who are lame cannot work as efficiently as a
healthy horse, and attract bad publicity. The driver continues: generally, if a horse has not
recovered within a week, they are sent to farms outside the city to recuperate before returning to
the city as a rested horse. Employees of the industry claim that the living conditions for the
horses are superb. Stalls in 52nd street are mucked at least once a day, so horses never stand in
their waste for a significant period of time (no more than any other horse would outside of the
city). Drivers claim that horses have plenty of room to lie down. 52nd street abides by the law,
since all the stalls are regulation size and are often larger than that. 104 Horses rarely get into
accidents with traffic. Spokesperson for the carriage industry, Christina Hansen, states,
“Everyone in the carriage industry works every day to ensure the safety of our horses, our
passengers and the public, and our record speaks for itself. That every single accident we have is
considered news is a testament to the safety of our industry.” 105 In 2011, Eva Hughes, Vice
President of the New York Carriage Association, responded to Ed Sayers’s letter to the editor,
stating that the industry’s “safety record is as good as or better than any other horse enterprise
one could name, and far surpasses those of racing, jumping, and cross country.” 106 There are two

103 Christina Hansen, "What You Should Know About the NYC Carriage Horses," Carriage On: All About the
Famous New York City Carriage Horses, last modified March 14, 2017, accessed April 12, 2018,
http://carriageon.com/basics.
104 Stalls must be 60 square feet by law. Most of the stalls at 52nd Street are at least 8’x10’ if not larger.

Michelle Young, "Behind the Scenes in the Clinton Park Horse Stables for the Central Park Carriages," Untapped
105 Christina Hansen, "Arthur and the Umbrella," Carriage On: All About the Famous New York City Carriage
106 Hughes, reply to letter to the editor.
water troughs in the park which horses have access to on their rides. Tack is routinely checked, as is each horse to prevent sores from rubbing. Employees suggest that the hair that is rubbed off on the horse’s nose under the horse’s halter is a rare but necessary occurrence. For safety reasons, all horses must wear halters while in the city, while working and while stalled. Workers of the carriage industry also point out that horses have access to 24/7 vet care, which is better than many horses in rural areas enjoy.

In order to fully understand both animal rights activists’ and the carriage industry’s arguments, one must first consider the definitions of “animal rights,” and “animal welfare.” Animal rights is defined as “rights believed to belong to animals to live free from use in medical research, hunting, and other services to humans.” In contrast, animal welfare is defined as “the state of the animal; the treatment that an animal receives is covered by other terms such as animal care, animal husbandry, and humane treatment. Protecting an animal’s welfare means providing for its physical and mental needs.”

Both animal rights activists and employees of the industry believe that they are helping horses. Animal rights activists believe that horses are being oppressed and tortured. Therefore, the industry should be shut down because the entire premise of the working city horse is inhumane. Different animal rights groups have suggested different solutions for the horses

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108 "Speaking Up for Carriage Horses in New York City," ASPCA.org, last modified January 26, 2016, accessed April 12, 2018, https://www.aspca.org/blog/speaking-carriage-horses-new-york-city. Sometimes tack breaks while horses are working (this is the case whenever horses are working around the world, be it in the show ring, on trail rides...etc.). As a safety measure, all working horses have a halter on under their tack in the event that the bridle fails. Horses are stalled with halters on just in case of emergency. For instance, if a fire broke out in the stable, employees could safely rescue each horse by leading them to safety via their halter, as opposed to setting all horses loose in the city, or else fiddling with each horse to get a halter on in the midst of chaos and fear.
currently working in the industry, everything from rescues adopting all of the horses, to releasing
the horses into the wild, to euthanizing all the carriage horses. Workers of the industry believe
that horses are living a high quality of life, reaping the benefits of excellent human care while
enjoying their work. Employees claim that the carriage industry does not abuse the horses and
should therefore not be shut down. To suggest that carriage horses should be rehomed to rescues,
released into the wild, or euthanized comes from a place of well-intentioned ignorance:

If the stables were sold and then closed, the carriage horses could end up homeless…. NY-Class and other animal rights groups pledge that if the carriages are eliminated, they will find safe pastures for the 216 horses. But many veterinarians say horse sanctuaries around the country are full and facing difficulties because of the economy. ‘If we banned the carriage horse industry tomorrow, they would go straight to slaughter,’ said Dr. Nena Winand, an upstate New York veterinarian… ‘There is no big field out there, there is no one to pay the bills.’

Rescues are already stuffed full of abused and neglected horses, so the proposition of adopting out all of the carriage horses is impractical. Releasing the carriage horses into the wild would be a death sentence to these domesticated creatures who have relied on humans their entire lives for care, and who could not care for themselves in the wild. Since the carriage horses are not dangerous, there is no ethical reason to euthanize them. Both parties believe they are advocating for the horses of the carriage industry. Both parties believe that they are right.

Animal activists believe that working horses violate animal rights. Human participants in the carriage industry violate these rights because they have “enslaved” horses to provide a service for them. Animal rights activists support animal rights. Activists scrutinize the big picture of the carriage industry, claiming that the practice of working horses is a violation of the horses’ rights in principle. Instead of understanding each of the individual horses’ needs and

112 Hager, "Old-Time New York."
desires, animal rights activists group all working horses under the same umbrella of maltreatment. Horses who could be adopted into loving forever homes\textsuperscript{113} would thrive because they could exist without being in debt to humans. Some animal rights activists call for the release of horses into the wild to truly free the enslaved animals. Many people understand that carriage horses would quickly die if they were left to their own devices out west. Thus, the final solution\textsuperscript{114} for the oppressed carriage horses is to euthanize them so that they can be free from human cruelty.\textsuperscript{115}

Animal rights activists neglect to take the individual horse into consideration. By viewing horses as an abstract group, animal rights activists have lost sight of individual horses in the carriage industry. According to carriage drivers, much of the propaganda activists use to protest the industry depict the ‘wrong’ horse. I have also encountered this on private Facebook pages, such as NYCLASS and CarriageOn. For example, activists who protested the carriage industry on behalf of Arthur held up pictures of a horse named Charlie who had tripped a few years earlier. Both Charlie and Arthur were grey horses who looked similar to one another. Activists were unaware that they were holding up pictures of a different horse because they seemed to lose sight of the individual horse in their quest for animal rights.

Carriage drivers, on the other hand, believe in prioritizing animal welfare over animal rights. Animal welfare concerns the individual animal, as opposed to animals in general. More specifically, animal welfare takes into account particular situations and contexts surrounding

\textsuperscript{113} Animal rights groups commonly refer to successful adoptions as the animal finding their “loving forever home.”

\textsuperscript{114} P.E.T.A. compares animal rights violations to the Holocaust, which is why I’ve chosen this phrase.

\textsuperscript{115} Multiple drivers shared this comment with me. I asked the driver I have been working with for clarification because I could not find any published sources stating this fact. He sent me a link to a recording of one of the main people leading the fight against the carriage industry. This recording was taken under false pretences, as one of the drivers had gone undercover as an animal rights activist for four months, recording all conversations presumably without participants’ knowledge. While the recording is now available on a public website, it has not been cited directly here for legal reasons. For more info on the carriage driver going undercover with NYCLASS see: David Seifman, "Secret Tape: How to Spin Council," New York Post (New York, NY), January 1, 2012, accessed April 30, 2018, https://nypost.com/2012/01/01/secret-tape-how-to-spin-council/.
each specific animal in order to provide that animal with quality care. Humans in the carriage industry must not only consider the physical needs of horses, such as feed, vet care, farrier work, and exercise, but must also understand and advocate for the horse’s mental requirements, such as freedom from boredom, and purpose. Since drivers believe that horses receive superb physical care and adequate mental stimulation, carriage workers abide by these requirements and therefore do not abuse their horses.

Carriage drivers believe in the welfare of their animals. Each individual horse enjoys his work. Every horse has a particular personality. Caretakers, drivers, and owners alike keep an eye on the horses to make sure they are healthy. If a horse is acting out of character, employees are immediately aware that something is off because they know the horses so well. Additionally, farriers cater to each carriage horse individually, providing extra foot support to the specific horses that need it. By tending to the individual needs of all horses in the industry, caretakers of the carriage horses defend the horses’ welfare, as opposed to their rights.

For all industry workers, the solutions offered by animal activists to the ‘problem’ of the carriage industry are unhelpful and unnecessary. Horses are well cared for and enjoy their work, so shutting down the industry and retiring all the horses is unnecessary. If activists were to release a carriage horse into the wild, that horse would have a low chance of surviving because carriage horses have relied on humans their entire lives in order to be fed, shod, and groomed. To release a carriage horse into the wild would mean death for that horse. In principle, the horse would be free, but in reality, the horse would also be dead. For advocates of animal welfare, the option of releasing horses into the wild makes little sense. Finally, the proposed euthanasia of carriage horses is infuriating if not comical to many carriage employees who strive to give their
horses the best life in New York City. Drivers believe that humanely killing over 200 horses in the name of their best interest is ludicrous.

The tension between the carriage industry and animal rights activists comes down to the tension between animal rights and animal welfare. Animal rights activists claim that they speak for the animals when no one else does, particularly because animals lack a voice. What are the dangers of speaking for animals? Does the voice of animal rights activists remove the agency of animals? Is it better for domesticated animals in principle to have certain blanket freedoms, even at the cost of their well-being? Is it better for domesticated animals to be cared for by humans they were bred to rely on at the cost of their liberty? Are animal rights and animal welfare mutually exclusive, or is there a way for both sides of the argument to be right?

The Agency of Carriage Horses

I argue that animal welfare is more relevant than animal rights when considering the well-being of horses in the carriage industry. Animal rights activists do not take into account individual horses. Instead, they clump together all horses without truly seeing them. Thus, individual horses become invisible to animal rights activists. In an ideal world, all animals could be free from human interference. In the case of domesticated horses, however, the reality of horses’ dependence on people prevents complete separation from symbiotic relationships. Animal rights activists claim that they speak for the animals, they speak for the horses. Projecting activists’ distanced voices onto horse they do not know silences any voice a horse might have, and removes the horse’s agency. While animal rights activists claim that animals do not have voices, the case of Arthur \(^{116}\) illustrates the opposite.

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\(^{116}\) Arthur was the horse mentioned in the introduction who spooked and crashed his carriage into four cars, totaling all of them and damaging his carriage.
To fully understand the context of Arthur’s accident, one must understand the process in which the carriage industry invites new horses into their practice. The industry purchases most of their horses from Amish communities in Pennsylvania. Carriage horses have usually had at least one other job before they get to New York, be it pulling plows, carts, and buggies, or racing in Standardbred events. The Amish retrain horses to drive carriages and then sell them to the carriage industry. Many times, these horses cannot keep up with the demands of Amish life. Unlike pulling carriages on the smooth asphalt of Central Park at a walk with ample breaks, Amish horses are required to pull heavy plows over soil. The work is much more physically demanding than work in the city. Some horses thrive in Amish communities. Those that do not are retrained for carriage driving and are then sold to independent owners in New York City who visit the horse in Amish country first to decide if that individual horse would be a good fit for the industry.

Horses that arrive in New York fresh from Pennsylvania (and occasionally other places) have a 30-day trial period. Each horse is generally driven by the owner and another experienced driver for the first two weeks at the same time. This way, if the horse gets spooked by something in his or her new surroundings, one driver can stay on the carriage while the other hops down to calm the horse. After two weeks, if the horse has proved him or herself to be a reliable worker, the owner will continue to drive alone for the following two weeks in order to make sure that the horse is safe. In Arthur’s case, his owner had entered the second half of the 30-day trial period and was working alone when Arthur spooked. When Arthur spooked into traffic, he let his people know that driving was not a good fit for him. The owner listened and retired him
immediately. Arthur had a voice. The horse did not want to be in the city, and he told his owner that through his behavior.\footnote{Cherry Hill discusses the agency of horses in her work: Cherry Hill, \textit{How to Think like a Horse: The Essential Handbook for Understanding Why Horses Do What They Do} (North Adams, MA: Storey Pub., 2006).}

Carriage horses that excel in the city do so because they were bred for the work and enjoy the work as individual horses. Horses that do not thrive in the city express their discomfort in obvious ways, taking off as Arthur did, or else rearing up or kicking out in fright. Usually, drivers are able to discern whether or not a specific horse will enjoy the work before he or she is purchased so that accidents like Arthur’s are minimized. While many horses were bred to excel in their intended line of work, horses mirror people in that they prefer one subject over another—just like people who may prefer mathematics over literature, or history over chemistry, individual horses can enjoy different types of work. The horses who have worked in the industry consistently for years are pleased by pulling carriages in the heart of Manhattan.

I have seen horses try to do their jobs even when they are on their days off in pasture. I used to work with a horse named IB who cut cattle\footnote{“Cutting” is a term used to describe the separation of a herd of cows from one specific cow. Farmers cut cattle to vaccinate animals, to treat the wounded...etc.} for a living. She was a hard worker and was eager to please. She had two days off a week which she spent out in the pasture with a few other horses. IB enjoyed her work so much, though, that she began to cut the other horses in her pasture. She would separate each horse from their pasture pals and would make sure everyone was an equal distance apart. Even though IB was free to be a horse, she chose to continue to cut on her days off. Yet another horse I discovered while researching loved his work as a lesson horse. The gelding had been retired from the lesson program and lived in a pasture right next to the indoor arena. While lessons took place, he had the ability to join the activity through an open gate in the arena. Though he was not asked or encouraged to join in on the lessons, he routinely
participated, following directions based off of what the other horses being ridden were doing. Thus, the old horse dutifully followed around the rest of the lesson horses while they worked. The gelding was free to do as he pleased and chose to work.119

Carriage horses who remain in the industry also have agency. Carriage horses’ behavior suggests that they enjoy their work. While horses’ behavior indicates that they are comfortable with their work, their relaxed behavior suggests that the horses’ experience in the industry is one above simply tolerating the work. Horses present relaxed behavior commonly found in herds of horses living in pastures away from the city. There are five main signs that a horse is relaxed: a sigh, a slow blink, lowering of the head, a cocked foot, and licking and chewing. Horses who sigh do not exhale out of sadness for the lives they lead. On the contrary, they sigh because they feel completely at ease in their surroundings. A slow blink and lowered head indicates that a horse feels safe and secure. When horses get nervous, they tend to stick their heads in the air and open their eyes wide, wide enough that one can see the whites of their eyes. Elevating their heads and opening their eyes helped horses in the wild spot danger. Generally, horses only exhibit this behavior when they are nervous or fearful.120 Thus, people can infer that horses who keep their heads down and blink slowly and steadily are unafraid and unworried. Many uninformed passersby comment on the carriage horses’ legs ‘hurting’ because horses generally stand with one of their back legs cocked. Most of the time, a cocked foot just means that the horse is resting one of their legs.121 In contrast, an anxious, miserable horse will keep his feet spread apart, ready

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120 There are certain horse breeds that always have white showing in their eyes, like Appaloosas. Some riding styles, like saddle seat, like horses to hold their heads high and to have a ‘wild’ look about them and also prove to be an exception to this rule.
121 People do this too! The next time you are standing for a prolonged period of time, perhaps waiting for a while in line at the supermarket, notice how your legs feel standing with weight distributed evenly between the two of them. Then, rock back on one of your legs, alleviating weight on the other. The leg bearing less weight should feel better.
to move at a moment’s notice. A stressed or unhappy horse would never settle him or herself into a relaxed position such that his or her back foot would be preoccupied, since horses rely on the readiness of their legs to move out of harm’s way. See Figure 15 for a visual representation of basic horse behavior.

Figure 15. Red Arrow: Alert, anxious, and fearful behavior mimics what an uneducated person may view as happy horse behavior. Blue Arrow: Relaxed, calm, and content horses appear to possess “sad” facial expressions to the untrained eye. Horses who enjoy commensalistic relationships with people have the same relaxed facial expressions and body language as working horses in the carriage industry.122

Shifting weight does not mean that standing is a terrible, barbaric thing for people, only that humans can sympathize with the relaxation that comes from shifting our weight.

Animal rights activists frequently misinterpret carriage horse behavior. Most activists who attempt to speak for animals do not “speak horse.” Instead, well intentioned animal rights activists project their own assumptions of emotions onto the horse. Making connections between human and horse behavior is not inherently bad. However, one must be able to correctly interpret the body language of a horse in order to then “speak” for them.

Comparing humans to horses is not intrinsically problematic. In fact, it is essential to compare ourselves to horses in order to fully understand their behavior. One can relate to horses who loudly exhale, for example, because humans, too, sigh when they are relaxed and content. Hence, finding similarities between human and horse behavior can be helpful when trying to fully understand horses. Problems arise, however, when humans have little context for the intent behind specific horse body language. To remedy the problem of projecting false emotions onto horses, one must spend time with horses in various contexts.

While learning to communicate with horses through body language may sound nearly impossible, remember that humans communicate with each other through subtle physical cues as well. When one passes a smiling stranger on the street, for example, universal human behavior would suggest that that person is not a threat. Smiles generally mean positive emotions and intent. If a stranger is frowning, humans generally know that that person is angry or upset. When people begin to know each other well, they begin to interpret far more subtle cues in individuals. Best friends, for example, can accurately interpret each other’s minute facial expressions because they know each other well. Carriage drivers in the industry know their horses in the same way that the general public know their best friends. However, outsiders, such as animal rights activists, have potential to interpret horses’ behavior correctly in the same way that humans can.

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interpret a stranger’s behavior somewhat accurately. Yet most animal rights activists do not know how to correctly interpret horse behavior. Thus, animal rights activists must first learn to speak horse before they make claims that they speak for the horses.

The first step to speaking for a horse is to listen and observe horses. One cannot possibly expect to be an advocate for horses if he or she has not first listened to the animal. Knowledge of how to evaluate horses’ communication with each other can be researched in books and watched on videos. In my experience, however, I have found that the best way to learn how to “speak horse” is to observe horses in pastures with each other. By watching horses without human interference, one can obtain a baseline for how horses talk with each other.

To effectively communicate with a horse, one must be able to understand the context from which a horse speaks. Horses may present similar physical behavior in response to several different types of situations. For example, horses tend to paw the ground when their stomachs hurt. Many times, pawing is a sign of colic which can be fatal to horses. Pawing also indicates that a horse is hungry. The carriage horses routinely paw the sidewalk throughout the day because they want a snack, not because they are in any pain. Carriage drivers can differentiate a horse that is painful from a horse that is hungry because of other factors: does the rest of the horse’s body language indicate pain or simply eagerness? Is the horse pawing around snack time, or is the horse randomly pawing the ground? Does this horse paw every day, or is this behavior rare? Does this horse paw when he is on vacation in a field without work, or is this specifically a stress-induced behavior? Thus, context is important for all people who attempt to understand horses.

124 Because of their biology, horses do not have the ability to vomit. When a horse gets an upset stomach, he or she must wait until the cause of the discomfort passes through their system. Colic can be extremely painful, so many horses try to evade pain by rolling. Unfortunately, when horses roll excessively, they risk twisting their intestines into an impossible tangled knot. Thus, many horses die from colic.

125 Large animal veterinarians use this language to describe horses that are in pain.
Animal rights activists rarely encounter horses. It is likely that few of the animal rights activists from P.E.T.A. and the A.S.P.C.A. of New York City have encountered horses outside of the city. I say this because the majority of administrative jobs in animal rights groups are all located in office buildings in urban environments. Animal rights activists could encounter horses on a daily basis. Their arguments and behavior towards the carriage industry, however, do not reflect this. While animal rights activists may visit 59th street, they certainly do not know the horses in the intimate way carriage drivers and employees know their four-legged colleagues. Members from various activist groups who do spend time with the horses on 59th street seldom have perspective on how all horses act in non-working environments. As mentioned earlier, many people who view horses on 59th street say that those horses, specifically, look sad. Based on one interaction, or even several interactions with the horses on 59th street, animal activists could come to the conclusion that horses are miserable without any other context for horse behavior. Simply having one specific encounter with horses does not provide an adequate or accurate representation of the horses’ experience. Consequently, one must have the baseline of horse behavior without human interaction to accurately decipher behavior presented by the carriage horses.

I invite any animal rights activists who are against the carriage industry to come meet a little horse named Sue. Sue is an American Quarter Horse who was rescued by the Humane Society of Missouri from a slaughter truck that crashed on I-44 in 2006. I adopted Sue when she was 8 years old during the summer of 2011. Because of Sue’s accident, she is unable to carry a rider. Boarded in a 7-acre pasture in the Catskill mountains, Sue enjoys life with her two pasture pals, Brandy, and Dali. Sue is a model for the commensalistic relationship animal rights activists
advocate for. She engages in light groundwork,\textsuperscript{126} is fed a healthy diet catered to her specific needs, is adored by a horse-crazy girl, and spends most of her time just “being a horse.” Come spend an afternoon with Sue, and then go back to 59th street, for animal rights activists will see that behaviors exhibited by a horse that enjoys a relaxed life in the countryside mimic behaviors demonstrated by the carriage horses of New York City.

Figure 16. The Author and her horse, Sue, in 2013. Here, Sue enjoys a trim from the ferrier in the comfort of her own pasture in upstate New York.

\textsuperscript{126}Groundwork is a term used by equestrians to indicate human and horse interactions which occur out of the saddle, on the ground.
I am not suggesting that every person must go out and spend time with horses. I am arguing that those who hope to speak for another living being, especially in a way that could destroy an entire institution, must have basic knowledge of how to communicate with those animals. Animal rights activists who refuse to engage with horses work against themselves. Speaking for a horse without first speaking with the horse, or understanding the horse fully, removes any voice or agency the horse would otherwise have. In doing so, animal rights activists “enslave” horses through their own rhetoric, effectively producing the opposite of what they intended: freedom for all carriage horses. Animal rights activists must spend time with horses if they are going to make claims on the carriage horses’ happiness and well-being.
Conclusion

Humans have been viewed by many activist groups and some political leaders as harmful to animals. The Industrial Revolution blinded humans to the welfare of working horses. People crammed horses into inhumane living conditions, putting their own profitability above the horses’ health and safety. Most horses were abandoned after the invention of the automobile, left to die in the wilderness or else survive off of land unfit for the sheer number of feral equines. Humans created a massive parasite out of unwanted horses and, in return, they have begun to slaughter the creatures on whose backs America was built. It is hard to imagine a way in which humans could be harmless, even healthy for horses who encounter them.

The carriage industry of New York City is a case study which demonstrates a relationship in which humans are not only harmless to horses, but are the main contributors to their high quality of life. While some human-horse relationships reflect toxicity, especially in the case of parasitic feral horses, the carriage industry successfully executes a mutually beneficial symbiotic relationship. Humans enjoy the benefits of horses who provide an escape from the stresses of city living, help people stay in the present moment, allow people to see each other more clearly, encourage healthy and honest connections between horses and humans, and contribute to the livelihood of their humans through their own work. Horses reap the benefits of people who provide them with health care, food, exercise, shelter, companionship, and love. While equines in the industry may not be entitled to animal rights, their individual welfare is a priority for the industry which far surpasses the purpose of the original rights proposed by animal activists.

People can use the case study of the carriage industry to offer a different, more positive way in which humans can understand their relationship with other animals. Though my thesis examines some characteristics of human-horse relationships that are specific to the carriage
industry, the central qualities of a healthy human-horse relationship are applicable to all symbiotic relationships between humans and animals. These qualities include a balance within the relationship: a human and an animal should each receive relatively comparable benefits out of the relationship. Exploitation of either the human or the animal should be avoided. Positive relationships between humans and animals rest upon the human’s respect of and investment in the animal they encounter. Finally, because humans are in a position of power over animals, humans must always listen to their animal companions and consider their needs when determining what is best for that individual animal’s welfare.

My project should not be viewed as a justification for animal cruelty. Instead, I hope that my thesis will open up discussion about the potential for building healthier relationships with all animals. We must come to terms with our role in creating toxic relationships with animals during the Industrial Revolution. Instead of shying away from our encounters with animals after the destruction we caused and still perpetuate today, we must acknowledge our past and fully engage with the repercussions of it in order to rebuild and repair our relationships with animals. Hope is not yet lost, and can be found in a couple hundred carriage horses and drivers on 59th street and Central Park.

127 Humans exploited horses in the industrial revolution. Feral horses exploit humans in present day America. These types of symbiotic relationships are unhealthy for both parties involved.
Bibliography


