

Back in the early 1900s entrepreneurs peddled their wares from carts on neighborhood roads, street cars provided reliable mass transit for the growing region and horse racing was king. That's right -- horse racing was big in Detroit once upon a time.

Many streets in Indian Village have Indian names, yet according to Nick Sinacori, quoted in an article in ModelD, at modeldmedia.com by Rodd Monts, two streets Iroquois and Seminole were named for top-performing race horses and Waterloo was named not after the battle, but for a horse farm of the same name in the area. In fact, Iroquois reportedly won 145 races and earned nearly \$200,000 – a huge sum in those days.

Sinacori lives in the same home that his grandfather bought not long before he went off to help fight World War I, on Newport Street, near Jefferson and Chalmers. The area used to be known as the Village of Fairview. Sinacori is a living history book on the area.

When he was a teen, one of Sinacori's uncles told him a story about how he used to sell fruit from a horse-drawn wagon, and on weekends would race the horse in pickup races to earn extra money. He found the story interesting but didn't fully understand how prominent horse racing was back in the day until his grandfather planted another seed. Sinacori recalls inquiring about why two blocks of Marlborough Street at Jefferson are the only blocks in the area paved with bricks.

"He said 'That's where they ran the horses.' I said 'I don't understand, you mean they ran them up and down the street?' But he said 'you'll find out in time.'"

As it turns out, the brick lane on Marlborough was once a path that led to the Detroit Jockey Club. Sinacori found that was the second track in the area. He later discovered there was a third large track on Jefferson, the Hamtramck Track, which was further west in the neighborhood now known as Indian Village.

The Detroit Driving Club may be the most important of the three. The entrance to the track was where, today, Algonquin Street meets Jefferson, and if you drive by you can picture where the gates once sat and trees lined the entryway (Algonquin is said to be a boulevard for precisely that reason.)

The problem was that neither Detroit nor Grosse Pointe wanted to pay for the road to be paved, Sinacori says. Eventually the Village of Fairview sued Grosse Pointe to cover the cost and won, reportedly \$186,000 at the time, and the road was paved -- from Beniteau to Cadiuex, and it was the second paved road in the region (after Woodward Ave).

"Here we have urban politics. We have transit politics. We have horse racing issues; the early, beginning stages of the automobile industry," he says. And one might say the beginning of Detroit as we know it.

Whatever happened to Fairview you may ask? Well that's a story for another time.

This article was originally written by Rodd Monts, a Detroit-based writer who often contributes to Model D. It was edited for Detroit History by freelance writer Craig Sasser.

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