

McLean County Museum of History

Draft Horses Collection

Processed by
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Collection Information

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	1 Box
COLLECTION DATES:	1865-2021
RESTRICTIONS:	None
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ALTERNATIVE FORMATS:	None
OTHER FINDING AIDS:	None
LOCATION:	Archives
NOTES:	See list of books at end of finding aid. See Evergreen Cemetery Walk online biography and archival file for Ellis & Martha Dillon

Brief History

The history of Norman horses in Normal is closely linked to the Dillon family, first known as E. Dillon & Co. and, later, as Dillon Brothers. They “were the most extensive and most widely known firms of importers and breeders of heavy French horses in this country,” according to Jessie Dillon.

Old Louis Napoleon (featured in several newspaper clippings in Folder 1) was imported from France and—it was said—the first Norman horse brought to Illinois. The Dillons purchased a half-interest in Old Louis Napoleon in 1857 and then developed a stock of superior horses by breeding mares to him. In 1863 Ellis and Levi Dillon purchased a farm in northeast Normal and a second farm south of that, plus a third farm located on the south side of Ash Street, two-and-a-half miles east of Normal (see Folder 6). In April 1870 Ellis and his nephew Levi made their first trip to France and, after several such trips, became the most extensive importers in the West. All of their buying was in La Perche. In 1930, there were more registered Percheron horses in the United States than all other draft breeds combined.

As farmers and stockmen realized the value of heavy horses, demand increased, and E. Dillon & Co. became widely known. The next generation of Dillons took an active part in the work and management of the business. From 1856 to 1892, the Dillons were regular exhibitors at the Illinois State Fair, as well as other state, county, and local fairs. See Dillon, pp 36-37, for a list of other importers and breeders in McLean County.

Scope

This collection includes newspaper articles, newspaper advertisements, a manuscript on the Dillon family, and miscellany relating to the draft horse (Norman or Percheron) trade centered in Normal.

Folder Inventory

Folder 1: Newspaper Articles

(Note: All from the *Pantagraph* unless indicated otherwise)

- 1.1 “Illinois State Fair,” New York Times, September 18, 1865. (Dillons as exhibitors)
- 1.2 “Letter from France from Levi Dillon, of Normal,” March 30, 1870.
- 1.3 “Another Letter from Levi Dillon,” April 4, 1870.
- 1.4 “Off for France,” April 16, 1872, p. 4. (Trip for purchase of new stock)

- 1.5 "Horses," September 10, 1873, p. 4. (Shown at McLean County Fair)
- 1.6 "Horse Talk," January 10, 1878, p. 4. (Breeding & marketing in the County)
- 1.7 "Norman Horses," May 22, 1879, p. 3. (Local stallion services big draw for breeders)
- 1.8 "Bloomington's Horse Trade" (2,000 horses/mules shipped out) and "Numerous Horse-Buyers," January 9, 1880, p. 3 (Who's who of buyers).
- 1.9 "The Norman," March 11, 1881, p 3. (Results of good judgment in horse business).
- 1.10 "Stalwart Steeds, A Glance at the Growth and Extent of the Imported Norman Horse Trade," *Daily Leader*, July 4, 1881. Dillions and Stubblefields.
- 1.11 "Old Louis Napoleon," *Daily Leader*, July 4, 1881. Biography with drawing.
- 1.12 "Draft Versus Coach," August 17, 1883, p. 3. (Draft horse market remains strong)
- 1.13 "A New Horse Company," October 10, 1883, p. 4. (Northwest Texas Norman Horse Company)
- 1.14 "Dillon Brothers," January 8, 1884, p. 3, (Opening of Norman Horse Ranch in Texas)
- 1.15 "Still the Headquarters for Normal Horses" May 17, 1884 and "Norman Horses," July 31, 1884, p. 3. (28 head arrive from France)
- 1.16 "Norman Horses," June 16, 1884, p. 4. (116 head arrive from France)
- 1.17 "Percheron Horse Breeders' Association," *Daily Bulletin*, November 17, 1885, p. 4. (Association is not incorporated; will register only animals with French registry)
- 1.18 "Dillon & Bright," January 29, 1886, p. 3. (New partnership builds new barn)
- 1.19 "Mr. Moots' Horses," February 9, 1887, p. 3. (Has fine horses imported from France)
- 1.20 "English Shire Horses," February 15, 1887, p. 3. (Two fine imported horses for sale)
- 1.21 "Foreigners Among Us," August 1, 1887, p. 3. (Local breeder received part of a large group of imported horses)
- 1.22 "Dillon Bros.' Great Sale," *Sunday Bulletin*, October 20, 1889, p. 4
- 1.23 "Normal's Oldest Horseman," *Normal Advocate*, March 31, 1894, p.1.
- 1.24 "The Horse Market," January 4, 1895, p. 5. (Re: competition from electric car system)
- 1.25 "About Horses" (I. H. Light reminiscence), April 23, 1897, p. 5.
- 1.26 "Good Residence Site in Normal," August 21, 1899, p. 5. (Includes reference to "extinction of the Norman Horse Business in Normal")
- 1.27 "Levi Dillon Talks," *Daily Bulletin*, December 21, 1902, p. 19. (Microfilm quality too poor to photocopy text.) (Topic: Side lights on shady practices)
- 1.28 "Veteran Horse Buyer To Move To The East," March 13, 1908, p. 5 (I.H. Light).
- 1.29 "Veteran Horse Buyer Is Dead," *Daily Bulletin*, February 14, 1910, p. 2. (I H Light, prominent resident dies at Hot Springs, Ark)
- 1.30 "Is Horsemen's Week in Bloomington," January 26, 1914, p. 9. (4-day breeders sale)
- 1.31 "Percheron Horses in McLean County," *Weekly Pantagraph*, February 20, 1914, p. 7. ("McLean county stands first in the state and in the United States in the breeding of Percherons horses." Tazewell county a close rival)
- 1.32 "McLean the Greatest Horse County in the United States," January 29, 1915, p. 10.
- 1.33 "Percheon [sic] Breeders Today," January 21, 1916, p. 15. (County horsemen meet)
- 1.34 "Horse Men Prepare For Future Growth," March 9, 1916, p. 6. (Organize county association)
- 1.35 "Harding Tells History of the Horse, Future," February 27, 1926, p. 10-B.
- 1.36 "White Barn All Remaining of Once-Busy Industry of Horse-Trading in Normal," October 21, 1928, p. One-D.
- 1.37 "Normal Long Trading Town," May 4, 1930, p. 1-D. (historical overview)

- 1.38 "Credit Given Horses," August 26, 1930, p. 15-A. (McLean County Centennial Edition) (Credit given for their service in the development of McLean County)
- 1.39 "Paid Dime Admission to See Draft Sire; First Big Horse Here," August 26, 1930, p. 11E.
- 1.40 "Heavy Horses Raised Here," August 26, 1930, p. 13E. (County once a leader in breeding & importing especially in the 1890s)
- 1.41 "Louis Napoleon, First Heavy Stallion," August 26, 1930, p. 13-E. (original – as opposed to photocopy; picture)
- 1.42 "Reuben G. Bright, Horseman, Dies," January 2, 1934, p. 3.
- 1.43 "Wealthy Take to Horses As Tractors Do Their Work," March 4, 1939, p. 5. (Secondary article, same clipping: "Bloomington once center of U.S. Draft Horse Business")
- 1.44 "Horses Put Normal on Map," December 27, 1955, p. 2.
- 1.45 "Horses Brought Town National Prominence," *The Normalite*, June 11, 1965.
- 1.46 "The draft horses that made Normal famous," Section B, Sun. June 30, 1974. (Feature article with pictures)
- 1.47 "The draft horse that made Normal famous" ("A Page from Our Past" column), December 31, 2006, p. B3.
- 1.48 "Carlock's Grand Horse Barn," by Michael Miller, *Normalite*, February 11, 2021.

Folder 2: Newspaper Ads

(Note: All from the *Pantagraph* unless indicated otherwise)

- 2.1 "Stallions and Mares of My Own Importation," John L. Kemp, August 23, 1883, p.4.
- 2.2 "Stallions and Mares of My Own Importation," John J. Kemp, and Percheron-Norman Horses For Sale," S. Busby, March 6, 1884, p. 3.
- 2.3 "Norman Stallions and Mares," J. J. Kemp, and "Our Great Public Sale, Fifteen Imported Norman Stallions," *Daily Bulletin*, March 22, 1885, p. 6.
- 2.4 "Draft Horses for sale," (several ads) February 19, 1886, p. 3.
- 2.5 "Imported Norman Stallions," May 13, 1886, p. 2.
- 2.6 "Twenty-Seven Imported and High-Grade Norman Stallions, Mares and Colts at Public Sale," October 7, 1886. p. 3.
- 2.7 "Moscow," January 18, 1887, p. 2. Illustration by Lou Burk
- 2.8 "Stallions, Breeders, Attention," March 26, 1887, p. 3.
- 2.9 "Lexington, ILL Percheron, French-Draft and English Shire Horses," "Normal, ILL. French Draft and Percheron Horse," and "Pedigreed Percheron and French Coach Horses" Geo. Stubblefield, January 20, 1888, p.3.
- 2.10 E. McNaught's Fifth Importation of Percherons" and several ads, April 10, 1889, p. 2.
- 2.11 "The Dillion Blanket Fastener, M.L. Moore," March 16, 1889, p. 2.
- 2.12 "Combination Sale 200 Horses, Dillon Bros.," October 24, 1889, p. 1.
- 2.13 "For Sale. A Nice Lot of Young French Draft and Percheron Stallions," S. Noble King, November 21, 1890, p. 3.
- 2.14 "At Normal, Ill. 450 Horses," February 26, 1891, p. 2.
- 2.15 "350 Horses, Imported Stallions, Mares, Fillies and Colts. Lexington, Ill." March 13, 1891, p. 7.
- 2.16 "The Dillon Sale, Closing hours of the Big Combination Horse Auction," March 13, 1891, p.7.
- 2.17 "Registered Percheron Stallions, for Sale, Geo. Hanna," March 26, 1892, p. 6.

- 2.18 "Pantagraph Stock-Printing Co.," March 10, 1892, p. 3.
 - 2.19 "Grand Opening, Sixty Head of Imported Native Full-Blood and High-Grade Percherons, and English Shires, Geo. White" and "For Sale, Registered French Draft and Percheron Stallions, H. N. King," "Shire Stallions, George Foreman, and "Pedigreed Percheron and French Coach Horses, Geo. W. Stubblefield," March 10, p. 2.
 - 2.20 "Lexington, Ill., is one of the best Horse centers in the West," March 29, 1892, p. 8.
 - 2.21 "Grand Opening, Sixty Head of Imported Native Full-Blood and High-Grade Percherons and English Shires," April 6, 1892, p. 3.
 - 2.22 "The I. Dillon Stock Farm for Sale," Isaiah Dillon, October 4, 1892, p. 6.
 - 2.23 "For Sale—Eight Head of First-Class French Draft Stallions," March 9, 1893, p. 7.
 - 2.24 "Public Sale 40 Head of Horses, Wm. Hurt & Son, Arrowsmith, Ill." December 24, 1898, p.8.
 - 2.25 "The French Draft Stallion Frank No. 9441, F.M. Benjamin," April 4, 1900, p. 5.
 - 2.26 "Normal, Ill. The Great Draft and Coach Horse Center," November 28, 1900, p. 7
 - 2.27 "Breeders' Sale 300 Horses 300, C.W. Hurt, Arrowsmith, Ill." October 19, 1907, p. 10.
 - 2.28 "Percheron Stallions and Mares To Lease for 1912, Isaiah Dillon," November 2, 1911, p. 6.
 "For Sale, Percheron Stallions and Mares at Bargain Prices, A.J. Dodson," January 26, 1914, p. 9.
 "Imported Percheron Stallion, L. F. Stubblefield," May 20, 1919, p. 15.
- Digital Scans of Pantagraph Stock-Printing Item by Lou Burk

Folder 3: Publications

- 3.1 Clay McShane and Joel A. Tarr, "Introduction," *The Horse in the City: Living Machines in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), pp. 9-11.
- 3.2 *The Percheron Horse: America's Horse Power*, ed. Percheron Society of America, 1930, 31pp.

Folder 4: Dillon Draft Horse Dynasty

- 4.1 "Reflections of an Era: The Dillon Draft Horse Dynasty," by Donna March Eichstaedt, April 15, 1974, typed manuscript, 20pp.

Folder 5: Dillon Family

- 5.1 Notes on Ellis Dillon and Levi Dillon, handwritten, 2pp.
- 5.2 "Death of Ellis Dillon: A Pioneer Norman Horse Man," April 14, 1899, and "Octogenarians Dine," December 18, 1898, *Pantagraph*.
- 5.3 Jesse H. Fisher, who married Anna Dillon, *History of Tazewell County*, p. 462.
- 5.4 "The Happy nuptials of Mr. Ellis E. Dillon and Miss Lizzie Duncan," *Daily Pantagraph*, December 27, 1883, typescript.
- 5.5 Ancestral File printout of Arenz family, December 19, 2002
- 5.6 "Dillon's Livery" ad in *Pantagraph*, undated, 2 copies.
- 5.7 Warrantee Deed of property from Jesse and Hester Fell to Levi Dillon, May 23, 1882.

Folder 6: Dillon Property

- 6.1 Abstract of Title of Lot One in Block Eleven in the original Town of Normal and other properties.
- 6.2 Partial map from 1895 Plat of East Normal, locating Dillon Barnes: “Brick,” “White,” “Pink,” and “Beech Street” Barnes, 1895, 2 copies.

Folder 7: Dillon Property Clippings

(Note: All from the *Pantagraph* unless indicated otherwise)

- 7.1 “Auction Sale of Levi Dillon Property on South Broadway,” April 1, 1913, p. 9.
- 7.2 “An Old Landmark Gone,” *Normalite*, August 14, 1936, p. 6.
- 7.3 “Old Dillon Stable to Become Theater,” December 23, 1936, p. 14.
- 7.4 “One of the six Barns on the Home Farms of Dillon Bros., Importers And Breeders of Norman Horses,” enlarged digital scan from *The Normalite*, June 11, 1965
- 7.5 “How Time Flies,” 100 years ago Dillon & Co. purchased lot to build a stable, June 1, 1982.
- 7.6 “Historic property renovated,” *Daily Vidette*, April 13, 1988. About barn at 102 W. Phoenix Ave., Normal.
- 7.7 “How Time Flies,” 25 years ago (Dec. 20, 1957), area that was a hayloft in Dillon barn, is an apartment, 1982.
- 7.8 “A real tough, mean fire,” (fire at former Dillon building / barn, 102 W. Phoenix Ave.), May 6, 2005, p. A1
- 7.9 Color picture of fire at 102 W. Phoenix Ave., May 5, 2005, former Dillon structure, photo accessed from *Pantagraph* website May 6, 2005.
- 7.10 “70 Years Ago: An Old Landmark Gone” (Dillon barn), *Normalite*, August 11, 2011 (event occurred on August 14, 1936— “75 Years Ago”).

Folder 8: Miscellaneous

- 8.1 Business cards (2) for J. J. Aspel, Auctioneer; photo of Kelly, May 1935; postcard photo of unnamed horse, sent to John Aspel 193?
- 8.2 *Catalogue of the Breeders 22nd Annual Sale*, Bloomington, Illinois, February 10-13, 1920.
- 8.3 Business card for Geo. W. Stubblefield & Co. and photocopy.

See also:

Ellis and Martha Dillon Evergreen Cemetery Walk folder.

Monographs in the McLean County Museum of History library:

Catalogue of Horses to be Sold at Combination Sale Under Direction of Dillon Bro9s., Normal, Ill. (McLean County), Catalogue No. 1, March 3, 4, 5, and 6, 1891. Bloomington, Illinois: Pantagraph Stock-Printing Co., 1891.

Dillon, Jessie M. *Normal and the Norman Horse Industry: Percherons of Today.* Npp: nd.

Dillon, Leo A. *Century of Percheron Progress, 1834-1934.* Unpublished manuscript, 58pp.

Hiatt, James M. *The National Register of Norman Horses, with a General History of the Horse-Kind and a Thorough History of the Norman Horse*. National Norman-Horse Association, 1881.

Mischka, Joseph. *The Percheron Horse in America*. Whitewater, Wisconsin: Heart Prairie Press, 1991.

Some of the Horses That Made Normal Famous. Comp Jessie M. Dillon and Roy H. Dillon, 1936. Note: Illustrations of identified horses, no text