

## Tryon Riding & Hunt History

Carter P. Brown

THE TRYON RIDING & HUNT CLUB, INC., was founded in 1925. Carter P. Brown as a founder, Director and Officer promoted horseback rides, picnics, helped maintain hundreds of miles of riding trails and equestrian events, was building the basis for an organization to perpetuate a wholesome and productive role for the Club to participate and lead in the preservation and promotion of the good life in the area.



The Club was incorporated in 1960 as a nonprofit organization whose function is to: encourage, support, and promote all types of horse activities which will enhance the equestrian tradition of the Tryon area, through programs of education, demonstrations of horse skills, and cooperation with allied programs of nature conservation, maintenance of trails and carriageways, recreational and sporting events, and such other equestrian activities that will benefit the entire community.

These objectives have been carried out in many ways including sponsoring the following annual events: Block House Steeplechase Races, Tryon Horse Show, Any & All Dog Show, Tryon Riding & Hunt Club Horse Trials and an annual meeting. In the past the Club has also sponsored: Junior Horse Show, Piedmont Paso Fino Horse Show, picnic rides, lancing (tilting) tournaments, gymkhanas, tri-weekly drag hunts, bird dog field trials, plus barbecue picnics in connection with the Tryon Horse Show. In 1956 the Club was instrumental in getting the United States Equestrian Team to train here in Tryon at the Cotton Patch in preparation for the Olympics in Stockholm.

The events sponsored by the Club and conducted by able volunteer committees now attract over 20,000 persons annually, and influence many newcomers to settle here.

In a more general manner the Club continues to encourage the maintenance of hundreds of miles of horseback riding trails and open areas of Polk County and strives to attract people to the area who will maintain open tracts of land to sustain the horseback riding trails and hunting throughout the county.

The most prestigious event in the Club's annual program is the Block House Steeplechase Races held each spring on the grounds of the Foothills Equestrian Nature Center. The first Steeplechase, in 1946, was started by Carter P. Brown, was held at Harmon Field and was a single race with a tin cup as the prize for the winner. The prize now for four sanctioned races exceeds \$65,000. The Races now are nationally sanctioned with the National Steeplechase Association in Elkton, Maryland. The fifth race is an amateur race for local riders on the flat. The attendance now approximates 18-22 thousand and reservations are received from all over the southeast.

In 1982, the Club established a college education scholarship for students from the area. It is administered by the Polk County Community Foundation.

In the early years the Club acquired a horse drawn mail coach (deBryun) that was better known as the "Tally-Ho". The Tally-Ho has been a feature in parades, events, horse shows and the Steeplechase for years. In 1982 the Tally-Ho was donated to the Polk County Historical Association which has put it on permanent display at the Depot in Tryon.

For many years the Club operated from the office of Charles J. Lynch until health forced his retirement. He served as Secretary, President and on many committees, and was Chairman of the Harmon Field Commission. Many outstanding civic leaders have been elected as Officers and Directors. The Office was moved to the Oak Hall Hotel in 1959, through the generosity of Clara Edwards, where it remained until moving to its new home in the restored Tryon Depot in the spring of 1978.

Each visitor to Tryon meets a sentinel at the intersection of Trade and Pacolet streets. This is "The Tryon Horse," ("Morris") and emphatically symbolizes the Tryon Riding & Hunt Club, who owns and maintains this famous steed.

Due to the ongoing efforts of the Tryon Riding & Hunt Club, the town of Tryon and the surrounding countryside are nationally recognized for carrying forward the traditions of fine horsemanship. Tryon is indeed one of the most prominent equestrian centers of the Southeast United States.

The Tryon Riding & Hunt Club, Inc. is a unique organization in that the majority of its members do not own nor ride horses. In fact, the membership of the Club is made up of horsemen, farm and estate owners, businessmen and women, and members of the general public. This is an enthusiastic, congenial, community-minded cross-section of people of the Carolinas. Members receive advance selection for reserved parking spaces at the Block House Races in April. Carter P. Brown died, November 15, 1978, but through his vision and inspiration the Club and its loyal members have been able to carry on in his tradition and purpose for the Club.