

“A ringer was used to make the killing”: Horse Painting and Racetrack Corruption in the Early Depression-Era War on Crime

Abstract: Peter Christian “Paddy” Barrie was a seasoned fraudster who transferred his horse doping and horse substitution skills from British to North American racetracks in the 1920s. His thoroughbred ringers were entered in elite races to guarantee winnings for syndicates and betting rings in the prohibition-era United States. This case study of a professional travelling criminal and the challenges he posed for the Pinkerton National Detective Agency in the early 1930s war on crime highlights both the importance of illegal betting to urban mobsters and the need for broader and more nuanced critiques of Depression-era organised crime activities and alliances.

Key words: ringers, racetracks, conmen, Pinkertons, organised crime

Horse “ringing” is the practice of running an experienced, faster, or older horse under the name of a younger or nondescript one, usually to take advantage of long betting odds. “King of the Ringers” Paddy Barrie boasted of ringing hundreds of thoroughbreds at racetracks across the United States, in Canada, and at Agua Caliente near Tijuana in the 1920s and early 1930s.<sup>1</sup> Journalists agreed that criminal associates in America’s major cities made regular use of Barrie’s talents, while Pinkerton detectives charged that Barrie’s ringers earned millions of dollars for betting rings.<sup>2</sup> The wider American public learned of his exploits following his most famous coup at Havre de Grace, Maryland’s premier racetrack,

---

The original version of this paper was presented at the fifth British Crime Historians Symposium at the University of Edinburgh in October 2016. I would like to thank the two anonymous *JAS* readers for their invaluable feedback and corrections.

<sup>1</sup> Paul Gallico, “Little Ringer, What Next?” *New York Daily News*, 17 Aug. 1934, 50.

<sup>2</sup> Note, “Horse Ringing by Peter Christian Barrie,” in Pinkerton’s National Detective Agency Records, Criminal Case Files, 1861-1992, Box 151, Folder 1: Racehorse Ringers, Essays & Notes, Manuscript/Mixed Material, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., [<https://lccn.loc.gov/mm75036301>], hereafter cited as PDNA Criminal Case Files Box + Folder.

on October 3, 1931. Barrie bought *Aknahton*, a three-year-old light chestnut colt and experienced racer, for \$4,300 from the Marshall Field Stables in Chicago. *Shem*, a plodding two-year-old gelding of similar colouring, was purchased for \$400 from a reputable Long Island trainer.<sup>3</sup> Barrie then dyed *Aknahton* to look like *Shem*, and entered the ringer as a two-year-old maiden on the last racing day at Havre de Grace. The race favourite was *Byzantine*, owned by Mrs Payne Whitney, and *Shem* was given odds of 52-1. After a poor start *Shem* (aka *Aknahton*) caught the field, passed *Byzantine*, and won by a sensational four lengths, guaranteeing winnings of more than \$250,000 for Barrie's patrons. Accusations of cheating and suspicions of fraud soon followed as did official scrutiny of the horse and his trainer.<sup>4</sup>

The exposure of a major racetrack corruption ring in the US in 1931-1932, with Barrie at the centre, confirmed long-standing popular views that horse racing was dominated by swindlers, thieves, and gangsters, and that race fixing was widespread.<sup>5</sup> Bookmakers regularly bribed stable hands, handicappers and timers for information on a

---

<sup>3</sup> Bob McGarry, "Ringing Racehorses: how Master Turf Swindler Disguises Thoroughbreds, Chapter I," *New York Daily News*, 21 Nov. 1932, 42-43 (hereafter referred to as McGarry, "Ringing Racehorses" + chapter). *Aknahton* raced legitimately and as himself at Belmont Park and Aqueduct between May and September 1931. See G. A. reports, 21 October 1931 in PDNA Criminal Case Files Box 152, Folder 6.

<sup>4</sup> D. C. Thornhill to S. L. Stiles, 7 November 1931, in PDNA Criminal Case Files Box 152, Folder 7; Bob McGarry, "Ringing Racehorses, Chapter II," *New York Daily News*, 22 Nov. 1932, 44.

<sup>5</sup> Accusations and cases of ringing were not new. There were well-publicised ringer scandals at the Derby and Ascot in the 1840s, long before the *Coat of Mail* controversy. *Running Rein* won the Derby in 1844, but was later revealed to be four-year old *Maccabeus*, so the title was awarded to the runner-up *Orlando*. *Bloodstone*, winner of the Two-Year-Old Stakes at Ascot that same year, was actually a very different three-year-old horse. See Adam Powley, *When Racing Was Racing: A Century of Horse Racing* (Yeovil, Somerset: Haynes Publishing, 2012), 8; Wray Vamplew, *The Turf: A Social and Economic History of Horse Racing* (London: Allen Lane, 1976), 85.

horse's form and to calculate odds, while trainers and jockeys were paid to fix races.<sup>6</sup>

Doping with cocaine or caffeine to increase pace, inserting sponges into a favourite's nose to hamper breathing, tampering with saddle weights, and affixing heavier racing plates were all used to alter racing performances.<sup>7</sup> A stable boy confessed to administering chloral hydrate to slow down *Ladana*, the Rancocas entry in the Burnt Hills handicap at Saratoga in August 1931. The horse was disqualified when she "presented with swollen, drooling lips" at the starting gate.<sup>8</sup> Barrie's special recipe of heroin mixed with digitalis, cola-nut extract, glycerine, and strychnine could be administered orally and by syringe, to *Stickaround* for example to ensure a win at Hawthorne, Chicago, in late October 1931.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Leo Katcher, *The Big Bankroll: The Life and Times of Arnold Rothstein* (1958; New York: DaCapo Press, 1994), 117; Paul J. Vanderwood, *Satan's Playground: Mobsters and Movie Stars at America's Greatest Gaming Resort* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), 249. Barrie did use bribery to fix races when necessary. For example, he paid *Coat of Mail's* jockey £25 to ride the ringer at Stockton, England, in October 1919, and bribed *Hickey's* (aka *Aknahton's*) jockey at Bowie, Maryland, in November 1931 "to keep second all the way" until the final stretch so his patrons could collect \$200,000. See George W. Cornish, *Cornish of the "Yard": His reminiscences and cases*, (London: John Lane, 1935), 92, and McGarry, "Ringing Racehorses, Chapter VI," *New York Daily News*, 26 Nov. 1932, 25. Young jockeys were enmeshed in systems of exploitation and indenture, and were sitting ducks for crooks. See John Christagau, *The Gambler and the Bug Boy: 1939 Los Angeles and the Untold Story of a Horse Racing Fix* (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), and Laura Hillenbrand, *Seabiscuit: Three Men And A Racehorse* (London: Fourth Estate, 2002), 61, 74-75.

<sup>7</sup> McGarry, "'Ringin' Racehorses: How Master Turf Swindler Disguises Thoroughbreds," *New York Daily News*, 21 Nov. 1932, 42; "Jimmy Wood's Sportopics," *Brooklyn Times Union*, 31 Aug. 1932, 1; Edward Hotaling, *They're Off! Horse Racing at Saratoga* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1995), 218-219.

<sup>8</sup> See "Rancocas Entries Are Barred At Spa," *New York Times*, 16 Aug. 1931, 130; Bryan Field, "Sinclair To Sell Stable At Auction," *New York Times*, 26 Aug. 1931, 26; Bryan Field, "Sinclair Horses Sold For \$81,300," *New York Times*, 4 Sept. 1931, 17; Hotaling, *They're Off!* 236. There was a limited timeframe in which a stimulant could be effective, so doping was an "inside job" by a trainer, stable hand, or jockey, but the financial incentives usually came from external sources. See Winnie O'Connor, *Jockeys, Crooks, and Kings* (New York: Jonathan Cape and Harrison Smith Inc., 1930), 38, in PDNA Criminal Case Files Box 150, Folder 9.

<sup>9</sup> "Jockey Lewis Wins With 4 Longshots," *New York Times*, 22 Oct. 1931, 31S; McGarry, "Ringing Racehorses, Chapter XII," 3 Dec. 1932, 24; "Trainers Buy My Tonic And Win," *Sunday People*, 7 Jan.

Barrie's forte was colouring horses. It was this skill which made him so valuable to the organised crime leaders, gangs, and syndicates which maintained protection and betting rackets at North American racetracks.<sup>10</sup> One Pinkerton report confirmed, "there is so much work to be done to produce a 'ringer' that there are not many people who select this particular type of racketeering."<sup>11</sup> Detailed descriptions of horses' colours and markings were recorded for Jockey Club registration and photographic records were rare until the later 1930s. *Shem* was a dark chestnut horse with a narrow white strip on the face and two white hind socks. *Aknahton* was a lighter chestnut colour, with a white face stripe, a white left-fore pastern, and two white hind ankles.<sup>12</sup> Shades such as dark brown, sorrel, chestnut or bay could be enhanced or altered with dyes, petrol, and peroxide. Star, blaze, strip and other white markings on a horse's face and its white heels, coronets or pasterns could also be augmented or created with bleach and paint.<sup>13</sup> Barrie's expertise extended to creating special materials as well as accuracy with the brush. His henna-based dyes withstood repeated washing, and the better the alteration, the less likely the substitute would be

---

1951, 8; David Ashforth, *Ringers and Rascals: A Taste of Skulduggery* (Compton: Highdown, 2003), 23-24, 34.

<sup>10</sup> C.E.D. reports, 14 November 1931, in PDNA Criminal Case Files, Box 152, Folder 7; Statement of Carl Clendening, 26 August 1932, in PDNA Criminal Case Files, Box 152, Folder 8.

<sup>11</sup> "Racetrack Rackets," n.d. [c1931] in PDNA Criminal Case Files Box 151, Folder 1.

<sup>12</sup> Foal markings are listed on the New York Jockey Club registration documents for both horses: Copy of Certificate of Foal Registration No. 283352, 1928, in PDNA Criminal Case Files Box 151, Folder 2, and Certification of Foal Registration No. 293575, 1929, in PDNA Criminal Case Files Box 151, Folder 1. The absence of photographs of these horses would prove to be a major impediment in the three-year PNDA hunt for Barrie and *Aknahton*.

<sup>13</sup> "Petrol and Peroxide; Changing The Colour Of A Horse," *Western Daily Press*, 21 Sept. 1920, 8; G. Clark Cummings, "The Language of Horse Racing," *American Speech* Volume 30, No 1 (February 1955), 23-24.

detected.<sup>14</sup> Many contemporaries, journalists and historians referred to Barrie as “the master painter”; he styled himself “the last of the great artists.”<sup>15</sup>

In *Ringers & Rascals* (2003), racing journalist and social historian David Ashforth detailed Barrie’s exploits in Australia, Canada, the United States, and Britain from the 1910s to the 1960s.<sup>16</sup> By contrast, this article includes a short biography but focuses on Barrie’s North American criminal career in the 1920s and 1930s, themes of interstate and transnational criminal mobility in the early federal war on crime, and the relationship between professional travelling criminals and big city organised crime networks. Smuggling, immigration, and policing studies have highlighted the scale of interwar trans-Atlantic and trans-Pacific illicit networks and criminal migration, and Barrie’s story confirms the vibrancy of transnational opportunism and its huge financial rewards.<sup>17</sup> He is also a useful example of criminal mobility in an era of increasing immigration restriction and border controls. As Andreas and Nadelmann note, “Criminals who cross these lines sometimes do so with indifference to its jurisdictional consequences; more often, however, they regard the easily crossed borders as an advantage, one that offers lucrative profits to smugglers, safe havens

---

<sup>14</sup> Murray Robinson, “As You Like It,” *Brooklyn Times Union*, 31 Aug. 1932, p1; McGarry, “Ringling Racehorses, Chapter XI,” *New York Daily News*, 2 Dec. 1932, 68.

<sup>15</sup> Hotaling, *They’re Off!* 241.

<sup>16</sup> Ashforth, *Ringers and Rascals*, 15-104.

<sup>17</sup> See for example, Lisa Lindquist Dorr, “Bootlegging Aliens: Unsanctioned Immigration and the Underground Economy of Smuggling from Cuba during Prohibition,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* Volume 93, No 1 (Summer 2014), 44-73; Stephen T. Moore, *Bootleggers and Borders: The Paradox of Prohibition on a Canada-US Borderland* (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 2014); Lisa Lindquist Dorr, *A Thousand Thirst Beaches: Smuggling Alcohol from Cuba to the South during Prohibition* (University of North Carolina Press, 2018).

to bandits, fugitives, and filibusters, and economic opportunities to illegal migrants.”<sup>18</sup>

Jurisdictional borders and sovereign dividing lines were often more limiting for law enforcers than the offenders they were pursuing.

The Pinkerton National Detective Agency (PNDA) pursued Barrie for three years between October 1931 and his eventual deportation in November 1934. During this period, the Agency accumulated a large body of files documenting Barrie’s ringers and frauds. Some are almost exclusively of newspaper clippings and typed articles, but surviving investigator reports reveal much about PNDA strategy and methods, and the challenges of investigating a highly mobile conman in a period of nascent transnational law enforcement cooperation. Pinkerton files, military service records, police memoirs, and newspaper reports, including exposes with Barrie’s own self-rationalisations, are used to re-evaluate his early life and criminal career.<sup>19</sup> These critiques are informed also by recent studies of organised crime and “travelling criminals,”<sup>20</sup> and criminological definitions of mobility centred on the distances travelled by offenders to engage in illegal activities.<sup>21</sup> The article follows many of Barrie’s

---

<sup>18</sup> Peter Andreas and Ethan A. Nadelmann, *Policing the Globe: Criminalization and Crime Control in International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 117.

<sup>19</sup> Barrie’s exposes featured in twelve instalments by Bob McGarry, ““Ringling” Racehorses To The Tune of \$6,000,000,” *New York Daily News* 21 November – 3 December 1932, and a series of articles in *The Sunday People* in January, February, and March 1951.

<sup>20</sup> Diego Galeano, “Travelling Criminals And Trans-national Police Cooperation in South America, 1890-1920,” in Luz E. Huertas, Bonnie A. Lucero, and Gregory J. Swedberg, *Voices of Crime: Constructing and Contesting Social Central in Modern Latin America* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2016), 17-50.

<sup>21</sup> See for example, C. Sterling, *Crime Without Frontiers: The Worldwide Expansion of Organized Crime and the Pax Mafiosa* (London: Warner Books, 1995); Carlo Morselli and Marie-Noële Royer, “Criminal Mobility and Criminal Achievement,” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* Volume 45, No 1 (February 2008), 4-21; Sharon Pickering and Jude McCulloch, eds., *Borders and Crime: Pre-Crime, mobility and Serious Harm in an Age of Globalization* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Eric Beauregard and Irina Busina, “Journey ‘During’ Crime: Predicting Criminal Mobility Patterns in Sexual Assaults,” *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* Volume 28, No 10 (July 2013), 2052–2067; Francesco Calderoni, Giulia Berlusconi and Lorella Garofalo, “The Italian mafias in the world: A

“journeys to crime”: the physical journeys from Australia to England, across the Atlantic, and throughout North America; Barrie’s skills development and widening criminal experience; the associational journeys with prohibition- and depression-era gangs and syndicates and with Arnold Rothstein, Nate Raymond, and other lesser known gamblers and fixers; and Barrie’s increasing celebrity recognition and criminal status conferred through PNDA investigations and sympathetic journalists.

Frequently described as the “Englishman” or “Britisher,” Peter Christian Barrie was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, on February 14, 1888, then migrated to Australia prior to World War 1.<sup>22</sup> When he enlisted at Sydney in September 1914, his occupation was veterinary dentist and farrier, illustrating (if true) he already had crucial competencies for horse substitution.<sup>23</sup> Trooper P. C. Barrie, a motor driver and engineer in the 6<sup>th</sup> Light Horse

---

systematic assessment of the mobility of criminal groups,” *European Journal of Criminology* Volume 13, No 4 (2016), 413–433.

Wider studies of mobility include: Noel B. Salazar, “Theorizing mobility through concepts and figures,” *Tempo Social* Volume 30, No 2 (August 2018), 153-168; Peter Adey, *et al.* eds., *The Routledge handbook of mobilities* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2014); Julia Leyda, *American Mobilities: Geographies of Class, Race, and Gender in US Culture* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2016).

Contemporary crime fiction studies employ mobility as an analytical tool to understand criminal agency across geographically diverse contexts and border crossings. See for example, Maarit Piipponen, Helen Mäntymäki and Marinella Rodi-Risberg, eds., *Mobility and Transgression in Contemporary Crime Narratives* (forthcoming: New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020); Andrew Pepper and David Schmid, eds., “Introduction,” in *Globalization and the State in Contemporary Crime Fiction: A World of Crime* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 1-19.

<sup>22</sup> Harry Smale to PNDA, December 15, 1931, PDNA Criminal Case Files, Box 150, folder 13: Racehorse Ringers correspondence; Murray Robinson, “As You Like It,” *Brooklyn Times Union*, 31 Aug. 1932, 1. Barrie either fuelled or did not correct later newspaper reports of his aristocratic antecedents. See Dan Parker, “Paddy Barrie’s Magic Tonic,” *American Weekly*, 9 Sept. 1951, Clipping in PDNA Criminal Case Files, Box 151, Folder 7. His father Edmund Chadwick Barrie was a provision merchant. See National Library of Scotland, Scottish Post Office Directories, Edinburgh & Leith Directory, 1889-1890, 63, <https://digital.nls.uk/83641909> [last accessed 8 May 2020].

<sup>23</sup> Barrie slit three-year-old *Aknahton’s* gums and removed several teeth so that the number and discolorations tallied with that of a two-year-old horse. McGarry, “Ringing Racehorses, Chapter 1,” *New York Daily News*, 21 Nov. 1932, 43.

Regiment, Australian Imperial Force, was deployed to Gallipoli with the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force. He suffered recurring bouts of dysentery and septic foot at Anzac Cove between May and August 1915, then spent six weeks on *H.M.T. Caledonian* bound for England. He received further treatment at military hospitals in Lewisham and Harefield for concussion, sustained from an exploding shell over the troop transit, and dysentery. We can speculate that these experiences shaped Barrie's post-war attitudes toward authority and risk, his inability to settle in one place, and thus his evolving criminal identity. He was honourably discharged on June 19, 1916 as "being permanently unfit for active service" but was classed as fit for Home Service and had secured employment at a London munitions' factory.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, by the mid-1910s, Barrie had already crossed several geographic borders, and illicit mobility quickly replaced patriotic mobility following his return to civilian life in England.

---

<sup>24</sup> Digital copies of Barrie's service papers are available at National Archives of Australia: Series B2455 First Australian Imperial Force Personnel Dossiers, 1914-1920: BARRIE P C, SERN 384, at <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/DetailsReports/ItemDetail.aspx?Barcode=3052790&isAv=N> [last accessed 29 April 2020]. Information is taken from: AIF Attestation Paper of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad (1, 5); Medical Report on an Invalid (13); Medical Case Sheet (46); M.V. Roberts to The Australian Military Offices, 12 June 1916 (60); Casualty Form-Active Service (68-69). Barrie's pre-war occupation was "farmer" on several documents, but the hand-written entry on his original enlistment form is "farrier." See AIF Attestation Paper of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad (1). Also, the synopsis of Barrie's military record provided by his barrister to jurors in September 1920 and reported in local press, did not fully tally with his military record. See for example, "Turf Fraud Sentences; Penal Servitude For Barrie," *Western Daily Press*, 29 Sept. 1920, 6.

For Crime and Great War veterans, see for example, Edith Abbott, "Crime and the War," *Journal of the American Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology* Volume 9, No 1 (1918): 32-45; Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Jon Lawrence, 'Forging a Peaceable Kingdom: War, Violence, and Fear of Brutalisation in Post-First World War Britain', *Journal of Modern History* Volume 75 (2003), 557-89; Clive Emsley, "Violent Crime in England in 1919: Post war Anxieties and Press Narratives," *Continuity and Change* Volume 23, No 1 (2008), 179-182; Ginger S. Frost, "'Such a Poor Finish' Illegitimacy, Murder, and War Veterans in England, 1918-1923," *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques* Volume 42, No 3, Special Issue: Rethinking World War I: Occupation, Liberation, and Reconstruction (Winter 2016), 91-111.



Barrie was arrested for several theft and fraud offences, including cheque book theft in March 1917 for which he served two months at hard labour, and “obtaining £275 by means of worthless cheques” in 1919 but was discharged by Marylebone Police Court on that occasion.<sup>25</sup> In September 1920 he was described as a Hampstead-based horse owner and amateur jockey, and was one of six defendants on trial at the Old Bailey for a series of horse sale and racing frauds. Barrie pled guilty to five offences, including falsely winning over £167 at the Faceby Plate at Stockton in October 1919 by substituting three-year-old *Jazz* for two-year-old *Coat of Mail*, running *Homs* as *Golden Plate* at Chester in May 1920, and entering an imaginary horse called *Silver Badge* at Cheltenham in December 1919 but actually racing *Shining More*. He was sentenced to three years’ penal servitude and served eight months at Dartmoor Prison.<sup>26</sup>

Barrie’s release coincided with the “racecourse wars” which Heather Shore has critiqued as a series of violent conflicts, involving “mainly metropolitan criminals in affrays and fights on the streets of London and on the racecourses of South-East England,” and to control bookmaking and track protection. As violence escalated from summer 1922 so did police and press surveillance of English tracks.<sup>27</sup> Across the Atlantic, racing and racetracks were enjoying a remarkable resurgence after a period of severe restrictions. In the late

---

<sup>25</sup> Cornish, *Cornish of the “Yard”*, 89-96; “Turf Fraud Sentences; Penal Servitude For Barrie,” *Western Daily Press*, 29 Sept. 1920, 6.

<sup>26</sup> See for example, “Racehorse Owner Arrested,” *Perth Courier*, 8 June 1920, 6; “The Jazz Turf Case,” *Western Times*, 28 June 1920, 4; “Turf Case Developments,” *Western Daily Press*, 7 July 1920, 2; “Turf Conspiracy Charge,” *Daily Mail*, 12 July 1920, 6; “Sequel To A Horse Race,” *Western Times*, 13 July 1920, 8; “The Turf Scandal,” *Western Times*, 21 Sept. 1920, 8; “Easy Money Made On Turf,” *Dundee Courier*, 29 Sept. 1920, 4; “Turf Fraud Case Appeal Dismissed,” *Western Times*, 18 Nov. 1920, 4.

<sup>27</sup> Heather Shore, “Criminality and Englishness in the Aftermath: The Racecourse Wars of the 1920s,” *Twentieth Century British History* Volume 22, No 4 (December 2011), 474, 479-487.

nineteenth-century, a strong anti-racing coalition of evangelical Protestants, social purity and vice reformers, and other progressives mobilised political allies to outlaw gambling and close tracks. Only 25 of 314 Gilded Age racetracks remained open in 1908. Racing ceased completely in New York between 1910 and 1912 and almost completely in Chicago between 1905 and 1922.<sup>28</sup> During the 1920s and 1930s thoroughbred horseracing was a highly lucrative mass spectator sport on both sides of the Atlantic.<sup>29</sup>

Despite having a passport limited to European travel, Barrie sailed for Canada in 1923, and became part of a vibrant interwar Criminal Atlantic.<sup>30</sup> He emigrated to North America to profit from racetrack corruption in the same period that American and Canadian entrepreneurs cultivated European markets for financial frauds and lucrative supply routes for liquor, narcotics, and people. Within months of his arrival in Canada, Barrie claimed, “One night [I] simply walked across the border into the United States.”<sup>31</sup> More robust

---

<sup>28</sup> Steven A. Reiss, *The Sport of Kings and the Kings of Crime: Horse Racing, Politics, and Organized Crime in New York, 1865-1913* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2011), xv-xvi, 174-175, and chapters 7 & 8; Steven Reiss, “The Cyclical History of Horse Racing: The USA’s Oldest and (Sometimes) Most Popular Spectator Sport,” *International Journal of the History of Sport* Volume 31, Nos 1-2 (2014), 29-38.

<sup>29</sup> Mike Huggins, *Horseracing and the British 1919–39* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003); Herb Phipps, *Bill Kyne of Bay Meadows: The Man Who Brought Horse Racing Back to California* (South Brunswick & New York: A. S. Barnes and Company/London: Thomas Yoseloff Ltd, 1978), 9; Gregory L. Ferraro, “The Corruption of Nobility: The Rise & Fall of Thoroughbred Racing in America,” *The North American Review* Volume 277, No 3 (May-June 1992), 4-8.

<sup>30</sup> For a seminal critique of the “Criminal Atlantic,” see Gwenda Morgan and Peter Rushton, *Eighteenth-Century Criminal Transportation: The Formation of the Criminal Atlantic* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004). On later trans-Atlantic criminal mobility, see Paul Knepper, *The Invention of International Crime: A Global Issue in the Making, 1881-1914* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Mathieu Deflem, *Policing World Society: Historical Foundations of International Police Cooperation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 97–110; Andreas and Nadelmann, *Policing the Globe*, especially chapter 3.

<sup>31</sup> Bob McGarry, “Ringling Racehorses, Chapter III,” *New York Daily News*, 23 Nov. 1932, 33. On passport, see Report from PNDA London Correspondent, 5 December 1931, and F. J. N. reports, 7 December 1931, both in PDNA Criminal Case Files Box 152, Folder 7.

border enforcement and immigration controls were enacted by US and Canadian governments in the early 1920s, and supplemented existing Chinese exclusion laws. Yet, restrictions were undermined by “elected officials on both sides of the border, corrupt police officers, and complaint railroad employees,” while smuggling gangs, document forgers, and safe houses were found in all border communities. Astute operators could take advantage of busy border checkpoints, at Niagara and Buffalo for example, where thousands of legitimate workers crossed every day.<sup>32</sup>

Canadian immigration historians highlight the privileged status of British emigrants while Mae Ngai has emphasised the racialisation of US immigration in the new post-1921 era of “numerical restrictions.” Power asymmetries rested on the dissociation of white Europeans and Canadians “from the real and imagined category of illegal alien” and a conscious decriminalisation of certain types of white immigrants.<sup>33</sup> Deportable criminal offences were still narrowly defined, judges retained consideration discretion when considering deportation applications, and the immigration quota enforcement bureaucracy was still evolving in the 1920s and early 1930s.<sup>34</sup> No laws can ever be completely effective, but Barrie was a foreign felon without a valid passport who crossed both the Canadian-US

---

<sup>32</sup> William H. Siener, “Through the Back Door: Evading the Chinese Exclusion Act along the Niagara Frontier, 1900 to 1924,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* Volume 27, No 4 (Summer 2008), 35, 43-46, 52.

<sup>33</sup> Barbara Roberts, “Shovelling out the ‘Mutinous:’ Political Deportation from Canada before 1936,” *Labour/Le Travail* Volume 18 (Fall 1986), 77-110; Mae M. Ngai, “The Strange Career of the Illegal Alien: Immigration Restriction and Deportation Policy in the United States, 1921-1965,” *Law and History Review* Volume 21, No 1 (Spring 2003), 75.

<sup>34</sup> Ryan D. King, Michael Massoglia and Christopher Uggen, “Employment and Exile: U.S. Criminal Deportations, 1908–2005,” *American Journal of Sociology* Volume 117, No 6 (May 2012), 1794-1795 [1786-1825]; Daniel Kanstroom, *Aftermath: Deportation Law and the New American Diaspora* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 32-34.

and Mexican-US borders multiple times between 1923 and 1934.<sup>35</sup> Further, he was arrested for several frauds, generally related to the sale of horses, in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Baltimore, Maryland, and Mechanicsville, New York, from the mid-1920s but prosecutions were not followed up and he quickly moved on.<sup>36</sup>

Over the next ten years, Barrie travelled extensively throughout the United States, Canada, and northern Mexico. Skilled travelling criminals such as professional thieves, prostitutes, gamblers, and confidence men and women used multiple aliases to evade police surveillance and arrest warrants for a range of fraud and deception offences. The physical journeys to crime of one itinerant but relatively disciplined cohort and their criminal agency – unconstrained by national borders, jurisdictional boundaries, or immigration restrictions – were regulated by the racing calendar.<sup>37</sup> David Johnson identified professional gamblers associated with horse racing as leaders in the development of late nineteenth-century “intercity criminal networks and syndicates.”<sup>38</sup> By the 1920s, travelling criminals could ally with urban syndicates for services and protection which in turn extended the geographic, social, and economic spaces through which they could safely travel. However, Barrie’s distinctive doping and painting skillset and the high financial returns they could generate

---

<sup>35</sup> Ngai, “The Strange Career of the Illegal Alien,” 76. When Barrie told a Saratoga District Attorney in 1934 that he had entered the US illegally on at least four occasions this was a blatant undercount. See Paul Gallico, “Peter Barrie Is Perfect Villain of Horse Track,” *Detroit Free Press*, 20 Aug. 1934, 15.

<sup>36</sup> New York Criminal History #3549 Patrick Christy, 15 October 1932, in PDNA Criminal Case Files Box 152, Folder 8.

<sup>37</sup> For another mobile professional thief, see Vivien Miller, “The life and crimes of Harry Sitamore, New York ‘Prince of Thieves’ and the ‘Raffles’ of Miami,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* Volume 87, No 3 (Winter 2009), 378-403.

<sup>38</sup> David R. Johnson, “The Origins and Structure of Intercity Criminal Activity 1840-1920: An Interpretation,” *Journal of Social History* Volume 15, No 4 (Summer 1982), 597.

ensured that he was more intricately tied to premier racetracks than other conmen and women.

A Pinkerton task force moved from track to track during the racing calendar in tandem with the professional criminals. Pinkertons had been policing American racetracks since the 1880s, providing gatemen, ushers, and night-watchmen, and monitoring crowds and traffic, as well as pursuing pickpockets, fraudsters, touts, and prostitutes who worked the crowds on race day and in nearby entertainment districts.<sup>39</sup> Scholarly focus has centred on the PDNA's controversial union infiltration, strikebreaking, and labour espionage activities from the 1890s to the 1930s, but the Agency continued to lead interstate robbery and fraud investigations, and to break up gangs of jewel thieves with the New York Police Department in the 1930s.<sup>40</sup> Racetrack security remained core business throughout the interwar years during a period of considerable industry expansion. The racetrack squad undertook surveillance to "police and protect" the paddock and stables while webs of informants helped PDNA operatives monitor the grooms, exercise boys, and jockeys, as well as race-day crowds. Pinkerton Superintendent Clovis E. Duhain oversaw racetrack

---

<sup>39</sup> Reiss, *The Sport of Kings and the Kings of Crime*, 143; Wilbur R. Miller, *A History of Private Policing in the United States* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 105-106. Pinkertons had also been at the forefront of the crackdown on betting shops and poolrooms in the 1880s and 1890s.

<sup>40</sup> James D. Horan, *The Pinkertons: The Detective Agency That Made History* (London: Robert Hale & Company, 1967), 511; Miller, *A History of Private Policing*, 133-145; Robert Michael Smith, *From Blackjacks to Briefcases: A History of Commercialized Strikebreaking and Unionbusting in the United States* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2003); Stephen P. O'Hara, *Inventing the Pinkertons; or, Spies, Sleuths, Mercenaries, and Thugs: Being a story of the nation's most famous (and infamous) detective agency* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016), 150-151.

operations and Thomas Finnerty was the main PDNA operative at Havre de Grace. These men also made it their business to recognise the horses, trainers, and owners.<sup>41</sup>

Traditional narratives of crime and punishment during the interwar years are dominated first by celebrity bootleggers and gangsters, and then by bandits, bank robbers, and public enemies during the New Deal war on crime. There is a voluminous literature on the criminogenic impacts of Prohibition which details the violent pooling of resources, consolidation of territories and markets, cartelization of illicit manufacturing, and the formation of larger gangs and metropolitan and regional syndicates led by hypermasculine “Big Shots.” Studies of Detroit, Chicago and New York demonstrate that gangs and syndicates demanded fealty and discipline and, like pre-1920s vice lords, were enmeshed in complicated webs of political, police, and judicial corruption.<sup>42</sup> Recent innovative studies of African American-controlled policy and numbers gambling in interwar Harlem, Chicago’s

---

<sup>41</sup> “Racetrack Rackets,” n.d. [c1931], in PDNA Criminal Case Files Box 151, Folder 1; Pinkertons to Alan Hynd, 14 August 1941, in PDNA Criminal Case Files Box 150, Folder 13.

Pinkertons had exposed another American “King of the Ringers” Benjamin A. Chilson, between 1903 and 1905, and again in the 1920s. See D. C. Thornhill to J. W. Wright, 29 September 1921 and Asst. Supt. C. E. Duhain Report, 9 February 1926, in PDNA Criminal Case Files Box 152, Folder 5, and Clippings on Chilson in PDNA Criminal Case Files Box 151, Folder 3. Chilson and Barrie did overlap, in 1926 for example, but Chilson (age 64 in 1926) then disappears from the historical record.

<sup>42</sup> See for example, John Kobler, *Capone: The Life and World of Al Capone* (Cambridge, MA: Dacapo Press, 1971, 1992); Albert Fried, *The Rise and Fall of the Jewish Gangster in America* (Revised Edition, New York: Columbia University Press, 1993); David E. Ruth, *Inventing the Public Enemy: The Gangster in American Culture, 1918-1934* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Paul R. Kaveieff, *The Purple Gang: Organized Crime in Detroit, 1910-1945* (New York: Barricade Books, 2000); Robert A. Rockaway, “The Notorious Purple Gang: Detroit’s All-Jewish Prohibition Mob,” *Shofar* Volume 20, No 1, Special Issue: American Jews (Fall 2001), 113-130; Mara L. Keire, *For Business and Pleasure: Red-Light Districts and the Regulation of Vice in the United States, 1890-1933* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 2010), especially Chapter 6; Robert M. Lombardo, *Organized Crime in Chicago: Beyond the Mafia* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013); Robert W. Whalen, *Murder, Inc., and the Moral Life: Gangsters and Gangbusters in La Guardia’s New York* (Fordham, MD: Fordham University Press, 2016).

intergang violence, and local bootlegging provide broader and more nuanced critiques of organised criminal activities in the interwar United States.<sup>43</sup> Organised crime groups were structurally diverse and multi-layered, and could be simultaneously hierarchical, insular, fluid, and decentralised. They varied in size. They easily incorporated different entrepreneurs such as lone female gun molls and larcenists, mobile con games, and the violent male enforcers and extortionists employed by more rigid urban crime syndicates.<sup>44</sup>

Barrie was a seasoned fraudster and conman. At times, he doped horses and provided ringers on a fee basis for betting rings and individual high-stakes gamblers; at other times he operated independently or in a smaller gang on the fringes of larger syndicates. John Kobler identified several men who operated on the fringes of Chicago gangs, including “lock picker, safecracker, and escape artist” Morris “Red” Rudensky.<sup>45</sup> There was significant operational and jurisdictional overlap between lone operators, smaller gangs, and hierarchical oath-bound “families,” as safecrackers, thieves, and bank robbers utilised fences, safe houses, and bail bondsmen protected by larger criminal gangs or

---

<sup>43</sup> See for example, Michael Woodiwiss, “Transnational organized crime: The strange career of an American concept,” in M.E. Beare, ed., *Critical Reflections on Transnational Organized Crime, Money Laundering and Corruption* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 3–34; Michael Woodiwiss, *Double Crossed: The Failure of Organized Crime Control* (London: Pluto Press, 2017); Frank Argote-Freyre, “The Myth of Mafia Rule in 1950s Cuba: Origin, Relevance, and Legacies,” *Cuban Studies* Number 49, (Winter 2020), 263-288.

<sup>44</sup> John E. Halwas, *The Bootlegger: A Story of Small-Town America* (Champagne, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1999); Shane White, Stephen Garton, Stephen Robertson, and Graham White, *Playing the Numbers: Gambling in Harlem Between the Wars* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010); John J. Binder, *Al Capone’s Beer Wars: A Complete History of Organized Crime in Chicago During Prohibition* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2017); Tammy Ingram, “The South’s Sin City: White Crime and the Limits of Law and Order in Phenix City, Alabama,” in Amy Louise Wood and Natalie J. Ring, eds., *Crime and Punishment in the Jim Crow South* (Urbana and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2019), 79-104.

<sup>45</sup> Kobler, *Capone*, 91, 140, 145, 202.

dominant individuals. By the mid-1920s, Arnold Rothstein's bail bond business was one of the largest in New York City, and Barrie's connection to Rothstein is discussed below.<sup>46</sup>

Barrie was allied with Detroit's Purple Gang and Minneapolis' gangs, but for over a decade, "New York crooks" provided financial backing for his frauds and expected to profit handsomely from the ringers painted by this immigrant specialist.<sup>47</sup>

By 1925, Barrie was in the greater New York area, working as a stable hand then chauffeur for Samuel C. "Sam" Hildreth, a leading thoroughbred owner and trainer, employed by August Belmont in the 1910s, and from 1921 at the Rancocas Stable owned by oil baron Harry F. Sinclair (later implicated in the Teapot Dome scandal).<sup>48</sup> Barrie later claimed he was paid by Detroit's Purple Gang to infiltrate Hildreth's operation and steal his doping mixture.<sup>49</sup> Hildreth was also a long-time friend and gambling associate of Arnold Rothstein whose spectacular turf, ring and ballpark winnings were often attributed to fixes. Rothstein's biographer surmised they "had been partners in some of the biggest betting coups ever made in the history of racing."<sup>50</sup> There is no direct PNDA or newspaper evidence directly linking Barrie to Rothstein, a bookmaker, gambler, bail bondsman, and narcotics kingpin, but it seems very likely that the ambitious fraudster and New York's master crook

---

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 142-143; Katcher, *The Big Bankroll*, 265, 295.

<sup>47</sup> McGarry, "Ringing Racehorses, Chapter 1," *New York Daily News*, 21 Nov. 1932, 42.

<sup>48</sup> Samuel C. Hildreth and James R. Crowell, *The Spell of the Turf: The Story of American Racing* (Philadelphia and London: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1926), 243-252.

<sup>49</sup> See Ashforth, *Ringers and Rascals*, 51-52.

<sup>50</sup> Katcher, *The Big Bankroll*, 112, 119, 123; David Pietrusza, *Rothstein: The Life, Times, and Murder of the Criminal Genius Who Fixed the 1919 World Series* (2003; New York: Basic Books, 2011), 130-134. Rothstein won \$1,350,000 in two races in 1921, including \$850,000 on *Sidereal* at Aqueduct on 4 July.



were involved in mutually beneficial betting schemes. It is also difficult to envisage Barrie's ringers competing at major north-eastern or midwestern racetracks between 1925 and 1928 without Rothstein's knowledge or patronage, not least because of Rothstein's extensive network of racetrack informants and control over lay-off betting.<sup>51</sup> Further, by 1926, Barrie had left Hildreth's employment and had enough money to legitimately purchase several racehorses and to set up his own riding stable.<sup>52</sup> As Katcher notes, "Rothstein's main function was organization. He provided money and manpower and protection. He arranged corruption – for a price. And, if things went wrong, Rothstein was ready to provide bail and attorneys."<sup>53</sup>

Racetracks had long been important sites of upperworld-underworld intersection. Legitimate financiers and consumers mingled with professional gamblers, pickpockets, and swindlers at the tracks. Wealthy bookmakers invested in stables and controlled jockeys. Legitimate and gangster investors partnered to finance racetracks (Rothstein and August Belmont II were the original investor-owners of Havre de Grace in 1912) and bright light entertainment districts such as Saratoga's Lido Venice-Piping Rock strip.<sup>54</sup> Many individuals moved easily between these worlds.<sup>55</sup> Thoroughbred ownership was important to

---

<sup>51</sup> One of Rothstein's partners was Charles A. Stoneham, head of a gambling syndicate controlling the casino and racetrack at Havana. Barrie raced at least one ringer at Havana, in 1927. See Katcher, *The Big Bankroll*, 193; "Horse Ringing by Peter Christian Barrie," in PDNA Criminal Case Files Box 151, Folder 1.

<sup>52</sup> McGarry, "Ringling Racehorses, Chapter III," *New York Daily News*, 23 Nov. 1932, 33.

<sup>53</sup> Katcher, *The Big Bankroll*, 232.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 132-137; Pietrusza, *Rothstein*, 92-93, 117, 130-132.

<sup>55</sup> See C. Oren Renick and Joel Nathan Rosen, "Inextricably Linked: Joe Louis and Max Schmeling Revisited," in David C. Ogden and Joel Nathan Rosen, eds., *Fame to Infamy: Race, Sport, and the Fall*

industrialists and bankers keen to flaunt their wealth and to status-conscious gangsters like the Capones. From 1931-1941, New York bootlegger William Vincent “Big Bill” Dwyer owned a large stake in Florida’s Tropical Park, whose refurbishment was financed by Canadian bootleggers.<sup>56</sup> Several Hollywood moguls and celebrities also became “turf moguls” through their ownership of racehorses and track investments.<sup>57</sup> Prohibition and the illegal liquor trades extended old associations and created new alliances between legitimate financiers, syndicates, urban political machines, and police.

In the years after World War One and during the Depression, crowds flocked to premier tracks to watch elite thoroughbreds compete for huge purses at Saratoga, Belmont, and Havre de Grace, and to local short-distance tracks - often part of a network of carnivals and travelling fairs - as at Butte, Montana, to see bottom-level thoroughbreds and quarter horses vie for small purses.<sup>58</sup> Changing attitudes toward competitive sports during the war, then decreasing working hours and increased leisure time and rising consumer confidence in the mid-1920s, and the aesthetics of the race-day experience enticed Americans of differing backgrounds and classes. As Alison Goodrum observes, “Spectators went along to the races .... to view the horseflesh and to take in the intoxicating atmosphere: they gambled, socialized and were entertained.”<sup>59</sup> Crowd-pulling horses included *Man O’ War* in 1919-

---

*from Grace* (Jackson MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2010), for the example of early 1930s Detroit racketeer John Roxborough.

<sup>56</sup> Reiss, “The Cyclical History of Horse Racing,” 38-39.

<sup>57</sup> Kobler, *Capone*, 34; Vanderwood, *Satan’s Playground*, 240-241; Hotaling, *They’re Off!* 243. Harry L. “Bing” Crosby was one of the original stakeholders of the Santa Anita racetrack opened in December 1934.

<sup>58</sup> Hillenbrand, *Seabiscuit*, 58; Ferraro, “The Corruption of Nobility,” 4-5.

<sup>59</sup> Alison Goodrum, “The Style Stakes: Fashion, Sportswear and Horse Racing in Inter-war America,” *Sport in History* Volume 35, No 1 (2015), 54.

1920, *Gallant Fox* in 1930, and rivals *Seabiscuit* and *War Admiral* (both *Man O'War* descendants) in the second half of the 1930s.<sup>60</sup>

Racing historian Steven Reiss notes the “number of tracks in operation rose to 34 in 1929, of which 70% were new,” and there was a 60% rise in the number of races, a doubling of the number of registered thoroughbreds, and purses “quadrupled to \$13.9 million between 1918 and 1926.”<sup>61</sup> Purses dipped significantly in the depression years but footfall and gate receipts did recover significantly. Florida, an expanding tourist destination and much-advertised tropical paradise, was home to four major tracks by the mid-1920s. Winter racing, traditionally limited to Havana’s Oriental Park, greatly aided the recovery of Florida’s tracks after the 1926 land-boom collapse.<sup>62</sup> Hialeah, north of Miami, was integral to Joseph E. Widener’s triangular Kentucky-New York-Florida racetrack empire (East Coast society elites would spend August in Saratoga then winter in south Florida), and its 1931 redevelopment included elegant Art Deco styling, lush landscaping and imported flamingos.<sup>63</sup> Three new racetracks opened in Chicago in the late 1920s: Washington Park, Lincoln Fields, and Arlington Park, followed by Capone’s local track at Hawthorne in 1931.<sup>64</sup>

---

<sup>60</sup> Hildreth and Crowell, *The Spell of the Turf*, 228-232; Hotaling, *They’re Off!* 214-215, 234, 249; Hillenbrand, *Seabiscuit*, 37-39, 158-159, 201.

<sup>61</sup> Reiss, “The Cyclical History of Horse Racing,” 38-39.

<sup>62</sup> Charlene R. Johnson, *Florida Thoroughbred* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1993), 46.

<sup>63</sup> Hotaling, *They’re Off!* 223; Holly Kruse, *Off-Track and Online: The Networked Spaces of Horse Racing* (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 2016), 56.

<sup>64</sup> Hotaling, *They’re Off!* 224; Roger Longrigg, *The History of Horse Racing* (London: Macmillan, 1972), 282.

A \$2 million thoroughbred track opened in December 1929 at the opulent Agua Caliente resort near Tijuana, the centre of a booming cross-border liquor and gambling economy.<sup>65</sup>

Ashforth uncovered few details about Barrie's frauds between 1928 and 1931, yet the combination of new racetracks, extended seasons, and fat purses undoubtedly increased underworld demand for Barrie's skills.<sup>66</sup> He was therefore most likely hidden in plain sight and simply not yet under PNDA surveillance in these years. His white skin and dapper appearance also facilitated his movement through racetrack crowds, and ensured he was one of many well-dressed white men at the paddock or near the stables. Spectators at all the major racetracks in the South were segregated by law, and often by custom at northern tracks. Black horsemen had dominated American tracks after the Civil War but were edged out from the 1890s. Lower status "negro clockers" and stable hands were still employed at many tracks but there were much fewer black jockeys and black trainers by the Jim Crow 1910s and 1920s. It is also noteworthy that in a period when criminality, mobility, and detection were intrinsically linked to race, class, and gender, African Americans feature in PNDA files on Barrie as chauffeurs, stable hands, trainers and racetrack clockers, and as unwitting rather than as full accomplices.<sup>67</sup>

---

<sup>65</sup> Johnson, *Florida Thoroughbred*, 32; Vanderwood, *Satan's Playground*, 49.

<sup>66</sup> Ashforth, *Ringers and Rascals*, 58.

<sup>67</sup> E. L. Patterson to S. L. Stiles, 13 October 1931, in PDNA Criminal Case Files Box 152, Folder 6; Maryjean Wall, *How Kentucky Became Southern: A Tale of outlaws, Horse Thieves, Gamblers, and Breeders* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2010), 109-127, 193-195; Katherine C. Mooney, *Race Horse Men: How Slavery and Freedom Were Made at the Racetrack* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), especially chapter 7. On race and criminal profiling, see Khalil Gibran Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

Technological innovations were transforming the race day experience at premier tracks: public announcement systems appeared in the early 1920s and steel-frame electric starting gates debuted in California in 1929. The electrical totalizer, a giant board on the infield, recorded the amount of money wagered on each horse, the odds, the total pool, and the mutual pay-outs. "A bet placed with any clerk at any ticket-selling machine was instantly and automatically entered into the pool, which allowed quick calculation of pre-race odds and post-race payouts" and so replaced pre-printed slips and the fervent manual calculations that had to be updated every 5-10 minutes.<sup>68</sup> Investment in the totalizer was part of a major push by racetrack owners and investors to eradicate illegal wagering and race fixing and thus to clean up the sport, as gambling re-emerged as an important income stream for organised crime during the last years of prohibition as racetracks and races increased. Syndicate backed Moe Annenberg monopolised the racing news wire service and the dissemination of racing results from 1927, and conmen had made money from advance knowledge of racing results for several decades.<sup>69</sup>

Vacation resort operators pushed for pari-mutuel wagering on dogs and horses to increase footfall and to eradicate the protection rackets controlling trackside bookmaking.<sup>70</sup> Hialeah's owner Joseph Widener lobbied hard for pari-mutuels to be introduced in Florida in

---

<sup>68</sup> Phipps, *Bill Kyne of Bay Meadows*, 46, 119-120; Powley, *When Racing Was Racing*, 20; Cummings, "The Language of Horse Racing," 27; Kruse, *Off-Track and Online*, 17-18. For a useful description of modern betting and pari-mutuel payoffs, see Richard H. Thaler and William T. Ziemba, "Anomalies: Parimutuel Betting Markets: Racetracks and Lotteries," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* Volume 2, No 2 (Spring 1988), 162.

<sup>69</sup> Johnson, "The Origins of Intercity Crime Activity," 600; Fried, *The Rise and Fall of the Jewish Gangster*, 117; Jonathan D. Cohen, "'Put the Gangsters Out of Business': Gambling Legalization and the War on Organized Crime," *Journal of Policy History* Volume 31, No 4 (2019), 541.

<sup>70</sup> Hillenbrand, *Seabiscuit*, 17-18, 32-33; Phipps, *Bill Kyne of Bay Meadows*, 41.

the face of strong opposition from Cuban racetrack owners and Southern Baptists. A pari-mutuel bill was defeated in 1929, stirred a bitter legislative fight two years later, and was passed over the governor's veto in June 1931. The state's first legal pari-mutuel horse race took place at Tropical Park on Boxing Day 1931, and over the next twelve months, Florida's three tracks produced \$710,388 in pari-mutuel tax revenue. By 1933, ten states had adopted pari-mutuel betting, which became an economic lifeline for many cash-strapped governments during the Depression.<sup>71</sup> However, betting rings could subvert pari-mutuels through comeback bets, namely money placed on bets at poolrooms and bookmakers across the United States and then wired into the betting bureaux at the tracks.<sup>72</sup>

When *Shem-Aknahton* trounced *Byzantine* in October 1931, there were immediate suspicions of foul play. The fraud was exposed by *Morning Telegraph* journalist John J. "Fitz" FitzGerald who asked the obvious question: how could the form of a horse valued at under \$500 only a few days before the race have improved so dramatically to draw wagers of \$20,000 from across the country?<sup>73</sup> *Shem-Aknahton's* sensational win allegedly earned over one million dollars in total for Barrie, his immediate associates, and wider betting rings in on the know, but "then the wise guys couldn't keep their mouths shut.....and the bubble

---

<sup>71</sup> Longrigg, *History of Horse Racing*, 282.

<sup>72</sup> McGarry, "Ringling Racehorses, Chapter VI," *New York Daily News*, 26 Nov. 1932, 25.

<sup>73</sup> Fitz, "'Shem' Not Shem," 9 October 1931, in PDNA Criminal Case Files Box 151, Folder 1; Ashforth, *Ringers and Rascals*, 65.

burst.”<sup>74</sup> When *Shem’s* trainer was instructed by officials to have the horse ready for inspection on October 4, both had disappeared.<sup>75</sup>

The American Jockey Club was established in 1894 to protect horse racing “from the sharks of the track and betting rings.” It set the racing schedule and rules, maintained lists of thoroughbred horses and their pedigrees, and had the power to licence trainers and jockeys. Early twentieth-century crackdowns on race fixing led many states to create racing commissions to oversee track licences and personnel at the local level, allocate race dates, and hear grievances. Those violating the rules or caught cheating could have their licences revoked, which could have a devastating effect on livelihoods, and be banned from the tracks in that state.<sup>76</sup> Within days of the *Shem-Aknahton* fraud, the gang and their horses were ruled off the turf by the Maryland Racing Commission, but it would take several more weeks for members’ identities to be confirmed by PDNA investigators: A. Ray alias Nate Raymond, Leo Kammerman alias Leo Canerman, Peter Westley alias Patrick Christie (Barrie), Arthur Kennedy, William Marino (listed as *Shem’s* owner), J. LeBolt alias Julius DeLott, Herman “Blackie” Brackenheimer, and Vladmar Sulick.<sup>77</sup> Kennedy was a legitimate trainer; the rest were not. Aside from Barrie, the main betting ring men were William J. “Big Bill”

---

<sup>74</sup> “Burning Blaze Has Top Weight,” *Baltimore Sun*, 10 Oct. 1931, clipping in PDNA Criminal Case Files, Box 151, Folder 1; McGarry, “Ringing Racehorses, Chapter 1,” 43.

<sup>75</sup> E.L. Patterson to S. L. Stiles, 13 October 1931, in PDNA Criminal Case Files Box 152, Folder 6.

<sup>76</sup> Reiss, *The Sport of Kings and the Kings of Crime*, 163-164; Johnson, *Florida Thoroughbred*, 21-28, 35, Miller Davis, “The Story of Horse Racing in Florida; Simply Fabulous,” *Miami Sunday News*, 24 Nov. 1963, 8D.

<sup>77</sup> Typed Statement, Maryland State Racing Commission, n.d. in PDNA Criminal Case Files Box 150,, Folder 13; “Racetrack Rackets,” n.d. [c1931] in PDNA Criminal Case Files Box 151, Folder 1; “7 Ruled Off Turf By Maryland Body,” *New York Times*, 19 Nov. 1931, 31.

Duffy and Nathaniel “Nigger Nate” Raymond, identified as being together at Havre de Grace on 3 October.

Ex-con Duffy was a well-known restaurateur and boxing promoter on Broadway, a nocturnal bright light city space full of “chorines, hoofers, promoters, publicity agents, speakeasy hostesses, [and] rum runners,” gamblers, and New York City mobsters, as well as legitimate businesses.<sup>78</sup> Raymond, a “Forger–Confidence Man–Gambler,” originally from San Francisco, was a professional high-stakes gambler, had been barred from Pacific Coast League parks for fixing baseball games, and was one of the eight players at Rothstein’s infamous last card game in Manhattan. Rothstein still owed him over \$303,000 when he was assassinated and Raymond was briefly arrested as a material witness to Rothstein’s murder in November 1928.<sup>79</sup> Despite the racially pejorative description, Raymond was not African American, but a white male with “a swarthy complexion.” He was Jewish and had attended Rothstein’s *levaya*.<sup>80</sup> Raymond was probably Barrie’s main turf-fraud partner between 1928 and 1931, and Barrie may therefore have been active on the West Coast during the period that Ashforth could not locate him.<sup>81</sup> Further, while on the East Coast, Raymond was

---

<sup>78</sup> E.F.G. Reports, 14 October 1931, in PDNA Criminal Case Files Box 152, Folder 6; “Big Bill Duffy Dies: Figure In Dry Era,” *New York Times*, 26 May 1952, 18; V. Penelope Pelizzon and Nancy M. West. *Tabloid, Inc. Crimes, Newspapers, Narratives* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2009), 95.

<sup>79</sup> Katcher, *The Big Bankroll*, 320-322, 340-341; Pietrusza, *Rothstein*, xviii, 9-11, 309, 375-376; John Scarne, *The Odds Against Me: An Autobiography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1966), 128-131; Herbert Mitgang, *Once Upon a Time in New York: Jimmy Walker, Franklin Roosevelt, and the Last Great Battle of the Jazz Age* (2000; New York: Cooper Square Press, 2003), 16-17, 21-22.

<sup>80</sup> The epithet was given to or appropriated by other Jewish crime figures such as Isadore “Nigger” Goldberg of Twentieth Ward Group in 1920s Chicago. See Fried, *Jewish Gangster in America*, 35, 105; Thaddeus Russell, *A Renegade History of the United States* (New York: Free Press, 2010), 171.

<sup>81</sup> Rothstein was killed in 1928 and Hildreth did not survive an intestinal operation in September 1929. “Sam Hildreth, 63, Turf Veteran, Dies,” *New York Times*, 25 Sept. 1929, 31.



domiciled in Long Island and Steve Maby, Barrie's former trainer turned PNDA informant, told Fitz that Barrie's headquarters in late 1920s and early 1930s was near the Long Island racecourses.<sup>82</sup>

From October 4, thoroughbreds *Aknahton* and *Ep* were transported to New York then Lake County Fairgrounds at Crown Point, Indiana, using a circuitous route and alternating van and rail, before *Ep* was abandoned and *Aknahton* was transported to Agua Caliente via Bowie, Maryland, where he raced as *Hickey* in late November 1931. *Shem* was later moved to New Jersey. Pinkertons investigated rail and stock yards, urban stables, and garages, attempted to photograph horses at Crown Point (*Aknahton*) and Jersey City stockyards (*Shem*), interviewed witnesses and informants, visited hotels and businesses, and checked phone records, to track gang members and build a timeline of their movements. Horses had been shipped by Barrie, Raymond, and Canerman using different aliases but were eventually tracked through the horse health certificates required by railroad companies.<sup>83</sup> Between October 1931 and February 1932, the Pinkertons exercised a multi-agency approach for a complex case underpinned by extensive geographic mobility, men using multiple aliases, and imperfect horse descriptions. They worked with local police in

---

<sup>82</sup> Fitz, "Ran As Gailmont, Started As Shem at Havre de Grace," 25 Feb. 1932, in PDNA Criminal Case Files Box 151, Folder 1.

<sup>83</sup> E.F.G. Reports, 14 October 1931, G.A.W. Reports, 16 October 1931, D.C. Thornhill to S. L. Stiles, 22 October 1931, C.J.M Reports, 22 and 23 October 1931, E.L. Patterson to S.L. Stiles, 25 October 1931, A.F. Reports, 31 October 1931, E.L. Patterson to S. L. Stiles, 31 October 1931, in PDNA Criminal Case Files Box 152, Folder 6; A.F. Reports, 2, 3, 4 and 5 November 1931, A.F. Reports, 5 November 1931, E.J.W. Reports, 12 and 13 November 1931, E. L. Patterson to S. L. Stiles and D. C. Thornhill to S. L. Stiles, 9 November 1931, C. E. Duhain Reports, 14 November 1931, E.J.W. Reports, 17 November 1931, in PDNA Criminal Case Files Box 152, Folder 7; E.J.W. Reports, 6 November, 1931 in PDNA Criminal Case Files Box 152, Folder 9.

New York, Baltimore, and Chicago, and the US Immigration Service as a plan to apprehend and deport Barrie as an undesirable alien began to take shape.<sup>84</sup>

Incomplete PDNA intelligence suggested the betting ring was planning another horse substitution at a winter track and the gang's base of operations was either Tijuana or Havana. The major operatives were tied to New York-Long Island while Barrie worked out of a mobile horse van or his distinctive black Lincoln touring car with red wheels. In early January 1932, "Blackie" Brackenheimer (former manager of boxer Max Schmeling's camp), Bill Duffy, and Larry Fay (New York bootlegger and racketeer) were spotted vacationing in Daytona, Florida, and asked to leave Tropical Park by stewards acting on advice from PNDA Superintendent Duhain. Both Tropical Park and Hialeah were under PNDA surveillance when Willis Kane (Barrie), recently arrived from Tijuana, attempted to stable five horses at Tropical Park in early February. Kane and the horses were directed to Hialeah.<sup>85</sup>

Hialeah officials became suspicious on 23 February when large comeback bets were placed on bay coloured *Gailmont*. Around \$7,000 of the \$8,907 wagered was wired to the track shortly before the race commenced and recorded by the recently installed totalizator. The race for three-year-olds went ahead, but after a false start *Gailmont* "broke down and finished the last quarter on three legs, a hopeless cripple." Pinkertons impounded the horse when he reached the paddock.<sup>86</sup> Track officials determined that *Gailmont* was dyed four-

---

<sup>84</sup> E.L. Patterson to S.L. Stiles, 25 October 1931 in Box 152, Folder 6; H.S. Mosher to H.R. McMullin, 10 November 1931, in PDNA Criminal Case Files Box 152, Folder 7.

<sup>85</sup> Fitz, "Ran As Gailmont," 25 Feb. 1932, in PDNA Criminal Case Files, Box 151, Folder 1; Supt. C. E. Duhain reports, 1 December 1932, 1, in PDNA Criminal Case Files Box 152, Folder 8.

<sup>86</sup> "Stewards To Rule on Miami 'Ringer'," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 25 Feb. 1932, clipping in PDNA Criminal Case Files, Box 151, Folder 1; McGarry, "Ringing Racehorses, Chapter VIII," *New York Daily News*, 29 Nov. 1932, 48.

year-old *Aknahton* carrying a racing injury sustained at Agua Caliente six weeks earlier. The fraud would have been very apparent if the horses had been closely examined: the real *Gailmont* was a gelding but the horse that raced at Agua Caliente and Hialeah in early 1932 had not been castrated. The application of “hefty blocks of ice” to *Aknahton*’s genitals was used at Havre de Grace and this method may have been repeated elsewhere.<sup>87</sup> The *Gailmont* substitution exposed *Aknahton* as a five-time ringer and precipitated a dramatic unravelling of Barrie’s fraud operations. Needless to say, the case was referred to the Miami Jockey Club. Its decision to rule two owners and a trainer, Kane, John P. Crawford, and A. F. Tavener, off the turf along with their five horses was confirmed by the newly-empowered Florida State Racing Commission.<sup>88</sup> But Kane (Barrie) – still known to Pinkertons as “Patrick Christie” – had again disappeared.

Pinkerton and local Miami police surveillance culminated in Barrie’s arrest when he collected his distinctive automobile from a local garage. He was interviewed by US Immigration officers in Miami city jail on March 1, posted \$500 bail and lodged at a downtown hotel to await the deportation warrant (illegal aliens without criminal records could deport voluntarily). As Pinkertons congratulated themselves, Barrie jumped bail on 13 March.<sup>89</sup> McGarry later triumphantly declared that the “turf swindler and international

---

<sup>87</sup> McGarry, “Ringling Racehorses, Chapter 1,” *New York Daily News*, 21 Nov. 1932, 43.

<sup>88</sup> Notes from Miami, February 27, 1932, and February 28, 1932, in PDNA Criminal Case Files Box 151, Folder 1; “Gailmont Branded As ‘Ringer’ On Hialeah Park Racing Card,” *Miami Daily News*, 24 Feb. 1932, 10; “Hialeah Ringer Case To be Decided Today,” *Miami Herald*, 25 Feb. 1932, 11; “State Race Board Upholds Stewards,” *Miami Daily News*, 28 Feb. 1932, 7B. It was reported that the track photographer would “mug” all five horses to assist with future identification if they were entered unlawfully. “Topical Tropics,” *Miami Herald*, 2 Mar. 1932, 10.

<sup>89</sup> “Barrie Arrested In Gailmont Case,” *Miami Herald*, 1 Mar. 1932, 4; E.J.W. Reports, 2 March 1932, 2, in PDNA Criminal Case Files, Box 152, Folder 8: Racehorse Ringers-Reports, 1932; Ngai “The Strange Career of the Illegal Alien,” 77. Barrie’s phone records showed that he had been in regular contact with Duffy. Raymond had been convicted of second-degree forgery in New York in January

crook.....has left the country for parts unknown.”<sup>90</sup> *Aknahton* had gone too. Their whereabouts were known to associates in major north-eastern and midwestern cities, who continued to utilise Barrie’s services.<sup>91</sup> W. E. Fred (Barrie) and a previously unknown female accomplice “Mrs Jean Browning” aka Ethel Patricia Von Gretchen were linked to ringers at Saratoga, Belmont, Fort Erie, and Jamaica in 1932. *Voltagreen* ran as *Janie G* at Fort Erie, Ontario, on August 6, while *Regula Baddun* ran as *Saintlite* at New York’s Jamaica track on October 3, exactly one year after the Havre de Grace coup. Fred and Browning were swiftly ruled off the turf at both tracks, but the bets had already been paid out.<sup>92</sup>

While a fugitive from the Pinkertons and the US Immigration Service, Barrie sold his story to the *New York Daily News* and provided material for a twelve-part “glowing, colorful yarn of intrigue, fraud and swindle on the racetracks” in November-December 1932.<sup>93</sup> The articles were framed as both salacious exposes and quasi-public service announcements, as well as acts of desperation by a penniless crook. Racing journalists such as Bob McGarry and Paul Gallico had long marvelled at Barrie’s brazenness and frequently adopted light-hearted prose to describe the daring exploits of a likeable rogue. The story of the clever master-

---

1932, but was released from Tombs Prison on appeal on 9 March (although this was set aside in July) so the timing of Barrie’s departure from Miami seems significant. See “Raymond Is Guilty of Forgery,” *New York Times*, 15 Jan. 1932, 7; “Raymond, Gambler, Gets 5-Year Term,” *New York Times*, 27 Jan. 1932, 15, “Gambler Gets Bail In Forgery Appeal,” *New York Times*, 9 Mar. 1932, 10.

<sup>90</sup> McGarry, “‘Ringin’ Racehorses, Chapter 1,” *New York Daily News*, 21 Nov. 1932, 42.

<sup>91</sup> Paul Gallico, “Little Ringer, What Next?” *New York Daily News*, 17 Aug. 1934, 50.

<sup>92</sup> “Operations of Barrie,” n.d., 2, C. E. Duhain to A. E. Ribey, 19 October 1932, A. E. Ribey to C. E. Duhain, 24 October 1932, “Track Undesirables,” W. F. W. Reports, 4 November 1932, Supt. C. E. Duhain reports, 1 December 1932, 3, in PDNA Criminal Case Files Box 152, Folder 8.

<sup>93</sup> “The Master Horse Ringer!” *New York Daily News*, 20 Nov. 1932, 52C.

ringer who fooled Jockey Clubs and racing officials is repeated in many racing histories and retold in online popular history podcasts.<sup>94</sup>

Alternative characterisations of Barrie as a calculating conman who mutilated horses, deliberately included guiltless, albeit naïve, jockeys and trainers in his frauds, and extorted journalists were hinted at but rarely discussed in detail. Further, the *New York Daily News* articles were hardly repentance-based confessions. “I never had any compunction about ringing a horse,” Barrie declared. “Certainly it was crooked. The game is full of thieves. I was cheating cheaters.”<sup>95</sup> His ringers were still running, he had sufficient funds to purchase thoroughbreds, and stable, feed and transport them, while he and his accomplice paid for numerous hotels in cash as they moved between tracks in 1932-1934.<sup>96</sup> The articles can also be read as bold advertisements of Barrie’s skills and successes and that he was still in business, touting for patrons now that Raymond was serving time in Sing Sing Prison in upstate New York. One PNDA source noted that Barrie’s associates were “sore” at the newspaper interviews.<sup>97</sup> However, the information he gave up was selective: most of the named associates were either dead or in prison, the list of ringers was incomplete, and he did not volunteer information about the period from winter 1928 to spring 1931, or his whereabouts after he left Miami in mid-March 1932. And, if criminal associates were really

---

<sup>94</sup> John McEvoy, *Great Horse Racing Mysteries: True Tales from the Track* (2000, Lexington, KY: Blood-Horse Publications, 2003), 134; Bert Sugar with Cornell Richardson, *Horse Sense: An Inside Look at the Sport of Kings* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2003), 137-138; Josh Nathan-Kazis, “History’s Greatest Horse Racing Cheat and His Incredible Painting Trick,” *Narratively Hidden Histories*, <https://narratively.com/historys-greatest-horse-racing-cheat-and-his-incredible-painting-trick/> [last accessed 5 June 2020].

<sup>95</sup> Quoted in McGarry, “Ringing Racehorses, Chapter 1,” *New York Daily News*, 21 Nov. 1931, 42.

<sup>96</sup> Gallico, “Peter Barrie Is Perfect Villain of Horse Track,” *Detroit Free Press*, 20 Aug. 1934, 15.

<sup>97</sup> Memo from W.F.W. 23 November 1932, in PDNA Criminal Case Files Box 152, Folder 8.

“sore” at Barrie, then the frustration of a major betting ring by *Gailmont’s* eleventh place in February 1932, may have been more significant.

Throughout 1933, Pinkertons were conducting surveillance on a blonde woman in her 20s in the New York-Long Island area and at Virginia tracks. Both Barrie and von Gretchen used different aliases when buying and selling horses and at hotels and racetracks, which continued to slow PNDA enquiries. In autumn 1933, both were seen at Laurel and Bowie racetracks in Maryland, but it is not clear whether there were suspicions of doping or substitution in specific races.<sup>98</sup> Barrie’s photograph and a list of eleven aliases were circulated to all PNDA offices in early January 1934.<sup>99</sup> By this time, Barrie was a well-known figure at many US and Canadian racetracks and the use of a lesser known accomplice may have been an operational decision. The likelihood that Barrie was now operating semi-independently on the fringes of organised crime may also have made syndicate silence and protection less secure. Pinkerton operatives could not agree whether there was any romantic attachment between Barrie, then 45 years old, and this much younger woman, but they were certainly entranced by the tall good-looking von Gretchen. Witnesses also found her to be much more memorable than Barrie.<sup>100</sup>

Mrs Helen Lewis’s (von Gretchen) request to a groom at Saratoga Springs in August 1934 to transfer three-year-old colt *Easy Sailing* from one stall to another prompted the

---

<sup>98</sup> See H. S. Mosher Reports, 4 February 1933; E. S. McNerry to C.E.D., 15 July 1933; E. McN Reports, 29 July 1933; T. J. F Reports 22 December 1933, 3-7, in PDNA Criminal Case Files Box 152, Folder 9.

<sup>99</sup> W. F. Wagner to All Offices, 5 January 1934, in PDNA Criminal Case Files Box 152, Folder 9.

<sup>100</sup> “The Pinkertons Smash the Race-Track Ringers,” *True Detective*, December 1941, 91, article in PDNA Criminal Case Files Box 151, Folder 7; McGarry, “Ringling Racehorses, Chapter XI,” *New York Daily News*, 2 Dec. 1932, 68.

suspicious groom to alert the Pinkertons.<sup>101</sup> Two painted thoroughbreds, recent arrivals from Fort Erie, had already been spotted in a nearby farmer's field thus Saratoga was being watched closely.<sup>102</sup> Pinkertons tailed Lewis, who led them straight to Barrie "sitting behind the wheel of a horse van, about to drive a nag away." Barrie and three associates were arrested by Pinkertons and Saratoga police and charged with grand larceny, although it was clear from the outset that this was merely a holding tactic to enable US Immigration officers to organise Barrie's deportation, as his associates were quickly released.<sup>103</sup>

By the early 1930s, Barrie's de-territorialised mobility and his continuous journeys to crime directly challenged federal social and crime control policies in a period of rising crime, violence, and insecurity. Both the Hoover and Roosevelt administrations adopted more aggressive post-entry social control deportation policies amid increased public anxieties over unemployment and law-breaking, public weariness with the failures of Prohibition, and political denunciations of foreign gangsters and native-born bandits.<sup>104</sup> One 1930 editorial declared, "Aliens who are taking advantage of America's hospitality to carry on rackets of every sort deserve no consideration or mercy. They ought to be sent back to their native

---

<sup>101</sup> Fred J. Cook, *The Pinkertons* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1974), 167-171.

<sup>102</sup> "Veterinarian for Jockey Club Certain No Ringers Have Been Run at Saratoga This Season," *The Saratogian*, 17 Aug. 1934, clipping in PDNA Criminal Case Files Box 151, Folder 6.

<sup>103</sup> "Barrie, Alleged Swindler, Given Hearing in Court," *The Saratogian*, 17 Aug. 1934, clipping in PDNA Criminal Case Files Box 151, Folder 6; "Peter Barrie of 'Ringer' Fame Arrested at Saratoga," *Miami Daily News*, 15 Aug. 1934, 9; "Barrie Charged with Attempted Theft of Horse," *New York Daily News*, 16 Aug. 1934, 54.

<sup>104</sup> Kanstroom, *Aftermath*, 31; "U.S. Studies Deportation of Gangsters as Weapon," *Washington Post*, 12 Dec. 1930, 1; Edward T. Folliard, "400,000 Aliens in U.S. Illegally, Doak Says," *Washington Post*, 6 Jan. 1931, 1; "More Lenient Deportation Laws Favored," *Washington Post*, 4 Apr. 1932, 2; "Immigration Law No Check to Gangsters," *Washington Post*, 21 July 1934, 2; Villa Poe Wilson, "Club Women Will Lend Their Aid to Charity, Economic and Reform Campaigns," *Washington Post*, 4 Nov. 1934, J4.

countries and denied the privileges of ever entering the United States again.”<sup>105</sup> Criminal deportations increased from 1932. Nevertheless, painting a horse to take the place of another was not actually a criminal offence in either Maryland or Florida, and conspiracy to commit fraud and false pretences were not extraditable offences between the US and Canada.<sup>106</sup> Barrie does not appear to have been convicted of any crimes during the ten years he spent in North America but he admitted to the US District Attorney at Saratoga that he had entered the US illegally and had no permanent address, while his numerous frauds were discussed in his newspaper articles.<sup>107</sup> As a non-domiciled immigrant with “no fixed address” he was particularly vulnerable to charges of vagrancy and becoming a public charge.<sup>108</sup> In November 1934, three months after his arrest at Saratoga, Barrie left Ellis Island on the S. S. *Caledonia* bound for England.<sup>109</sup>

There was mixed journalistic reaction to Barrie’s deportation. Drawing on broader cultural rankings of lesser and more serious illicit activities which evolved during the prohibition years, his allies noted that Barrie was a crook, but opined that the *real* crooks were the gamblers who profited from the fraudster’s ringers rather than the horse painter himself. One *New York Daily News* writer dismissed Barrie as “a specialist who could be trusted by the gangsters” but not a big shot: “Barrie was merely a small-time artist used as a

---

<sup>105</sup> “Alien Criminals,” *Washington Post*, 13 Dec. 1930, 6.

<sup>106</sup> A. E. Ribey to C. E. Duhain, 24 October 1932, 1-2, in PDNA Criminal Case Files Box 152, Folder 8.

<sup>107</sup> Paul Gallico, “Peter Barrie Is Perfect Villain of Horse Track,” *Detroit Free Press*, 20 Aug. 1934, 15.

<sup>108</sup> John L. Coontz, “Get Out! Uncle Sam to Criminal Aliens,” *Washington Post*, 30 April 1933, pSM1:

<sup>109</sup> H.S.M. Reports, 26 October 1934, E.F.G. to D.C.T. and H.S.M. 3 November 1934, in PDNA Criminal Case Files Box 152, Folder 9.



tool by gamblers.”<sup>110</sup> Further, criminology studies of mobility and criminal achievement have emphasised the relatively short distances travelled by drug, market, and property offenders between their place of residence and any crime location, although there are obvious exceptions such as serial sex offenders and interstate serial killers. They also highlight the importance of financial returns and criminal networks in shaping an offender’s mobility, as well as age, as older higher-rate offenders with a wider geographic reach and more criminal contacts were higher earners.<sup>111</sup> Barrie’s case study challenges the press dismissals of his significance and nuances the linkages between migratory entrepreneurs and criminal achievement.

Barrie may have been a minor player in complex illicit gambling markets and the racing economy. He was a professional conman and racketeering specialist operating for or on the fringes of larger syndicates through a series of shifting alliances and associational networks. By 1933, Barrie’s big shot associates were dead or in prison while his career was defined by survival, adaptability, and longevity. The “Perfect Villain of Horse Track” was very much alive with a transferrable and profitable skillset that was still in demand. It is impossible to calculate the exact amount of illegal winnings from Barrie’s ringers and he never corrected the figures proffered by McGarry and other journalists. Despite his frequent pleas of poverty - particularly to sympathetic journalists - ringing horses must have brought

---

<sup>110</sup> “Barrie On Way Out,” *Daily Racing Forms*, 25 Oct. 1934, and Robert T. Paul, “One Ringer Less,” *New York Daily News*, 21 Aug. 1934, clippings in PNDA Criminal Case Files Box 151, Folder 6.

<sup>111</sup> Morselli and Royer, “Criminal Mobility and Criminal Achievement,” 4-6, 13; Beauregard and Busina, “Journey ‘During’ Crime,” 2052.

significant financial returns, otherwise Barrie would not have opted to remain in North America for ten years.<sup>112</sup>

He was an experienced middle-aged peripatetic offender whose purposive mobility and multiple aliases helped avoid detection and apprehension for a relatively long period. And, in the early 1930s, the Pinkerton National Detective Agency deployed large numbers of agents at considerable expense to go after this gambler's "tool." The Agency's reputation as the nation's most powerful single law-enforcement body was being challenged by the rising profiles of federal law enforcement agencies, particularly J. Edgar Hoover's Bureau of Investigation and Harry J. Anslinger's Federal Bureau of Narcotics, and the PNDA business model was changing with greater emphasis on security and private protection contracts. Yet, the Pinkertons' pursuit of Barrie, whether a small-time artist or not, enabled operatives to showcase their criminal investigation, detection, and crime fighting skills developed both in the United States and through the PNDA's network of overseas offices.

Nevertheless, by November 1934, it was probably time for Barrie's North American career to end. He had been ruled off the turf in Canada, Maryland, Florida, and New York. His ability to operate at the tracks with the highest purses and most lucrative betting was increasingly constrained both by his celebrity and the Pinkertons. The gradual adoption of horse saliva testing for drugs, the tattooing of an identification number on a horse's upper lip, and photographing of a horse's unique "nighteyes" (calluses on the inner side of each leg) and ostensibly stricter monitoring of horses and personnel at major tracks made it easier to expose ringers.<sup>113</sup>

---

<sup>112</sup> Paul Gallico, "Little Ringer, What Next?" *New York Daily News*, 17 Aug. 1934, 50.

<sup>113</sup> Hotaling, *They're Off!* 241.

Viewed against the backdrop of increasing political and public hostility to foreign offenders, Barrie was the consummate and remorseless alien habitual criminal who had deliberately undermined the “Sport of Kings” by taking advantage of America’s hospitality to profit handsomely from racetrack racketeering. His physical removal from the United States could be portrayed as a small but notable victory during one phase of a much longer war on illegal wagering and race fixing in the United States. In 1934, a career unfettered by national borders was at last curtailed by the host nation’s immigration laws. However, criminal deportation was an administrative tool rather than a strategy for reformation or desistance. Barrie’s North American exploits undoubtedly conferred status, success, and criminal reputation: despite his ignominious return to England, he was still the master painter and the clever fraudster who had outwitted Jockey Clubs, racetrack owners, and trainers across the US, Canada and Mexico, and had eluded the famous Pinkertons for a considerable period of time. Further, Barrie’s forced return led to a timely career relaunch and at least twenty more years of doping, dying, and ringing horses at major British tracks.<sup>114</sup>

---

<sup>114</sup> Ashforth, *Ringers and Rascals*, 85-104.