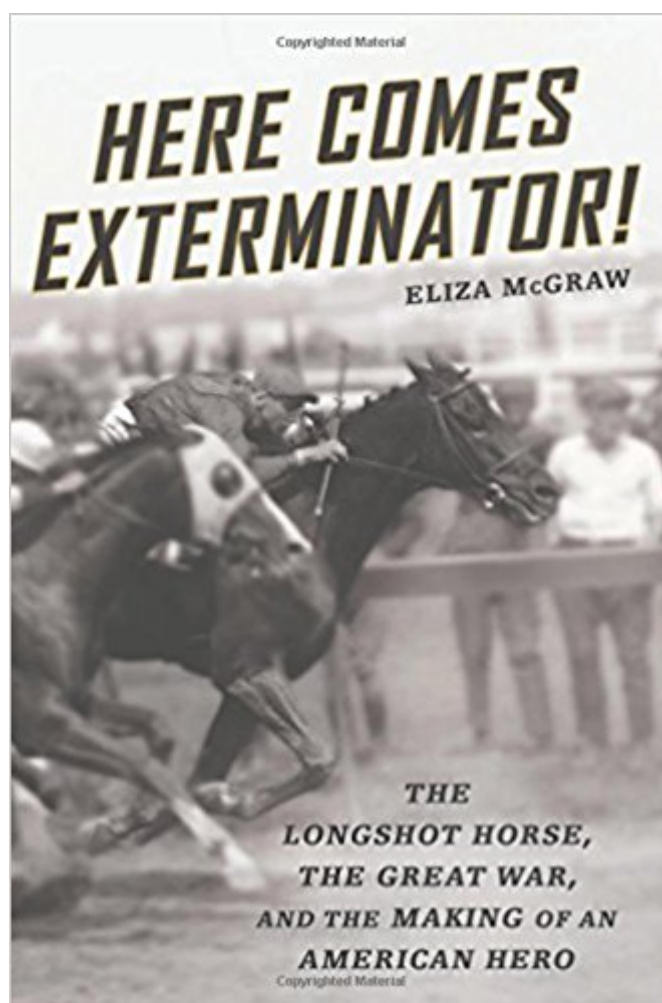


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# Here Comes Exterminator!: The Longshot Horse, The Great War, And The Making Of An American Hero



## Synopsis

The father of the Kentucky Derby called him "the greatest all-around Thoroughbred in American racing history." Sportswriter Grantland Rice simply called him "the greatest racehorse." Now Eliza McGraw tells the story of how a gangling, long-shot Kentucky Derby winner named Exterminator became one of the most beloved racehorses of all time. *Here Comes Exterminator!* draws readers into the golden age of racing, with all its ups and downs, the ever-involving interplay of horses and people, and the beauty, grace, fear, and hope that are a daily part of life at the track. Caught between his hotheaded millionaire owner and his knowledgeable trainer, Exterminator captured fans' affection with his personality, consistency, athleticism, and heart. Exterminator's staggering success would dramatically change the world of horse-racing. He challenged the notion that American horses would never live up to Europe's meticulously charted bloodlines and became a patriotic icon of the country after World War I. And his longevity established him as one of the public's most beloved athletes, paving the way for equine celebrities like Seabiscuit and showing Americans they could claim and love a famous racehorse as their own.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Before there was Seabiscuit there was Exterminator, the long-shot Thoroughbred that won the Kentucky Derby--and America's devotion--in 1918. His story is a wonderful ride."

People "Exterminator's come-from-behind story captured hearts (and still-standing records, such as 33 stakes wins by a North American thoroughbred) as told in this

deeply researched profile." "Garden and Gun" A great read if you like horse racing and want to learn what life was like in the early 1900s, when newspapers were king, people named Vanderbilt, Hancock and Belmont were famous owners and horses were big news." "Eric Sondheimer, The Los Angeles Times "A beguiling tale of an ungainly gelding "gawky, awkward, and practically lop-eared, who held the racing world in thrall during his career (1917-24) and still holds the record of 33 stakes wins by a Thoroughbred raced in North America." "Booklist" Readers who couldn't get enough of Laura Hillenbrand's Seabiscuit will welcome this new title; with its colorful cast of characters and exciting down-to-the-wire action, it should have wide appeal." "Library Journal" Before Seabiscuit, before Man o' War, Exterminator raced his way into America's heart. Eliza McGraw shows how his cheerful endurance still wins our enduring love." "Dorothy Ours, author of Battleship: A Daring Heiress, a Teenage Jockey, and America's Horse" A great book about a great horse." "Susan Richards, author of Chosen by a Horse "Eliza McGraw's story of an unflappable, courageous, almost-overlooked champion, Exterminator who shocked the racing world when he won the Derby in 1918 is an exciting, mud-soaked, triumphant journey from starting gate to finish line." "Martha Sherrill, author of Dog Man: An Uncommon Life on a Faraway Mountain "This horse deserves a monument! Eliza McGraw takes us on an incredible ride on the back of one amazing horse. With impeccable research she meticulously weaves this lost tale of a champion of champions. A great horse - a great story - a truly great read!" "Robin Hutton, author of the New York Times bestseller Sgt Reckless: America's War Horse "Yes, there was another race horse who also stole America's heart. And now there is a book that artfully captures this love affair between The Galloping Hatrack and his fans. Meticulously researched and a compelling read about the golden age of horse racing. Well done, Ms. McGraw. You don't even have to be a horse nut to love this book." "Jody Jaffe, author of the Natalie Gold series

ELIZA MCGRAW is a contributing writer for EQUUS magazine and author of two instructional equestrian books as well as two academic works. Her horse-related writing has appeared in The Chronicle of the Horse, The Blood-Horse, Mid-Atlantic Thoroughbred, Raceday 360, the New York Times racing blog, and The Washington Post. She has taught at American University and earned degrees from Columbia University and Vanderbilt University. She lives in Washington, D.C., with her family, and keeps her paint mare Sugar in Potomac, Maryland.

I knew absolutely nothing about horse racing before I read this book. I neither saw nor read Seabiscuit when his story was all the rage a few years ago and that's because it just isn't my thing. I picked up this book on the recommendation of a friend who has an enormous amount of knowledge on the subject and I trusted her judgement. The first half of the book was slower reading in that it was packed with history, with background, and with context that helps to understand why, although he never posted the times that Man o' War did, he nonetheless captured the hearts and imagination of America in a way no other horse ever had. McGraw had incredible access to family members and original sources and the roughly 80 pages of notes and bibliography testify to the research that went into the book. The second half of the book breezes by so quickly as we come to see Exterminator transform into a celebrity just as surely as any movie idol of the time; he even got a profile in Vanity Fair! By the end of the book I reached the point that I was truly sad that I could never see Exterminator myself. His personality really came through in McGraw's writing and I just wanted to hug that big goofy horse and his best buddy Peanuts (1-3). I was really moved by the love Exterminator had for racing and the long and painful last years of his career. I'm not going to lie, I cried through most of the last 20 or so pages. Perhaps Exterminator was best summed up by a quote from an unnamed reporter, "Turf fans worshipped many horses...But they loved Old Bones." I really enjoyed this book and I would love to see a movie made about the relationship that formed the primary bond of the book, that of Exterminator and his long-term trainer, Henry McDaniel.

The author has seemingly written two books and combined them into one volume: one is a history of horses in the late 19th and 20th centuries, especially in war, and the other is the story of the brilliant Exterminator, the "ugly" horse that was a racing sensation in the 1920's. When I was a young adult reader one of my favorite horse books was "Old Bones," which was the fictionalized story of Exterminator told for children. Eliza McGraw takes the story, minus the fictional stable boy, and expands it to include a thoughtful look at the owner and trainer, as well as the way the horse was idolized by the public. Exterminator was a very long lived horse after his retirement from his brilliant racing career. The public loved him and he gathered large crowds whenever he was exhibited. He was exhibited at war bond drives during the second world war and raised millions. When his pony companion Peanuts died in 1944, the New York Times honored him with an obituary. Exterminator passed on in September of 1945 at the advanced age of 30, mourned by the public that had just gratefully experienced the end of World War II. With the decline of thoroughbred horse racing in America Exterminator is not as well-known today 71 years after his death and perhaps the author

could have spent more time on that, as opposed to the time spent on the post Civil War era. But for someone who devoured horse stories throughout her childhood years this is a well-researched return to the Golden Age of racing and one of its four legged heroes.

What a terrific book! I loved the way the author weaved the history of earlier Americans' relationship with horses (something most of us have all but forgotten) with the exciting story of Exterminator and the evolution of horse racing. Chock full of terrific anecdotes, unforgettable, gritty characters, and terrific descriptions, the book proved wholly absorbing--and I definitely fell in in love with Exterminator! I can't wait to see what Eliza McGraw writes next.

This book told a story I knew, but with photos I had not seen before, and also details and attention to the time period. If the story really "wants" to be Laura Hillenbrand's "Seabiscuit," I would say it isn't quite, but deserves to be mentioned in the same paragraph. The writing is smooth and clear, and the story seems to be well-researched.

Fine book!

Exterminator is one of my favorite racehorses from the past. This was a wonderful book giving lots of insight into the life of Exterminator and his connections. It also gave a fascinating look into the era during WW1 and after. I highly recommend.

Fun, informative and interesting read. Well written as expected. From a time when horses raced and gained a following, a huge following. Any racing fan will enjoy

More than met my expectations. Ms McGraw's interweaving of World War I history is especially interesting.

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