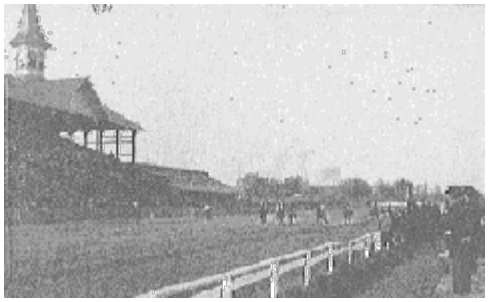
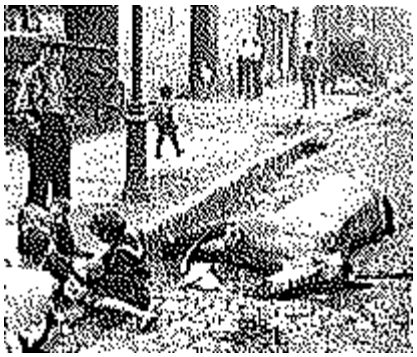
Comments?
Introduction

Horses



The horse held two contradictory positions in turn-of-the-century urban America. On the one hand, it was the noble, elegant symbol of the rural past, celebrated and fawned over by the wealthy in their hunt club s and riding stables, and lionized by the general public in the emerging sport of thoroughbred racing. *Seen in the photo here is the 1909 Kentucky Derby.*



On the other, it was the inefficient, messy, and antiquated cog brutalized within the quickening pace of the industrial/urban collosus. This photo, euphemistically titled "The End of a Career", was taken on the streets of New York, but the same scene was played out daily on the streets of Detroit as well. Turn-of-the-century cities needed to move vast quantities of goods (ice, coal, bread, beer, milk, etc.,) and the horse was the primary means of intra-city cartage. The farm horse of the rural past might be put out to pasture when his working days were over, but the city horse was worked to the last, dying in the traces to offset his expensive upkeep.



The Detroit Creamery employed a stable of hundreds of horses to move its dairy products to homes, hotels, and restaurants in the city. Here, delivery carts await their morning stock.



Above is the yard of the Gordon Pagel Baking Co., supplier of daily bread to tens of thousands of Detroit residents. Note the pool of urine spreading from the team on the right. The leavings of the city's horses were a major sanitary and healt h problem, making, as they did, a breeding ground for disease-causing bacteria. A 1900 New York City Transportation Committee claimed that if growth rates continued as predicted, cities would be knee deep in horse waste by 1950. Happily, the internal comb ustion engine soon displaced the horse (though the cartage industry would be a latecomer to motorized transport, as trucks did not enjoy widespread use until after World War I.) On the other hand, motorized transport brought about it's own health problems (exhaust and the accompanying particulate matter and poison gases), and respiratory problems plague urban populations today.