

## Legendary Racehorse of the Bullfield Stable Inducted into Hall of Fame

*On 10 Aug 2012, Planet was inducted into the National Thoroughbred Racing Hall of Fame in Saratoga Springs, New York. The award was accepted by Sarah Wright of Ashland, the great-granddaughter of Planet's owner, Maj. Thomas Doswell. The article, which appeared in the Official Guide, is reprinted here.*

Planet was one of the most spectacular American racehorses in the years leading up to the Civil War. Foaled in [Hanover County] Virginia at Maj. Thomas Doswell's Bullfield Stable in 1855, Planet was sired by Revenue out of the Boston mare Nina. Planet was a sensation from the start. He made his debut with a victory over four others in mile heats for a purse of \$10,070 in Fairfield, Va. in May 1858, and went on to establish a record for career purse earnings that stood for twenty years.

Turf writer John Hervey described Planet as "a rich chestnut, 15.2½ hands tall, he was remarkable for his symmetry of mould and the excellence of his limbs."

Planet displayed his remarkable skill and versatility by compiling a record of 27-4-0 from 31 starts and earning \$69,700. Known as "The Great Red Fox," Planet was regarded by many turf experts to be second only to the mighty Lexington among the greatest American racehorses prior to the Civil War.

Carrying Bullfield's famed orange silks and trained by N. B. Young, Planet won at a variety of distances in Virginia, Georgia, South

Carolina, Alabama, and Louisiana. He also traveled to New York where he won a \$20,000 sweepstakes in September 1860 at the Fashion Course on Long Island. Racing from age three to six, Planet defeated many of the top horses of his era, including Daniel Boone, Congaree, Socks, and Arthur Macon.

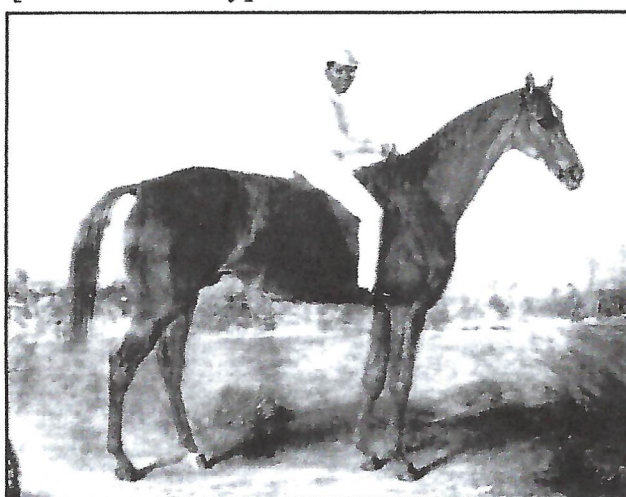
Planet was retired to stud at Bullfield in 1861. The Civil War and its aftermath curtailed racing in the South and interrupted

several years of Planet's career as a stallion. During those years, Planet and many of the other Bullfield horses were hidden in the woods to protect them from Yankee marauders.

In 1868, Doswell sold Planet to R. A. Alexander of Wood-

burn Farm in Kentucky, where he resided until his death at the age of 20 in 1875.<sup>1</sup>

Planet joins Secretariat, another famous product of the Doswell area, among the elite 93 horses in the Thoroughbred Racing Hall of Fame, a roster that includes Man o'War, Whirlaway, War Admiral, Seabiscuit, Seattle Slew, and Riva Ridge. Planet is one of only four horses in the Hall of Fame born before the Civil War; the others are Lexington (1850), Sir Archy(1805), and Kentucky (1861).<sup>2</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Bouyea, Brien. "Planet," Guide to the Official National Thoroughbred Racing Hall of Fame, 2012-13: 54-55.

<sup>2</sup> Glassner, Greg. *Herald-Progress*, 23 Aug 2012.

## Bullfield: Home of the "Red Stables"

The first Thomas Doswell, a Hanover native, began his turf career when he founded Bullfield Farm in 1824. In that era, the New Market race course in Petersburg, and the Broad Rock, Tree Hill, and Fairfield tracks near Richmond were at the height of their popularity.<sup>1</sup>

Bullfield was called "The Red Stables" because of the unusual solid orange silks worn by its jockeys and because nearly all of its champion horses were sorrels or chestnuts. From the early 1800s until the turn-of-the-century, the Doswells were owners, breeders, and trainers of racehorses and the orange silks of "T. & T.W. Doswell" became famous from New Orleans to Saratoga.<sup>2</sup>

For many years, the Field Days exhibition at Bullfield signified the start of a new racing season. The annual event attracted as many as 150 gentlemen to inspect the stables, view the horses, and drink and dine in lavish style. One account tells of a special train coming from Richmond carrying many of the prominent men of the city to watch the Doswells show their mares and stallions and to see the young colts run their trials on the track just east of the house. The Doswells were mainly interested in improving the breed and never bet on their horses. Wagers at Field Days were limited to a top bet of ten cents.<sup>3</sup>

Bullfield Stables achieved its greatest victories during the years immediately preceding the War Between the States through the produce of the famous stud matrons Fanny Washington by Revenue and Nina, daughter of the mighty Boston.<sup>4</sup>

Planet, the first foal of Nina, won at all distances, beginning at age three. Although he excelled at sprints and trotting, he had the endurance necessary to win the four-mile

marathon races that were common in those days. A day's racing might involve as many as 12 hard miles, including preliminary and final races.<sup>5</sup>

Planet won his first victory in the Doswell Stakes at Fairfield in May 1858. From his debut until he was retired, Planet's career was marked by a series of unparalleled performances on every track of note from New York to New Orleans.<sup>6</sup>

When Bullfield was raided by Federal troops during the Civil War, the portrait, "Planet with Jesse Up," [shown on page 5] was cut from its frame, folded in quarters, and then abandoned on the roadside. It was returned to Bullfield when a passerby recognized the jockey's orange silk.<sup>7</sup>

After the War and the death of T. W. Doswell in 1890, family fortunes declined and Bullfield was sold to F. H. Nagel in 1901. Considered the end of an era, the sale was lamented by an unknown writer:

Bullfield, famous in the annals of the racing world as a place where in its time were bred and trained more winning horses than in any other stables in America, and noted also as the home of Maj. T. W. Doswell, the mere mention of whose name calls up in the minds of many Virginia gentlemen memories of by-gone days of good comradeship and genial hospitality, has passed out of the hands of the family by whom it has been owned for nearly a hundred years.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Talley, Dale Paige. *The Doswell Dynasty: Virginia Gentlemen & Fine Horses*, @ [amazon.com](http://amazon.com), 2006: 31-32.

<sup>2</sup> Talley: 23.

<sup>3</sup> Wright, Sarah. Notes for Presentation to the Hanover County Historical Society, 13 Sep 1992.

<sup>4</sup> Talley: 31-32.

<sup>5</sup> Glassner, Greg. *Herald-Progress*, 23 Aug 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Talley: 32.

<sup>7</sup> Talley: 39.

<sup>8</sup> Talley: 138.

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