

Edgar, Patrick Nisbett ^[1]

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Edgar, Patrick Nisbett

by Jane Wilson, 1986

ca. 1770-ca. 1858

Patrick Nisbett Edgar, the first man to publish a stud book of American racehorses, was born in Dublin, Ireland, the son of Patrick Edgar. Although his name does not appear in the published list of alumni of Trinity College, Dublin, he is said to have been educated at the [University of Dublin](#) ^[2]. His ungovernable temper led him, in rage, to murder his father's gardener, according to one report; he fled Ireland and made his way to America where he was employed by wealthy planters as tutor to their children. He was considered eccentric and such names as "Sir Patrick" and "Edie Ochiltree," after the character in Sir Walter Scott's novel, *The Antiquary* ^[3], came to be applied to him. Nevertheless he was respected and soon came to be recognized as an authority on blood horses and blood lines. This knowledge and his scholarship attracted the attention of Captain James J. Harrison of Diamond Grove, Brunswick County, Va., "Father of the American Turf," who selected Edgar to take over the gathering of data that led to the manuscript for *The American Race-Turf Register* ^[4] by Patrick Nisbett Edgar, identified on the title page as "from Granville County, North Carolina." It was printed in 1833 in New York by Henry Mason for "Patrick N. Edgar & Co." The dedication is to Captain Harrison and signed by Edgar from Williamsboro (now [Vance County](#) ^[5]). A second volume was anticipated and mentioned on the title page but was never published for lack of funds. Others offered to take over Edgar's material for publication but he refused; he was reported to have sent it to Ireland for safekeeping although it has never been found.

According to the 1850 census of Granville County, Edgar was eighty years old and living in the household of twenty-five-year-old James Currin and his wife and children, in that part of the county known as Abraham's Plains. His love of horses and riding contributed to his death from exposure after he was caught in a snowstorm riding near the plantation of one Jigget in the vicinity of St. Tammany Ferry on [Roanoke River](#) ^[6]. He was buried in the family cemetery there.

Edgar's *The American Race-Turf Register* has been described as "a literary monument" and the compiler as "a personality." His book has been widely cited and is regarded as accurate and reliable but there are omissions. He has been suspected of leaving out horses belonging to men with whom he was not on good terms. The noted stallion, [Sir Archie](#) ^[7], for example, was omitted.

Apparently Edgar never married. In those census reports in which his name appears, he is always listed alone.

References:

Elizabeth A. C. Blanchard and Manly Wade Wellman, *The Life and Times of Sir Archie* (1958).

Fairfax Harrison, "The Equine F. F. V.'s," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 35 (1927).

John Hervey, *Racing in America, 1665–1865* (1944).

Additional Resources:

Patrick Nisbett Edgar. *The American Race-turf Register, Sportsman's Herald, and General Stud Book: Containing the ...* Press of Henry Mason. 1833. <https://archive.org/details/americanracetur00edgagoog> ^[4] (accessed July 24, 2013).

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