



The Great Sweepstakes of 1877: A True Story of Southern Grit, Gilded Age Tycoons, and a Race That Galvanized the Nation

Mark Shrager

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In 1877 the members of the United States Senate postponed all business for the day so that they might attend a horse race—the iconic, polarizing post-Civil War event at the center of this story. The nation, still recovering from the depredations of the Civil War and the Reconstruction that followed, recognized it as a North vs. South encounter, pitting New York’s powerful thoroughbred Tom Ochiltree and New Jersey’s Parole—owned by the ostentatious Northern tycoons Pierre and George Lorillard—against the already legendary “Kentucky crack,” Ten Broeck—owned by the teetotaling, plain-living Frank Harper and ridden by black jockey and former slave William Walker—representing a former slave state and its Southern values. The race and the colorful cast of characters involved reflected the still seething America during one of the nation’s most difficult and divisive periods. Shrager presents a fascinating and heart-pounding piece of history exposing the racial and economic tensions following the Civil War that culminated in one final race to the end.

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