



# Marion Hollins

## Queen of the Road

by  
Jerry Trapani



Images from the National Archives,  
unless otherwise indicated

**M**arion Hollins was born in 1892 into a family of wealth and social standing in a time when women were expected to be proper, quiet and well behaved. She was none of these throughout her life, but instead was an exceptional athlete in golf, tennis, and especially equestrian pursuits. Today we would call her a “tomboy” as she was raised with four brothers and always acted as the 5<sup>th</sup> brother. Born and raised at the family’s estate on the south shore of Long Island in East Islip, she grew up with the Vanderbilts, Cuttings, and the prominent sporting families of the times.

Marion’s father was Harry Hollins, a banker and financial adviser to the likes of J.P. Morgan and the Vanderbilts. He was a well-known sportsman and his Long Island farm, Meadow Farm, encompassed 600 acres along the Great South Bay. He wrote *Happy Hunting Ground*, about his life and friends at the Southside Sportsmen’s Club. Like most estates of the time it was a self-sustaining farm and had plenty of hunting, fishing, and horses. The horses were used for riding and driving to a variety of carriages. Marion was holding the reins at age three on the lap of her mother, Evaline Meserole Knapp Hollins. Riding to hounds, showing, and the like were her pursuits from an early age.

*“Marion Hollins is in a class by herself in everything. She rides (equestrian) as well as she golfs. She’s the best woman driver in the east (maneuvering horse-drawn carriages along Fifth Avenue). She’s the star of the Long Island polo team. She swims like a reincarnated mermaid. She plays tennis like a whirlwind. I’d trust myself with her in motor climbing the Jungfrau if she took it into her head to drive to the top.”*

- 1914 Chicago Tribune



Marion Hollins on her mother’s lap, learning to drive.

Photo from *Champion in a Man’s World*  
by David E. Outerbridge

Top photos: Bain News Service, publisher, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

SUBJECT: NUMBER  
A.U.

165-WW 232 B29B

PHOTOGRAPHER Int. Film Serv. (C)

REC'D Apr. 1918 TAKEN Apr. 1918  
27,

DESCRIPTION  
N.Y. SOCIETY GIRL DRIVING  
LIBERTY COACH FROM BUFFALO  
TO NEW YORK.

Photo shows Mr. Morris C. Howlett and Miss Marion Hollins the N.Y. society girl and famous horsewoman who drove the Liberty Coach (famous four-in-hand owned by late Alfred G. Vanderbilt) from Buffalo to New York - April, 1918.



ISSUED:

NOTES:

3-2665

SUBJECT: NUMBER  
AU

165-WW 232 B29

Inter. Film Ser.  
PHOTOGRAPHER

May ---1918 Apr. ---1918  
REC'D TAKEN

P.N. 74259

DESCRIPTION  
"LIBERTY COACH" LEAVING BUF-  
FALO FOR NEW YORK.

"The Liberty Coach" drawn by the famous four-in-hand team owned by the late Alfred G. Vanderbilt and driven by Miss Marion Hollins of New York leaving Buffalo on its journey to New York City in the interests of the Third Liberty Loan Campaign.



ISSUED:

NOTES:

3-2665



SUBJECT: NUMBER  
**165-WW 241 E 4**  
 AU

PHOTOGRAPHER West. Newsp. Union.  
 RECD May 1918 TAKEN May 1918.

DESCRIPTION  
 WHEN MISS MARION HOLLINS, a New York society girl, reined up her coach and four at City Hall, New York, after a drive of 473 miles from Buffalo, the third Liberty Loan was the better off by \$ 4,000,000. The coach and its occupants were welcomed by the Mayor's committees at City Hall. Photo shows the coach driving thru Central Park, May 1918.



ISSUED: NOTES: 1-2018

SUBJECT: NUMBER  
 165-WW-233 A 8  
**165-WW 233 A 8**  
 Central News Photo Ser.

PHOTOGRAPHER  
 July 18, 1918 May 4, 1918  
 RECD TAKEN

DESCRIPTION  
 LIBERTY COACH COMPLETES BUFFALO TO NEW YORK TRIP.  
 The Liberty Coach bond sellers and reception committee at the City Hall, N.Y. City. Left to right: Mrs. Arthur Iselin, Mrs. Thomas Hastings, acting Mayor A. Smith, Miss Marion Hollins, Mrs. A.G. Vanderbilt, Lieut. A. Le Moel, standing in front.



ISSUED: NOTES: 1-2018

As Marion grew, she learned tennis and later golf and became a champion in both sports. She won the Pebble Beach championship a record five years in a row from 1922-26 and went on to win it three more times in her career. Her accomplishments in golf are legendary, so much so that she is to be inducted into the Golf Hall of Fame in 2021. Marion made her mark as an athlete but also as a golf course developer. Her developments include The Women's National Golf and Tennis Club in Glen Head, Long Island, NY; Cypress Point Club, and Pasatiempo Golf Club. Her achievements and contributions to golf are fully covered in her biography, *Champion in a Man's World*, published by Sleeping Bear Press, is currently out of print.


In this article we will deal with her equestrian prowess and her accomplishments in the ring and on the road. Riding in those days for a woman meant riding side-saddle at which she was very proficient, winning many classes at shows on Long Island's Meadowbrook, Piping Rock, Stony Brook and Bay Shore show grounds. Her passion for speed and daring led to her riding astride. As polo became more popular in America, she took up the sport and was the only woman to be rated with a man's handicap. She was such a great player that she played with best players of the day. Tommy Hitchcock and Harry Payne Whitney gladly let her play their ponies. In the 1930s it was said, "What Babe Ruth was to baseball, Marion Hollins was to polo." High praise indeed.

Almost every year before WWI the Hollins family took extended excursions to Europe and England. While in Paris, Marion, still just a teenager, met legendary whip, Morris Howlett. She became his best student. Marion encouraged and sponsored him to come to America to mentor the newly formed Ladies Four-in-Hand Club. She practiced many hours both on the box and at the reinboard; becoming the best known and most accomplished lady whip on both sides of the pond. One her favorite driving exercises was tooling to downtown New York and driving the coach and four through the narrow, winding streets of Chinatown.

During "the season" in New York, Marion could be seen many days tooling Morris Howlett's coach "Meteor" from the Colony Club, a women-only private social club on Madison Avenue, to many points outside the city. She was the only amateur ever to be allowed to drive the Meteor and Howlett's teams. At the National Horse Show of 1917, she competed in the Ladies Jumper classes and then, while the coachman played "The Sidewalks of New York" on his horn, surprised the crowd by driving into the ring with the Ladies Four in Hand Club's coach "Arrow" drawn by Alfred Vanderbilt's famous team of greys.

The 1917 National Horse Show was special, with Every day during the 1917 National Horse Show, Marion would drive the coach and greys through the streets of New York to Madison Square Garden carrying guests who made

SUBJECT:	NUMBER:
	AU
165-WW 284 A 22	
(C) Und & Und.	
PHOTOGRAPHER	
Jan 1919	TAKEN
DESCRIPTION:	
SOCIETY WOMEN AID IN SERVING SOLDIERS FROM STRANDED TRANSPORT.	
Marion Hollins, Mrs. B.H. Hollins and Mrs. Raymond Potts, Long Island Society women are here shown serving coffee and cake to the soldiers who were just taken from the Northern Pacific that was stranded off Fire Island.	
ISSUED:	NOTES:



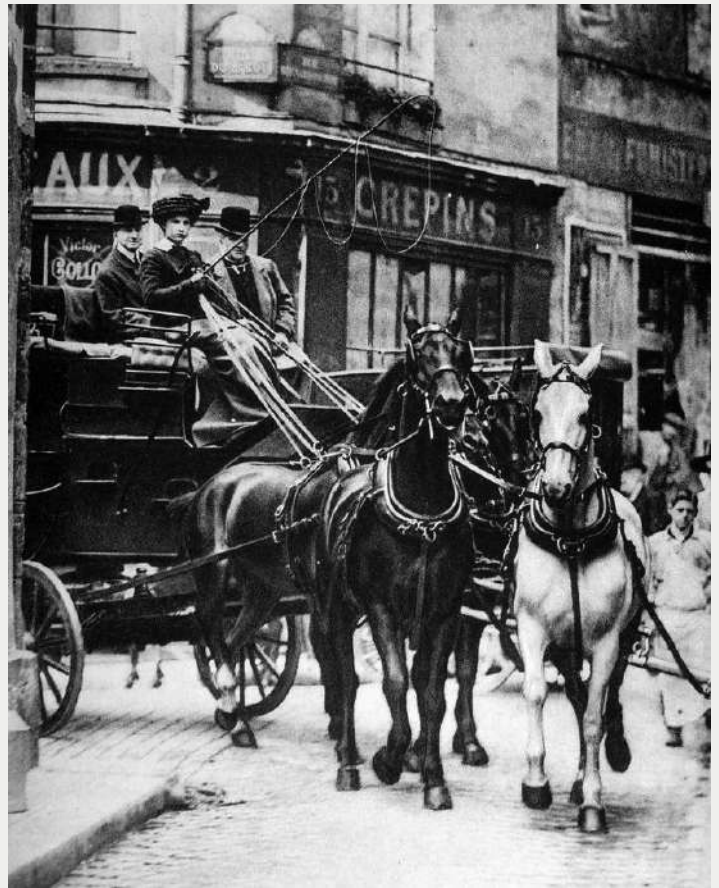


donations to the Red Cross for the war effort. Newspapers covered the event, reporting sightings of William H. Moore, Joseph E. Davis, and Helen Hitchcock, as well as Mr. and Mrs. Ambrose Clark as her passengers.

Arguably Marion's greatest coaching and patriotic endeavor was in the spring of 1918 when she took the aging grey team of Alfred Vanderbilt, who had tragically died in the sinking of the *Lusitania*, and his coach, the aptly named "Liberty" and started in Buffalo, traveling east to Albany and then south to City Hall in New York. Along the way of this 450 mile trip, they stopped in villages and towns raising \$400,000 for Liberty bonds. (In today's money, that would be 7.6 million dollars!)

Her altruistic endeavors were not just equestrian related; during the war she donated all her trophies from golf, tennis, polo and horse shows to be melted for the war effort. The story of Marion's life would make a great movie, and she even starred in an early silent film *The Flame of Kapur* where she foxhunted, played golf and drove in an automobile race with one of Willie K's newfangled racing machines. Family members relate that she actually drove a car in probably the final 1910 Vanderbilt Cup Motor race on Long Island. She was great friends with not only the society of the era but was also seen with many movie stars and was a great friend of Amelia Earhart and Charles Lindbergh.

Marion passed at age 52, in the fall of 1944. She was truly a champion in a man's world and queen of the road. 🐾



Marion Hollins with driving with Howlett in Paris as a teenager.

Photo from *Champion in a Man's World* by David E. Outerbridge.

NUMBER	CN 11/24
240H	AU
CENTRAL NEWS PHOTO SERVICE, N.Y.	
165-WW	240H 2
NOV 1918	TAKEN
DESCRIPTION:	
LIBERTY COACH FINISHING BUFFALO TO NEW YORK TRIP.	
<p>The Liberty Coach, driven by Miss Marion Hollins, of the Ladies Four-in-Hand Driving Club, arriving at the New York City Hall with \$500,000 worth of Liberty bond pledges collected on its trip from Buffalo to New York City.</p>	
ISSUED:	NOTES:
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