The gray trotting mare Emma B was foaled on the Foxcroft farm of Cleoral E. (Chamberlain) and Phineas M. Jeffers. This we know because of the work of John W. Thompson, editor of “The Maine Horse Breeders’ Monthly” (hereinafter “the Monthly”), who published a short article about her in January of 1880. Editor Thompson’s article states that she was foaled in 1873. (Note: This may be in error as her sire, Bayard, made only one season (1871) in Maine. This is supported by at least two subsequent articles in “the Monthly”. One such article published in May of 1883 noted that Bayard was then in New Hampshire and that he “stood one season several years ago, in Maine, where he sired Emma B., record 2.22”.) Before proceeding, a few words about the Jeffers is in order.

The Jeffers were married on October 27, 1852. Mr. Jeffers was a farmer and Civil War veteran, having served a short time with the famous Company B of the Twentieth Maine. The leader of that Company was Walter G. Morrill, a Medal of Honor winner, a horseman who lived in nearby Dexter. Shortly after returning to Maine, Jeffers served a three year term (1865 - 67) on the Maine Board of Agriculture. In 1867 he presented a paper to the Board which was simply entitled “Raising Horses”. (Note: It still makes good reading for breeders of the Standardbred horse.) According to a 1870 census of Foxcroft located at the Thompson Free Library, the Jeffers had attained the age of 43 thus giving them a birthdate in the year 1827. Also listed was an Edward Jeffers age 15. The Jeffers’ farm, sometimes referred to as the “Boston Farm”, consisted of 70 acres and was located on the north side of the road leading from Guilford to Sebec on Lot 15 in Range 5. Today, the road leading to the farm has been discontinued. Not far away is located “The Blacksmith Shop Museum” maintained by the Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society which Jeffers may have frequented.

Emma B was not a big mare, standing under fifteen hands and weighing about 900 pounds, according to Editor Thompson who saw her in August of 1880 at Beacon Park or Mystic Park near Boston. She was sired by a Kentucky bred stallion called “Bayard”. According to a stallion ad placed in “The Maine Farmer” (6/3/71), Bayard, foaled 1863, was bred by R. A. Alexander of Woodburn Farm in Lexington, got by Pilot Jr. The ad explained that Bayard had been “purchased the first of May by a Boston party” who intended to use him for private breeding purposes but would also offer him to a limited book of outside mares. According to a note in “Turf, Field and Farm” published in “the Monthly,” April 1882, Bayard was purchased by F. M. Wetherbee of Boston. It stated that while in Maine he sired 13 foals, five with records from 2.22 to 2.35. (Note: the small number of foals would further suggest that Bayard stood for stallion service only one year in Maine.) The ad further listed Jeffers’ stallion “Abdallah” for service.
Jefferds raced Abdallah and other home breds at the local trotting park in Foxcroft. The Piscataquis Central Trotting Park first opened in 1866 according to author Louis E. Stevens who published (1995) a history of Dover-Foxcroft. In early June of 1871 Bayard was shown under saddle between trots at the local track. According to the report filed with the “Piscataquis Observer” (hereinafter the “Observer”), later corrected, Bayard with Elmer Thompson up showed a quarter in 35 seconds which was said to have been “worth the price of admission”.

Emma B’s dam is unkown to the author, however, Editor Thompson’s article noted that her dam was sired by Brown Harry then owned by S. D. Cushman of Dexter. This Morgan stallion was formerly owned by Jefferds and was described in Thompson’s Noted Maine Horses Vol. 1 (1874) as a “very elegant horse” whose offspring were “stylish” and often fast. The early years of Emma B’s development are a bit of a mystery. A search for her in the pages of the “Observer” failed to produce results. It could be that she had a different name while in Maine as it was common for a new owner to change the name of a horse once it left Maine. It is worth noting that the “Observer” reported on 6/8/76 that a trotter by the name of “Lady Bayard” prevailed over Jefferds gray mare “Belle Brandon” in the race for four year old trotters at the Piscataquis Park races. Either trotter might have been Emma B. Thompson noted that she trotted several races in 1878 taking a record of 2.38. A search of the pages of the “Boston Globe” (hereinafter “the Globe”) shows that she raced at Narragansett Park near Providence in early September. At that time she was driven by Dan Bigley Jr, of Boston. However, she was not entered to trot later that month at either Mystic Park or Beacon Park. The fall trotting schedule for the Eastern Circuit through Plainfield, Ct., Hartford, and Providence also fails to find Emma B entered to trot.

Meanwhile, the “Local News” (8/22/78) from the “Observer” noted that P. M. Jefferds intended to sell his farm and move to Illinois. A “For Sale” ad placed in the “Observer” by Jefferds offered “pasture and wood lands for sale” along with a five year old mare, new buggy, sleighs and harnesses. The September 26 issue of the “Observer” reported that the Jefferds had departed for Illinois, and that “they have the best wishes of all our citizens”. (Note: A local history of old Foxcroft by Mary Chandler Lowell published in 1935 states that he died there.) Interestingly, Walter G. Morrill had just completed managing a two day, split (Foxcroft and Dexter) trotting meet. One wonders whether this trotting man with an eye for a coming prospect made an offer on Emma B before she was shipped out of state.

The trotting season of 1879 was a busy one for Emma B. At Hartford on June 25 she won a race lowering her record to 2.25. At Plainville on July 2 she won again. The “Boston Globe” reported on July 16 that the “lovers of horse-trotting” turned out in force the previous day at Mystic Park to watch a couple of races including the 2.25 Class where Emma B was entered to trot. It took six heats to determine an eventual winner, as both Emma B and Lady Foxie showed on top in two heats after a dead heat in the fifth heat. The sixth heat was described in part as follows:
The word was given at the first trial, and they went off with the chestnut at the gray’s wheel. At the turn the gray was ahead, but all the way around the horses would be first one and then the other ahead until the upper turn was reached, when the gray forged to the front and won the heat by two lengths.

The summary of the race showed that Emma B was now owned by Jim Keenan of Boston. A week later she won in three straight heats at Providence. Three days later on July 25 at the same track she won the free-for-all in five heats, taking the last three heats. Her best time was 2.23. After trotting 14 heats in ten days, she was shipped to Buffalo where on August 6 she won again in five heats with her best time being 2.22 ¼. Her season apparently concluded at Point Breeze Park in Philadelphia on October 2 where she trotted for a purse of $600 in the 2.22 Class. Again she prevailed, this time in three heats taking her record (2.22) in the first heat. The summary printed in “the Monthly” shows she was still in the hands of Jim Keenan. This “Boston sportsman” also had interests in rowing and boxing according to an internet article (9/02), “Fred Plaisted - Professional Sculler”, by Bill Miller. He managed the Maine oarsman Fred Plaisted who later (1890) coached at Bowdoin. He also managed the Boston boxer John L. Sullivan. It seems that his chief interest was wagering on the outcome of these contests which might explain why he also owned a trotting horse.

It had been a remarkable year for the trotting mare from Foxcroft. One wonders whether the Jeffers, now in Illinois, were following her career through the pages of “the Monthly”. (Note: Editor Thompson would often publish letters from his subscribers outside Maine who wanted to keep up with the doings of Maine’s trotters.) Emma B had gained so much respect that she was selected by Currier and Ives to be the subject of a lithograph. This first small folio showed her hooked to a high wheel sulky with a record of 2.22 ½. Emma B continued to race in 1880. A brief note in the June issue of “the Monthly” stated that she was shipping to the mid-west under the care of James Dustin. Dustin was a native of Winslow who once worked with the trotters of Thomas S. Lang in North Vassalboro. He was a familiar figure on the Eastern Circuit who, according to Thompson, “had a large and varied experience with trotters, among those he has driven, some of them to their fastest records”. This list included the trotter Camors 2.19 ¼ by Lang’s Gen. Knox. Dustin was taking over for Dan Bigley Jr. who “could not leave his engagements” on the Eastern Circuit. A later note in “the Monthly” showed her winning a race at Toledo, Ohio. (Note: Her tour of the mid-west must have been short as Editor Thompson saw her back in Boston during his trip there in August).

Trotting on the Eastern Circuit for 1881 got underway in June. On May 1 “the Globe” reported on the trainers stabled at the two Boston area tracks, Mystic Park and Beacon Park. Included among the 200 horses stabled at Beacon Park was Emma B. The article stated in part: “Dan Bigley (Jr.) has the renowned gray mare by Bayard, Emma B., 2.22, who is as handsome as a picture this spring”. Unfortunately, her many fans would have to wait a spell to see her on the track as she was entered but did not trot during the spring meets at Mystic and Beacon Parks. She was entered to trot at Charter Oak Park in
Hartford the end of June, but again she did not appear. On July 10 “the Globe” reported that “Emma B has come to herself again. Danny drove her in 2.27 Wednesday, and will send her this morning again. She is a great favorite in Boston”. Finally, on July 23 she trotted in the Free-For-All Class at Mystic Park finishing third in the summary behind a Knox trotter called “Victor” teamed by the veteran Hiram Woodruff. A month later she trotted in the 2.21 Class at Hartford for a purse of $2000. The summary had her losing to the fast Edwin Thorne, her best effort a fourth place finish in the third heat. On September 7 at Mystic Park she was run into while on a break and distanced thereby eliminating her from the contest. Still not in top form, she trotted a week later at Beacon Park in the 2.21 Class finishing ahead of only “Noontide.” (Note: Noontide would become famous for helping to establish a foundation family of trotters. This family is named after her dam, Midnight, who was then at Recluse Farm in South Hiram, the property of James Edgecomb.) Emma B bounced back to win her next two trots against the stallion Mambrino Dudley at Hartford and Mystic with James Dustin guiding her. According to “the Globe” there had been “not a little talk over the respective merits of the above equines, the owners of each claiming superiority.” This may account for the large print ad in “the Globe” announcing that Emma B would trot October 21 at Mystic Park in Medford. (Note: the only trotter whose name appeared in bold type was Emma B.) This apparently closed out the season for Emma B, and while she did not lower her record, she did finish the year fifth on the list of fastest Maine bred trotters behind Hopeful, Lady of Maud, Camors and Independence, the last three sired by Gen. Knox.

The April 1882 issue of “the Monthly” announced to its readers that Emma B had been sold to Richard K. Fox. Fox was a self made millionaire from Ireland who bought a down and out newspaper, the “Police Gazette,” and turned it into an internationally famous weekly. About this time Currier and Ives published a second lithograph of Emma B which noted that Fox had purchased the gray mare from Jim Keenan for the sum of $10,000 and changed her name to “Police Gazette”. An interesting internet article by Edward Van Emery entitled “The Sins of New York As Exposed By The Police Gazette” suggests that Fox intended to use her to promote his newspaper. Fox did not come from a trotting background but realized that many of his readers (and potential readers) followed the trotting sport. If he could support baseball teams and sponsor various “champion belts” for boxers like John R. Sullivan, he could own a trotter made famous by Currier and Ives. Later in 1882 Currier and Ives published their last lithograph of Emma B, a large folio showing her to harness with a record of 2.22. This must have pleased Mr. Fox, but one wonders if he really appreciated her stature given her humble beginnings. One that did was Editor Thompson who published a large illustration of James Dustin in his August issue with the subheading “Driver of Richard K. Fox’s Police Gazette, Formerly Emma B.” Emma B was not the first nor would she be the last Maine bred trotter to be made famous by Currier and Ives. However, she must have been one of the better looking ones and certainly the only one from Foxcroft, Maine.