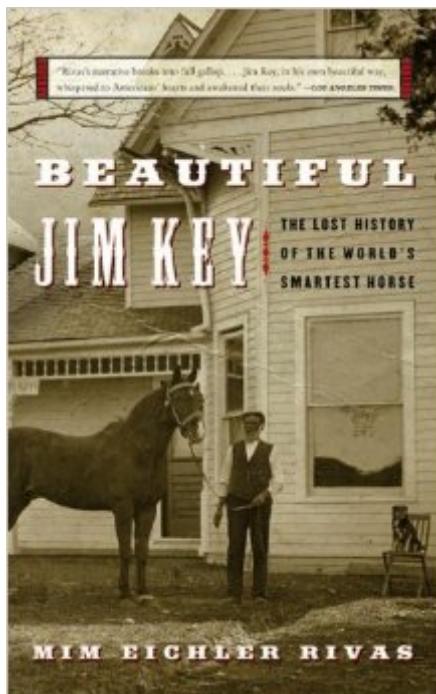


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# Beautiful Jim Key: The Lost History Of The World's Smartest Horse



## **Synopsis**

Beautiful Jim Key -- the one-time ugly duckling of a scrub colt who became one of the most beloved heroes of the turn of the century -- was adored not for his beauty and speed but rather for his remarkable abilities to read, write, spell, do mathematics, even debate politics. Trained with patience and kindness by one of the most renowned horse whisperers of his day -- former slave, Civil War veteran, and self-taught veterinarian Dr. William Key -- Jim performed in expositions across the country to wildly receptive crowds for nine glorious years, smashing box office records, clearing towering hurdles of skepticism and prejudice, and earning the respect and admiration of some of the most influential figures of the era, from Booker T. Washington to President William McKinley. This is the remarkable true saga of a truly exceptional animal -- and the no less exceptional man who led him to greatness.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

This book is in my Top Five to recommend. It was such a great read that I tried not to finish it too fast because I did not want the story to end. It is filled with great background information covering the various World's Fairs to Slavery to the Civil War. It is not just a book about an incredible horse, but of his teacher as well as the mindset of our race and the history being made during that time period. Jim and Bill Keys connection to animal rights were equally fascinating. To me this book is in the vein of "The Professor and the Madman" offering an excellent story with welcomed historical information.

Am a little shocked to find such harshly negative reviews of the book; this is easily one of the best animal books ever written. Arguably one of America's first media "superstars", Beautiful Jim Key toured the country for many years performing and was a major catalyst for both animal rights and human rights as well. It should also be stressed that the horse's act was minutely scrutinized by reporters and a team of professors from Harvard, who found no secret coaching or cues were given to the horse - he really could do everything it was claimed he could do, although the book only lightly touches on how long and arduous a process teaching him must have been. Any animal lover and/or history buff will fall in love with this book and never want it to end.

I purchased this in soft cover, planning to give it to my mother for Christmas, but I read it first and liked it enough that I ordered the hard cover for my mother and kept the soft cover for myself. This is a fascinating read. What makes it more than a great animal story is the way it is told within the historical context of the time. There were so many interesting facts and descriptions detailing the period from before, during, and after the Civil War, Reconstruction, and into the early 20th century. The subject matter is extremely fresh, told in an easy manner that makes it fast and easy to read and yet memorable and thought provoking. The subtitle of the soft cover is slightly different from the hard cover -- soft says, the Lost History of the World's Smartest Horse; hard says, the Lost History of a Horse and a Man Who Changed the World. I suspect the change was made to attract readers. The text is the same in both versions.

I was looking for a good wholesome family movie for movie night, someone had recommended 'Secretariat' to my husband, so I was looking at reviews for it on-line when I came across a picture book called 'Wonder Horse: The True Story of the World's Smartest Horse' by Emily Arnold McCully. It looked interesting. I borrowed it from my local library and read it to my children who are six and nine years old. We all loved it; I was fascinated and wanted to learn more about the man who trained the smartest horse in the world. McCully's author note from 'Wonder Horse' said that the horse's trainer and owner, Doc Key, was a former slave who followed his master's two sons into the Civil War where he saved their lives, after he was a free man he went on to pay off the mortgage on his master's house. Those two facts alone amazed me and I wanted to learn more about Doc Key. I was thrilled to find Mim Rivas's biography on both horse and man. The horse was "Beautiful, Jim Key", his owner and trainer, William "Doc" Key. They are two of the most endearing creatures I've ever read about. I loved learning all the things Jim could do and his attitude while doing them, I would recount his accomplishments and antics at dinner each night to the amusement of my family. I

love the story about Jim sneaking in and stealing all the apples Doc stored in his desk drawer in the stables, how he ended up sleeping in the house every night with Doc and what happened when Jim got too big to sleep in the house. I was reminded of Helen Keller and Annie Sullivan while I read how Doc taught Jim the alphabet and how to spell. Doc worked with Jim for years teaching Jim the alphabet and numbers, then how to spell, add, subtract, multiply, make change, use a cash register, tell time, sort mail and cite biblical passages. Jim and Doc eventually partnered with Albert Rogers and went on tour traveling the country spreading their message that 'anything is possible with kindness and patience.' They eventually joined forces with George Angell from the Massachusetts SPCA and the American Humane Education Society and took their message to millions of people especially encouraging school children to sign a pledge of kindness to all creatures. If you are an animal lover I strongly encourage you to read this book. I just loved it. It is one of the sweetest stories I have ever read.

This is one of the most amazing and entertaining true stories I've ever read. I couldn't put this book down. It is really two stories in one - the man's adventurous life and the horse's almost unbelievable intelligence.

"Beautiful Jim Key" is an inspiring story on several levels. Dr. Key believed in treating living creatures - both animal and human - with patience and kindness. This is the story of a man whose family came from slavery, and who rose above his situation by educating himself and becoming a respected member of the community. This was a time when it was not common for African Americans to have a place in society. Indeed we could do with more good-hearted people like Dr. Key today. Not only did he love animals, he was credited with helping to promote the humane treatment of animals throughout the many cities he and Jim traveled to. The second story is about Dr. Key's wonderful relationship with this very special horse, Jim. Dr. Key had a rapport with all animals he encountered, but formed a life-long bond with this amazing horse. It is a story for all ages, and serves as a life lesson for treating all living creatures with respect and kindness.

The true story of "Beautiful Jim Key" the World's Smartest Horse and his trainer, world renowned "horse whisperer" Dr. William Key, an ex-slave, Civil War Veteran and self-taught veterinarian, is truly inspirational and rich in our nation's historical detail. This is my all-time favorite book! This dynamic duo was way ahead of their time and overcame staggering hurdles to make a positive impact on the world, making kindness to animals part of the foundation of civilization.

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