

BEHIND *the seams*

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*At Home in
Vermont with*
**Oughton
Limited**



Portrait of Oughton Limited
founder Daphne Markcrow



About a decade ago, Daphne Markcrow was shipping two horses from her Vermont farm to a nearby facility for lessons. After what seemed like endless trips from the barn to the trailer and back again, Markcrow knew there had to be a better way to transport her gear for two horses quickly and efficiently. As a result, she developed a bag made of waxed canvas with halter squares for detailing and loaded it up for a one-trip-only transition to the barn aisle. The piece mirrored the functionality of a tack trunk, but was light, stylish, and mobile.

“I couldn’t imagine life without it now,” said Markcrow. “After that first bag, I made a couple more for myself and then some for my friends. Pretty soon, I was making ten at a time.”

THE BIRTH OF A BAG BUSINESS

While horses may have inspired Markcrow’s vision for practical, durable yet stylish bags, her concept of producing products for a target market plus her MBA (Master of Business Administration) from Duke University helped the bags evolve into a business.

“I began seeing ways to improve the lives of equestrians through Oughton Limited,” said Markcrow.

Inspired to fulfill the needs of highly mobile competitive equestrians using the travel style of her family as a muse, Markcrow quickly began to see the lines of barn functionality and mainstream fashion blend together. Creating a capsule collection that debuted at the Lake Placid Horse Show in 2007, Markcrow still recalls the first few bags she sold. Surprisingly, they were not all purchased by riders.

“A family came to see me at Lake Placid and bought two tack trunk bags for their daughter’s horses, but their son was also there and was getting ready to go to college,” said Markcrow. “The bag ended up being a perfect alternative to keeping a trunk at the foot of the bed in his dorm room. Another group of men bought bags to stow their gear for a hunting trip, and Patty [Scialfa] even bought one for Bruce [Springsteen] as a touring bag. Those first few sales were very formative for me.”



Waxed Canvas Barn Tote and Rolling Duffel



City Lux M with dark blue leather flap and Paddock CrossBody x Clutch in turquoise



Daphne Markcrow carries the City Lux M with brown buffalo flap

Realizing the potential her bags possessed, her goals for Oughton Limited expanded. While she estimates that 90% of Oughton Limited buyers have some connection to the equine industry, they use the pieces to bring their favorite slices of equestrian style to everyday life. That sentiment is one that Markcrow can relate to.

“I travel, I am a mom, I work, and I am a horse person. Those roles lead me to produce what I need,” she said. “Many equestrians also lead multi-faceted lives, going from barn to work, country to city, and traveling the world.”

While traveling in England, Markcrow recalls being mesmerized by the colorful surcingles she spotted on Thoroughbreds at a race track. (A strap of leather or nylon material used around the horse’s girth area to help stabilize the saddle and jockey.) The images danced in her mind during the plane ride home, where she began designing the Course and Paddock Collections, which incorporate the look and purpose of a surcingle while adding a splash of classic color.

CLASSIC EQUINE INSPIRATION FOR ANY SEASON

Markcrow’s main pillar of inspiration is functionality, but she also maintains the classic aesthetic of the equestrian lifestyle. The line’s color palette and materials, with actual halter hardware as the main motif, resonate with a sporting world that is steeped in tradition and history. The style also transcends the lines of riding disciplines, and appeals to those with an attraction to the horse lifestyle.

“Inspired by the heritage, materials, and classic aesthetics of the equestrian world, Oughton bags are designed and made for a lifetime, or even two,” she said. “The consumer world operates with trends, flash, and throw-away fashion. With more and more bling, I love seeing people taking a step back from the edge and staying classic. Everything I make is meant to stay in the line for a while; there are no trends or seasonality.”

Oughton Limited is a reflection of Markcrow’s personal style blended with notes of the equestrian lifestyle, but it also gives a nod to her love of heritage. With an infatuation for family heirlooms of all shapes and sizes, Markcrow can often be



The idyllic Markcrow family farm house in Vermont



Rolling Duffel, Carteret Satchel, and Waxed Canvas Barn Tote (on floor)



It's all in the details: Rolling Duffel



A family home amongst Vermont's green mountains

spotted wearing one of her grandfather's U.S. Navy jackets to do late-night barn checks, or weaving pieces from her family's different parts of call into the aesthetic of her self-designed Manchester home. That mindset crosses over into her business through timeless quality.

"If you make the very best product, you can sell it no matter what," said Markcrow. "I never design my product with a spreadsheet. I don't work cost backwards, I produce forward. When I know the demand is there, I design products to the highest standards of production quality possible and figure out the margins afterwards. Not skimping on quality for profit has served me well so far."

AT HOME IN VERMONT... AND FLORIDA

Markcrow hails from North Carolina, where she grew up on a Thoroughbred farm. Her love for horses came from her

mother and like many of us, wherever she went, horses would follow. She moved north after marrying her husband, Craig, a native of Vermont, to raise their two children: Anna and Henry, now eight and six years old.

Living in a newly-built farmhouse in the pastoral rolling hills of Manchester, just minutes from the Vermont Summer Festival showgrounds, local inspiration and Markcrow's personal affinity for all things equine continue to be the driving force behind Oughton Limited's bags and accessories.

"I stopped riding during college but when we came to Vermont, I had a six-week horse show in my backyard and, before I knew it, I had a barn full of horses."

As for her favorite Oughton Limited piece, Markcrow said, "The roller duffel is my favorite bag. It's the perfect shape to

commute to Florida, to horse shows in the winter. I am particularly happy with how it performs."

Although she travels for the business, Markcrow cherishes the six weeks in the summer when she can not only compete with her own horses, but also be surrounded by horse show friends and fellow equestrians.

"I am so lucky that I have such a great horse show so close," said Markcrow. "It is wonderful to have these worlds come together for six weeks each summer. Each year, I look forward to sharing my business, the town I love, and our home with the horse show community." *H&S*

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