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The Preservation of the Colonial Spanish Horse and Robert E. Brislawn, Sr.

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Robert E. Brislawn, Sr.:
Preservation of the Colonial Spanish Mustang

By

GRETCHEN LEEANN PATTERSON, BA

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
Stephen F. Austin State University
In Partial Fulfillment
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Robert E. Brislawn, Sr.:
Preservation of the Colonial Spanish Mustang

By

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ABSTRACT

In 1493, the Spanish horse importation to the Caribbean islands provided an important stimulus to American exploration as an agent of transportation. In the late nineteenth century, the necessity of horses declined with the advent of railroads and motorized vehicles. Reduction of Native American populations through wars, disease, and forfeiture of territory also contributed to less reliance on horses. Born in 1890, Robert E. Brislawn, Sr., a dedicated horseman, decided to collect and preserve the best Spanish-type horses that he could locate as links to western heritage. From 1924 until his death in 1979, Brislawn's diligent quest introduced him to like-minded individuals with similar goals. His story places these horses into the larger frames of western, Borderlands, and Spanish colonial history and their role in the evolving environmental management of the mid-west and western plains and the research concludes with their development as a heritage breed.

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people who agreed with Robert E. Brislawn's vision to save the Colonial Spanish Mustang for future generations of horsemen and women.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Illustrations	vii
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1.....	5
Chapter 2.....	27
Chapter 3.....	50
Chapter 4.....	80
Conclusion.....	103
Bibliography.....	111
Vita	125

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure	Page
1.1 Statue of Don Juan Oñate, New Mexico Oñate Monument Center, Alcalde, New Mexico Courtesy of <i>Albuquerque Journal</i> ; https://www.abqjournal.com/1080408/.html	21
1.2 Lakota camp of tipis, horses, and wagons probably on or near Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, John C. H. Grabill (1891) Courtesy of the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division LOT 3076-2, no. 3636; http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/99613796/	22
1.3 The Cow Boy, John C. H. Grabill (1888) Courtesy of the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C.; LOT 3076-12, no. 320 http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/ppmsc.02638	23
1.4 Chuck Wagon on a Cattle Drive, John C. H. Grabill (1887) Courtesy of the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C.; LOT 3076-12, no. 190; http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/ppmsc.02637	24
1.5 Illustration of barbed wire samples Advertising for Barbed Wire Courtesy of <i>Lawrence Business Magazine</i> https://www.lawrencebusinessmagazine.com/2017/06/barbed-wire/	25
1.6 William F. Cody “Buffalo Bill” (1892) Original Photography by Burke; Courtesy of the <i>Lincoln Journal Star</i> http://journalstar.com/entertainment/visual-art/buffalo-bill-s-wild-west-explores-the-big-show-of/article_352c94ca-91b3-5879-bff5-bf00845df43b.html	26
2.1 Indian Territory in Oklahoma (1890) Oklahoma Historical Society http://www.okhistory.org/research/hl_map3.php#page/0/mode/1up	44

2.2	Three men from Georgia waiting for the 1901 Land Run 45 Virgil Robbins Collection, 19344.58.5 http://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entryname=LAND%20Openings
2.3	Horses waiting for shipping to Great Britain at holding facility..... 46 Newport News, Virginia (1914); Photograph by James H. Breazeale Courtesy of the Library of Virginia http://www.dailypress.com/features/history/dp-nws-world-war-i-war-horses-1-20141129-story.html
2.4	Theodore Roosevelt and John Muir (1903)..... 47 Glacier Point, Yosemite Valley Courtesy of the U.S. National Park Service https://www.nps.gov/yose/learn/historyculture/muir-influences.htm
2.5	Ross Dog & Cat Food Company (1924-1939)..... 48 Dr. W. J. Ross, Owner; Courtesy of Advertising Antiques http://advertisingantiques.com/dr-ross-dog-and-cat-food-sign/
2.6	Robert E. Brislawn, Sr., & Robert M. Denhardt (1973)..... 49 Colonial Spanish Horse Collection, A/323, East Texas Research Center, Stephen F. Austin State University
3.1	Potato Blight, <i>Phytophthora infestans</i> 69 Courtesy of Margaret Senior, Illustrator New South Wales Agriculture, Australia https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/about-us/services/collections/scientific-illustrations/senior/potatoes/late-blight-potato
3.2	Sprague, Washington (1887) Postcard 70 Courtesy of Old Imprints; http://www.oldimprints.com
3.3	USGS Survey Crew; Robert E. Brislawn, Sr. at the rear (1917)..... 71 Colonial Spanish Horse Collection, A/323, East Texas Research Center, Stephen F. Austin State University
3.4	Robert E. Brislawn, Sr. leading Survey pack horses (1917)..... 71 Colonial Spanish Horse Collection, A/323, East Texas Research Center, Stephen F. Austin State University

3.5	General Francisco (Pancho) Villa.....	72
	Photograph by D. W. Hoffman (1912)	
	The Getty Research Institute, 89.4.46	
	http://blogs.getty.edu/iris/faces-of-the-mexican-revolution/	
3.6	General Pershing crossing the Rio Grande into Mexico.....	73
	(1916), Courtesy of the U.S. Army Military History Institute	
	https://history.army.mil/news/2015/150200a_mexicanWar.html	
3.7	<i>New York Tribune</i> (1916)	74
	Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers	
	Library of Congress, Washington D.C.	
	http://www.chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030214/1916-05-08/ed-1/seq-1/	
3.8	Brislawn Homestead Sign (2014).....	74
	Courtesy of Kate Taylor	
3.9	Conformation points of a Colonial Spanish Horse.....	75
	Building A Mystery, SMR-3406, HOA-1013, AIHR O-3395	
	Courtesy of Victoria Lynn & Vickie Ives	
3.10	The Book Cliffs Escarpment, Utah	76
	Courtesy of the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance	
	http://suwa.org	
3.11	Buckshot, SMR-1 with Robert E. Brislawn, Sr.....	77
	Colonial Spanish Horse Collection, A/323, East Texas Research Center,	
	Stephen F. Austin State University	
3.12	Ute, SMR-2 with Ferdinand Brislawn	77
	Colonial Spanish Horse Collection, A/323, East Texas Research Center,	
	Stephen F. Austin State University	
3.13	Spanish Mustang Registry Tally Book (1969)	78
	Colonial Spanish Horse Collection, A/323, East Texas Research Center,	
	Stephen F. Austin State University	
3.14	Jeff Edwards, Wild Horse Research Farm; Porterville, California	79
	Colonial Spanish Horse Collection, A/323, East Texas Research Center,	
	Stephen F. Austin State University	

4.1	Gilbert Jones and Robert E. Brislawn, Sr. (1973).....	95
	Courtesy of Friends of The Heritage Horse Foundation Herds http://www.spiritofblackjackmountain.com	
4.2	McKinley-Romero Horses, Las Lunas, New Mexico	96
	Courtesy of Alan Bell	
4.3	Ilo Belsky; Phantom Valley Ranch; Eli, Nebraska	97
	Colonial Spanish Horse Collection, A/323, East Texas Research Center, Stephen F. Austin State University	
4.4	The Spring House; Medicine Spring Ranch (1985-1990).....	98
	(l) Gilbert Jones & (r) Bryant Rickman Courtesy of Friends of The Heritage Horse Foundation Herds http://www.spiritofblackjackmountain.com	
4.5	Gilbert Jones with Kiamichi Girl, SSMA-260	99
	Sired by Chief Kiamichi 'Rooster' Colonial Spanish Horse Collection, A/323, East Texas Research Center, Stephen F. Austin State University	
4.6	Spanish Mustang Registry Annual Meeting (1973)	100
	Camino, California; Courtesy of Jeff Edwards Colonial Spanish Horse Collection, A/323, East Texas Research Center, Stephen F. Austin State University	
4.7	Darlene & Bryant Rickman.....	101
	www.southwestspanishmustangassociation.com/ RiclmansALBC.html	
4.8	Chart of Colonial Spanish Horse Organizations	102
5.1	The Cayuse Ranch (2017)	107
	Courtesy of Kate Taylor & the Spanish Mustang Registry, Inc.	
5.2	Statue of "The Seven Mustangs"	108
	Alexander P. Proctor (1948), the University of Texas at Austin http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMM10Z_ Mustangs_University_of_Texas_Austin_TX	

- 5.3 Robert E. Brislawn, Sr. & San Domingo, SMR-4..... 109
Colonial Spanish Horse Collection, A/323, East Texas Research Center,
Stephen F. Austin State University
- 5.4 Gretchen Patterson and One Dance Left, HOA-1081 110
SMR-2934, AIHR O-3336; Courtesy of the American Indian Horse Registry

INTRODUCTION

Horse—a single word which immediately fires a picture of a four-legged animal with long mane and tail flying in the breeze—graceful, agile, and fast. Terrifying to some people and loved by others, horses have a long history of association with mankind. “The history of the horse has been the key to power, conquest, and the wealth of nations.”¹ Modern horse evolution occurred over a period of sixty million years with several migrations between the Western and Eastern hemispheres.² No records exist detailing the last migration when the ancestral *Equus ferus* left the Americas and found abundant forage and water on the vast Eurasian steppes. Once considered a food source, the complete history of domestication remains shrouded in the past, although more current research suggests that domestication occurred approximately some three to two thousand millennia BCE. When humans decided that this fleet-footed creature was useful, the horse became a beast of burden.³ Capable of hauling a war chariot or a cart

¹Stephen J. G. Hall, “The Horse in Human Society,” in *The Domestic Horse: The Origins, Development and Management of Its Behaviour*, ed, Daniel S. Mills and Sue M. McDonnell (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 23.

²Robert M. Denhardt, *The Horse of the Americas*, 1947, reprint (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1975),11.

³Marsha A. Levine, “Domestication and Early History of the Horse,” in *The Domestic Horse: The Origins, Development and Management of Its Behaviour*, ed, Daniel S. Mills and Sue M. McDonnell (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 6-7; See also: Vera Warmuth, Anders Eriksson, Mim A. Bower, Javier Cañon, Gus Cothran, Ottmar Distl, et al., “European Domestic Horses Originated in Two Holocene Refugia,” in *Public Library of Science One* 6, no. 5, accessed May 2, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1371/annotation/ef679268-70cb-49f8-8e1b-2c9df4ed1930>.

loaded with goods, horses allowed armies to advance, merchants to transport their wares, shortened the time for people to travel from place to place, and intertwined humanity's destiny with that of the horse.

In AD 711, Tariq ibn Ziyad and his invading Islamic cavalry rode their “small, swift, and hardy” North African Barb horses into battle and conquered Visigoth Hispania, now modern Spain.⁴ The successful domination of the Iberian Peninsula and the crossbreeding of Barb horses on native Iberian stock continued for the next seven centuries until Ferdinand I and Isabella defeated the Moors at Grenada in 1492.⁵ That same year, the Spanish monarchs approved and funded a voyage of exploration by Christopher Columbus who believed that sailing west across the Atlantic Ocean was the route to the Far East. Instead, he discovered the first of several islands that he claimed for the Spanish crown. Determined to obtain additional financial support, Columbus returned to Spain, confident that he had found the “coveted sea route to the East Indies.”⁶ Although his claim was false, and later discredited, Columbus embarked on a second voyage in 1493 that included men and horses to explore, conquer, and plunder the islands he discovered. By 1519 when Hernán Cortés advanced into Mexico,

⁴Roger Collins, *The Arab Conquest of Spain, 710-797* (London, UK: Blackwell, 1989), 31.

⁵Robert M. Denhardt, *The Horse of the Americas, 1947*, reprint (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1975), 16.

⁶Matthew Restall, *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2003), 9.

Spain had a firm hold in the New World. Spanish imperialism claimed, at one time, the majority of South America, Central America, and North America.⁷

Spanish explorers, whether military, civilian, or missionary, rode their horses and mules into unknown territory, established presidios, cities, and missions, bred more livestock and left their indelible impression on the places and people they conquered.

When the empire faded, and the conquistadors passed into memory, remnants of their culture remained through language, governance, art, law, architecture, music, place names, and an array of animals that provided food and transportation.⁸ Without the Spanish horses, the exploration and conquest of the Americas might have taken a different, slower route, but that is not what occurred. Spanish horses became Indian ponies, feral horses, free-roaming mustangs, cow ponies, pack horses, cavalry mounts, wagon horses, and plow horses. The history of the horse is summarized in countless books, captured in works of art, and abounds in legends and myths. Famous horses and famous riders—those stories exist, too. Robert E. Brislawn, Sr., and his associates believed that the Colonial Spanish Horse, also known as the Spanish Mustang, needed preservation in the modern world where horsepower had evolved into

⁷Restall, *Seven Myths*, 15.

⁸Donald E. Chipman, *Spanish in Texas, 1519-1821* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), 242-260.

mechanization and the horse, as transportation and bearer of burdens, was no longer required.

Brislawn came of age in the early twentieth century when horses were still a necessity in the rural countryside. Tractors and trucks hastened the demise of horses' usefulness, especially on farms throughout the United States. Brislawn's examination and efforts to identify, preserve, and define the Spanish-type horse was part of a larger pattern of breed organizations and registrations. The growing awareness of Spanish Colonial history and the changing role of the West in American history combined with the late nineteenth-century conservation movements resulted in the preservation of the Colonial Spanish Horse as a living symbol of the American past.⁹ Brislawn realized that any hope of saving the descendants of Spanish horses was a project worthy of his effort, time, money, and dedication required to collect Spanish-type stallions and mares. Without his intervention, the Spanish-type horse might have disappeared into the annals of western American history. His determination to continue their bloodlines sparked a years-long quest that reflected larger American trends to conserve natural resources, preserve western culture, and revive the Spanish horse legacy that deserved a distinct place in a diverse, progressive nation.¹⁰

⁹Robert E. Brislawn and Jeff Edwards, "Brislawn-Edwards Spanish Barb Wild Horse Research Farm Publicity Flyer" (Porterville, CA), 1977; Colonial Spanish Horse Collection, A/323, East Texas Research Center, Stephen F. Austin State University.

¹⁰Charles Montgomery, *The Spanish Redemption: Heritage, Power, and Loss on New Mexico's Upper Rio Grande* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 229.

CHAPTER 1

The Spanish conquest in North America resulted in extensive cultural and lifestyle changes to the indigenous people including the assimilation of Spanish horses into other cultures. One of Brislawn's preservation objectives was to overcome the negative association of Spanish horses with American Indian tribes. According to historian Pekka Hämäläinen, horses had "lifted the Indians...to a new level of existence" with the ability to "resist future Euro-American invasions, [but] horses also brought destabilization, dispossession, and destruction."¹ Native opposition to westward expansion culminated in the military and civilian slaughter of their horses to defeat this resistance to government policies.

The arrival of the first Spanish horses provided a significant contribution to the future course of the New World discovery and settlement. "During the earliest years of exploration," historian Robert Denhardt wrote, "horses were sent in every ship leaving the Spanish ports. Each of the conquerors, when he contracted with Charles V and his son Philip II, was bound to take a certain quota

¹Pekka Hämäläinen, "The Rise and Fall of Plains Indian Horse Culture." *Journal of American History* 90, no. 3 (December 2003): 834, accessed March 1, 2018, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3660878>.

of stallions and mares.”² On his second voyage in 1493, Christopher Columbus brought the first stockmen who established cattle and horse ranches on the island of Hispaniola (modern Haiti and the Dominican Republic) and later, the islands of Cuba and Jamaica. The breeding programs proved successful, and future exploratory expeditions relied on a ready supply of Caribbean-bred horses. The Spanish crown had three main objectives--mining for precious metals, acquiring land suitable for new colonies, and spreading the Christian faith among the “settled native populations.”³ The conquistadors obliged by exploring and claiming substantial portions of North and South America where gold, silver, and precious stones were available in a seemingly never-ending supply. For transportation and a method of intimidation, horses were vital to those enterprises. As Spanish land procurement continued northward through Mexico and into the vast, uncharted territory of North America, so did the horses that later transformed the indigenous cultures in possession of those lands.

Historian W. H. Timmons stated, “Reports of great wealth and natives who would be [receptive to Christian] conversion in the country to the far north in the 1580s brought responsive action from the monarchy of Philip II of Spain in the

²Robert M. Denhardt, *The Horse of the Americas*, 1947, reprint (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1975), 35.

³Matthew Restall, *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2003), 12.

form of a royal decree authorizing the pacification and settlement of the new land.”⁴ On September 21, 1595, Philip II awarded Don Juan de Oñate “the contract for the conquest and settlement of New Mexico,”⁵ and to colonize the northern frontier of the Viceroyalty of New Spain. **(Figure 1.1)** De Oñate crossed the Rio Grande River on April 30, 1598 and declared all the territory beyond the Rio Grande for Spain. Oñate’s expeditionary force traveled to present-day northern New Mexico and established the Mission Santa Fe de Nuevo México. In addition to their religious faith, the Spaniards brought their possessions and “a herd of more than seven thousand head of stock”—horses, beef cattle, oxen, sheep, pack mules, donkeys, and goats.⁶

With superior weapons and horses, the Spaniards enslaved the Acoma Pueblo people to guard the herds, but native herdsmen were not permitted to ride. “Juan de Oñate’s colonists...recognized the fact that most of their strength lay in exclusive possession of the [horses].”⁷ With a shortage of manpower,

⁴W. H. Timmons, “Oñate Expedition” in *Handbook of Texas Online* (June 2010), Texas Historical Commission, accessed April 09, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/upo02>

⁵Timmons, “Oñate Expedition.”

⁶Herbert Eugene Bolton, ed., “The Oñate Expeditions and the Founding of the Province of New Mexico,” in *Spanish Exploration in the Southwest*, 1908, reprint (Barnes & Noble, Inc., New York: NY, 1967), 201-11; Gaspar Pérez de Villagrà Alcalá, *History of New Mexico*, 1610, reprint (Arno Press, New York, NY: 1967), 130-7; Marc Simmons, *The Last Conquistador* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 96.

⁷Glenn Vernam, *Man on Horseback* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 210.

however, this proved to be a problem for the Spaniards, and in 1621, the Spanish viceroy of New Spain, Diego Fernández de Córdoba reversed the 'no ride' mandate. Unlike the Aztecs and Mayans of Mexico who feared the horses, the Pueblo natives learned the art of equitation, eventually passing this knowledge to other native tribes beginning with their aggressive, southern neighbors, the Apaches. The Acoma encouraged Apachean attacks on the Spanish colony "because they [wanted] to be rid of the Spaniards."⁸ By 1671, the Apache, Comanche, Cheyenne, Crow, Kiowa, Shoshone, Sioux, and Ute had acquired Spanish horses, occasionally by trade, but more often by raiding the Spanish missions and pueblos located in the Rio Grande region. From the time when Oñate settled in Santa Fe, Spanish horses were prized by Indian raiders as swift transportation and as a food source. Stallions and mares also escaped into the wild, roaming across the plains to water holes and abundant grasslands. Without man's intervention, feral horses bred and multiplied on the open ranges.⁹ From the sixteenth century onward, the Spanish horse population increased steadily

⁸Elinore M. Barret, "The Geography of the Rio Grande Pueblos in the Seventeenth Century," *Ethnohistory* 49, no. 1 (Winter 2002): 146, accessed April 4, 2018, <https://muse-jhu-edu.steenproxy.sfasu.edu/article/11778/pdf>.

⁹Lee Boyd and Ronald Keiper, "Behavioural Ecology of Feral Horses," in *The Domestic Horse: The Origins, Development and Management of Its Behaviour*, ed. Daniel S. Mills and Sue M. McDonnell (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 55; "Over the centuries, some domestic horses escaped captivity to become feral." A feral horse can be caught and tamed, whereas a true wild horse/equine cannot be domesticated.

throughout the New World. By the close of the seventeenth century, Spanish horses ran "...wild from Tucumán [Argentina] to the borders of Canada."¹⁰

Native American horse culture spread across the Great Plains, extending northward from the territories (and future states) of Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, the Dakotas, and westward to Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, and Nevada in the 1700s. Historian Frank Gilbert Roe stated that Spanish horses gave the nomadic tribes a wider [hunting] range, the ability to hunt buffalo efficiently, and achieve a productive hunter-gatherer lifestyle.¹¹ Horse stealing between the tribes, as well as raids on frontier settlements, became the means for warriors to gain honor, experience, social status, and quite often, a wife. Among the Blackfoot, Lemhi Shoshoni, Kansas, and Mandan people, a marriage ceremony involved "an exchange of gifts between the families of the bride and groom...horses were virtually always among the valuable gifts exchanged."¹² Used for barter, gifts, debt payments, naming ceremonies, and funeral sacrifices, horses meant wealth to the Native American tribal cultures.¹³ **(Figure 1.2)**

¹⁰Denhardt, *The Horse of the Americas*, 40.

¹¹Frank Gilbert Roe, *The Indian and The Horse* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962), 178.

¹²John Canfield Ewers, *The Horse in Blackfoot Indian Culture* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1985), 249-50; See also page xii: "Much of the factual information on which this [book] is based was supplied by elderly, full blood Piegan and Blood Indian informants, whose knowledge of the functions of horses in the late years of buffalo days was solidly grounded in personal experiences."

¹³Ewers, *The Horse in Blackfoot Indian Culture*, 256, 284-85.

By the nineteenth century, wild horse numbers were estimated to be 100,000 or more, and by 1821, Texas was home to the largest population of feral Spanish *mesteños* or mustangs.¹⁴ Although difficult, when caught, tamed, and broken to ride, mustangs were tough, steady mounts, able to travel long distances, and remain sound day after day. Mr. W. Y. Allen, a traveling Presbyterian chaplain in the Houston, Texas area, described one horseback journey during his stay in Texas. In 1838, Allen was asked to officiate at a wedding approximately eighty miles north of Houston and had to borrow a horse for the trip. "The time was August. I made Capt. Bingham's, twenty-five miles the first day, on Clark Owen's mustang. We started at 2 a.m., next morning, and made twenty-five miles [before] breakfast."¹⁵ After a brief stop for the morning meal, Allen and his comrades traveled the remaining thirty miles, arriving at his destination in the early afternoon in time for the wedding ceremony. The next morning, Allen returned to Houston on Clark's mustang. From 1845 to 1861, as more people immigrated to Texas, the increased demand for riding and ranch

¹⁴Thomas E. Speir, "Mustangs," *Handbook of Texas Online*, Texas State Historical Association (2002), accessed April 9, 2017, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/tcm02>; The term *mustang* comes from the Spanish *mesta*, which denotes a company, a group of graziers, or stockmen; the adjective *mesteño* means "belonging to the graziers." Mustang originally referred to the bloodstock imported from Spain.

¹⁵W. Y. Allen, "Reminiscences of Texas, 1838-1842," ed. William S. Red, *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 17 (July 1913 - April, 1914): 296, accessed December 7, 2017, <http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph101061/>.

horses drew parties of *vaqueros* (cowboys) into the harsh brush country to capture, train, and sell as many mustangs as possible.¹⁶ Mustangs, valued for their toughness and durability, traveled long distances on short rations and remained sound, day after day. Besides Indian raids, the lack of fences, stampedes at night, abandoned animals, and unrecovered strays contributed to the growth of wild, unbranded horses and cattle, especially in Texas.¹⁷

After the Civil War ended in 1865, Spanish horses became essential to the western cattle industry and the roundup of wild longhorn cattle. The Northern and Midwestern populaces needed cheap, abundant beef sources that, in turn, initiated the late-nineteenth-century Texas cattle drives. From 1866 to 1885, large herds of free-range cattle were gathered and sent up trails through Texas, Indian Territory (Oklahoma), Arkansas, Missouri, and Kansas to the railroad shipping depots to meet the demand. Other destinations for beef cattle included California, Colorado, Montana, New Mexico, and “all points between.”¹⁸ Driving the cattle to the stockyards and railroad connections required trail hands “of all

¹⁶Vernam, *Men on Horseback*, 292; The term *vaquero* derives from the Spanish word *vaca* (cow) and implies a ranch hand or stockman.

¹⁷Stephen F. Austin, “Journal of Stephen F. Austin on his First Trip to Texas, 1821,” *Texas Historical Association Quarterly* 7 (July 1903-April 1904): 300, accessed February 4, 2018, <https://tshasecurepay.com/digital-library/read/?resource-id=7&page=308&q=mustang+horses#page/1/mode/2up>.

¹⁸Eddie Weller, “The Cattle Frontier in Texas,” in *The Texas Heritage*, 4th ed. Ben Proctor and Archie P. McDonald (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 2003), 274; Vernam, *Men on Horseback*, 300.

sizes, shapes, colors, and ages”—experienced *vaqueros*, young boys, ranch hands “with a touch of wanderlust,” and “emancipated Negro[es].”¹⁹ **(Figure 1.3)** Trail contractors also gathered a large *remuda* of horses able to manage the rough, untamed country and inclement weather.²⁰ Along with the cattle, the *remuda* consisted of experienced trail horses and mustangs often wearing a saddle for the first time. They crossed every river from Texas to Kansas and Missouri, enduring stampedes, tornadoes, hailstorms, and freezing blizzards that serve as testimony to *vaquero* and mustang stamina. When a herd reached its rail destination, the horses, now trained to saddle and bridle, were sold as working stock horses. With money in their pockets, the trail hands, along with a few possessions and their saddles, journeyed back to Texas to join another cattle drive or find ranch work. **(Figure 1.4)**

In 1876, upon the completion of the railroad shipping yards in Ft. Worth, Texas, cattlemen began moving their livestock by rail. By 1885, the long drives discontinued and the demand for large *remudas* diminished. Historian Eddie Weller stated, “...more settlers moved west and began to farm near the trails [and put up fences], “making it much harder to trail cattle north to the railheads.”²¹

¹⁹J. J. Hill, *The End of the Cattle Trail* (Austin, TX: The Pemberton Press, 1969), ii.

²⁰Edward S. Barnard, “Cowboys and Cattle Kings,” *The Great American West* (Pleasantville, NY: The Reader’s Digest Association, Inc., 1977), 286; The *remuda* consisted of a small band of horses used by *vaqueros* (cowboys) when gathering or driving cattle. When one horse tired, the *vaquero* caught and saddled another horse.

²¹Eddie Weller, “The Cattle Frontier in Texas,” 280.

The establishment of well-financed, large-scale cattle ranches and affordable land from the federal government also contributed to the loss of the open range.

Beginning in 1787 with the passage of the Northwest Ordinance, the newly formed federal government had encouraged the public to claim and farm federal lands which continued the territorial expansion of the United States.²² With the passage of the 1841 Pre-Emption Act, claimants kept government land if they were heads of households, widowed, single, and over twenty-one years of age. Furthermore, if the claimants were United States citizens, or intended to become naturalized citizens, living there for at least fourteen months, they were able to purchase sixty-five hectares (160 acres) at a minimum [price] of \$1.25 per acre or \$3.09 per hectare.²³ This legislation led to the passage of the 1862 Federal Homestead Act that made the preemption provisos part of accepted United States land policy. Additional requirements for holding the land included a small filing fee, an extended residency period of five years before receiving title

²⁰The Northwest Ordinance, officially titled "An Ordinance for the Government of the Territory of the United States North West of the River Ohio," was adopted by the Confederation Congress on July 13, 1787. The Ordinance established a government for the Northwest Territory, outlined the process for admitting a new state to the Union, and guaranteed that newly created states would be equal to the original thirteen states. This Confederation Congress legislative act protected civil liberties, outlawed slavery in the new territories, and spelled out a plan subsequently used as the country expanded to the Pacific. See Northwest Ordinance, July 13, 1787; (National Archives Microfilm Publication M332, roll 9); Miscellaneous Papers of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789; Records of the Continental and Confederation Congresses and the Constitutional Convention, 1774-1789, Record Group 360; National Archives.

²³John R. Van Atta, "A Lawless Rabble: Henry Clay and the Cultural Politics of Squatters' Rights, 1832-1841," *Journal of the Early Republic* 28, no. 3 (Fall, 2008): 371-73.

to the land, and the continued option of purchasing the land from the government for \$1.25 per acre. The Homestead Act encouraged people to migrate from the war-weary, ravaged Confederate states as well as from European countries. With the promise of affordable land, there was a concentrated push to set up farms, build new towns, and seek a new life.

Some farmers and ranchers brought their eastern bred livestock along with their riding and carriage horses including Thoroughbreds, Morgans, and gaited horses. For heavy pulling and plowing, the Percheron, Belgian, and Shire draft breeds were the most popular.²⁴ Farmers had little use or regard for the smaller, stocky mustang horses. The invention of barbwire in 1874 gave the big ranchers a cost-efficient way to “keep [their] herds from straying...it enabled them to control vital waterholes...and to keep farmers and sheepmen off the lands that [they] claimed as their own by right of possession, if not of law.”²⁵ Farmers also adopted the innovation, and miles and miles of fence posts and barbwire defined individual land holdings. **(Figure 1.5)** This move by homesteaders to settle, plant crops, and raise domestic livestock contributed to the decline of the feral Spanish horses.²⁶

²⁴Frank R. Graham and T.W. Morse, eds, *The American Breeder* 8, no. 1 (Kansas City, MO: Graham Publishing Company, 1914), 11.

²⁵Edward S. Barnard, “Cowboys and Cattle Kings,” in *The Great American West*, 299.

²⁶Hope Ryden, *America's Last Wild Horses*, (1969; repr., New York, NY: Lyons & Burford, Publishers, 1990), 182.

Although the Spanish horses had some early admirers, they had detractors as well. U.S. Army officers, ranchers, and Eastern horsemen held a low opinion of the short, wiry, rough-coated equines. They preferred the larger, predominantly Northern European equine stock or used mustang mares to improve the hardiness of the developing western stock horse. Historian Bruce Beckmann stated, "American quarter horse stallions were mated with mustang mares used on the Texas range...Gathering wild cattle in South Texas required a mount with speed and strength."²⁷ The horses' connection with Plains Indian cultures, particularly the Comanches and the Sioux made them undesirable. This association had important consequences for both horses and Indians.

After the Civil War ended in 1865, the U.S. government began a "total war that combined cooperation with professional buffalo hunters, prolonged winter campaigns...and systematic slaughtering of captured Indian Horses"²⁸ as the means to subjugate all Native tribes who resisted the westward flow of American expansion across their hunting grounds and grasslands. The United States Army found that the only effective control was to deprive the tribes of their horses and main food source of bison. In 1867, Colonel Richard Irving Dodge of the U.S.

²⁷Bruce Beckmann, "Quarter Horses," *Handbook of Texas Online*, Texas State Historical Association (June 2010), accessed February 4, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/tcq01>

²⁸Hämäläinen, "The Rise and Fall of Plains Indian Horse Culture." 845.

Army gave orders to his troops “to kill every buffalo you can. Every buffalo dead is an Indian gone.”²⁹ The indigenous tribes also incurred great losses in battles and outright massacres against U.S. Infantry and Cavalry forces. In 1874, under General Philip H. Sheridan’s command, Colonel Ranald Mackenzie and his men located and attacked a large group of Comanche warriors storing winter provisions in Palo Duro Canyon in the Texas Panhandle. The warriors escaped by climbing up the canyon walls but left their horses. Mackenzie “had over 1,000 [horses] shot, saving only about 350 to reward his [loyal] Indian scouts.”³⁰ After the U.S. Army’s 1876 defeat at the Battle of Little Big Horn against the Dakota and Lakota Sioux, Sheridan received further orders to disarm and dismount the warriors, place the tribes on reservations, and sell or destroy their horses. Sheridan accomplished this task with due diligence.³¹ Environmental historian Carolyn Merchant wrote, “In the space of 10 to 15 years, buffalo were removed from the plains, and the remaining Plains tribes were relocated to reservations.”³²

²⁹Larry Barsness, *Heads, Hides and Horns: The Compleat Buffalo Book* (Fort Worth, TX: Texas Christian University Press, 1985), 126.

³⁰William T. Hagan, *Quanah Parker, Comanche Chief* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 15.

³¹Michael V. Sheridan, *The Personal Memoirs of Philip Henry Sheridan, 1831-1888*, 2 (New York, NY: D. Appleton & Co., 1902): 517, accessed March 18, 2018, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=njp.32101079830897;view=1up;seq=543;size=125>.

³²Carolyn Merchant, *American Environmental History: An Introduction* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2007), 20.

By 1890, the Plains Indians had lost their land, buffalo, horses, and nomadic lifestyle.

During the late 1800s and early 1900s, feral horses that roamed the Western United States were considered frontier icons in nineteenth and twentieth-century popular culture. They shared fame and notoriety alongside Wild Bill Hickok, William F. “Buffalo Bill” Cody, and William H. “Billy the Kid” Bonney (also known as Henry McCarty). Selected for their endurance, mustang horses traversed the rough western trails of the short-lived Pony Express from 1860-1861.³³ Organized by William Hepburn Russell, Alexander Majors, and William B. Waddell, the Leavenworth, Kansas freighting firm sent relays of horses and riders to deliver mail from St. Joseph, Missouri to Sacramento, California. At age fifteen, Cody was hired by George Crisman, the company wagon master, to ride for the Pony Express. Cody’s first route covered forty-five miles with three changes of horses. In his autobiography, Cody wrote, “I easily made my forty-five miles on time on my first trip out, and ever afterward.”³⁴ Though Cody worked only for two months, and the Express folded in 1861, the riders and their horses galloped into history and legend. **(Figure 1.6)**

³³Phillip D. Strong, *Horses and Americans* (New York, NY: Frederick A. Stokes, 1939), 232; Horses used by the Pony Express included Thoroughbred and Morgan horses on the eastern end of the trail and mustangs on the more rugged western end of the mail route.

³⁴William F. Cody, *The Life of Honorable William F. Cody Known as Buffalo Bill: The Famous Hunter, Scout and Guide, An Autobiography*. 1879, reprint (New York, NY: Time-Life Books, Inc., 1982), 91.

The late 1800s also produced a profusion of popular media fiction such as serialized newspaper stories, monthly journals, romantic dime novels, and the traveling performances of Buffalo Bill's "Wild West Show" as well as the Barnum and Bailey Circus. Author Joseph G. Rosa's biography on Hickok stated, "the American public's preoccupation in the late 1860s with Wild Bill and other frontier "types" stemmed largely from the escapism that followed four years of civil war."³⁵ The wide, open western frontier called to people tired of war, recession, unemployment, and overcrowded cities. Reading about the "rich, fertile regions to the West [and] the adventures of the "plainmen" or "frontiersmen" inspired and motivated Easterners to risk hostile Native Americans, uncharted territory, uncertain weather, and other hazards in search of fresh opportunities.³⁶

An influx of Europeans and Asians also streamed into the United States during the latter part of the nineteenth century seeking land and prospects for a better life. Although many recent arrivals remained in the cities along the two seaboards, the Western, Southwestern, and Pacific regions encountered new waves of immigrant population and commercial development as railroad corporations continued expansion of the railway system across the nation.³⁷

³⁵Joseph G. Rosa, *Wild Bill Hickok: The Man and His Myth* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996), xvii.

³⁶Rosa, *Wild Bill Hickok: The Man and His Myth*, xviii.

³⁷Richard White, *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011), 37.

Profitable real estate sales and private investors added to the westward growth as farmers, ranchers, merchants, mining, and logging companies viewed the land and abundant natural resources as a source of profit and financial surety.

Railroad executives and land speculators used their money and political influence to receive large grants of public land from federal and state governments.³⁸ “Railroads wanted settlers, both as purchasers of their land grants and as future freight customers.”³⁹ Rail companies preferred using immigrant laborers who worked for low wages as “railway work was a common occupation among [Irish] immigrant men because workers were in such high demand. For other Irish immigrants, owning a piece of land and farming offered “status and dignity of those who worked for themselves and not for wages.”⁴⁰ As an example, Brislawn’s grandfather, Séamus Ó’Breasláin, descended from generations of Irish tenant potato farmers, migrated to the United States for the opportunity to own property, raise a family, and be independent of a wealthy landlord.

As the western lands became populated with new towns, farms, and ranches, cattlemen and sheep ranchers regarded feral horses as a nuisance and

³⁸White, *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals*, 23-26.

³⁹Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 1987), 125.

⁴⁰Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest*, 129.

competition for water and grazing lands. Spanish horse numbers declined steadily over the next three decades. Extermination, stallion castration, and crossbreeding contributed to the decline during the early 1900s. With the wholesale slaughter of feral horses by private individuals and the federal government, only a few Spanish-type horse herds persisted in remote, mountainous locations throughout the western states by the end of the 1920s.

Fortunately, a handful of far-sighted individuals and interested groups decided to protect these horses. Prominent among such concerned individuals was Robert Emmett Brislawn, Sr., whose efforts to save the Spanish-type horses preserved an important chapter of equine history. His campaign defined and standardized an American heritage breed whose ancestors had crossed the Atlantic Ocean, allowing the Spanish conquistadors to ride rather than walk in the New World.



Figure 1.1 Statue of Don Juan de Oñate
Oñate Monument Center, Alcalde, New Mexico
Courtesy of *Albuquerque Journal*
<https://www.abqjournal.com/1080408/.html>



Figure 1.2 Lakota camp of tipis, horses, and wagons; Pine Ridge Indian Reservation; Photograph by John C. H. Grabill, 1891
Courtesy of the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division,
Washington, D.C.
LOT 3076-2, no. 3636; <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/99613796/>



Figure 1.3 The Cow Boy; Photograph by John C. H. Grabill (1888)
Courtesy of the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division
Washington, D.C.; LOT 3076-12, no. 320
<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/ppmsc.02638>

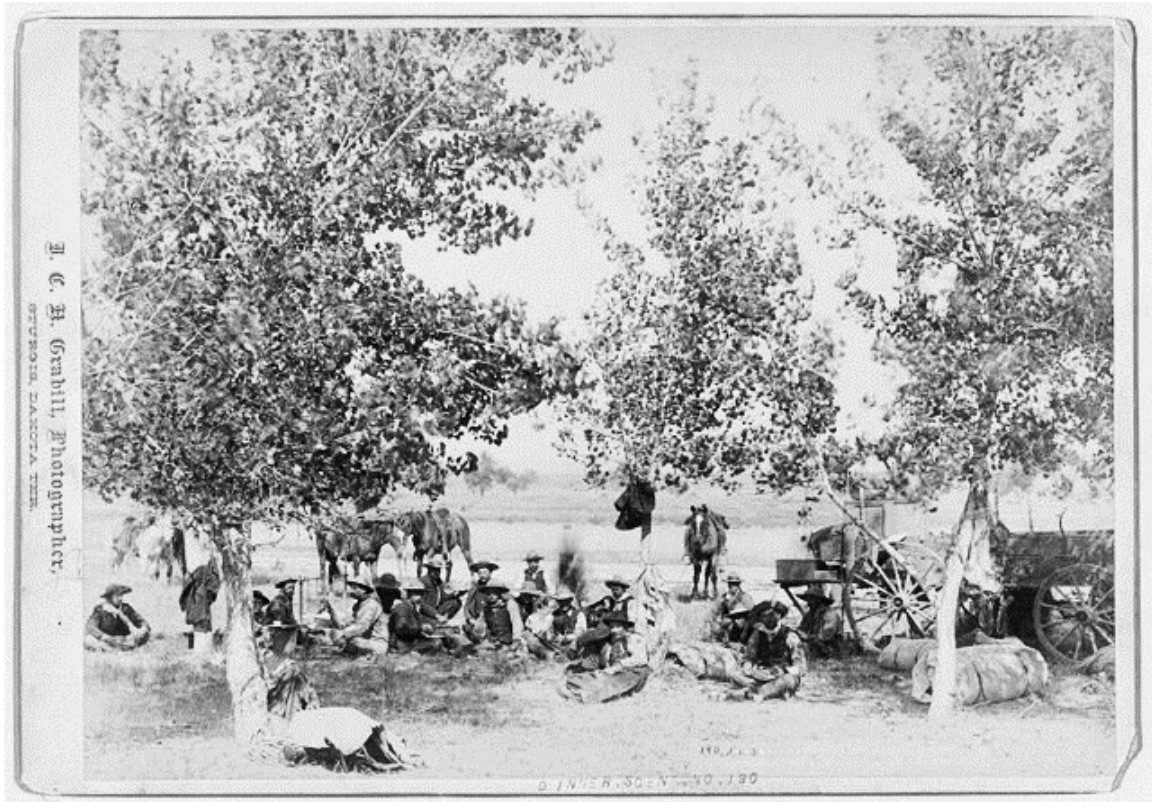


Figure 1.4 Chuckwagon and cowboys at dinner
Photograph by John C. H. Grabill (1887-1892)
Courtesy of the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division
Washington, D.C.; LOT 3076-12, no. 190;
<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/ppmsc.02637>

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Figure 1.5 Advertising for Barbed Wire
Courtesy of *Lawrence Business Magazine*
<https://www.lawrencebusinessmagazine.com/2017/06/barbed-wire/>



Figure 1.6 William F. Cody “Buffalo Bill” (1892)
Photograph by Burke; Courtesy of the *Lincoln Journal Star*
http://journalstar.com/entertainment/visual-art/buffalo-bill-s-wild-west-explores-the-big-show-of/article_352c94ca-91b3-5879-bff5-bf00845df43b.html.

CHAPTER 2

As a young man, Brislawn worked in the local barbershop in Sprague, Washington where he met men from all walks of life. While sitting in a barber chair, they talked while he listened to stories from “buffalo hunters, French trappers, explorers, early settlers, and ranchers, all brought in their memories of a frontier that was rapidly vanishing.”¹ Late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century studies of Spanish colonial history and the west in American history caused broad popularization of both topics. Academics and philanthropists began to identify and advocate for the preservation of cultural resources. A simultaneous westward expansion based upon the demand for arable land, timber, and minerals, often at the expense of Native American tribes, resulted in growing tension between conservationists and preservationists. The Spanish-type mustangs, caught in the center of this debate as both natural and cultural resources, presented a challenge to farming and ranching opportunities while simultaneously representing a history that encompassed more than the American frontier. With industrialization and growth throughout the United States, achieving a balance that satisfied all parties proved difficult and required federal leadership and legislation.

¹Neil UíBreaslain, *The Way of an Irish Horseman* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2006), 25.

In 1887, Congress passed the Dawes Act that required “the Indian to give up their reservations for individual [land] allotments.”² The act, with the focus on Indian Territory, forced the Native American population into individual rather than communal ownership of land. In this manner, from 1889 to 1901, large portions of the Territory became available for settlement. **(Figure 2.1)** The 1889 Oklahoma Land Run that followed the Dawes Act multiplied the territory’s population from 60,000 to 400,000 residents who argued that this valuable real estate “was inhibiting business opportunities for merchants...“clogging the wheels of commerce, [and] a crime against southwestern civilization.”³ Another frequently used justification for opening reservation lands was the belief that white settlers provided good examples of self-sufficiency and hard work to Native Americans and “that agriculture was essential for their assimilation” into civilized society.⁴ **(Figure 2.2)** Although Native tribes employed various delaying tactics including numerous federal treaties, violent battles, and outright massacres that

²S.C. Gwyne, *Empire of the Summer Moon: Quanah Parker and the Rise and Fall of the Comanches, the Most Powerful Indian Tribe in American History* (New York, NY: Scribner, 2010), 308; See also Henry Dawes, U.S. Congress, “An Act to Provide for the Allotment of Lands in Severalty to Indians on the Various Reservations” (General Allotment Act or Dawes Act), Statutes at Large 24, 388-91, NADP Document A1887, accessed February 20, 2018, <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=50>.

³William T. Hagan, *Quanah Parker, Comanche Chief* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 93-94.

⁴Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton and Company, 1987), 124.

slowed the westward land encroachment, nothing proved effective in stemming the pervasive belief in American cultural and racial superiority.⁵ As land transformed into towns, houses, and fenced pastures, a different, difficult path emerged for the Native people and their horses.

Mustang herds still roamed the plains and grasslands in the nineteenth century, having evolved over centuries of freedom into the resilient feral horses of the West. But, the days of large, free-ranging horse herds and bison had drawn steadily to a close at the end of the century. The unromantic side of the wild horse debate was their competition with cattle and sheep for grazing and water, their small, stunted size, poor conformation, and unpredictable temperaments. Once considered valuable assets as transportation, feral horses became contemptable objects. Historian Walker D. Wyman stated, "From 1870 to 1900...to most cattlemen wild horses were something to shoot, not capture...[and] they were not only a nuisance but a menace, while to the cowboy and settler, [the horses were] a source of income and sport."⁶ Unpopular and unwanted, the wild horses were hunted and sold for their meat, hides, and

⁵John L. O'Sullivan, "Annexation." *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, 17 (July–August 1845): 5–11, accessed September 6, 2017, <http://web.grinnell.edu/courses/HIS/f01/HIS202-01/Documents/OSullivan.html>.

⁶Walker D. Wyman, *The Wild Horse of the West*, 1945, reprint (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), 95-97.

horsehair or in some cases, driven off cliffs into the Pacific Ocean, or left to die of thirst and starvation in box canyon kill pens.

Between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, three global conflicts created the need for cavalry remounts and the large-scale round-up and sales of horses produced a deeper decline in American horse numbers. The two Boer Wars, 1880-1902, were fought between the British Empire and the Dutch-Boers of the Transvaal and Orange Free State. “This distant war...started a new movement to capture the wild herds.”⁷ From 1899 to 1902, the United States exported 425,000 horses to the British Government for use in cavalry, artillery, and Quartermaster regiments.⁸ The Spanish-American War, 1898-1901, and the Philippine-American War, 1899-1902, required mounted troops for the invasion of Cuba and the Philippine territories. The U.S. Army supplied this need through sales from contractors across the nation—both domestic and feral horses with 243,900 horses exported.⁹ From 1914 to 1916, horse exports numbered at 380,329 with France and Great Britain purchasing the largest quantity of horses.¹⁰ **(Figure 2.3)** Brislaw served in France during World War I. He stated,

⁷Wyman, *The Wild Horse of the West*, 121.

⁸J. Edward De Steiguer, *Wild Horses of the West: History and Politics of America's Mustangs* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2011), 140.

⁹*Scientific American Supplement* LIII, no. 1376 (May 17, 1902), 22054.

¹⁰Wyman, *The Wild Horse of the West*, 123.

“In the war effort, these horses were being turned into pack and riding animals and were often held in front of the men as they ‘went over the top’ in battle; horses being killed in this way in large numbers.”¹¹ When Brislawn returned to his Wyoming home in 1919, an idea became a full-fledged decision. Someone had to save the Spanish horse if there were any left worth saving. He nominated himself.

Fortunately, for Brislawn, a new era of progressive, reformer legislation and environmental concern began during Theodore Roosevelt’s presidency that included efficient, productive conservation as an administrative policy.¹² In May of 1903, at Salt Lake City, President Roosevelt addressed Utah political leaders and a gathering of citizens on the need to protect the western regions:

“In these regions...it is especially incumbent upon us to treat the question of the natural pasturage, the question of the forests, and the question of the waters, all from the one standpoint—the standpoint of the far-seeing statesman, of the far-seeing citizen, who wishes to preserve and not to exhaust the resources of the country...”¹³

Roosevelt fostered an agenda that helped expand progressive conservation, political reform, and social activism. Due to excessive exploitation

¹¹UiBreaslain, *The Way of an Irish Horseman*, 68.

¹²Samuel P. Hays, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency: The Progressive Conservation Movement 1890-1920* (New York, NY: Atheneum, 1969), 15.

¹³Theodore Roosevelt, *Presidential Addresses and State Papers, Part One, I* (New York, NY: Kraus Reprint Company, 1970), 219.

of the nation's natural resources for private gain, conservationists called for federal supervision of the nation's natural resources. They found a sympathetic ear and man of action in Roosevelt. An avid outdoorsman and sportsman, Roosevelt traveled extensively throughout the western states and added the management of natural resources as one of his domestic priorities. In 1903, he established the first wildlife sanctuary, and in 1905, the U.S. Forest Service became a separate bureau when Congress transferred the national forest reserves from the Department of the Interior to the Forest Service.¹⁴ Gifford Pinchot became the first chief and “set out to educate the public and the private forest industry about scientific [and more modern] forest management.”¹⁵ Through Pinchot's strong, forceful leadership, federal and private lumber concerns developed new attitudes about using and conserving forest reserves.

Naturalist, preservationist, and writer John Muir published *Our National Parks* in 1901 as part of his campaign to establish the Yosemite Valley as a national park. Newspaper editor, Richard F. Fleck noted Muir's strong influence in the 1980 foreword of *Our National Parks*. “Muir's compelling articles, his founding of the Sierra Club in 1892, and his strong influence on politicians,

¹⁴Gerald W. Williams, “The USDA Forest Service—The First Century,” accessed February 21, 2018, https://www.fs.fed.us/sites/default/files/media/2015/06/The_USDA_Forest_Service_TheFirstCentury.pdf.

¹⁵Hays, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency*, 29.

including President Theodore Roosevelt, helped the national park cause,” and furthered Muir’s political efforts and the conservation movement.¹⁶ The 1906 Congressional legislature approved the American Antiquities Act that established archaeological sites as national monuments—the power to create these monuments was made an executive (presidential) privilege. Roosevelt exercised this authority throughout his presidency.¹⁷ **(Figure 2.4)** Roosevelt’s successor, William Howard Taft, continued with the conservation efforts. During his presidency, Congress passed the 1911 Weeks Forest Purchase Act that allowed the U.S. Forest Service “to purchase forested, cut-over, or denuded lands within the watersheds of navigable stream [and] added nearly twenty million acres to the national forest system east of the Mississippi River.”¹⁸ Taft issued proclamations for four national monuments during his presidency, yet conservationists appointed by Roosevelt felt threatened by Taft’s policies and turned to the public for support and “as a result, conservation gain[ed] greater

¹⁶Richard F. Fleck, foreword in *Our National Parks* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1981), xii; Yosemite Valley was an established park owned by the State of California. In 1916, the state relinquished ownership to the federal government.

¹⁷American Antiquities Act of 1906, Public Law 59-209, 59th Cong., (June 8, 1906) HR 11016, 16 USC 431-433, accessed February 21, 2018, <https://www.nps.gov/history/local-law/anti1906.htm>.

¹⁸Lincoln Bramwell, “1911 Weeks Act: The Legislation that Nationalised the US Forest Service,” in *Journal of Energy & Natural Resources Law* 30, no. 3 (August 2012): 325-336. *Environment Complete*, EBSCOhost, accessed May 8, 2018, <http://web.ebscohost.com.steenproxy.sfasu.edu:2048/>.

national attention.”¹⁹ Taft’s administration was conflicted between the Republican conservatives and progressives due to conservation controversies and antitrust cases which split the Republican party and brought in the Democrat Woodrow Wilson as the next president.

Wilson supported the conservation efforts when Congress created the National Park Service (NPS) within the Department of the Interior in 1914. At that time, there were sixteen national parks and twenty-one national monuments created “to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein...and by such means, as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”²⁰ He issued seven presidential proclamations for the preservation of national monuments; three of these sites became national parks including Grand Canyon, Arizona. During Wilson’s two terms, Congress also passed the 1920 Federal Water Power Act that created a commission to oversee the national waterways and water power projects and the protective Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 between the United States, Canada, and Great Britain.²¹

¹⁹Jurretta Jordan Heckscher, ed. “The Evolution of the Conservation Movement, 1850-1920” (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 2002), accessed May 8, 2018, <https://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amrvhtml/cnchron5.html>.

²⁰An Act to Establish A National Park Service and for Other Services, (August 25, 1916), (39 Stat. 535) accessed February 21, 2018, https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/anps/anps_1i.htm.

²¹Heckscher, ed. “The Evolution of the Conservation Movement, 1850-1920.”

Reform activism also focused on animals. The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) organized in 1866 as well as similar groups that came into existence. In 1877, delegates from twenty-seven of these diverse groups joined forces and formed the American Humane Society (AHS). Both groups intended to improve the conditions of dogs, cats, other household pets, and urban farm animals, especially horses that “suffered abusive drivers and overloaded haulage conditions as primary urban movers of machines, food, and people.”²² Studies of the nineteenth century “demonstrates the centrality of animal protection to major American transformations [including] growth of science and technology, the rise of modern liberalism...and the development of American ideologies of benevolence.”²³ As the urban “consumer culture of pet keeping” evolved and medical research added new pet products including parasite control, antibiotics, and vaccines, dogs, and cats became sheltered companion animals and moved indoors.²⁴ The SPCA also expanded further to cover the welfare of farm animals and improve the conditions of food animals

²²Janet M. Davis, “The History of Animal Protection in the United States,” *The American Historian*, accessed March 31, 2018, <http://tah.oah.org/november-2015/the-history-of-animal-protection-in-the-united-states/>.

²³Davis, “The History of Animal Protection in the United States.”

²⁴Davis, “The History of Animal Protection in the United States.”

sent to slaughterhouses for human consumption and the emerging market for pets in the 1920s.²⁵

The main source for the pet food market was the free-roaming horse herds that competed with cattle and sheep for grazing and water on the western ranges. When threatened with the destruction of pastures that left inedible weeds or brush and loss of water sources, ranchers and stockmen took matters into their own hands and lobbied heavily for federal control of the rangeland and to preserve their livelihoods.²⁶ These interest groups started an efficient lobby campaign in Congress to regulate and control the public grazing lands and eliminate the feral horses. Federal range experts also cited their reasons for regulation including grass consumption, water usage, and protection of watershed vegetation. After several failed attempts, Congress passed the 1934 Taylor Grazing Act. The legislation's intent was "to stop injury to the public grazing lands [excluding Alaska] by preventing overgrazing and soil deterioration; to provide for their orderly use, improvement, and development; [and] to stabilize the livestock industry dependent upon the public range."²⁷ The new law, however, gave feral horse adversaries legitimacy to round-up and ship

²⁵Charles D. Niven, *History of the Humane Movement: The Humane Movement in North America* (New York, NY: Transatlantic Arts, 1967), 106.

²⁶De Steiguer, *Wild Horses of the West: History and Politics of America's Mustangs*, 138.

²⁷Taylor Grazing Act, Bureau of Land Management, United States Department of the Interior, 43 USC 315.

thousands of horses to slaughterhouses and meat packing plants. Horse runners (also known as mustangers) began to systematically hunt feral herds “with rifles, ropes, dogs, and later, light planes...to make room for more cattle.”²⁸ From 1934 to 1937, forty-seven million pounds of horsemeat were canned and sold by the Ross Dog and Cat Food Company in Los Alamitos, California.²⁹ **(Figure 2.5)** Their eastern competitor was the Corned Beef and Cabbage (CBC) empire that bought, slaughtered, and canned an estimated 40,000 feral horses for dog food. European and Scandinavian markets also imported horsemeat for human consumption.³⁰

In 1939, the acting director of the Department of the Interior Grazing Service, Archie D. Ryan, reiterated the opinion that “a wild horse consumes forage needed by domestic livestock, brings in no return, and serves no useful purpose.”³¹ With no advocates to plead for their continued existence, the wild horses of the western ranges were almost exterminated by 1940. Those that escaped detection and round-up survived in the remote, rugged wilderness

²⁸Wyman, *The Wild Horse of the West*, 204.

²⁹Wyman, *The Wild Horse of the West*, 206.

³⁰De Steiguer, *Wild Horses of the West*, 140-141.

³¹Wyman, *The Wild Horse of the West*, 163. The author was unable to access the primary source for this quote. The author emailed Marene Barker at the National Archives (NARA), of the Denver Office but she could not locate Ryan’s letter. Wyman gave no other information in his end notes.

regions of Arizona, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Wyoming. A few Native American tribes including the Blackfoot, Cheyenne, Crow, Navajo, San Pueblo, and Ute held onto their horses and later, Brislawn managed to buy a few individual horses from those Native herds.³² While the wild horse debate persisted in the 1930s and 1940s, (and remains an unsolved problem in the twenty-first century), Brislawn continued his search for Spanish breeding stock, but not everyone shared his admiration or concern, and some horsemen believed that pure or straight Spanish-type horses no longer existed.³³

Although automobiles and trucks had replaced the horse as the preferred mode of transportation, the horse industry remained an important part of the American landscape. Other horsemen and women besides Brislawn decided to collect, standardize, and record their unique breed of American horses versus the older breed organizations such as the Thoroughbred, Arabian, and Percheron. In 1939, author and horseman, Robert Denhardt met with breeders and interested parties at the Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show in Fort Worth, Texas. Denhardt's idea for a quarter horse association received

³²Hope Ryden, *America's Last Wild Horses*, (1969; repr., New York, NY: Lyons & Burford, Publishers, 1990), 29-30.

³³Ryden, *America's Last Wild Horses*, 31, 34; Author's Note: Brislawn and his advocates looked for horses that displayed a certain type of skeletal structure, conformation, temperament, or had documented proof of isolation from other horse breeds. Brislawn searched for his ideal Spanish horses in remote places, i e., small Native American holdings and reservations, the borderlands of northern Mexico and South Texas, the wilderness areas of Arizona, Utah, and Nevada, New Mexico, and the remaining family herds of Cherokee and Choctaws in Oklahoma.

positive responses, and in March 1940, he met with western horse industry leaders. Denhardt presented a proposed charter, by-laws, and mission statement that read:

“The purpose for which it is formed is the support of a non-profit education undertaking...and promote the use of such knowledge with respect to the history, pedigree, record, breeding, exhibiting, publicity, sale, and improvement of the Quarter Horse breed of horses in America as authorized by Article 1302, Section 102, Vernon’s R.C.S.,1925.”³⁴

The meeting was a success, and the new registry’s Articles of Incorporation received approval on April 15, 1940, in Harris County, Texas. The American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA) became one of several modern horse registries created in the twentieth century. The Appaloosa Horse Club, the Palomino Horse Club, and the Albino Horse Club followed the AQHA’s lead in organization and registration of horses.³⁵ Brislawn had corresponded regularly with Denhardt for several years, and in 1969, Denhardt wrote to Brislawn about the newly published Spanish Mustang Registry (SMR) stud book that listed the first 218 horses. **(Figure 2.6)** Denhardt stated, “I want to congratulate on your most excellent “Tally Book.” This was a real labor of love – I know because I

³⁴Robert M. Denhardt, *Foundation Sires of the American Quarter Horse* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976), 13-15; The original Articles of Incorporation are photocopied on those three pages in the book.

³⁵Randy Witte, “The History of Western Horseman: 75 Years of the World’s Leading Horse Magazine” (Fort Worth, TX: *Western Horseman Magazine*, 2011), 15.

fought through the Vol. #1 of the AQHA...I was still fighting for the old 14 hands, hard twisted, bull-dog quarter horse, whose daddy was a running horse and whose dam was a mustang..."³⁶ Some of the oldest bloodlines of Quarter Horses show the influence of mustang blood, and can be found "in most Western horse breeds to a lesser or greater degree."³⁷ During Brislawn's western states travels in the 1940s, he encountered people who approved of his mission, and the more dubious ones who criticized his efforts and believed that the Spanish-type horses were extinct. Brislawn decided, along with his search, that educating the public about Spanish horses was necessary to garner favorable opinions. Fortunately for Brislawn, another early twentieth-century movement celebrated throughout the Southwest was the revival of Spanish Colonial heritage.

Beginning in 1925, (when Brislawn first considered preservation), the Spanish Colonial Arts Society emerged in New Mexico. Founded by Mary Austin and Frank Applegate, the Society worked to offer a new image of and preserve Hispano culture. "To understand New Mexico's Spanish-speaking people, one must appreciate the state's Spanish past...[that] evoked a redeeming if slightly decadent European character," as opposed to the "disagreeable image of the impoverished [Mexican] mestizo."³⁸ Austin's view of the "Spanish colonial past

³⁶Brislawn, *Spanish Mustangs and Hard Times*, 159.

³⁷Denhardt, *The Horse of the Americas*, 203.

³⁸Montgomery, *The Spanish Redemption*, 3

[was] an invigorating legacy...[of] a Spanish inheritance [that] transformed the people into a rich folk culture...and whose religious customs and artistic expressions might enliven a tired nation."³⁹ The Society's influence spread beyond the state's borders and according to author David Gebhard, created revisionist awareness in Spanish art, architecture, politics, music, and the need "to discover meaningful historic roots."⁴⁰

Early nineteenth-century histories of Spanish Colonial either glorified the Spanish Conquest or viewed Spaniards "with a romantic past, but backward and priest-ridden."⁴¹ A series of published historical works praised Spanish colonization in the Americas as a civilizing mission... [and a] "favorable assessment of the Spanish conquest."⁴² This outlook continued until 1880 when new intellectual and economic conditions produced attitudes about Mexican and South American markets and their historical connections—an area, Latin American scholar Benjamin Keen stated, that suffered from neglect and oversight.

³⁹Montgomery, *The Spanish Redemption*, 3.

⁴⁰David Gebhard, "The Spanish Colonial Revival in Southern California (1895-1930)," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 26, no. 2 (May 1967): 145, accessed March 28, 2018, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/98817>.

⁴¹Benjamin Keen, "Main Currents in United States Writings on Colonial Spanish America, 1884-1984," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 65, no. 4 (November 1985): 658, accessed March 12, 2018, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2514891>.

⁴²Keen, "Main Currents," 658.

The American Historical Association (AHA), founded in 1884, brought a degree of professionalism to scholarly writings, specialty subjects or areas, training seminars for students, and better research methods. One influential historian was Edward G. Bourne whose 1904 book publication, *Spain in America, 1450-1580*, “set the tone for a half-century of revisionist writing on Colonial Spanish America.”⁴³ Bourne’s favorable viewpoint impressed Herbert E. Bolton who taught at the University of California from 1911 to 1945. Considered “the much-studied father of what came to be known as the “Bolton school,” he popularized the term “Spanish Borderlands.”⁴⁴ Bolton “aimed to add a Spanish dimension to the Anglo-centric history of the United States.”⁴⁵ Bourne, Bolton, and other historians in the 1920s and 1930s, however, continued to concentrate on the positive attributes of Spanish conquest and “minimize[d] the oppressive and repressive aspects of Spanish rule” and overlooked the darker, seamier underside of Spanish colonization.⁴⁶ Following in Bolton’s footsteps, scholarly works published since the 1940s continues to explore “the political, economic, and social history of colonial Spanish America in greater depth [and from both

⁴³Keen, “Main Currents,” 661.

⁴⁴David J. Weber, “The Spanish Borderlands, Historiography Redux,” in *History Teacher* 39, no.1 (November 2005): 43, accessed March 26, 2018, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30036743>.

⁴⁵Weber, “The Spanish Borderlands, 43.

⁴⁶Keen, “Main Currents,” 661.

sides].”⁴⁷ Historian David J. Weber’s article, “The “Spanish Borderlands, Historiography Redux,” offered a wealth of articles and writers who seek to expand Bolton’s “Spanish Borderlands” historiography as a valuable resource for English-and Spanish speaking America. But, the simplistic idealism of the untamed, rugged frontier where feral horses and cattle ran free lingers within the frame of “historical revisionism, political activism, and the context of the times in which writers or historians composed their stories.”⁴⁸

On the disappearance of the feral horses, historian J. Frank Dobie, wrote, “they have gone with the winds of vanished years. They carried away a life and a spirit that no pastoral prosperity could in coming times re-present.”⁴⁹ Within this frame of conservation awareness and preservation action, Brislawn continued his search for Spanish-type horses, but the task became more difficult with the loss of open range and free-roaming horses in the twentieth century. As a man whose life bridged two centuries, Brislawn’s strong-willed, Irish heritage and self-sufficient upbringing prepared him for a life-long journey.

⁴⁷Keen, “Main Currents,” 682.

⁴⁸Richard S. Grimes, “The Making of a Sioux Legend: The Historiography of Crazy Horse,” in *South Dakota History* 30, no. 3 (Fall 2000): 278, accessed March 13, 2018, <https://www.sdhspress.com/journal/south-dakota-history-30-3/the-making-of-a-sioux-legend-the-historiography-of-crazy-horse/3003-making-of-a-sioux-legend-by-richard-grimes.pdf>.

⁴⁹J. Frank Dobie, *The Mustangs* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1934), 112.

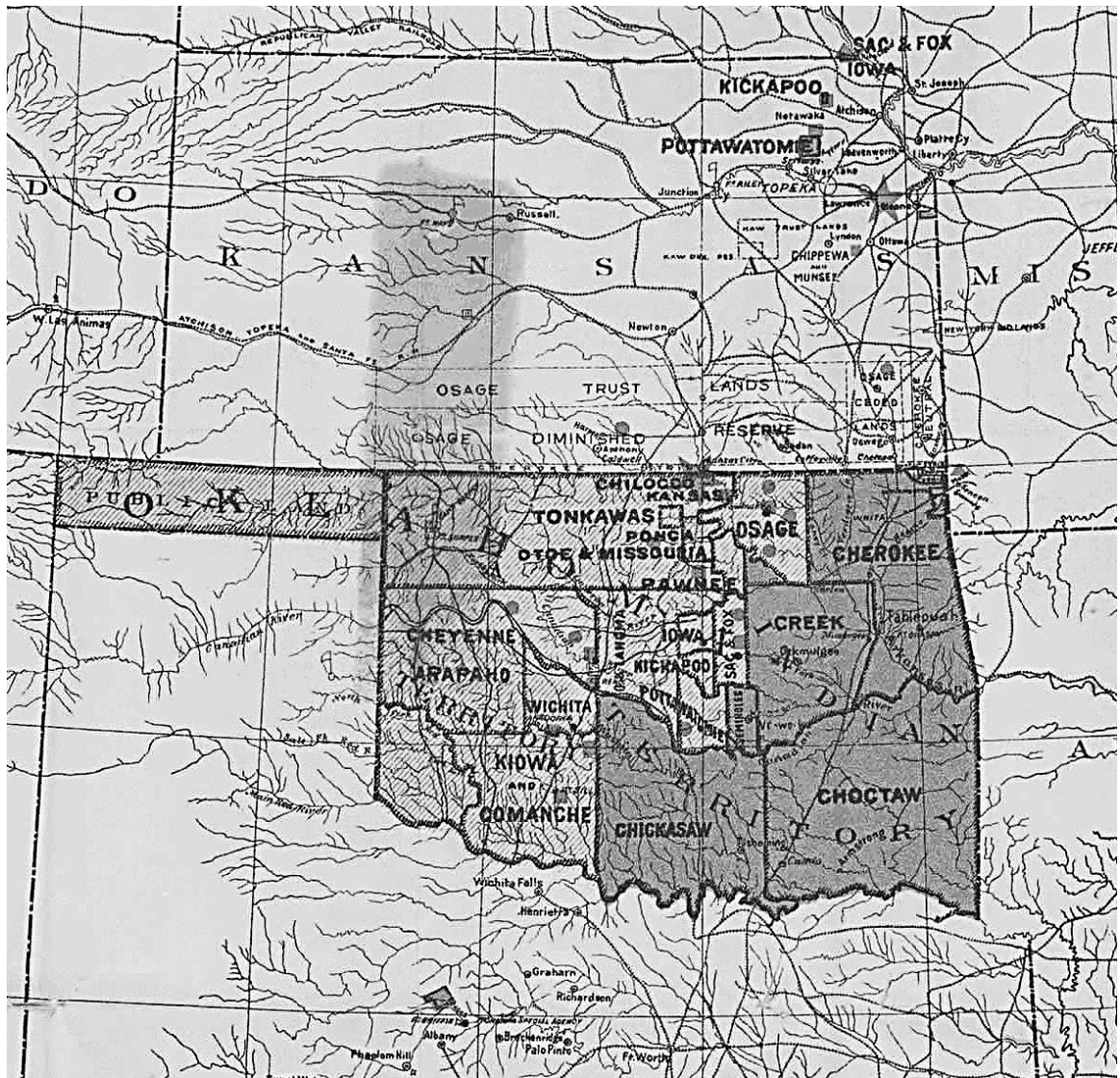


Figure 2.1 Map of Indian Territory, Oklahoma in 1890.
Courtesy of Oklahoma Historical Society
http://www.okhistory.org/research/hl_map3.php#page/0/mode/1up

Oklahoma
Historical
Society®



Figure 2.2 Three men from Georgia waiting for the Wichita-Caddo Land Run, (1901) Virgil Robbins Collection, ID# 19344.58.5; Courtesy of the Oklahoma Historical Society <http://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entryname=LAND%20OPENINGS>

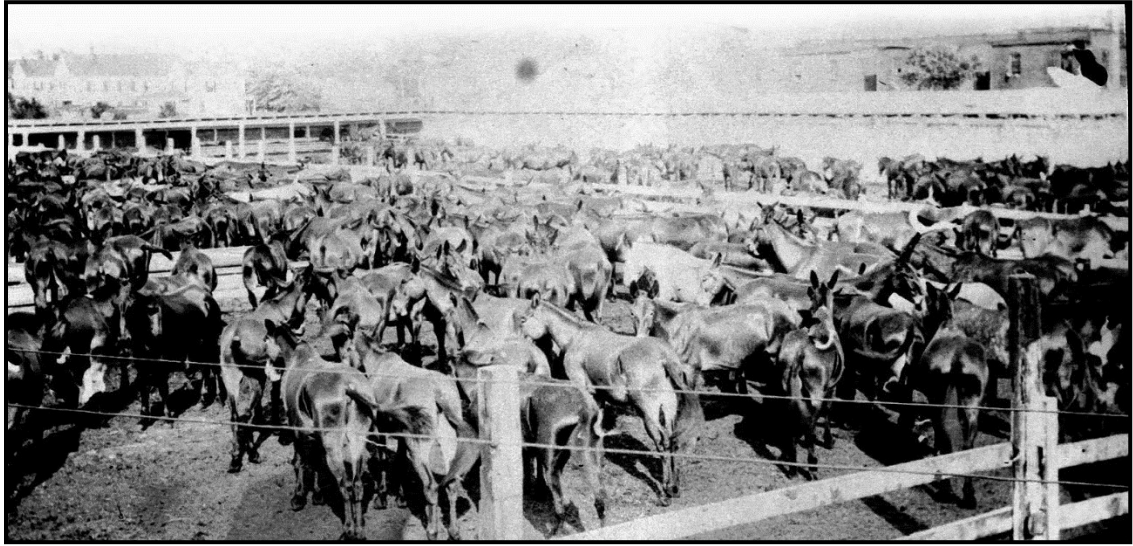


Figure 2.3 Horses waiting for shipping to Britain at holding facility, Newport News, Virginia (1914); Original Photograph by James H. Breazeale
Courtesy of the Library of Virginia
<http://www.dailypress.com/features/history/dp-nws-world-war-i-war-horses-1-20141129-story.html>



Figure 2.4 President Theodore Roosevelt & John Muir
Glacier Peak, Yosemite Valley (1903)
Courtesy of the U.S. National Park Service
<https://www.nps.gov/yose/learn/historyculture/muir-influences.htm>

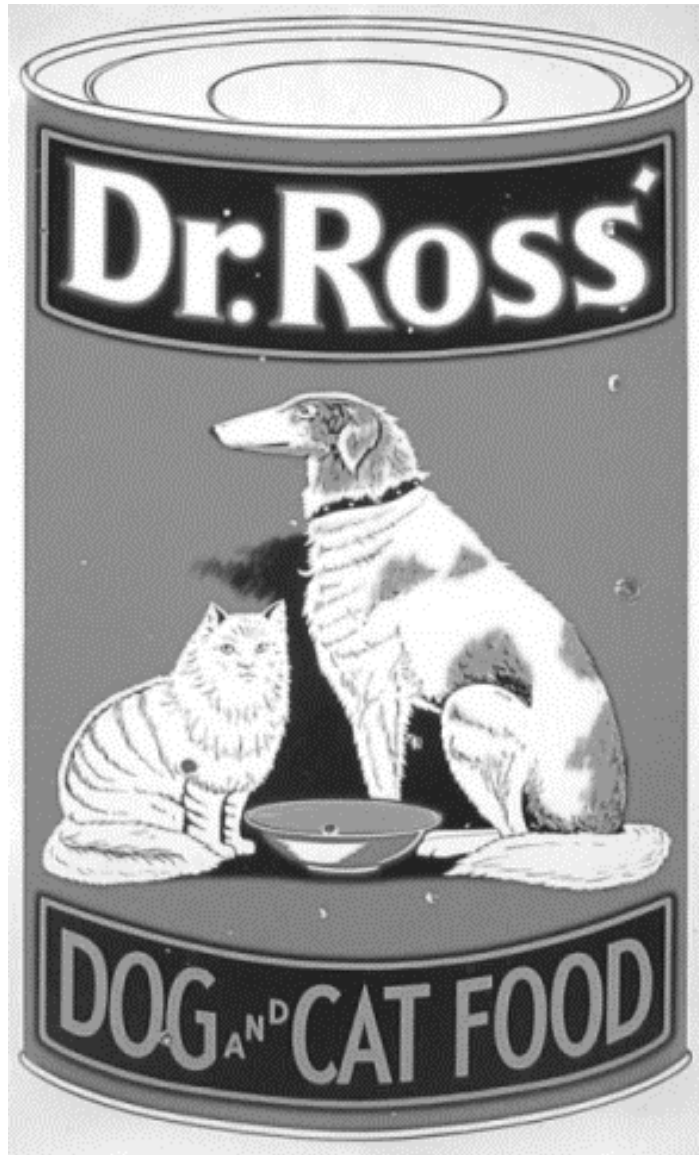


Figure 2.5 Ross Dog and Cat Food Company (1924-1939)
Dr. W. J. Ross, Owner
Courtesy of Advertising Antiques
<http://advertisingantiques.com/dr-ross-dog-and-cat-food-sign/>



Figure 2.6 Robert E. Brislawn, Sr. & Robert M. Denhardt (1973)
Spanish Mustang Registry Annual Meeting in Camino, California
Colonial Spanish Horse Collection, A/323, East Texas Research Center,
Stephen F. Austin State University

CHAPTER 3

Brislawn's narrative, as told to family and friends, combined the traditional Irish immigrant and nineteenth-century western expansion stories that provided him the opportunity to become familiar with the Spanish-type horses. This background history enabled him to identify horses as a cultural touchstone in a rapidly changing world of international wars and western development.

During the years of 1845 to 1849, Ireland suffered a devastating famine due to the widespread destruction of the Irish food staple, the potato. Crop failures, caused by the *Phytophthora infestans*, a deadly fungus, left the farming populace without their main food staple and with little seed potato for the next four spring plantings.¹ **(Figure 3.1)** The blight and subsequent famine known as the "Great Hunger" brought five years of starvation, disease, and death for the Irish people. The famine triggered the first Irish immigration wave to the North American shores, including Robert E. Brislawn's grandparents and other members of the Brislawn family.² Originally from Enniscorthy, County Wexford, Ireland, Séamus Ó'Breasláin, his two brothers, Mathew and Miles, and his future bride, Anastasia Meagher, bought passage on a ship headed to the United

¹Cecil Woodham Smith, *The Great Hunger* (London, UK: New English Library, 1977), 92.

²Neil UíBreasláin, *The Way of an Irish Horseman* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2006), 2.

States in 1845. They survived the rough seas, crowded quarters, poor provisions, and arrived in New York City on May 1, 1846.

Neil UiBreaslain, Brislawn's middle son, published his father's biography, *The Way of an Irish Horseman* in 2006, and he stated that "Séamus and Anastasia Ó'Breasláin, in the new world of the Americas...[settled] on a little homestead farm and [the] stone-rich fertile land of [Boulder] Iowa"³ The young couple produced seven children including Ferdinande (nicknamed Fer), who was Robert Emmett Brislawn's father. The 1860 Federal Census listed Séamus as a farmer.⁴ He did not enlist as a Union soldier when the Civil War occurred (1861-1865), nor was the young family affected significantly by the conflict that devastated the southern states. Living in Iowa, the rebuilding of the nation divided by the war was of little importance to Irish emigrants such as the Brislawns who had faced extreme famine, cruel landlords, and the harsh British government. After Anastasia's death in 1875, Séamus (known then as James) moved the family to Cedar Rapids, Iowa where Fer met his future bride, Elizabeth "Lizzie" Jane McGlade. Séamus died in 1878. That same year, and unable to convince Lizzie to marry him, Fer "joined two of his brothers, James

³UiBreaslain, *The Way of an Irish Horseman*, 3.

⁴U.S. Selected Federal Census, 1850-1880 (Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010), Census Year: 1860; Census Place: Boulder, Linn, Iowa; Archive Collection Number: T1156; Roll: 4; Page: 29; Line: 22; Schedule Type: Agriculture.

and Mat...and others of their relatives,”⁵ and traveled to the then Washington Territory, which received statehood in 1889. He established a homestead close to the tiny town of Sprague, some fifty miles from Spokane in the Washington Territory.

In 1879, members of the McGlade family including Elizabeth left Iowa and moved to Sprague. “Lizzie came looking for Fer...[and] brought all of her own relatives, and many of their friends, along with her.”⁶ They married in 1885 and had five children: Alice, Ferdinand, Anastasia, Robert, and Francis James. In May 1898, just three months after Francis was born, Lizzie died, leaving Fer with the children to raise on his own.⁷ Family members and friends volunteered to foster the children. Robert Emmett Brislawn, born in 1890, spent his early childhood on his Uncle Mat’s cattle and wheat ranch ten miles from Sprague. Indian ponies and Spanish mules were the preferred livestock “when everything moved on horseback, by buggy, by wagon or by train.”⁸ Growing up on the ranch, Brislawn learned to drive a four-horse gang plow in the wheat fields, trained horses for riding or pulling, and developed horsemanship skills that served him later in life. At age eleven, he moved back to Sprague where his father managed

⁵UiBreaslain, *The Way of an Irish Horseman*, 6

⁶UiBreaslain, *The Way of an Irish Horseman*, 6.

⁷Ancestry.com, *U.S. Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current* (Provo, Utah), 2012, accessed February 7, 2018, <http://www.findagrave.com/memorial/44100911>.

⁸UiBreaslain, *The Way of an Irish Horseman*, 19.

the local wheat warehouse. **(Figure 3.2)** Brislawn attended school at St. Joseph's Catholic Convent that provided education to all Sprague children as no public school existed at the time. To supplement the family income, Brislawn worked part-time as a shoe shiner and janitor at Charlie Ivory's Barbershop during the school term and full-time in the summer. In mid-1904, Brislawn attended the Moeler Barber College in Spokane, Washington and returned with his certification to shave and cut men's hair. Mr. Ivory gave him a barber chair and Brislawn "continued shining shoes and washing bathtubs" along with an occasional "customer brave enough to let me shave him."⁹

High school and the barbershop filled his days, but Brislawn fell ill in January of 1911 and spent the entire winter and part of spring in bed. The diagnosis was a respiratory failure, or possibly tuberculosis. Dr. Joseph Bittner, the town physician, prescribed an outdoor occupation as a probable cure. With spring passing into summer, Dr. Bittner took matters into his own hands and sent Brislawn to Mr. John Blackburn, the Chief of the United States Geological Survey stationed at Avery, Idaho. Blackburn needed "a good man," said Dr. Bittner, "with some education, to work as Recorder during the coming season...[you will be] part of his party for the summer," he told his patient.¹⁰ Brislawn joined the survey

⁹UiBreaslain, *The Way of an Irish Horseman*, 9.

¹⁰UiBreaslain, *The Way of an Irish Horseman*, 15

party of ten men and twenty-five horses as the recorder in the summer of 1911, “a genuine tenderfoot...weak as a young sycamore and as white as its insides.”¹¹ Before the survey party trekked into the mountains, however, the experienced packer left the survey party for an easier job driving a hay mower. Blackburn offered the job to Brislawn at fifty dollars a month--ten dollars more than the recorder position. He accepted the offer and with a few lessons from Blackburn and an elderly, seasoned prospector acquaintance of Blackburn, Brislawn packed up all the gear, groceries, and baggage needed for the survey crew. They traveled along the Saint Joe River, skirted the Three Sisters Peaks, and headed into the Clearwater River backcountry on the Montana side of the Bitterroot Mountains.¹² Summertime progressed as the survey trailed deeper into the Bitterroots; Brislawn’s health improved. Returning home to Sprague that autumn, he put away his bedroll, settled into his previous routine of barbershop duties, and completed his last year of high school. After high school graduation in 1912, Brislawn rejoined Blackburn’s survey crew as the full-time teamster because “he knew the horses from on the ground experience.”¹³ The chief

¹¹UiBreaslain, *The Way of an Irish Horseman*, 17.

¹²George Otis Smith, *Annual Report of the Director of the United States Geological Survey to the Secretary of the Interior for the Year Ending the 30th of June 1912* (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, 1912), 103,132, accessed August 10, 2017, <https://pubs.usgs.gov/ar/33/report.pdf>.

¹³Mabel Brislawn, *Spanish Mustangs and Hard Times: I’ve Known Some* (Lexington, KY: Bob Brislawn Memorial Society, 2014), 6.

surveyor, like Brislawn, preferred the “hardy, durable, smooth-riding, sure-footed, faithful, affectionate descendants of the horses brought in by the Spanish conquistadors” as he and his men mapped the rugged backcountry.¹⁴ Blackburn trusted Brislawn to select stock that remained free of health issues during the peak survey months of May to October. From 1912 to 1915, Brislawn traveled and worked with survey crews in California, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Utah.¹⁵

(Figures 3.3 & 3.4)

In the fall of 1915, the Brislawn family, along with other of their Irish friends, moved to northeastern Wyoming near the township of Moorcroft, staked their claims, and started new homesteads.¹⁶ That following spring, and in need of cash funds, Brislawn and his older brother, Ferdinand (Ferdy), rejoined the Geological Survey as they mapped the New Mexico-Mexico border for the United States War Department from 1916 to 1917. The decade-long conflict, known as the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920), involved various political groups and

¹⁴UiBreaslain, *The Way of an Irish Horseman*, 31.

¹⁵Smith, *Annual Report of the Director of the United States Geological Survey to the Secretary of the Interior for the Year Ending the 30th of June 1915* (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, 1915), 127, accessed March 9, 2018, <https://pubs.usgs.gov/ar/36/report.pdf>.

¹⁶U.S. Department of the Interior, *Bureau of Land Management: General Land Office Records*, State of Wyoming Survey 1862, Accession Nr: 819066, August 11, 1921, accessed February 9, 2018, <https://glorerecords.blm.gov/details/patent/default.aspx?accession=819066&docClass=SER&sid=uemb2wn4.mcw>.

figures vying for the leadership and control of Mexico and the revolution evolved into a struggle among rival leaders.¹⁷ Hoping to bring peace to Mexico, the United States government sided with Venustiano Carranza, but this diplomatic move angered his chief opponent, General Francisco Villa. He led his raiders across the border and attacked the U.S. military base at Columbus, New Mexico in March 1916. **(Figure 3.5)** Six American soldiers died, and the United States authorized General John J. Pershing and the U.S. Seventh Cavalry to intervene.¹⁸ **(Figures 3.6 & 3.7)** The attack prompted a “special request” by the U.S. War Department for better topographical maps that brought Blackburn, Cornelius Schnurr, and two other survey crews to Arizona and New Mexico.¹⁹ The work took the entire summer of 1917. Brislawn used Texas and New Mexican bred horses and mules to carry the survey equipment and camping supplies. He noticed similarities to his Washington and Wyoming Indian ponies,

¹⁷Robert C. Overfelt, “Mexican Revolution” *Handbook of Texas Online*, Texas State Historical Association, last modified March 25, 2016, accessed February 19, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/pqmhe>.

¹⁸Smith, *Annual Report of the Director of the United States Geological Survey to the Secretary of the Interior for the Year Ending the 30th of June 1920* (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, 1920), 34-5; Smith notes on pages 34 and 35: The Deming road was an old railway bed with no tracks. “It was this road that Gen. Pershing followed which he pursued into Mexico after Villa’s attack on Columbus,” accessed March 9, 2018, <https://pubs.usgs.gov/ar/41/report.pdf>.

¹⁹Smith, *Annual Report of the Director for the Year Ending the 30th of June 1917* (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, 1917), 101. Smith notes on page 101 that, “The survey of the United States portion of the Perilla quadrangle, lying partly in the Chiricahua National Forest, in Cochise County, Ariz., and Grant County, N. Mex., was completed by J. E. Blackburn and Cornelius Schnurr, the area mapped being of 223 square miles,” accessed February 19, 2017, <https://pubs.usgs.gov/ar/38/report.pdf>.

especially their small stature, toughness, and ability to survive on the Chihuahua desert forage. After several close encounters with Villa's mounted Rurales in the borderlands, the survey parties requested protection from Pershing's mounted troops which they received. The survey teams completed the mapping of 223 square miles of the U.S-Mexican border.²⁰

On the global stage, World War I raged across Europe with the Western Front entrenched in northwest France. The United States entered the war on April 6, 1917. President Woodrow Wilson appointed General Pershing as head of the American Expeditionary Forces.²¹ Pershing invited the survey personnel to enlist as commissioned or non-commissioned officers. Ferdie enlisted immediately as an Army Topographic Engineer officer and departed for France. Brislawn traveled by train to Wyoming where his father, having built a small house on the new homestead, waited for news of his sons and their adventures in New Mexico.²²

Shortly after his return home, the United States Army called again for volunteers as the nation joined the British, French, and Allied forces fighting in

²⁰Brislawn, *Spanish Mustangs and Hard Times: I've Known Some*, 60.

²¹John J. Pershing, "Final Report of General John J. Pershing, U.S.A., Commander-in-Chief, American Expeditionary Forces" (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1919), accessed August 13, 2017, <https://archive.org/details/cu31924027816747>; See also: House doc. 626, 66th Cong. 2d session.

²²Brislawn, *Spanish Mustangs and Hard Times: I've Known Some*, 65.

Europe. On May 20, 1917, Brislawn sailed to France on the *USS Leviathan* as a member of General Pershing's 43rd Engineers, Company C, to rebuild bridges and railroad tracks for the American supply trains. Brislawn stated, "the engineers behind the lines...were the grease on which the skids of war slid forward."²³ Headquartered in the Lorraine where the Western Front was quiet, Brislawn moved "to various locations as needed to bring supplies to the soldiers."²⁴ Teamsters and packers employed horses to move supplies where there were no tracks. Brislawn's horsemanship skills proved valuable during his service in France.

Though the necessity and importance of the horse changed dramatically in World War I, horses still played a substantial role throughout European battlefields. The January 1918 issue of *The American Breeder* quarterly magazine stated, "The demand for horses must be met if we are to win this war...[this] will cut the United States short of horses and mules for agriculture and construction use for years to come."²⁵ The United States shipped surplus domestic and feral horses to the war effort; Brislawn observed a trainload of

²³UiBreaslain, *The Way of An Irish Horseman*, 66; *U.S., World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918*, Ancestry.com, Provo, Utah, 2005, accessed August 10, 2017; The History Committee on Board the Ship, *History of the U.S.S. Leviathan, 1919* (Washington, DC: Brooklyn Eagle Job Department), 84, accessed August 13, 2017, <https://ia801409.us.archive.org/12/items/historyofussleivi00broo/historyofussleivi00broo.pdf>.

²⁴Brislawn, *Spanish Mustangs and Hard Times: I've Known Some*, 69.

²⁵Frank R. Graham and T.W. Morse, eds, *The American Breeder* 11, no. 9 (Kansas City, MO: Graham Publishing Company, 1918), 23.

Indian ponies that came from the Powder River Basin in Wyoming for use as riding and packhorses. If a feral horse proved useless due to injury or just unmanageable, that horse went to slaughter. Brislawn stated, “[horsemeat] was food for the people in many areas” as the war that raged through the countryside destroyed French villages and farms.²⁶ Eighteen months after he enlisted in the Army, the German command admitted defeat. The Armistice, signed on November 11, 1918, ended World War I. Brislawn arrived home in 1919 as a decorated hero in need of a job.

His proficiency as an experienced teamster secured him a position with the Western U.S. Geological Survey Department in 1920 mapping the Northwest and the unsettled parts of Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas, and Utah.²⁷ As he journeyed throughout the western states, his admiration grew for the Spanish type horses used on the pack strings. They endured heavy work over rough terrain, grew fat on grasses that other horses refused, exhibited a strong will to survive, and proved intensely loyal to their masters. He also realized that the “small, tough horses that played a large role in the development

²⁶UíBreaslain, *The Way of an Irish Horseman*, 68.

²⁷Smith, *Annual Report of the Director of the United States Geological Survey to the Secretary of the Interior for the Year Ending the 30th of June 1920* (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, 1920), 105, 117, accessed March 9, 2018, <https://pubs.usgs.gov/ar/41/report.pdf>.

of the West”²⁸ were quickly disappearing from the western ranges. Discussions with family and friends convinced Brislawn that the Spanish type horses needed a sanctuary.²⁹

Brislawn’s father died in 1921, leaving the Wyoming homestead to his three sons. Needing more land for his horses and cattle, Brislawn started buying out neighbors and friends who wanted better-paying jobs and the more modern conveniences of town living.³⁰ By 1925, Brislawn owned 3,000 acres that he named the Cayuse Ranch, but he was still a bachelor. **(Figures 3.8)** Five years later, as Francis, Brislawn’s younger brother and the Crook County census taker, canvassed the scattered homes around Hulett, he met the new school teacher, Genevieve Irwin. She impressed Francis enough that “he thought she might be one lassie that could interest [Robert].”³¹ Francis was right, and the twenty-mile trip from the Cayuse to Hulett became a well-worn trail as Brislawn courted Genevieve. They married on April 9, 1931. Though the Great Depression

²⁸Barbara Rustin, “Bob Brislawn is the Wyoming Kid,” (Sacramento, CA: Spanish Mustang Registry, 1975). Colonial Spanish Horse Collection, A/323, East Texas Research Center, Stephen F. Austin State University.

²⁹UiBreaslain, *The Way of an Irish Horseman*, 106.

³⁰M. P. LeRoy and Viola B. Pugh, “Certificate of the Registrar of the U. S. Land Office at Newcastle, Wyoming,” Patent #819066, August 11, 1921 and Patent #908707, June 12, 1923, accessed February 17, 2018, <https://glorerecords.blm.gov/results/default.aspx?searchCriteria=type=patent|st=WY|cty=011|ln=Brislawn|fn=Robert|mn=E|sp=true|sw=true|sadv=false>

³¹UiBreaslain, *The Way of an Irish Horseman*, 108.

deepened across the nation, the self-sufficient young couple provided for their own needs. They spent that summer together in the Yellowstone National Park with the U.S. Geological Survey where Mrs. Brislawn learned to survey, draw map contours, pack the horses, and set up and break down camp.³² The first of five children, Robert Emmett Brislawn, Jr., arrived in the fall of 1932, Mabel was born in 1934, Neil in 1937, Colleen in 1939, and Francis Shane in 1942.³³

In 1940, Brislawn retired from the geological survey work due to technological advances in surveying equipment, aerial photography, and aerial mapping that replaced the need for teamsters, horses, and mules.³⁴ The western ranges, now surveyed and mapped, developed into modern cities with irrigated agriculture, industrial complexes, and tourist attractions which meant less land for free-roaming, feral horses. After thirty years of travel and survey work, Brislawn stayed home, turning his hand to his family, cattle, and horses. Francis Shane

³²Walter Curran Mendenhall, *Annual Report of the Director of the United States Geological Survey to the Secretary of the Interior for the Year Ending the 30th of June 1932* (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, 1932), 48; Mendenhall stated that “At the request of the National Park Service, the survey of an extension of Yellowstone National Park was begun.” Because the USGS reports cover a fiscal year from June to June, the 1931 summer Yellowstone survey was not reported until 1932, accessed March 9, 2018, <https://pubs.usgs.gov/ar/53/report.pdf>.

³³Ancestry.com, *1940 United States Federal Census* (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012), accessed March 11, 2018, https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?db=1940usfedcen&h=148315369&indiv=try&o_vc=Record:OtherRecord&rhSource=3693.

³⁴Mendenhall, *Annual Report of the Director of the United States Geological Survey to the Secretary of the Interior for the Year Ending the 30th of June 1938* (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, 1938), 142. Accessed March 9, 2018. <https://pubs.usgs.gov/ar/59/report.pdf>.

was nine months old in 1942 when Genevieve died after a brief, sudden illness, leaving Brislawn with the children, the ranch, a small herd of working cow horses, and his retired survey packhorses.³⁵ Living on a ranch with livestock to feed and tend every day did not slow down for death and the family filled their days with ranch work. During the winter months, the older children stayed at St. Joseph's Orphanage in Torrington, Wyoming for school, but this proved difficult, especially with Wyoming's harsh winters. Brislawn's younger brother, Francis, home-schooled his nieces and nephews for two years until they were old enough to ride their horses to a distant country school.³⁶

Brislawn's horses and those he had kept for the survey teams were either geldings or older mares. At that time, he only had one mare, Old Kate, that fit his description of a Spanish-type horse, but no stallions. His oldest daughter, Mabel Brislawn, recalled her father "talking to people who stated that the Spanish horse was being exterminated; that very few, if any were left in the world, [and that] someone ought to do something to preserve these horses."³⁷ The turning point came when Jim Clark, a fellow surveyor, visited the Cayuse Ranch in 1943. The conversation drifted to the horses, and Clark insisted that Brislawn's "knowledge,

³⁵UiBreaslain, *The Way of an Irish Horseman*, 130.

³⁶UiBreaslain, *The Way of an Irish Horseman*, 131.

³⁷Brislawn, *Spanish Mustangs and Hard Times: I've Known Some*, 123-24.

experience, and the ranch-land to run the horses on,” put him in position to preserve the Spanish-type horse.³⁸ Brislawn’s former survey chief, John Blackburn concurred. What happened next was “the almost unavoidable, nearly predestined effort to prevent the willful and assiduous extinction of the Spanish (Indian) Pony.”³⁹ The question he asked himself, “Could full-blooded Spanish horses still be found anywhere?”⁴⁰ Brislawn decided that “It was time for spirited detective work.”⁴¹

With years of horse experience, Brislawn had a firm idea of conformation standards that he believed defined the Spanish-type horse. Ranging in size from 13 to 15 hands in height and weighing between 800 to 1,000 pounds at maturity, Brislawn identified the distinct features that set Spanish-type horses apart from modern breeds.⁴² They were: 1) “A narrow but deep chest that provides for greater lung capacity and rapid cooling ability” which is an important aspect for distance riding; 2) “Long, well-angulated shoulders” that provide a smooth ride, especially at the trot; 3) “Sharp, well-defined withers;” 4) “Short, strong backs;” 5) “A sloping croup (hip) and from the rear view; these horses are “rafter-hipped”

³⁸Brislawn, *Spanish Mustangs and Hard Times: I’ve Known Some*, 124

³⁹UiBreaslain, *The Way of an Irish Horseman*, 139.

⁴⁰UiBreaslain, *The Way of An Irish Horseman*, 139.

⁴¹UiBreaslain, *The Way of an Irish Horseman*, 140.

⁴²Author’s note: A hand is equal to four inches; horse height is measured in a straight line from the ground to the top of the withers (shoulder).

with no distinct crease at the backbone;” 6) “The body is equally balanced;” 7) Elongated musculature as opposed to the “short, bunched musculing characteristic of the American Quarter Horse, Appaloosa, or American Paint Horse;” 8) “A low tail set;” 9) “The chestnuts and ergots are small or non-existent”—these are evolutionary remnants of toes before the hoof became one solid foot; 10) “Heads generally have straight to concave foreheads and a nose that is straight or slightly convex. Heads can vary between long, finely made heads to shorter, deeper ones;” 11) “Teeth meet evenly;” 12) “Nostrils are small and crescent-shaped but will flare wide with exertion or alertness;” and 13) “Ears are small and usually hooked” with abundant ear hair to prevent bugs from reaching the ear canal; and 14) “A long, ground-covering stride.” Two additional and subtle skeletal features are: 15) “Dense cannon bones (lower legs) are nearly round rather than flat;” and 16) “The first cervical vertebra (known as the atlas) has wings that are more lobed rather than semi-circular.”⁴³ **(Figure 3.9)**

The search for mares and stallions that matched these requirements as a Spanish horse began with two Indian mares acquired from the Crow Reservation in Montana in 1943. Two other mares came from New Mexico and one from northern Mexico. Then in the summer of 1945, Brislawn met Monty and Sadie

⁴³Phillip Sponenberg, “Conformation in “North American Colonial Spanish Horse Update” (Blacksburg: Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine, July 2011), accessed March 18, 2017, <http://www.horseoftheamericas.com/conformation.htm>. See also: Brislawn, *Spanish Mustangs and Hard Times: I’ve Known Some*, 158.

Holbrook who were trailing a small band of horses down the “D” road that ran in front of the Cayuse Ranch. As itinerant horse traders, the Holbrooks traveled between Utah, Montana, and Canada catching, selling, and buying horses.⁴⁴ The horses that day were captured “from the Green River Canyon badlands and along the Book Cliffs [in Utah]. Only the toughest horses and the hardest folks ever made their way into and out of the Book Cliffs.”⁴⁵ **(Figure 3.10)** Brislawn bought a young grullo stallion and named him Buckshot.⁴⁶ Two years later, Brislawn’s older brother, Ferdie purchased a full-brother to Buckshot from the Holbrooks and named him Ute.⁴⁷ These two stallions, Buckshot and Ute, were the first SMR foundation stallions. Both were sired by Holbrook’s Book Cliffs stallion, Monty, and out of a Ute Indian Reservation mare. **(Figures 3.11 & 3.12)**

⁴⁴Monty and Sadie Holbrook did not have a permanent address, although at one time, according to Jeff Edwards, they lived in Craig, Colorado. The author researched several sources but was unable to find any information about the Holbrook family beyond their being mentioned by Mabel Brislawn in *Spanish Mustangs and Hard Times*, by Neil UiBreaslain in *The Way of an Irish Horseman*, and *Horse of the Americas Newsletters* by Jeff Edwards.

⁴⁵UiBreaslain, *The Way of an Irish Horseman*, 141; According to the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance (SUWA), “Between Price, Utah and Grand Junction, Colorado are miles of barren, windswept terrain and the thousand-foot-high wall of the Book Cliffs that winds for 250 miles across Utah and Colorado. It is the longest continuous escarpment in the world. Near the town of Green River, Utah, a second escarpment, the Roan Cliffs, rise above the Book Cliffs, and together the two climb a vertical mile above the desert. From a distance, the double rampart appears to be a smooth, unbroken wall, but on closer inspection, it resolves into a complicated network of spurs, ridgelines, and canyons.” Small bands of horses resided in the region until the mid-twentieth century; Monty Holbrook captured Monty, the sire of Buckshot and Ute, from the Book Cliffs, accessed July 18, 2017, <https://suwa.org/multimedia/map/book-cliffsdesolation-canyon-region/>.

⁴⁶Author’s Note: The grullo horse color resembles the color of gunpowder, although the color may also be described as “mouse gray.”

⁴⁷UiBreaslain, *The Way of an Irish Horseman*, 141.

The seven horses formed the nucleus of the original Cayuse Ranch herd. Brislawn traveled extensively throughout the western ranges searching remote areas for Spanish-type horses, adding only thirteen to the herd by 1949. He knew his task was difficult but believed that success was possible with a little luck and a lot of faith. Ferdy joined the mission but remained in the background while Brislawn did the traveling and talking to anyone who had a lead or a location of Spanish-type horses. The Brislawn brothers also shared their vision with a small group of horsemen and women who wanted to help with the preservation effort. They followed the example of Spanish horse organizations in Chile (1893), Argentina (1923), and Brazil (1932) “whose purpose was to preserve the descendants of the mounts that conquistadors rode.”⁴⁸ Brislawn’s loosely formed association was incorporated in 1957, as the Spanish Mustang Registry (SMR) under Wyoming state laws. Brislawn, Ferdy, his eldest son, Emmett, and Dr. Lawrence P. Richards were the first directors and officers.⁴⁹ When Brislawn started numbering horses in June 1957, Buckshot received the #1 number; his brother, Ute was #2. Seventy horses were registered by 1958 with the Brislawn horses receiving the first twenty numbers. The first tally or studbook, published in

⁴⁸Don Worcester, *The Spanish Mustang: From the Plains of Andalusia to the Prairies of Texas* (El Paso: University of Texas Press, 1986), 77.

⁴⁹Spanish Mustang Registry, *Certificate of Incorporation 1980-000073811*, Wyoming Compiled Statutes, 1945, Section 44-101, 1957. Note: Dr. Lawrence P. Richards was a professor of Zoology at the University of Illinois in 1957. He was a regular correspondent with Brislawn and assisted Brislawn with the legalities and paperwork for incorporation.

1969, listed 218 horses.⁵⁰ **(Figure 3.13)** Brislawn's goal to restore and preserve the Spanish horse became a solid reality rather than a dream.

As the first president and the official SMR ambassador, Brislawn answered "400-450 letters of inquiry"⁵¹ every month, wrote articles, and engaged in public speaking forums. He was a plain-spoken, yet charismatic man, and according to daughter Mabel Brislawn, her father had the "Irish gift-of-the-gab."⁵² Answering letters, writing his memoirs, and operating the Cayuse Ranch, however, did not allow Brislawn the traveling time he enjoyed. In the summer of 1969, he resigned as president of SMR. By personal request, his oldest son, Emmett was elected as the new president and assumed complete management of the Cayuse Ranch.

Brislawn cited health reasons and a desire for milder climate as his reasons for the change. The Cayuse Ranch lost fifty horses in a sudden, raging blizzard during the winter of 1969 which was a devastating setback to the breeding program. A fellow Spanish Mustang horseman, Jeff Edwards of Porterville, California offered his ranch as a haven with milder winters. Brislawn

⁵⁰Robert E. Brislawn, Sr. and Kitty UiBreaslain, *Spanish Mustang Registry Tally Book, 1957-1969* (Oshoto: Wyoming, 1969), 20.

⁵¹Brislawn, *Spanish Mustangs and Hard Times*, 145.

⁵²Brislawn, *Spanish Mustangs and Hard Times*, 58.

accepted, and by 1971, a group of fourteen horses--two stallions and twelve mares grazed on California's rolling hills. **(Figure 3.14)**

When the U.S. Department of Agriculture recognized Brislawn as the founder of the Spanish Barb Mustang horse in 1972,⁵³ he told Edwards that he “was through with the research and the letter writing,” but he was always willing to show the horses to visitors and school groups. Brislawn also continued his search for horses throughout the western states until 1974, when he retired at age eighty-five. His intense passion for validating the purity of his Spanish horses and for educating anyone willing to learn kept Brislawn active.⁵⁴ Although California's climate was good for the horses, Brislawn missed his family and the ranch and returned to Wyoming in 1975.⁵⁵ He still enjoyed traveling, but family or friends chauffeured him to various destinations and meetings. Brislawn made one last visit to Oklahoma in the spring of 1978, but the next harsh Wyoming winter was his last. He died on January 6, 1979. His life-long vocation to preserve a “historical monument to our nation's past,” had been accomplished.⁵⁶

⁵³M.E. Ensminger, U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Horsemanship and Horse Care*, Agricultural Research Service, Bulletin #353 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, September 1972), 49-50, accessed September 28, 2017, <https://naldc.nal.usda.gov/download/CAT73369258/PDF>.

⁵⁴Brislawn, *Spanish Mustangs and Hard Times: I've Known Some*, 173.

⁵⁵Jeff Edwards, *Horse of the Americas Newsletter* 13 (October 1975), 1; Colonial Spanish Horse Collection, A/323, East Texas Research Center, Stephen F. Austin State University.

⁵⁶Robert E. Brislawn, Sr., and Scott Ratliff, Quoted from the online article, “Robert Brislawn, Mr. Mustang,” Wyoming Cowboy Hall of Fame, 2016, accessed March 7, 2018, <http://www.wyomingcowboyhalloffame.com/inductees/2016-inductees/brislawn-robert-bob/>.

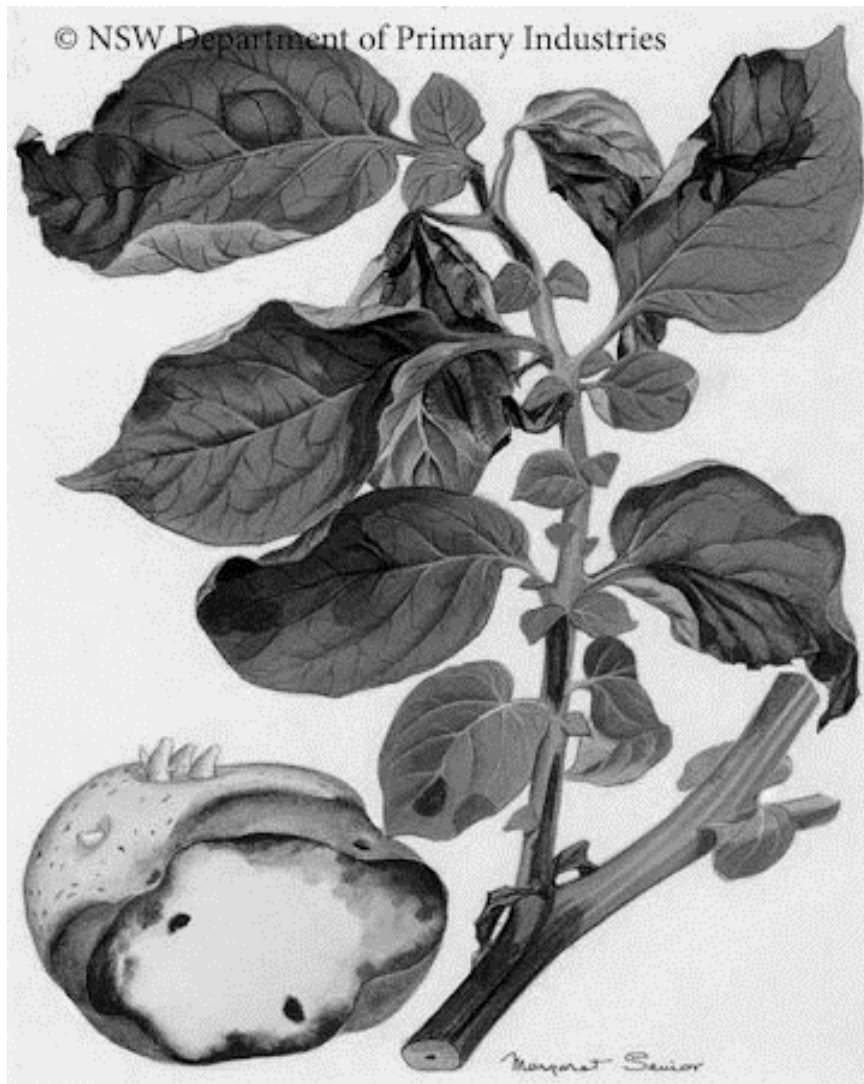


Figure 3.1 Potato Blight

Phytophthora infestans

Original illustration by Margaret Senior

<https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/about-us/services/collections/scientific-illustrations/senior/potatoes/late-blight-potato>



Figure 3.2 General View of Sprague, Washington, (1887) Postcard
Photograph by L. Samuel
Courtesy of Old Imprints.com; Portland, Oregon
<http://www.oldimprints.com>



Figure 3.3 USGS Survey Crew; Bob Brislawn at the rear (1917)
Colonial Spanish Horse Collection, A/323, East Texas Research Center,
Stephen F. Austin State University



Figure 3.4 Bob Brislawn leading the Survey pack horses (1917)
Colonial Spanish Horse Collection, A/323, East Texas Research Center,
Stephen F. Austin State University



Figure 3.5 General Francisco (Pancho) Villa
Photograph by D. W. Hoffman (1912), Postcard,
The Getty Research Institute, 89. R.46
<http://blogs.getty.edu/iris/faces-of-the-mexican-revolution/>



Figure 3.6 General Pershing crossing the Rio Grande into Mexico (1916)
Mexican Border Campaign
Courtesy of the U.S. Army Military History Institute
https://history.army.mil/news/2015/150200a_mexicanWar.html



Figure 3.7 *New York Tribune* (May 8, 1916)
 Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers.
 Library of Congress, Washington D.C.
<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030214/1916-05-08/ed-1/seq-1/>



Figure 3.8 The Cayuse Ranch (2014)
 Courtesy of Kate Taylor & Spanish Mustang Registry



Figure 3.9 Conformation Points of a Colonial Spanish Horse (2010)
Building A Mystery, SMR-3406, HOA-1013, AIHR O-3395
Victoria Lynn, Owner
Courtesy of Vickie Ives



Figure 3.10 The Book Cliffs and the Roan Cliffs above, Utah
Courtesy of the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance
<http://www.suwa.org>

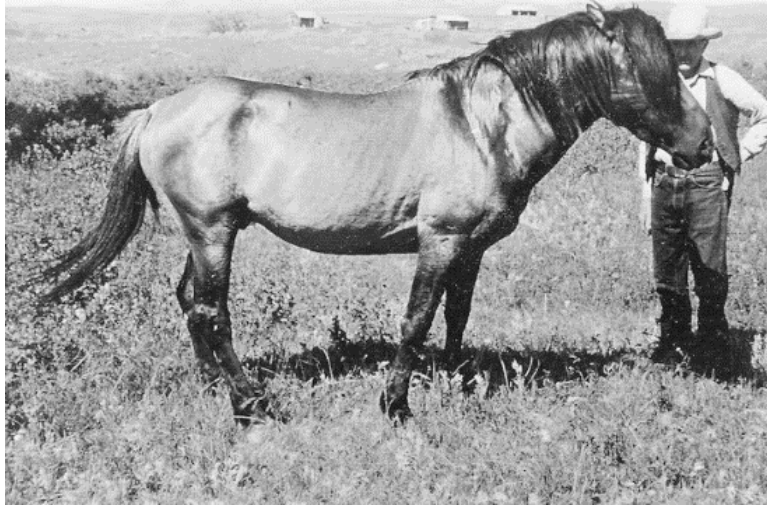


Figure 3.11 Buckshot, SMR-1 with Robert E. Brislawn, Sr.
Colonial Spanish Horse Collection, A/323, East Texas Research Center,
Stephen F. Austin State University

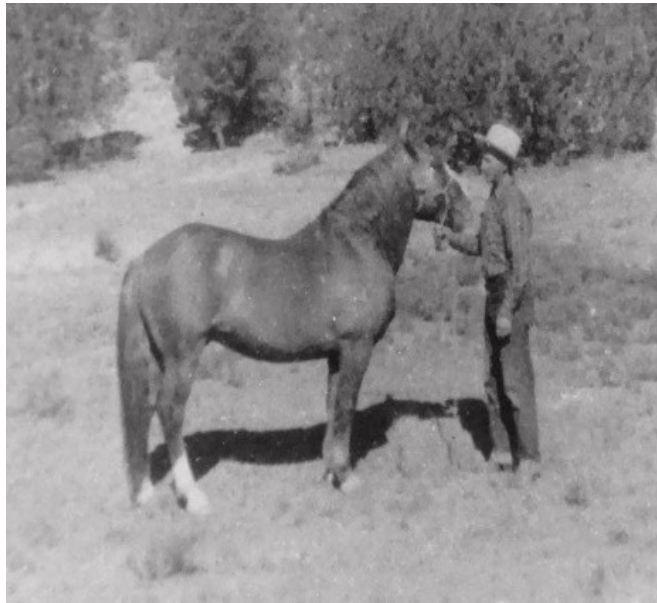


Figure 3.12 Ute, SMR-2 with Ferdinand Brislawn
Colonial Spanish Horse Collection, A/323, East Texas Research Center,
Stephen F. Austin State University



Figure 3.13 SMR Tally Book; 1969
Colonial Spanish Horse Collection, A/323, East Texas Research Center,
Stephen F. Austin State University



Figure 3.14 Jeff Edwards, Wild Horse Research Ranch, Porterville, California Colonial Spanish Horse Collection, A/323, East Texas Research Center, Stephen F. Austin State University

CHAPTER 4

As Brislawn looked for horses that fit his Spanish model, he met other horsemen like himself who owned small bands of Spanish-type horses. One strong, influential voice among Brislawn's circle of preservationists was Gilbert Jones. Although sixteen years younger than Brislawn, Jones grew up in West Texas where cowboys, cattle, and mustang horses were part of his youth. Aware of the technological and societal changes throughout the United States in the twentieth century, Brislawn and Jones joined forces to preserve and promote their Spanish-type horses. Jones's friendship and guidance strengthened Brislawn's resolve despite disappointments, a constant shortage of funds, and disparagement from other equestrian groups.¹

Although Brislawn had limited success in his early attempts to identify and obtain notable examples of what he considered the correct Spanish-type horse, it was only after his association with Gilbert Jones, that the preservation of Spanish-type horses flourished. The creation of the Spanish Mustang Registry (SMR) in 1957 and its initial success was due in part to their friendship. However, Brislawn and Jones also utilized well-established techniques and guidelines for the identification and recording of specific horses in order to create a breed standard and thus provide legitimacy for their quest.

¹Neil UíBreaslain, *The Way of an Irish Horseman* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2006),147.

The two men met through a mutual friend, Ilo Belsky of Eli, Nebraska. Correspondence between the three men introduced Brislawn to Jones in 1955. Brislawn reiterated Belsky's suggestion that he (Brislawn) and Jones needed to set up a meeting and discuss their similar goals of horse preservation. In September 1956, Brislawn traveled to Tijeras, New Mexico where Jones resided at that time. Brislawn, with Belsky as a reference, inspected the Jones horses and declared them excellent specimens of Spanish-type horses. The addition of the Jones horses was a positive reinforcement for the preservation effort.

Brislawn's inspection procedure started with an overall first look at each horse. He checked for balance from the length of the neck, the back, and hindquarters with long, smooth muscling. A short-backed horse with a deep, v-shaped chest in the front and a low set tail in the rear was part of his criteria. Brislawn then evaluated each animal with a hands-on approach and assessed the temperament—a flighty or anxious attitude was considered a fault. He measured height and weight, the size and shape of the head, the set of the eyes—were they broad or narrowly set? He felt each leg, looking for dense, rounded lower leg bone (cannon bone). Hooves were round and upright with a good heel as opposed to a flat-footed horse. Brislawn also judged the horse's movement, looking for a fast walk and a ground-covering stride at a faster pace.²

²Barbara Rustin, "Spanish Mustang, Spanish Barb, Indian Horse, Are They All the Same?" Unpublished article; Colonial Spanish Horse Collection, A/323, East Texas Research Center, Stephen F. Austin State University.

The two men became good friends—Brislawn rented a house in Tijeras, enrolled his two young children, Shane and Colleen, in school, and resided there for eighteen months. **(Figure 4.1)** With assistance from Bertha Jones, who cared for her children as well as Shane and Colleen, Brislawn and Jones traveled throughout New Mexico, the borderlands of South Texas, and into northern Mexico looking at and buying a few horses that fit their ideal of a Spanish-type horse from 1956 to 1957. The two men had a common goal and worked in tandem to preserve their horses and enlarge their breeding stock pool. The search for horses continued whenever a telephone call or letter mentioned horses that might be eligible for registration. During this time, Belsky suggested that a registry was needed to record the bloodlines of their Spanish-type horses for future generations. Brislawn and Jones agreed and, as stated previously, the Spanish Mustang Registry (SMR) formalized as a legal corporation in 1957.³

One of the first calls came from Weldon McKinley, owner of the Romero Ranch in Las Lunas, New Mexico. McKinley's band was authenticated through breeding records when the ranch belonged to the Delferio Romero family. The Romero ranch "was an original Spanish land grant awarded to the Romero family and later re-purchased by their descendants when New Mexico became a state in 1848."⁴ The purchase agreement included the condition that the new owners,

³Spanish Mustang Registry, *Certificate of Incorporation* 000073811, State of Wyoming, Section 44-001, 1957.

⁴Fran Lynghaug, *The Official Horse Breeds Standards Guide: The Complete Guide to the Standards of All Equine Breeds Associations* (Minneapolis, MN: Voyageur Press, 2009), 109-110.

Weldon and Margaret McKinley, protect the remaining Romero horses. The elderly Señor Delferio Romero was particularly proud that his horses, brought to the ranch in 1826, were straight Spanish with no outcross breeding. SMR accepted the McKinley-Romero horses in 1962.⁵ **(Figure 4.2)**

In 1969, Brislawn and Jones traveled to Nebraska and inspected Belsky's thirty head of working ranch horses. Belsky owned the Phantom Valley Ranch, located north of Eli, Nebraska. Brislawn approved the entire herd for registration with SMR. The Belsky strain of horses "came up from Texas trail to that country in 1885."⁶ Belsky called them "Spanish Barbs"⁷ and bred for conformation and a smooth gait like the Spanish Jinete horse.⁸ **(Figure 4.3)** The three small bands (Jones, McKinley, and Belsky) broadened the genetic pool accessible to other interested Spanish horse breeders.

While Brislawn worked on the newly incorporated registry, back in New Mexico, Jones encountered problems with horse theft, horses dying after ingesting locoweed, and a five-year drought that raised feed and hay prices. Born in Oklahoma, Jones decided to return to his home state. He purchased "Medicine

⁵Susan E. Field, "The Spanish Mustang," *Western Horseman* 32, no. 10 (October 1967): 83.

⁶Brislawn, *Spanish Mustangs and Hard Times: I've Known Some*, 167

⁷Jones, "The History of Medicine Spring Mustangs."

⁸Robert M. Denhardt, *The Horse of the Americas* (1947; repr., Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1975), 26-27; "These horses were bred in Andalusia and were the products of seven hundred years of crosses of the Moorish Barb on native Iberian stock. They were light, clean-legged horses...with a smooth gait [that was ideal for travel.]"

Spring Ranch, located in the Kiamichi Mountains of southeast Oklahoma and moved there in the spring of 1958.”⁹ The property bordered on one and a half million acres of timber and pasture land open to grazing livestock by permit.¹⁰ The ranch had a year-round, running spring whose waters were medicinal according to Jones’s Choctaw and Cherokee neighbors. **(Figure 4.4)** He also discovered their horses—bred from horses brought from the southeastern United States in the 1800s. When Jones settled into Medicine Spring Ranch, both the people and their horses had dwindled in numbers. He decided the horses should also be saved, and their bloodlines perpetuated for the future.

Jones’s first purchase was a young, outstanding stallion named Chief Kiamichi, aka ‘Rooster’ from the Choctaw Locke family. In a letter to Brislawn, Jones described the horses and their history. He asked Brislawn to come and inspect the Choctaw horses. When Brislawn and his son, Emmett, arrived in 1959, they purchased another stallion, Choctaw, who traveled with Emmett back to the Cayuse Ranch in Wyoming that same year. Brislawn and Jones purchased jointly a second Choctaw stallion, Chief Pushmataha. After one breeding season with the Jones mares, Brislawn transported the stallion to Utah.¹¹

⁹Jones, “The History of Medicine Spring Mustangs.”

¹⁰Taylor Grazing Act, Bureau of Land Management, United States Department of the Interior, 43 USC 315.

¹¹Jones, “The History of Medicine Spring Mustangs,” At the time of Choctaw’s purchase, there were only oral records and none that list his breeding or ownership. Chief Pushmataha was bred from stock owned by the La Flores and Self families, both of Choctaw descent.

As stated previously, after the loss of fifty horses in the winter of 1969, Brislawn divided the herd and sent a breeding group to a warmer climate in 1971. Through the invitation of fellow horseman, Jeff Edwards, Brislawn and the horses moved to Edward's ranch in Porterville, California. Edwards also convinced Brislawn to start a registry that was more inclusive than SMR. With Robert M. Denhardt's permission, the two horsemen chartered the Horse of the Americas Registry (HOA)¹² as an umbrella organization to "allow [more] horses possessing Barb blood to be registered in a category to which they fit...[registration] is determined from pictures, measurements, and physical characteristics."¹³ Under Brislawn's leadership, they developed six basic Spanish-type horses eligible for inclusion.¹⁴

Although Brislawn had a larger public following than Jones, both men had embarked upon their preservation goals with a determination to succeed.¹⁵ In

¹²Bob Brislawn and Jeff Edwards, *Horse of the Americas Newsletter* 12 (August 1975), 1; Colonial Spanish Horse Collection, A/323, East Texas Research Center, Stephen F. Austin State University.

¹³Robert E. Brislawn and Jeff Edwards, "The Horse of the Americas Registry: Registry Instructions" (Porterville, CA: 1975), 1; Colonial Spanish Horse Collection, A/323, East Texas Research Center, Stephen F. Austin State University.

¹⁴Brislawn and Edwards, "Registry Instructions." The six categories are: Spanish Barb Horse, Cayuse Indian Pony, Spanish Medicine Hat, Spanish War Bonnet, Tobiano Medicine Hat, and Tobiano War Bonnet; Colonial Spanish Horse Collection, A/323, East Texas Research Center, Stephen F. Austin State University.

¹⁵Featured in several issues of *Western Horseman*, *Horse and Rider* as well as *National Geographic*, *Life*, *Chicago Tribune*, various other newspapers, Spanish Mustang Registry publications, and *Horse of the Americas Newsletters*, Brislawn used any resource that brought attention to the Spanish Mustangs. Brislawn and his horse, San Domingo, SMR-4, were the main characters in Marguerite Henry's book, *San Domingo, The Medicine Hat Stallion*.

1972, the U.S. Department of Agriculture recognized Brislawn as the founder of the Spanish Barb Mustang Horse.¹⁶ This recognition gave the breed validity but also created a tiny faction within SMR that split with the parent group. When SMR incorporated in 1957, one member, Susan Banner Field-Paulton, believed that SMR needed to limit registrations to horses that fit one body type, impose strict registration standards, encourage “careful selective breeding” of horses, and replace the word ‘Mustang’ with ‘Barb.’¹⁷ Dissatisfied and unable to convince Brislawn of her ideas, she left SMR in 1972 and started the Spanish Barb Breeders Association (SBBA). Field-Paulton, an experienced horsewoman, partnered with Peg Cash, who handled the finances, publicity material, and historical research. Field-Paulton and Cash had been involved with SMR but “desired to carry the goal one step further [and] restore the horse closer to the original [Spanish] characteristics.”¹⁸ Only five bloodlines were recognized in the first quarter century of the SBBA registry: the Belsky from Nebraska; the McKinley-Romero from New Mexico; the Coche Two; the A-Ka-Wi; and the Sioux Chief (Sun), first registered with SMR. In 2005, the Wilbur-Cruce horses from

¹⁶M. Eugene Ensminger, “*Horsemanship and Horse Care*,” Bulletin 353, U.S. Department of Agriculture (Washington, DC, 1972), accessed March 18, 2018, <https://ia800800.us.archive.org/23/items/CAT87210211/CAT87210211.pdf>.

¹⁷Silke Schneider, *Arizona’s Spanish Barbs: The Story of the Wilbur-Cruce Horses* (Denver, CO: Outskirts Press, Inc., 2007), 71.

¹⁸Jean Walsh, “SBBA History & Horses,” in *Spanish Barb Horse Association Newsletter* (Summer 2013): 1; Colonial Spanish Horse Collection, A/323, East Texas Research Center, Stephen F. Austin State University.

Arivaca, Arizona became the sixth foundation strain of SBBA.¹⁹

In 2010, the board of directors changed the organization's name to Spanish Barb Horse Association (SBHA) to reflect the larger umbrella of horse owners who did not operate breeding farms. Due to limited genetic diversity, SBHA culls offspring that do not meet its breed standards. Registration of horses from the other Spanish horse groups depends upon bloodlines and a physical, hands-on inspection of each horse. These requirements are limiting in their scope and expansion as a registry for all Spanish-type horses.

At the 1973 annual meeting, Jones was elected president of SMR. **(Figure 4.6)** Favorable publicity and public interest in Spanish Mustangs increased the membership numbers across the United States, and the registry flourished as breeding stock produced more foals each year eligible for registration. Brislawn personally consulted with horse owners when asked to pair a particular stallion and mare.²⁰ Ranchers either traded their stallions or sent the mares to different stallions to diversify their bloodlines. Horse shows, endurance races, competitive trail rides, parades, and other equine events gave “breeders a chance to bring

¹⁹Schneider, *Arizona's Spanish Barbs*, 4; See: Eva Antonia Wilbur-Cruce, *A Beautiful, Cruel Country*. The Wilbur-Cruce horses were documented as a closed group of Spanish horses with no outside breeding when they were removed from the Wilbur-Cruce Ranch in 1990. The horses descended from stock brought to Arizona by Juan Sepulvada and Padre Eusebio Kino of the Mission Dolores, Pimería Alta. The Wilbur-Cruce Ranch is now part of the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge in Arizona.

²⁰Brislawn, *Spanish Mustangs and Hard Times*, 159.

these rare horses before the public.”²¹

In June 1978, Jones hosted a gathering of Spanish Mustang enthusiasts at Medicine Spring Ranch. **(Figure 4.7)** The occasion brought SMR members together for three days of reunion, riding, business, and horse trading. Brislawn, now eighty-eight years of age, came down from Wyoming to inspect horses. The meeting did not have a peaceful ending as a disagreement, fueled by hot tempers under the influence of alcohol, arose between Brislawn and Jones over Jones’s buckskin tobiano stallion, Chief Kiamichi. **(Figure 4.5)** According to Mrs. Leana Westergaard, the argument ensued when Jones refused Brislawn’s request to take the stallion back to Wyoming. The heated discussion echoed through camp with the threat of violence as both men hurled insults at each other. Calmer, less intoxicated folks managed finally to separate the combatants, but the former camaraderie and unity between Jones and Brislawn dissipated.²²

That following day, Jones resigned as the SMR president and decided to form a separate registry. In July 1978, he incorporated the Southwest Spanish Mustang Association (SSMA) based out of Finley, Oklahoma and in direct competition with SMR.²³ With an Oklahoma base, SSMA drew new members

²¹Field, “The Spanish Mustang,” *Western Horseman* 32, no. 10 (October 1967), 83.

²²Leana Westergaard, Oral interview with the author, September 24, 2017, Colonial Spanish Horse Collection, A/323, East Texas Research Center, Stephen F. Austin State University.

²³Southwest Spanish Mustang Association, *Certificate of Incorporation 97063*, State of Oklahoma, Statue 53-8-1 to 53-8-99, 1978.

and registrations from Jones's Choctaw and Cherokee neighbors and their horses.

Jones continued his preservation and breeding efforts for another twenty-one years with horses acquired from his Choctaw and Cherokee neighbors, the Wilbur-Cruce Ranch horses from Arizona, and a few feral horses from the Oregon, Nevada, and Wyoming Horse Management Areas (HMA) maintained by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management. He sponsored bi-annual meetings at Medicine Spring Ranch where SSMA members camped for the weekend, competed in gymkhanas or enjoyed trail riding through the Kiamichi Mountains.²⁴ Jones died in 2000 at the age of ninety-four; his long-time friend and SSMA vice-president, Bryant Rickman of Soper, Oklahoma inherited all of Jones's horses.

(Figure 4.8) Under Rickman's leadership, the SSMA registered Choctaw horses received the designation of the Oklahoma Heritage Horse.²⁵ Recognized as a strain of Colonial Spanish Horse (CSH), the Choctaw horses acquired protected status from the State of Oklahoma and The Livestock Conservancy (TLC), a United States institution dedicated to the preservation of American heritage livestock.

In 1979, SMR celebrated twenty-two years as an organization and

²⁴*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. s. v. "Gymkhanas" are equestrian day events comprising races and other competitions on horseback for children and adults.

²⁵Oklahoma Concurrent Resolution No. 34, *Recognition of the Oklahoma Colonial Spanish Horse as the Official Heritage Horse of Oklahoma*, for the Year Ending 5th of March, 2014, 54th Legislature, 2nd session, accessed February 11, 2018, http://www.southwestspanishmustangassociation.com/OK_Heritage_Horse.html

continued to attract a younger generation of horse owners and breeders who carried Brislawn's legacy into the future. But, another registry with a broader range of registration requirements added another facet to the Spanish horse preservation in 1979.

Nanci Falley and Leana Westergaard had attended the SMR meeting in Oklahoma when Brislawn and Jones feuded. After the dust settled and the meeting concluded, the two women decided that their association with SMR had ended. On the way back to Texas, Westergaard mentioned that a tiny registry in Arizona known as the American Indian Horse Registry (AIHR) was for sale.

Established originally in 1961, the American Indian Horse Registry (AIHR) collected, recorded, and preserved the pedigrees of American Indian Horses as an alternative for Native American horses not eligible for inclusion in the Spanish Mustang Registry. First organized by Frank Green of California, as president and registrar, Green emphasized the Navajo, Ute, Blackfoot, and other tribal horses. He assigned those horses with an O number (Original). Green died in 1967 and Geraldine and Larry Kluth of Apache Junction, Arizona purchased the registry from Green's estate in 1968.²⁶ The Kluth's incorporated AIHR with the State of Arizona that same year.²⁷ They added the half-bred (AA) and cross-bred/modern (M) divisions to encourage increased membership and registration of horses.

²⁶Nanci Falley, email letter to the author, March 16, 2018, Colonial Spanish Horse Collection, A/323, East Texas Research Center, Stephen F. Austin State University.

²⁷American Indian Horse Registry, *Certificate of Incorporation* 00725036, State of Arizona, January 19, 1968.

Kluth died in 1978, and his widow put the registry up for sale. In 1979, Falley became the sole owner.²⁸ She added the (A) division which recognizes BLM horses and eligible horses of unknown pedigree and the (P) division for ponies. The O division remained, and any horse registered with SMR, SSMA, SBHA, (and later, Horse of the Americas, Inc. (HOA) and American Heritage Horse Association (AHHA) is eligible for inclusion as an Original or purebred Spanish horse. Although small, the registry is viable with the head office located at Rancho San Francisco near Lockhart, Texas.

After Brislawn's death in 1979, Edwards continued with the HOA breeding farm until 1983 when a fellow horseman, Rick Inman, purchased the property and the horses. Inman continued the breeding, selling, and registration of horses under the HOA banner, while Edwards published the newsletter, answered letters, and traveled to speaking engagements.²⁹ In July 1988 due to a divorce settlement, Inman sold the farm property but kept the horses. Edwards published the final HOA newsletter in 1991 and Inman discontinued the HOA registry.

In 1999, John Fusco, a successful Hollywood screenwriter, horseman, and Spanish Mustang enthusiast, wrote the screenplay for *Spirit, Stallion of the*

²⁸Nanci Falley, email letter to the author, March 16, 2018.

²⁹Jeff Edwards and Rick Inman, *Horse of the Americas Newsletter* 38 (January 1983), Colonial Spanish Horse Collection, A/323, East Texas Research Center, Stephen F. Austin State University.

Cimarron, an animated feature film and a 2003 Academy Award nominee.³⁰

While researching the film, Fusco visited Karma Farms of Marshall, Texas and met with Vickie Ives and this author. Several hours of discussion ensued along with a short trail ride on the farm's string of riding horses, all Colonial Spanish horses. Fusco's research assisted with the development of the film as well as the screenplay for another well-received adventure/horse movie, *Hidalgo*, starring Viggo Mortensen. Fusco's interest led him back to California where he negotiated and purchased the registry rights, the HOA archive from Edwards and Inman, and Inman's remaining Spanish Mustang horses—eight mares and one stallion. Fusco planned to restore the registry but was unable to devote the time needed. He sent the horses and all the documentation to Ives with her promise to restart the registry. With assistance by this author, Tom and Della Norush of Attica, Indiana, and Ives, the new Horse of the Americas Registry filed for incorporation in Harrison County, Texas, September 13, 2000.³¹ HOA also joined TLC and petitioned the organization to recognize the Spanish Mustang as a heritage breed. This recognition occurred in 2002. The TLC directors also changed the name designation to Colonial Spanish Horse (CSH). Due to the small number of registered horses, the Conservancy considers the CSH lineages

³⁰*Spirit, Stallion of the Cimarron*, directed by Kelly Asbury and Lorna Cook, written by John Fusco and Michael Lucker (Dreamworks Animation, 2002), accessed March 18, 2018, <http://www.imdb.com>

³¹Horse of the Americas, *Certificate of Incorporation 01597442*, State of Texas, September 13, 2000.

as a critical but viable equine family.

First established in 1977 as the American Minor Breeds Conservancy, but now known as The Livestock Conservancy (TLC), this dedicated group of professionals works, “to protect over 150 breeds of livestock and poultry from extinction...protect genetic diversity in agriculture...and protect heritage breeds for the security of [the] agricultural system.”³² The TLC has aided other groups in their progress to educate the public about heritage breeds. An annual census with each registry records data on stallions, mares, foals, and geldings. TLC links the various CSH entities and continually urges collaboration among the several registries to sustain the breed. With favorable publicity and the proliferation of CSH information available through the Internet, other equine owners across the globe purchased and transported their CS Horses to distant homes. As of 2018, Colonial Spanish Horses reside in England, Scotland, Ireland, Denmark, France, Austria, Germany, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and Australia.³³

The European Spanish Mustang Society (ESMS) was founded in 2009 by a few European breeders with a desire to become more inclusive of other Spanish Mustang strains not accepted by the long-established, original registry, SMR. A second important reason was the acceptance of the breed by the United

³²Livestock Breed Conservancy, “Mission Statement,” accessed March 30, 2018, <https://livestockconservancy.org/index.php/about/internal/mission>.

³³Martine Lettau, “A Brief History of the European Spanish Mustang Society,” email letter to the author, March 18, 2018, Colonial Spanish Horse Collection, A/323, East Texas Research Center, Stephen F. Austin State University.

Kingdom Department of Fisheries and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) thereby making possible a breed specific equine passport within Europe. The Society had to show seventeen breeding stallions and fifty mares registered in the ESMS stud book to qualify for breed acceptance, but these numbers were not achievable, and to this day, the number of breeding stallions in the UK is still only three, with less than ten in Europe overall. ESMS is in association with HOA, and horses registered with ESMS automatically receive registration with HOA, thereby insuring that bloodlines are recorded in the country of breed origin. The ESMS changed in 2009 from a membership society to a stud book record for the registration of European bred Spanish Mustangs. With only three minimally active breeders in Europe currently, initial plans are on hold until such a time when more interested breeders emerge to support a European Society for this critically rare breed.³⁴ **(Figure 4.8)**

³⁴Martine Lettau, "A Brief History of the European Spanish Mustang Society."

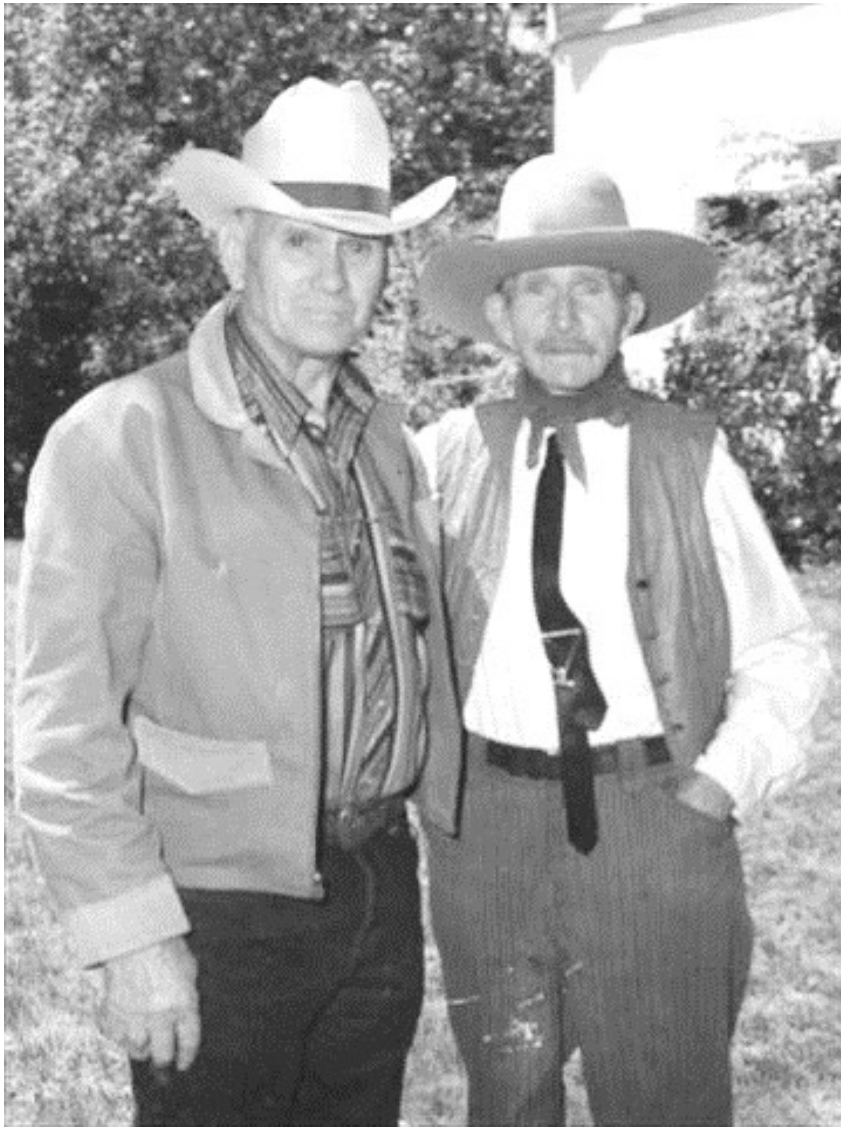


Figure 4.1 (l) Gilbert Jones & (r) Robert Brislawn (1973)
Courtesy of Friends of The Heritage Horse Foundation Herds
<http://www.spiritofblackjackmountain.com>



Figure 4.2 McKinley-Romero Horses, Las Lunas, New Mexico
Courtesy of Alan Bell
Greenville, Texas



Figure 4.3 Ilo Belsky; Phantom Valley Ranch (1960s)
Eli, Nebraska
Colonial Spanish Horse Collection, A/323, East Texas Research Center,
Stephen F. Austin State University



Figure 4.4 The Spring House, Medicine Spring Ranch
(l) Gilbert Jones & (r) Bryant Rickman
Courtesy of Friends of The Heritage Horse Foundation Herds
<http://www.spiritofblackjackmountain.com>



Figure 4.5 Gilbert Jones; Kiamichi Girl, SSMA-260
Sired by Chief Kiamichi, aka 'Rooster'
Colonial Spanish Horse Collection, A/323, East Texas Research Center,
Stephen F. Austin State University



Figure 4.6 Spanish Mustang Registry Meeting (1973)
Camino, California
Courtesy of Jeff Edwards; Colonial Spanish Horse Collection, A/323,
East Texas Research Center, Stephen F. Austin State University

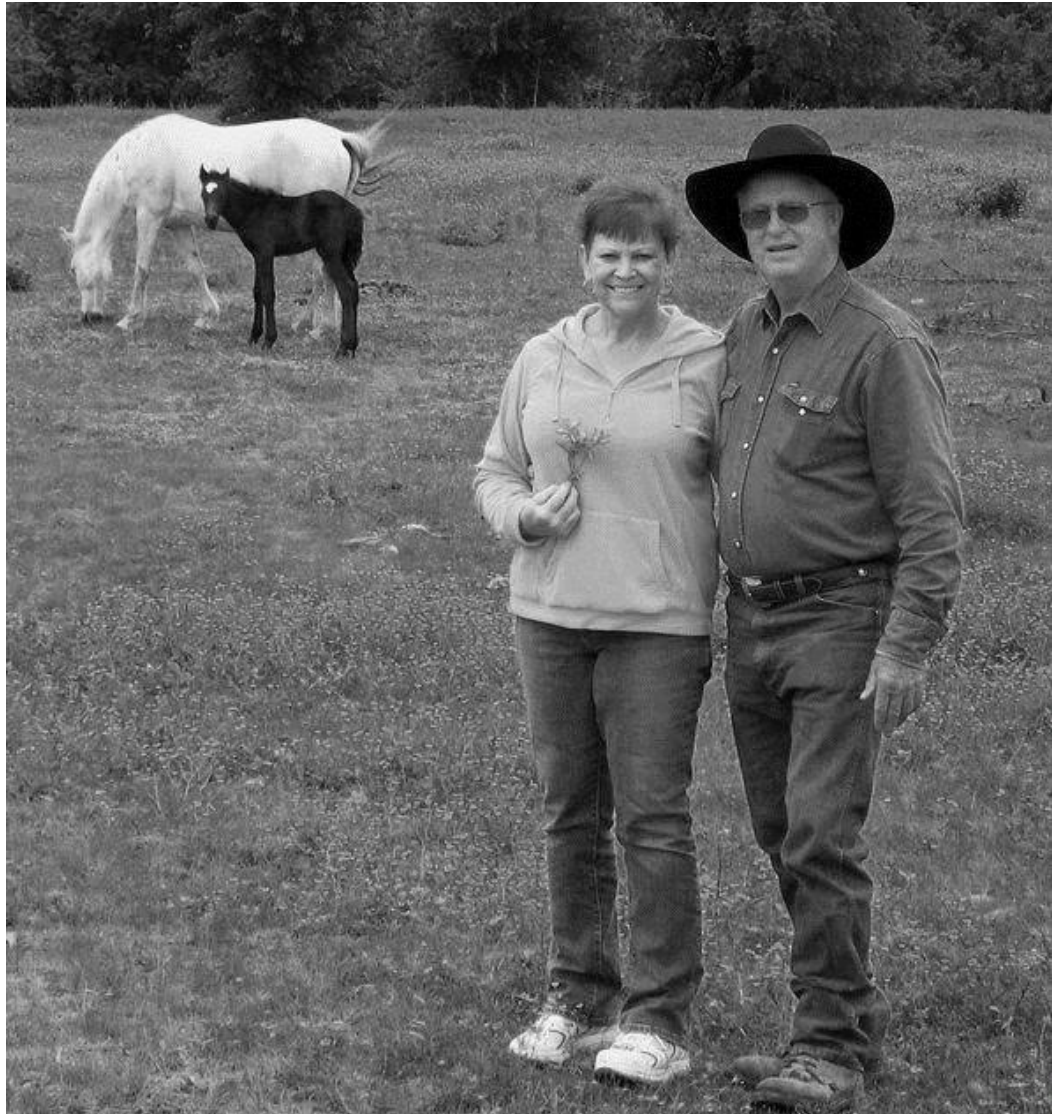


Figure 4.7 Darlene & Bryant Rickman (2017)
Chairman, Southwest Spanish Mustang Association, Inc.
Courtesy of Rebecca Gideon

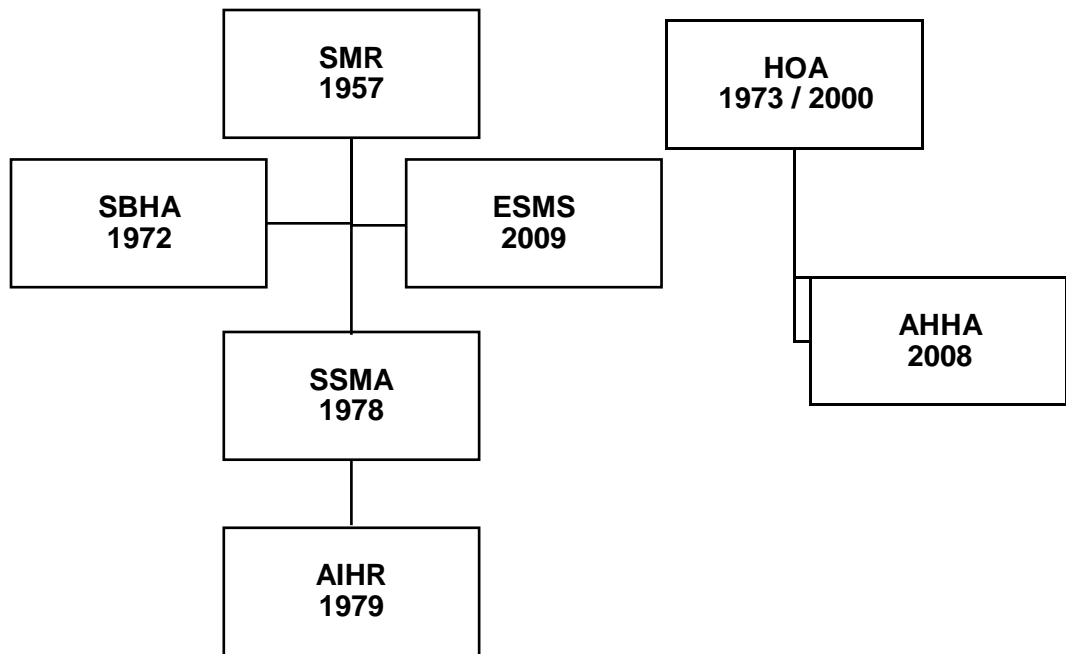


Figure 4.8 This chart illustration shows the development of the main Colonial Spanish Horse registries as of 2018: 1) Spanish Mustang Registry, Inc., 2) Spanish Barb Horse Association, 3) Southwest Spanish Mustang Association, Inc., 4) American Indian Horse Registry, Inc., 5) Horse of the Americas, Inc., 6) American Heritage Horse Association, and, 7) European Spanish Mustang Society.

CONCLUSION

The preservation of Spanish horses provides a small, interesting side story to American western and Borderlands history as well as the national preservation and conservation movements. Through Brislawn's lifelong quest, we have a deeper understanding of the character and attitudes of horsemen like him who were adamant in their drive to save a valuable, equine genetic resource with a unique and colorful history. Since the deaths of Brislawn and Jones, Spanish horse advocates have continued to emphasize the horses' status as a historical and cultural icon while encouraging others to become involved in their preservation. Thus, the Spanish Mustang fits within the larger movement of identifying and saving historic sites, natural resources, and heritage livestock.

Like Brislawn and Jones, CSH horse owners are independent, strong-willed individuals who do not always agree on bloodlines, conformation, or even color or coat pattern. Unfortunately, organizational fragmentation and lack of unity detract from the continued advancement and protection of the breed.¹ However, there remains a strong commitment to the heritage of the horse as originally articulated by Brislawn. The Corolla Wild Horse Fund, Inc., and the Foundation for the Shackleford Banks Horses are two new organizations based

¹D. Philip Sponenberg, "North American Colonial Spanish Horse Update." Blacksburg: Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine (July 2011), accessed March 18, 2015, <http://www.horseoftheamericas.com/conformation.htm>.

in the North Carolina's Outer Banks. Both CSH strains received recognition as state cultural treasures, and in May 2010, the CSH became the official State Horse of North Carolina. Beside the registries mentioned previously, other extant organizations include the American Heritage Horse Association in South Dakota, the American Sulphur Horse Association in Utah, the Pryor Mountain Wild Mustang Center in Wyoming, the South Carolina Marsh Tacky Registry, and the Florida Cracker Horse Association. The Colonial Spanish Horse has achieved legitimacy and protection as a critically endangered horse due to Brislawn's early work to identify and preserve the breed.

In 2017, Brislawn's grand-daughter, Josie Brislawn, sold most of the 3,000-acre Cayuse Ranch and reduced the breeding bands of stallions, mares, and foals. **(Figure 5.1)** Other Brislawn family members are elderly and younger relatives do not have an interest in breeding, raising, training, and selling horses; but, there is hope. In February 2018, the Livestock Conservancy sponsored The Endangered Equine Summit at Texas A & M University, College Station, Texas. The purpose of the meeting "was to bring together breeders, organizations, and registries...[and suggest ways]...to help with the dwindling numbers of ALL endangered equines."² With renewed energy and purpose, the Spanish Mustang representatives at the meeting promised to work on collaboration and ensuring

²Tomlyn Grey, "The Road Ahead: A Summary of the Endangered Equine Summit," in *Spanish Mustang Registry Annual*, ed. Simrat Khalsa (Pleasant Hill, OR: Spanish Mustang Registry, 2017), 18

the future.³ The horses and their bloodlines saved by Brislawn, Holbrook, Jones, McKinley, Belsky, and Wilbur-Cruce continue through the efforts of other breeders who are “here for the amazing Spanish horses with the wind in their hair and fire in their souls.”⁴ **(Figure 5.2)** On Brislawn, writer and Spanish Mustang owner, Callie Heacock wrote, “He was a giant among horsemen, breaking trail for all who continue to conserve his beloved breed which was made possible one horse at a time, by a man with no fortune, but great heart, and great wisdom garnered from years of devotion.”⁵

Although each group has an agenda and preservation itinerary, many members concur that Spanish horses were the backbone of colonial and frontier life. Secure as a heritage breed, Colonial Spanish Horses today confirm the attributes inherited from their Spanish ancestors, through natural selection, and sensible breeding practices. Brislawn’s preservation efforts identified and defined the Spanish-type horse because he recognized the significance and historical connection of the horses. He promoted these aspects to any interested person or

³Present at the meeting were: Jim Dildine for SMR, Bryant Rickman for SSMA, Vickie Ives and Tomlyn Grey for HOA, Silke Schneider for SBHA, and this author for AIHR. Nanci Falley, president of AIHR was unable to attend. HOA members Carol Fuller Powell, Renee Dantzler, and Allison Clark were also in attendance.

⁴Grey, “The Road Ahead,” 21-22.

⁵Callie Heacock and Ernesto Valdés, “The Spanish Mustang and the Long Way Home,” *Houston History Magazine* 7, no. 1 (Fall, 2009): 23, accessed March 18, 2015, <http://houstonhistorymagazine.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/Mustangs-Heacock-Valdes.pdf>.

organization throughout his lifetime, and did indeed earn the title from his peers, “Mr. Mustang.” **(Figure 5.3)**

The author as a young girl always loved horses but due to family circumstances did not own a horse or learn to ride until 1970 when she met her good friend and accomplished horsewoman, Vickie Ives. In 1971, Patterson bought her first horse and has remained active with horses since that time. In 1983, Ives purchased her first Colonial Spanish Horse, Choctaw Sun Dance, from Nanci Falley and in the ensuing years changed her breeding operation from registered American Quarter Horses and Appaloosas to Colonial Spanish Horses. As friends and neighbors, Patterson and Ives have worked together for thirty-five years to continue Brislawn’s legacy. **(Figure 5.4)**



Figure 5.1 Horses roam on the Cayuse Ranch (2017)
Courtesy of Kate Taylor & Spanish Mustang Registry



Figure 5.2 Statue of "The Seven Mustangs," Alexander P. Proctor (1948)
Texas State Museum
On the grounds of the University of Texas at Austin
http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMM10Z_Mustangs_University_of_Texas_Austin_TX

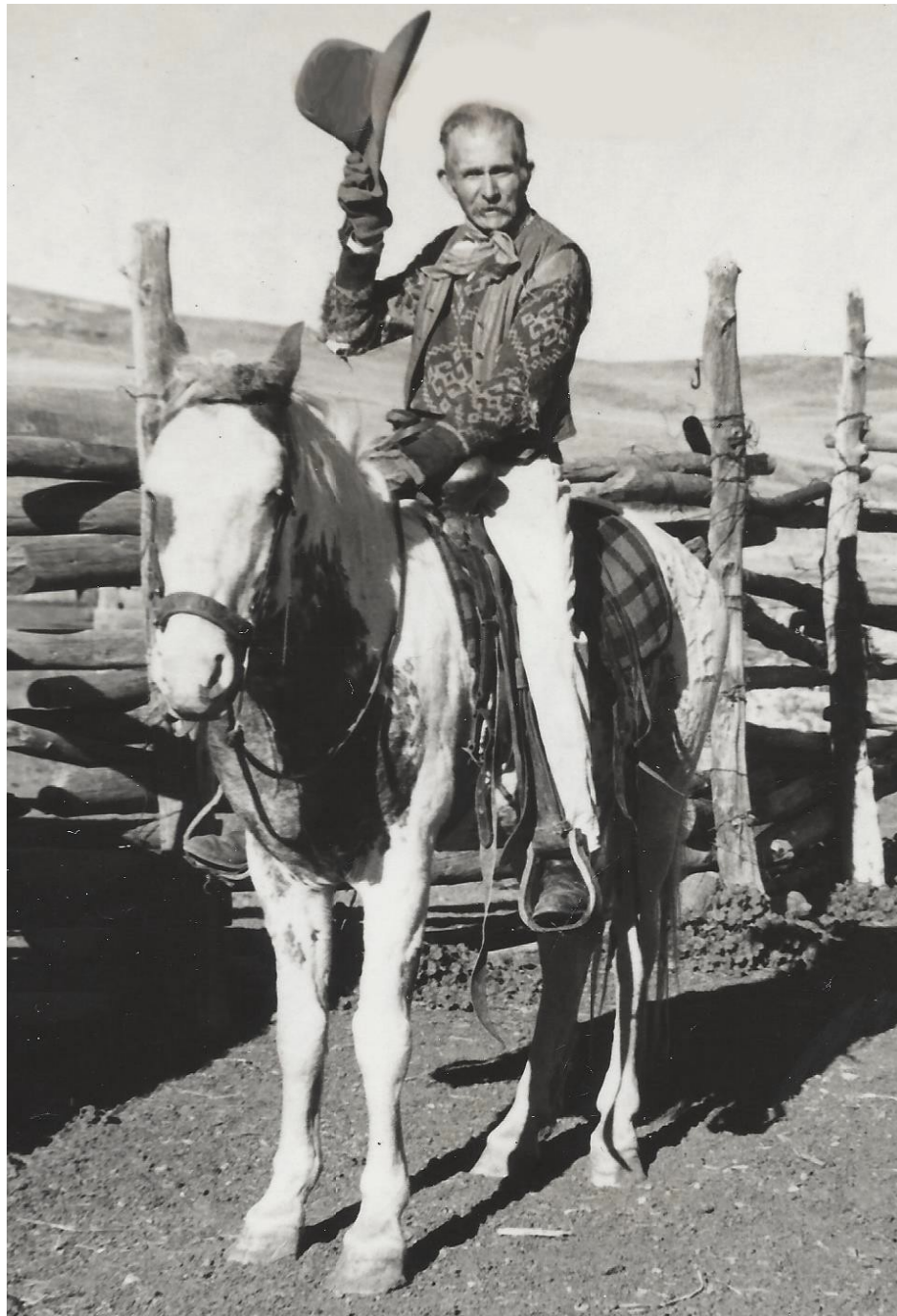


Figure 5.3 Robert E. Brislawn, Sr. & San Domingo, SMR-4
Colonial Spanish Horse Collection, A/323, East Texas Research Center,
Stephen F. Austin State University



Figure 5.4 Gretchen Patterson and One Dance Left, HOA-1081, SMR-2934 & AIHR O-3336; Courtesy of American Indian Horse Registry

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