

mustangs



American Scene



American Scene

Published By
THE THOMAS GILCREASE
INSTITUTE OF AMERICAN
HISTORY AND ART
R.R. 6, TULSA, OKLAHOMA

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The editorial staff wishes to express
special appreciation to Florence Rossi for
editorial assistance on this issue.

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Vol. XII, No. 2 of the American Scene,
published and copyrighted by the Thomas
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titles the member to four issues of the
magazine along with other membership
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ABOVE: **WILD HORSES**, Oil,
by James Walker

COVER: **WILD HORSES**, pencil
sketch by Wm. Cary

mustangs

BY DONNIE D. GOOD

"Among the wild animals of the west, none gave us so much pleasure, or caused such excitement, as the bands of wild horses that at intervals came under our view. The beauty and symmetry of their forms, their wild and spirited action—long full sweeping manes and tails, variety of color, and fleetness of motion—all combined to call forth admiration from the most stoical."

Alfred Jacob Miller, 1837

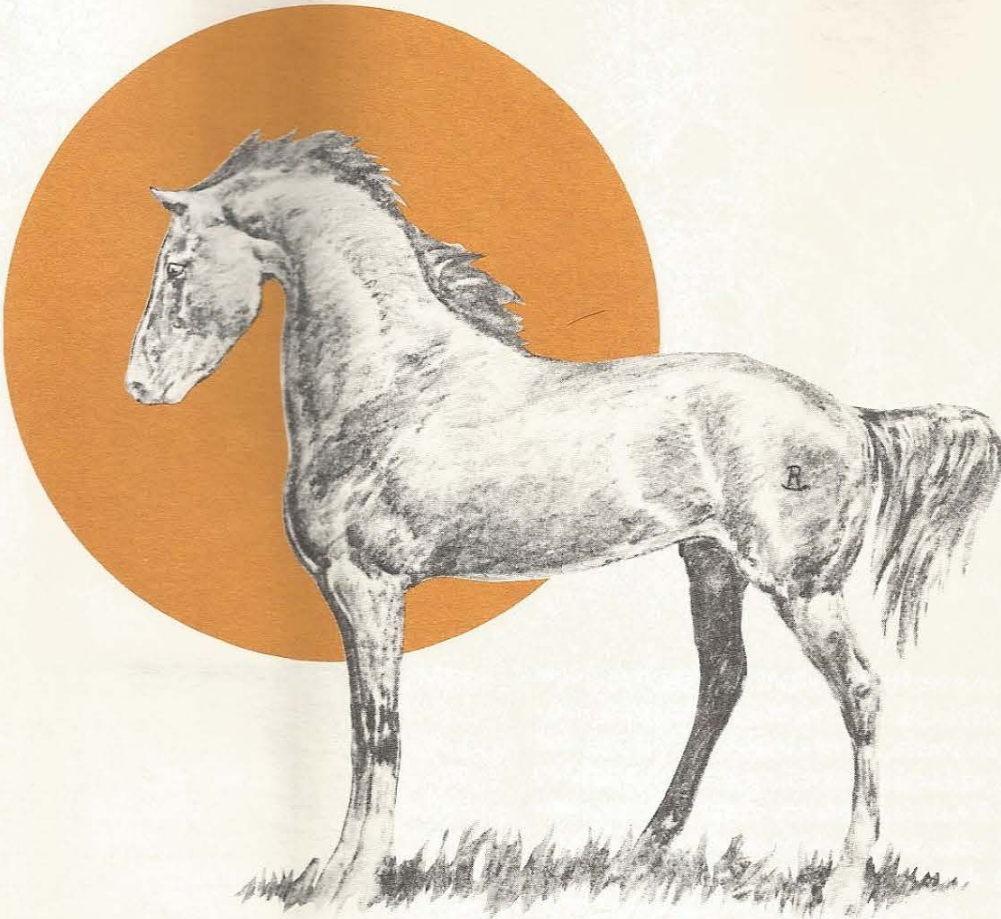
Throughout history men have been challenged repeatedly by those things which have seemed most dangerous, impossible and unconquerable. In the development days of the Western frontier of the United States, myriad challenges existed to lure men into the mainstream of activities: the challenges of finding gold in clear, cold streams, of building railroads through impassable mountain ranges, of killing buffalo from herds roaming free on the prairies, of rounding up, branding, and driving cattle to Northern markets, and of finding new land on which to build homes, plant crops and raise families. These various challenges were met by thousands of men and women who had the fearless courage to face the unknown, the dangerous, the seemingly unconquerable.

This courage was personified by a creature of the West—the mustang—which challenges

the imaginations of contemporary men almost as he must have kindled fires of determination in the hearts of early Western frontiersmen. The freedom-loving mustang, however, often proved to be more of an inspiration to men than an actual participant in their various activities.

Roaming untamed in an equally untamed land, the mustang became a legend in his own time. Indians and white men alike admired and often exaggerated his capacities. Early colonists and settlers, miners, hunters, traders, cavalrymen, Texas Rangers and Indians of tribes from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean told stories, legends, and tall tales of the magnificent feats of certain individual animals which they had seen or of which they had heard.

The enigmatic mustang was descended from Spanish stock, changed by his struggle for survival and affected by the elements of the regions



Pencil sketch by Will James

in which he roamed. After decades of adaptation to living wild and free, he lost much of the graceful beauty of his Spanish ancestors but retained and increased their traditional qualities of stamina, endurance and intelligence. The mustang was a domesticated animal returned to the wild; like the longhorn, he was a product of natural selection in breeding. His offspring were affected by droughts, scarcity of grass, climatic conditions and the threat of predatory animals. After several generations of coping with these problems the mustang became a sinewy, tough, little animal whose ability to endure any test of God or man was, indeed, inestimable.

Herds of wild horses developed from many sources. Aside from those animals abandoned by colonists, many were lost from garrisons and missions as a result of stampedes and storms. Raiding by Indians caused innumerable horses

to be lost from their owners. As the herds grew, their unrestrained roving attracted countless numbers of domesticated animals from unfenced grazing ranges. The mustang herds multiplied within their own ranks which were joined, generation after generation, by domesticated horses reverting to the wild.

The mustang band usually was comprised of a stallion followed by as many mares as he could collect and defend. Although twenty to twenty-five animals were in an average size band, many were larger. The stallion was master, guide, herder, guardian and protector of his mares and their colts. He was their leader in flight, their defender against animal or human enemies, and their tenacious champion when challenged by another stallion to a struggle for power and control. Many of these brave, strong-hearted, little animals would die rather than submit to captivity.



The first horses brought to the New World by Columbus on his second voyage to the West Indies were from the provinces of Cordoba and Andalusia in southern Spain. Prior to that time, during seven centuries of occupation of Spain by the Moors, horse breeding had become increasingly important and so successful that Spanish bred horses generally were recognized, at the close of the fifteenth century, as being the most superior horses in the world. The principal blood line of those animals was contributed by the barb horses taken to Spain by a group of the Moorish invaders, the Berbers of North Africa.

The barb horse generally was considered a type rather than an actual breed. Originating from the Arabian, the barb had developed in Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and other North African states. This development brought the barb type to be generally coarser than the delicate confirmation of the Arabian. For seven hundred years the barbs were bred with native horses of Spain, producing small, lightweight, but sturdy animals endowed with great speed and endurance. The horses which made the voyage from Spain to the western hemisphere in the sixteenth century were principally of barb descent; however, they retained strong Arabian characteristics.

They were subjected to a voyage of about four thousand nautical miles, which, under good sailing conditions, could be completed in two or three months. In the small sailing craft of the time few comforts were provided for the

animals which often were strapped into a hammock-like apparatus suspended between beams on the deck. Sometimes the horses stood hobbled on the ship's deck where they were tied down during storms. During extended calm periods, with no winds to propel the ship, water shortages often developed. The only recourse available to the human passengers was to throw the animals overboard. Some authorities estimate that only half the horses sent from Spain during that period completed the voyages.

Spanish horses continually were shipped in small numbers to the Americas until 1520 when, by special edict of Charles V, King of Spain, the practice of exporting horses was forbidden to prevent the further reduction of the number of horses in Spain. By that time, however, horse breeding had become a primary occupation of the Spaniards in the West Indies. Royal and private ranches established on the islands of Santo Domingo, Cuba, and Jamaica, stocked with quantities of Spanish brood mares, developed large herds. Although the royal edict was strictly enforced for several years, it was disregarded eventually and horses again were sent from Spain to America.

In 1519, Hernando Cortez, the conqueror of Mexico, began his campaign against the Aztecs with over six hundred men and only sixteen horses. It soon became apparent that the natives were more impressed by the horses than by the conquering Spaniards. Additional men and over a thousand horses were sent from the islands during the two year period in which



Illustrations from the Codex Columbiana

Cortez' conquistadores were fighting the Aztecs. After victory was won in August, 1521, Cortez and many of his men remained to develop ranching and mining interests in Mexico. Shortly after the conquest, more horses sent from the islands became the seed stock for ranches on the mainland. Occasionally, fine Arabian horses were imported by breeders to upgrade their stock. Records show that Antonio de Mendoza, viceroy of Mexico from 1535 to 1550, owned eleven ranches where horses and mules were raised.

In 1538, Hernando de Soto left Spain to conquer Florida with over seven hundred men and approximately a hundred horses. When his ships reached Cuba, De Soto bought horses from the island herds and sailed for Florida with more than three hundred mounts for his followers. After landing in what is now Tampa Bay, in May, 1539, De Soto and his armor clad warriors made an epic three year march through Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. When their leader died on the banks of the Mississippi River, his followers decided to try reaching Mexico by land. After wandering as far west as the Red River, the diminishing group returned to the Mississippi River, built fragile wooden vessels, and floated downriver to the Gulf of Mexico where they finally made their way to a Spanish settlement.

The famous expedition of Francisco Vasquez de Coronado which began in 1540, made a wide looping trail throughout what is now the southwestern United States. This explora-

tion, made in search of the rumored gold of Cibola, enabled Spain to claim all the territory covered by Coronado and his followers and to extend the Spanish colonial frontier far to the north of where Cortez and the first conquistadores landed on the coast of Mexico.

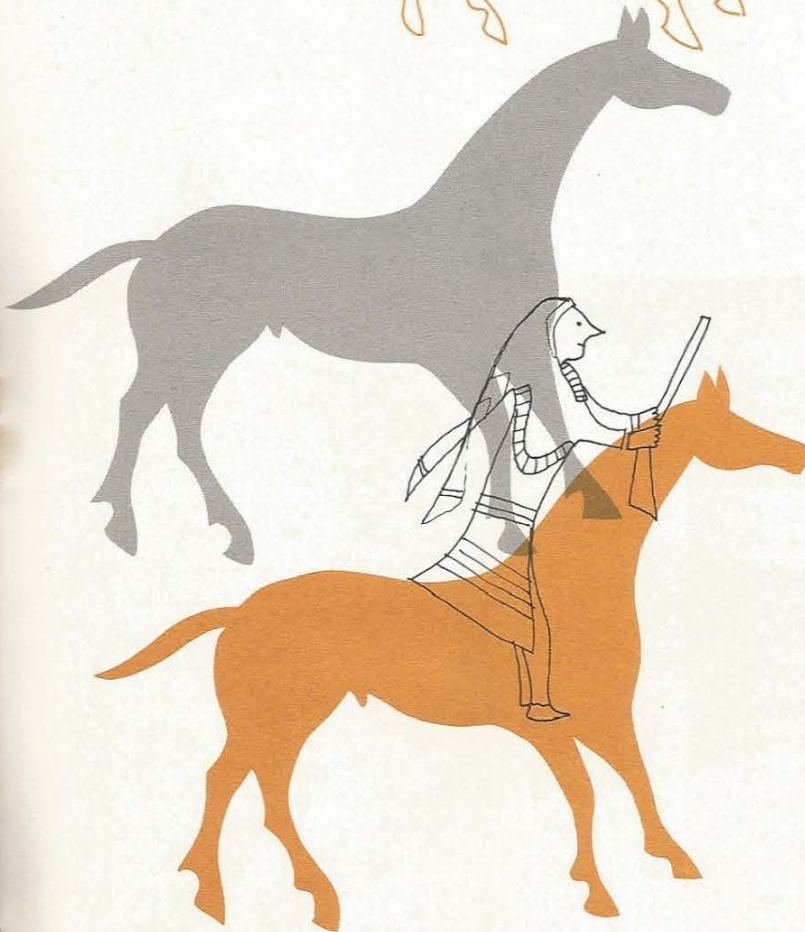
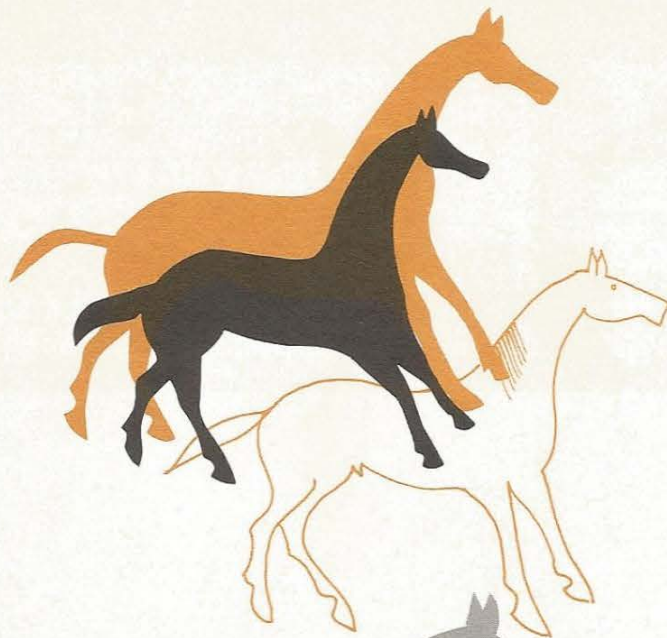
Early reporters and historians believed that horses lost or strayed from the De Soto and Coronado expeditions were the beginning of herds of wild or feral animals which developed on the Western plains. Later investigations into diaries and chronicles of the exploration period, as well as consultation with contemporary zoologists concerning the likelihood of the "stray" theory, have proved to historians that the enormous herds of mustangs could not have developed from animals lost by the explorers. They served only to introduce the horse to the western hemisphere; not to multiply and inhabit the land.

The Spanish explorers were followed by other Spaniards seeking their fortunes or their fulfillment. Spanish missionaries often were as zealous in their desires to convert the natives as were those men who were attracted by the possibilities of finding gold. The gold of souls was as great a factor in the development of the Spanish colonial settlements as was the opportunity there for individual stock raisers to build vast personal fortunes by developing immense rancheros. Among the unrecorded numbers of Spaniards who made voyages to colonize New Spain were missionaries, miners, merchants and ranchers.



"They [the Plains Indians] chose to accept from the Europeans only the horse; which made them masters of the buffalo which provided food, shelter, bedding, clothing, tools, saddles, lariats, twine and the core of their religion."

J. Frank Dobie, *The Mustangs*.
Little, Brown and Company, 1934.



Line Art illustrations derived from an original drawing by a Sioux

In the mid-sixteenth century activity surrounding the opening of silver mines north of Mexico City created a need for horses from the herds of Mexico. From 1550 to 1600 colonization of provinces south of the Rio Grande River created a continued need for horses and other livestock. During this period horses and cattle from herds raised on ranches in Mexico were bought continually by colonists moving to the far northern frontiers of the Spanish colonial empire.

Among the most important of the colonizers was Juan de Onate, who, in 1598, was commissioned by Philip II, King of Spain, to conquer and settle the valley north of the Rio Grande. Accompanied by a large group of colonists, Onate led the expedition to the area which is now the state of New Mexico. In a few years the country was flourishing with settlements, missions and forts. Mines were opened and farms and ranches thrived in the region. In 1609 Santa Fe was founded and became the capital of the province and the largest trading center of the northern Mexican territory.

Several thousand head of stock — horses, cattle, and sheep — as well as many slaves accompanied the colonists to the new settlements. The pueblo Indians, natives to the area invaded by the Spanish, were subjected to the status of serfdom by the newcomers and were forced to labor in their fields and to tend their stock. Since fields near the settlements were sown with the farmers' crops, it was necessary to herd the animals on ranges far from the settlements. Numerous Indian herders, usually supervised by a Spaniard, were assigned to care for the stock on grazing ranges.

Among the first of many laws and ordinances established to govern activities in Spain's colonies in America was a regulation prohibiting Indians from riding horses. The Spaniards recognized, from the experience of Cortez during the conquest, the advantage they held so long as they kept the natives afoot. The fear evoked in the Indians by Spanish horses was soon overcome by understanding and also by their desire to be riders. As colonization spread into the northern provinces, ranches were established where horses were raised. The Spanish colonists needed to utilize native manpower to contain and manage their herds on the vast unfenced ranges. Disregarding the law, the

colonists began to allow Indian herdsmen to ride and to teach them methods used by vaqueros in handling livestock; neither cattle nor horses could be handled effectively by men afoot.

The beginning of the seventeenth century is acknowledged by most historians as the beginning of the Age of the Horse Culture among Indian tribes west of the Mississippi

few years after that expedition, missions and ranches were started in southern Texas and the prospect of gradual colonization seemed certain. However, after a decade of enduring Spanish intrusion into their land, the Indians of Texas drove out the colonists and took their cattle and horses.

Earliest recorded raids upon Spanish herds were made by the Apaches on settlements in



River. As all great eras often have meager beginnings, the acquisition of the horse by the Indian had its beginning with horses straying or being stolen from the early colonists in the northernmost provinces of the Spanish colonial empire. The activity of Spanish colonists pushing to settle on the northern frontier led them to the southern frontier of the traditional homelands of the tribes of the Great Plains. The acquisition of horses by the Indians eventually enabled them to keep the Spanish from making further colonial expansion. From the beginning of the seventeenth century to late in the eighteenth century horses spread among the tribes of the West: from the Rio Grande in the South to southern Canada in the North, from the Mississippi River in the East to the Pacific Ocean in the West. By the middle of the eighteenth century, 150 years after the settlements were established near Santa Fe, Spanish horses were appearing in the Saskatchewan country in Canada.

After the Spanish were established in their New Mexico settlements, intermittent expeditions were sent out to explore the country to the east and west. The earliest recorded expedition into Texas was made in 1665. For a

New Mexico a few years after they were established. The Apaches kept only the best horses captured for riding; they ate the others. Although hungry men, white or Indian, in the frontier wilderness often resorted to eating their horses and mules, some Indian tribes developed a taste for horse meat and considered it a delicacy. The Apaches were foremost among the Indian tribes who chose to eat horse flesh.

Soon the Navajo and Ute tribes also began raiding the herds of the Spanish missions and ranches. The pueblo Indians, although oppressed by their Spanish masters, helped to prevent the loss of the colonists' horses to the raiding of other tribes. No defense, however, proved to be too effective. Although more horses were brought from Mexico over the years to replenish the New Mexicans' stock, the size of their herds fluctuated and they retained very little of the increase.

In 1680, the pueblo Indians revolted and colonists driven from settlements in New Mexico fled to El Paso on the Rio Grande. When the Spaniards withdrew, they left behind not only their ranches, missions, mines and forts, but also their livestock.

In 1692, colonists returning to rebuild their

settlements took more cattle, sheep and horses into New Mexico. The horses lost during their twelve years' absence were either taken by Indians or were left to revert to the wild. The pueblo Indians, whose revolt caused the flight of the colonists, had little interest in owning horses but valued them as an item for trade with the plains Indians.

During the last years of the seventeenth

Grande and Nueces Rivers with the title, "VAST HERDS OF WILD HORSES."

Other vast herds developed in California which was colonized during the last three decades of the eighteenth century. In a few short years, native vaqueros were trained and developed their horsemanship to a degree comparable to that of the finest horsemen in history. Their control and finesse in all activities per-



century extensive explorations were made into Texas by the Spanish. Scattered missions were built and stocked with horses and cattle. Early in the eighteenth century efforts toward colonization of Texas were resumed and by 1719 San Antonio de Bexar was founded. As ranches were established along the San Antonio River, the Spanish there developed large herds of horses and cattle.

Colonists who could not endure living conditions on the remote frontiers often abandoned their stock when they returned to more civilized areas. As early as 1560 horses abandoned by early settlers in provinces south of the Rio Grande River had produced great herds of wild horses in that region. Indian attacks drove out many settlers whose animals were left, in the panic of the situation, to shift for themselves.

Although wild horse bands eventually penetrated most regions of the West, the greatest of all wild horse ranges developed in Texas. From San Antonio to the Rio Grande the wild horses multiplied and herds grew. Although the Spanish colonials in Texas were estimated to total only 1,500 by 1744, the wild horses were so numerous that, by 1777, maps of Texas recorded their existence between the Rio

Wild Horses, Watercolor, by Alfred Jacob Miller

"Their hot and fiery blood causes them to take alarm at the slightest movement, — so that when they start a general stampede takes place, and in a very few minutes the prairie is bare and not one of them is to be seen."

Alfred Miller



Wild Horse Herd, Watercolor, by Leonard Reedy

Roping Horses, Etching, by Edward Borein



formed on horseback were practiced not only during their hours of work but also during their leisure hours. Many women as well as men on the remote California frontier became expert riders.

Consistent with their preoccupation with developing riding skills, the early Californios were considered to be excellent horse trainers. It could be said that they "gentled" rather than "broke" horses; hours of quiet, patient handling were necessary. They often spent months working a colt from a wild herd on a hackamore before continuing with further steps to develop him into a well trained cow horse.

The wild horse herds of California multiplied, however, to such an extent that, by 1810, when droughts began to cause problems on the Pacific Coast ranges, the ranchers were forced to exterminate thousands of wild horses which were consuming grass needed for their cattle. The droughts lasted for thirty years. During that time severe methods were used to kill the mustang herds; they were driven over cliffs

into the sea or they were rounded up and placed in corrals where branded stock was sorted out and the remaining animals killed.

For many years illicit trade with Spanish settlements in Texas and New Mexico had been carried on by Americans. However, the Spanish authorities never had approved of these activities and often dealt severely with the adventurous traders whenever they could be captured. When the Mexicans revolted against the oppressions of their mother country, Spain, the Mexican leaders viewed trade with Americans as being a possible source of income to their new government. In 1821, William Becknell made the first successful trading trip from St. Louis, Missouri, to Santa Fe and established the Santa Fe Trail.

In 1822, Stephen F. Austin led the first group of American colonists from Missouri to settle in Texas on lands granted to them by the Mexican government. By 1833 the number of Americans in Texas was estimated to be above twenty thousand. Colonists and traders



as well as other travelers of the period recorded numerous herds of wild horses in their journals and reports.

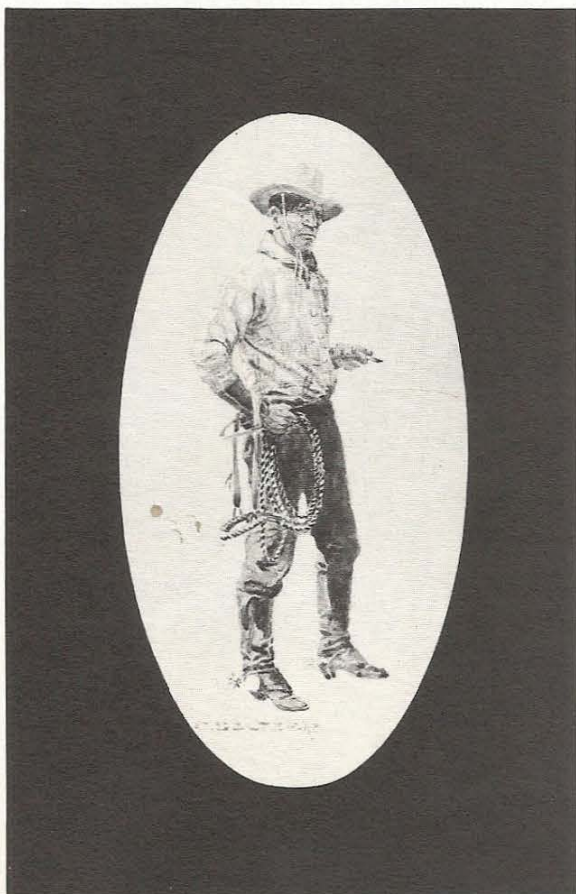
Early settlers caught some mustangs to increase their limited herds. Colts from the wild herds often were raised to become good, reliable work animals. Mustang mares were used as breeding stock. The stallions, however, were most difficult to catch, almost impossible to break and train, and generally came to be considered "not worth the trouble."

Although mustangs often were caught for sport or profit, the sport generally proved to be a chore and the profit usually was minimal. It was a commonplace occurrence for one out of every three mustangs to die from his resistance to being broken. In 1845, those mustangs which were broken to ride brought only \$10 to \$12.

John Treat Irving, Jr., nephew of Washington Irving, recorded the events of an Indian's breaking a mustang in his 1833 publication of *Indian Sketches*, which were written during his travels among the Pawnee Indians. Describing the animal, his account began:

"His colour was snowy white, here and there broken with spots of brown. He had been caught wild from the prairies but a few weeks before. He was a slave, but he had never been mounted — his back had never bent to a burden. They led him up in his own native wildness — his tail stood out — his ears were pricked up — his eyes staring — his nostrils expanded — and every hair of his long mane seemed almost erect with an undefinable feeling of terror. At one moment he dashed swiftly around at the full stretch of the long tug which secured him — then pausing, and shaking his long mane over his head, he fixed the gaze of his almost bursting eyes upon his captor. Then raising his head, and casting a long, lingering, and almost despairing gaze upon the hills of the prairie, which till then had been his home, he made a desperate leap forward, dragging to the ground the Indian who held the end of his halter. Others, however, rushed to his assistance, and held him in. The crowd then attempted to close round him, but he reared upon his hind legs, and kept them at bay, with rapid and powerful blows of his fore feet. At length a young Indian who was standing near, threw off his robe and crept cautiously towards the animal from behind. With a sudden leap he bounded upon his back — when he felt the curbing hand of his rider — he sent up a shrill and almost frantic scream — he bounded in the air like a wild cat — he reared, he plunged, but in vain; his rider was a master hand, and retained his seat as unmoved as if he had constituted part of the animal itself. He curbed him in — he lashed him with his heavy whip, until he crouched like a dog upon the prairie. His spirit was crushed; and the last spark of freedom was extinguished. Shortly after, one of the hunters came up and tied a pack upon his back. He made no resistance, and they led him off with the rest, to finish his days in drudgery and toil."

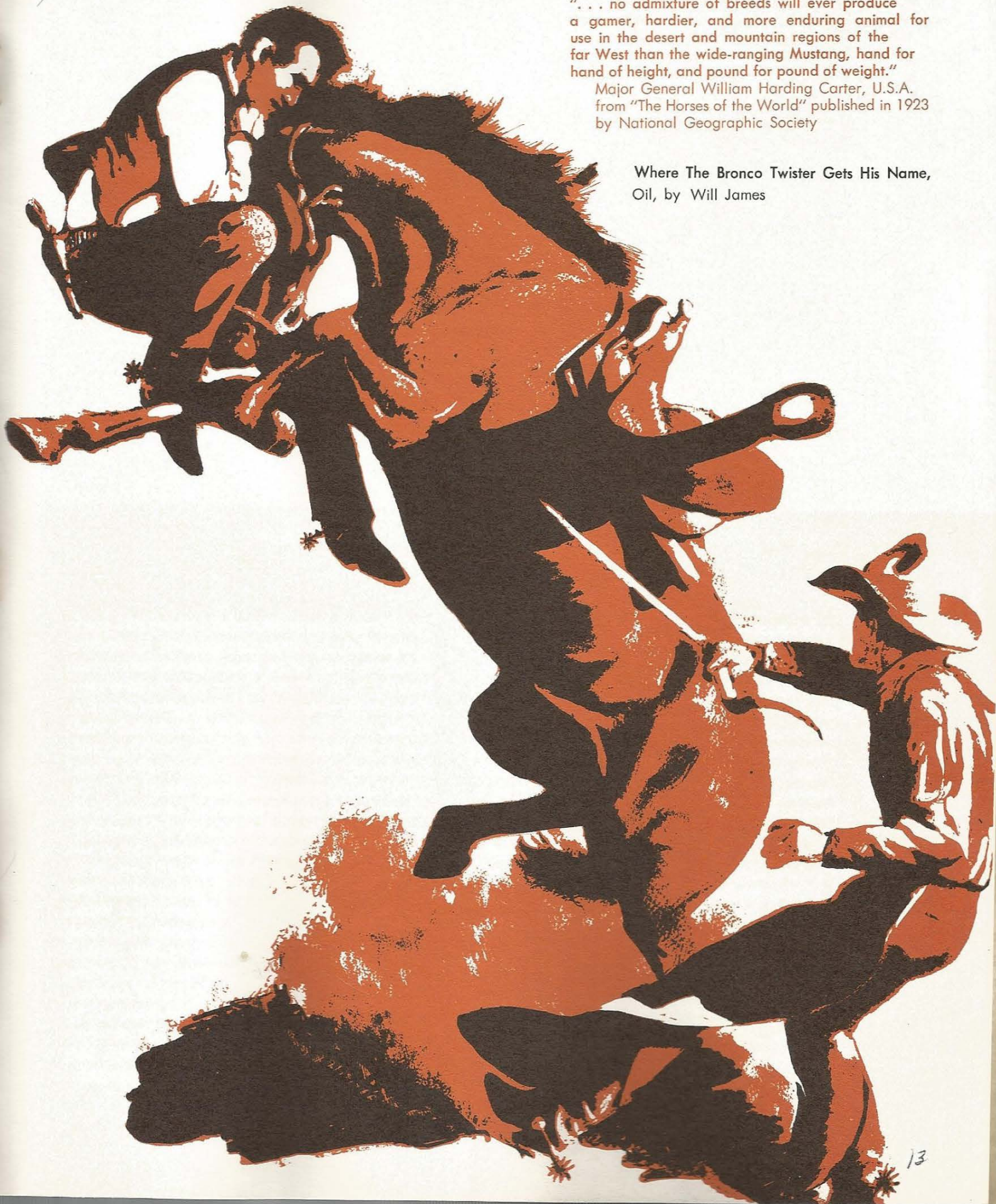
Bronc Buster, Watercolor, by O. C. Seltzer



"... no admixture of breeds will ever produce a gamier, hardier, and more enduring animal for use in the desert and mountain regions of the far West than the wide-ranging Mustang, hand for hand of height, and pound for pound of weight."

Major General William Harding Carter, U.S.A.
from "The Horses of the World" published in 1923
by National Geographic Society

Where The Bronco Twister Gets His Name,
Oil, by Will James





Indian Boy Breaking Horse, Oil, by Henry F. Farny

Wild horse herds had not spread to the plains areas until after the majority of the tribes were mounted and adapted to their various uses of the animal. After a tribe acquired its first horses, it took approximately twenty years for adapting them to their particular needs. Although Indian tribes throughout the West are known to have caught and broken mustangs, it was frequently recorded by early observers that they much preferred trading or stealing horses from white settlers or from other Indian tribes to pursuing the uncertain business of catching mustangs.

Horse stealing became a practiced art; successful thieving earned much praise and glory for an Indian among the other men of his tribe and often brought additional interest from the women. Stealing the most highly prized war horse or buffalo horse of an enemy tribe brought special recognition. They often risked their lives for such animals. Young men, interested in establishing their future positions, became especially daring in their horse raiding forays.

Although the Indians of the plains had practiced buffalo hunting prior to their acquisition of horses, their being mounted not only made hunting more successful but also made it possible for them to follow the migrations of the buffalo. The buffalo provided them with food and skins for their dwellings, clothing, and equipment; the horse made these more accessible. The number of horses owned by each tribesman became the symbol of his wealth and power. Horses were used as a form of currency for paying debts and buying wives.

Indian boys learned to ride horses almost as early as they learned to walk. Unlike the white man's method, the Indian mounted his horse from the right side. Indians customarily used their legs to guide their horses for they needed to have full use of their hands in hunting or in combat. Although they seldom had saddles, Indians from the plains tribes often kept a rope dragging from their horses' necks. These ropes were used in emergency situations when the riders were unseated in battle or in the buffalo



Horse Thieves, Oil, by O. C. Seltzer

chase. Tribesmen spent hours in practicing methods of charging and retreating, developing their horsemanship and skills in emergency maneuvers.

Theodore Ayrault Dodge, Brevet Lieutenant Colonel of the U.S. Army, admired the Indians' riding abilities in his book, *Riders of Many Lands*, published in 1894:

"... the Indian can perform equestrian feats which strike us as wonderful . . . It is a point of honor with him, as it was with the ancients and is still among many peoples, not to leave his dead or wounded in the hands of the enemy, liable to butchery or deprived of the rites of burial; and he will pick up a warrior from the ground without dismounting, almost without slacking speed, throw him across his pony and gallop off. This requires and receives much practice. Sometimes two act together in picking up the man, but one is quite able to accomplish it . . . Perhaps this is the best of the numerous feats the Indian can exhibit."

As traders, settlers and other frontiersmen

made their separate ways to the West in the first half of the nineteenth century, they encountered the mounted plains Indians, whose resistance to their intrusion brought about the need for protection by the U.S. Army. Forts were constructed on the remote frontier and the U.S. Cavalry got its first opportunity to evaluate Western ponies and mustangs. They soon learned to respect the endurance of the Spanish descended, Indian pony and to know the advantage a grass fed animal held over a grain fed one in country where grain was unobtainable. Officers of the cavalry differed in their opinions of the possibilities of adapting herds of mustangs to the needs of Western cavalry units. Although grass eating, Spanish descended, Western bred ponies were tried and used successfully by segments of the U.S. Cavalry on the frontier, no records exist regarding general use of those animals, much less the mass adaptation of mustangs.

From the days of the Texas Revolution in 1836, to the Civil War in 1861, the Texas

Rangers, by using animals which ate grass rather than grain, had considerable success in handling Indian problems in their region. Again, however, there are no records to indicate the percentage of their animals which were mustangs. No organization is known ever to have used, exclusively or primarily, mustangs broken from the wild for their activities. Although the Confederate Army was in dire need of horses during the Civil War, there is no record of their having considered obtaining animals from the mustang herds of the West.

The frontier cavalry primarily used horses from the Eastern states, a variety of large breeds with northern European origins. The American colonists also took horses as they moved into the West. During the twenty years following the Civil War, as more and more people went west to settle or to seek their fortunes, the infusion of driving, draft, and running horses began to affect the mustang herds as well as the domesticated animals. As Easterners moved west, their value for the appearance of horses began to influence the Western horse breeders; efforts were made toward developing horses with more height, weight, and refined appearance.

Although there was never a distinct breed known as the "Bronco," the name often was attached to the various representatives of the Spanish descended horses of the West. The Indian pony — often called a "cayuse" — the cow pony, and other Western ponies were all referred to as broncos. The term bronco was used in association with the bucking and pitching of the Western range horses and mustangs.

Frederic Remington in an article entitled, "Horses of the Plains," published in *Century Magazine* in 1889, wrote with obvious admiration for Western ponies:

"I think that the wild state may have sharpened the senses of the bronco, while in domestication he is remarkably docile. It would be quite unfair to his fellows to institute anything like a comparison without putting in evidence the peculiar method of defense to which he resorts when he struggles with man for the mastery. Everyone knows that he 'bucks,' and familiarity with that characteristic never breeds contempt. Only those who have ridden a bronco the first time it was saddled, or have lived through a railroad accident, can form any conception of the solemnity of such experiences . . . His greatest good quality is the ease with which he

stands any amount of hard riding over the trail . . . As a saddle animal simply, the bronco has no superior . . ."

"This particular American horse lays claim to another quality, which in my estimation is not least, and that is his wonderful picturesqueness. He graces the Western landscape, not because he reminds us of the equine ideal, but because he comes of the soil, and has borne the heat and burden and the vicissitudes of all that pale of romance which will cling about the Western frontier."

Although the Spanish descended Western range pony performed with precise agility in cutting and rounding up cattle, walked hours of quiet vigil while night herding sleeping longhorns, loped thousands of tedious miles driving cattle to markets, and was valued for his "cow sense" by cattlemen all over the West, his long-lost brother — the mustang — was a different story. There still exists an erroneous belief that during the days of the great cattle drives, cowboys rode mustangs. Although cowboys sometimes went on mustang "chases" during slack seasons on their home ranges, few caught the animals for anything other than sport and amusement.

To most cattlemen the mustang was a plague. He ate the grass needed for the ranchers' cattle, drank the water which often was scarce, and frequently stole the best horses from the ranchers' working remudas and breeding herds. The constant threat of the mustangs' thieving caused the expense and trouble of night herding and created the necessity of using extra horse wranglers on cattle drives. Many cattlemen believed that the eating habits and sharp hoofs of the mustangs did more damage to their ranges than sheep would do. Cattlemen became alarmed about the herds of wild mustangs and determined to do something about them.

Pure Spanish descended mustangs reached their peak, numerically, in the middle of the nineteenth century. Although professional mustangers began capturing quantities of animals from the unrestricted herds as early as 1840, their efforts were not sufficient to effectively diminish the numbers of mustangs multiplying in the West. The activities of those men, keeping the best animals they caught and releasing the others, had, however, caused the degeneration of subsequent generations of mustangs. Those remaining "broomtails" were the target, during the last quarter of the nineteenth cen-



Nature in the Raw, Watercolor, by George Phippen
A Wild Horse, Etching, by Edward Borein



tury, of the cattlemen's campaign to rid the West of the mustang pests.

Two factors joined to remove the pure Spanish descended mustangs from the West: the cattlemen's attempts at mass extermination and the infusion into the wild herds of larger breeds such as Thoroughbreds, Morgans, Clydesdales, and Percherons. The estimated million wild horses remaining on ranges in the West by 1900 were still called mustangs, but retained only a portion of their original Spanish heritage. This fact had no bearing, however, on the extermination of the animal which has continued, in some areas, to the present time.

As machines were invented to provide the means, man contrived many inhumane methods of pursuing and catching the wild horse herds. During the first half of the twentieth century, hundreds of those animals were tracked and captured. Since World War II, approximately 100,000 have been killed and converted into dog or cat food.

Early in 1971, the Interior Department's Bureau of Land Management estimated there were less than eighteen thousand wild horses remaining on public lands in America. The majority of those animals were in Nevada and Wyoming.

For years, many individuals and organizations, disturbed over the fact that the few remaining wild horses are being driven to extinction, have put forth a valiant effort to gain protection for the remaining bands as well as for their wilderness environment without which they would be unable to exist. Few individuals have written so rationally yet eloquently concerning the preservation of wilder-

ness as Wallace Stegner. In his book, *The Sound of Mountain Water*, Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1969, Stegner reproduced a letter which he had written in 1960 to David E. Pesonen of the Wildlife Research Center at the University of California. Putting forth arguments for wilderness preservation he wrote:

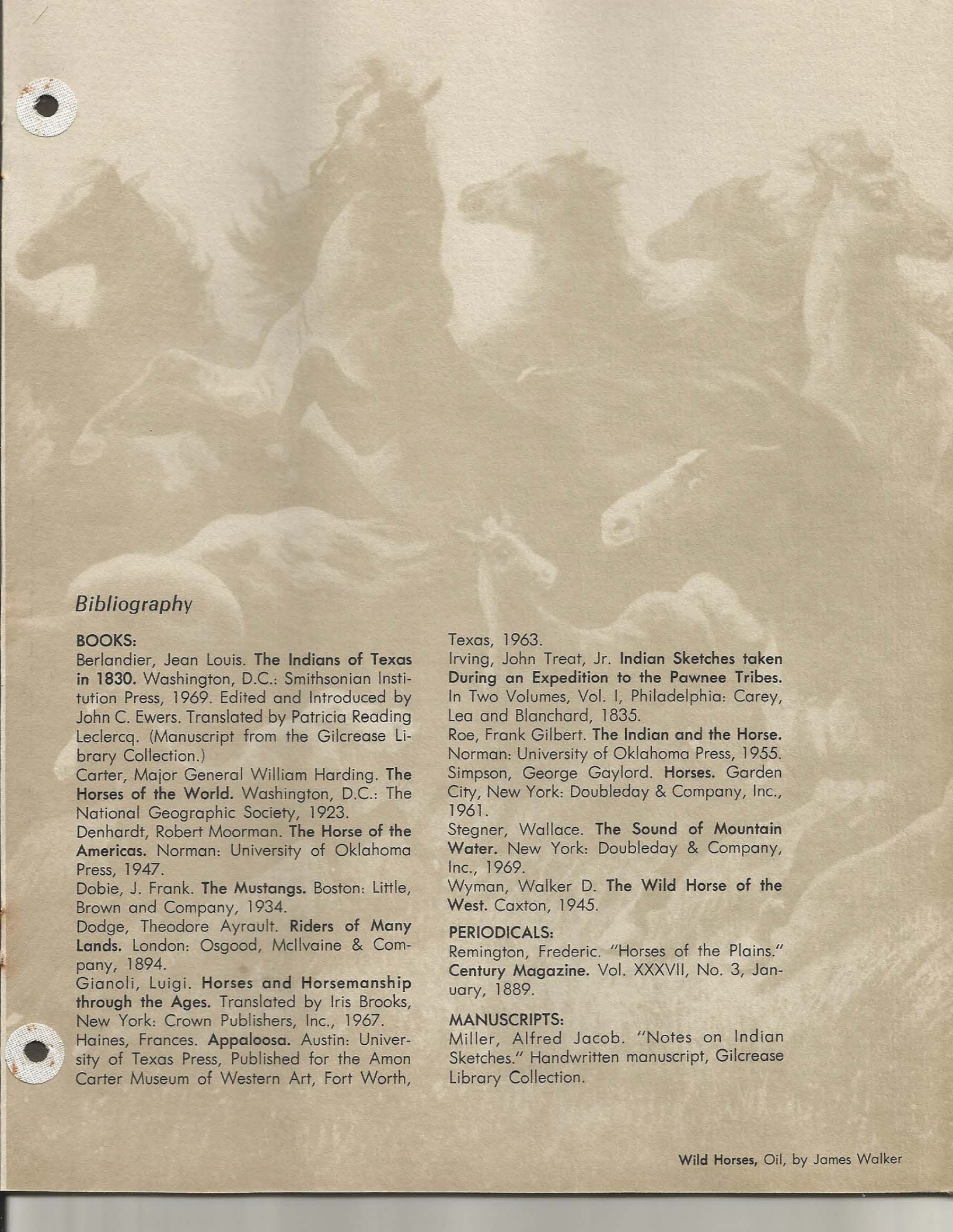
"What I want to speak for is not so much the wilderness uses, valuable as those are, but the wilderness idea, which is a resource in itself. Being an intangible and spiritual resource, it will seem mystical to the practical-minded — but then anything that cannot be moved by a bulldozer is likely to seem mystical to them . . .

"Something will have gone out of us as a people if we ever let the remaining wilderness be destroyed; . . . if we drive the few remaining members of the wild species into zoos or to extinction; if we pollute the last clear air and dirty the last clean streams and push our paved roads through the last of the silence, . . . We need wilderness preserved — as much of it as is still left, and as many kinds — because it was the challenge against which our character as a people was formed. The reminder and the reassurance that it is still there is good for our spiritual health even if we never once in ten years set foot in it . . .

"The American experience has been the confrontation by old peoples and cultures of a world as new as if it had just risen from the sea. That gave us our hope and our excitement, and the hope and excitement can be passed on to newer Americans, Americans who never saw any phase of the frontier. But only so long as we keep the remainder of our wild as a reserve and a promise — a sort of wilderness bank . . ."



Watercolor, by O. C. Seltzer



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A PUBLICATION OF THE
THOMAS GILCREASE INSTITUTE OF AMERICAN
HISTORY AND ART

