RUNNING WILD, RUNNING FREE?: CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF WILD HORSES IN THE AMERICAN LANDSCAPE

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty
of the
North Dakota State University
of Agriculture and Applied Science

By

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In Partial Fulfillment
for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Major Department:
History, Philosophy, and Religious Studies

May 2014

Fargo, North Dakota

North Dakota State University
Graduate School

Title

Running Wild, Running Free: Changing Perceptions of Wild Horses in the American Landscape

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ABSTRACT

Since the 1930s, wild horses have become a subject of public concern. They are often showcased as symbols representing the historic past of the western United States. More recently they have become symbols of a mythic, or imagined, west. Writers, scholars, politicians, advocates, ranchers, and land managers are among the few groups who have taken a role in the livelihood of these animals living freely on public rangelands. The protection movement that began in the 1950s and carried over into the 1970s ultimately resulted in the passage of the 1971 Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act. This act placed all wild horses living on public rangelands under the protection of the Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service. Before this legislation individuals in the West could round up wild horses without interference. Afterwards, only the federal government and appointed contractors were allowed to do this. As a result of all the policy changes people in the general public began learning more about the wild horse situation in the United States.

Perceptions regarding wild horses have undergone some change since the passage of the 1934 Taylor Grazing Act. Case studies contained in this dissertation provide examples of perceptions in different parts of the country. The personal narratives gathered from these areas are analyzed as essential pieces to the wild horse dilemma. They help provide an additional lens through which scholars can examine the changing perceptions regarding wild horses. The second section of this dissertation delves into the developmental stages of wild horse protection in the United States. Advocates, activists, and politicians sometimes view the subject in varying ways and those are examined. Legislation, slaughter, holding facilities, and adoption methods are a few of the main areas analyzed within this section.

As times have changed it has become necessary to reform and adapt under the Act of 1971. Doing this could ensure the future of wild horses living in the United States. Perceptions about them have changed, and it is still a subject wrought with emotion, but American identity is still connected to their aesthetic appeal.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people I would like to acknowledge for this work. First of all, this dissertation was pushed along by many people, and as a result specific names will not be mentioned. I owe much to those who motivated me and kept me going during the writing droughts. Secondly, thank you for supporting me, encouraging me, and nudging me along day-by-day. With much sacrifice, comes much reward. And this is mine. My family, friends, colleagues, fellow academics, committee, and horse enthusiasts . . . this is for you. Thank you for believing in me.

PREFACE

Young girls are well known for being horse crazy. It is not a new realization. Rather, it is one I associate with on a deeper level. When I was a young girl growing up on the Great Plains, thoughts of horses, their wildness, their freedom, and their innate sense of surroundings cantered through my brain. My attention has always been drawn towards literature focusing on wild horses and their connections with humans. Walter Farley's *The Black Stallion* took me to exotic places far away from the rolling landscape of south-central Kansas. The bond that the main character, Alec, had with the black Arabian stallion was mystical, and held a dream-like, other-worldly quality. Then, as I read Marguerite Henry's books, such as *Misty of Chincoteague* and *Star*, she took me to wind-swept beaches on the eastern shores of the United States. This showed me that, despite the divide between humanity and wildness, people can make strong bonds with wild horses. Although Henry's stories take place much closer to my childhood location, they still presented themselves like the myths of old. Today there remains a portion of the population that views wild horses through the lenses of their childhood, as I did: wild, free, tough, and legendary.

As an adult, my focal point regarding wild horses has changed. Instead of viewing the subject, as emotional as it can be, in an entirely subjective way, I now look at the past and current issues they face through the historical lens of time. As a historian, one of the difficulties faced in a project such as this, particularly one that can become emotionally drenched, is removing oneself from the story: looking in rather than looking out. As a horse crazy young girl, this was not a possibility. However, as a trained historian I am able to focus on these issues, looking at the problem through a variety of lenses in order to give the history of wild horses in the United States a proper, and fitting, narrative. They were players in the creation of the United

States. They became legends through the stories people passed on to one another. These mythic qualities grew over time. Native Americans trained them, traders bought them, mustangers caught them, and slaughterhouses paid for them. Their roles in history underwent serious transformations.

Not until the mid-twentieth century did someone try to save them. That story is pivotal to the entire wild horse narrative, but it is not the only story to be told. Through the years, many others stood for and against these animals. The wild horse narrative is one of adaptation and resilience. It is because of the records that remain from these tumultuous years, as well as a variety of other records like oral histories, photographs, and maps, that I am able to write this historical narrative. Perhaps I will be able to do the wild horses, their foes, and their supporters some justice in its telling.

Legend and myth often showcase wild horses as untouchable figures. American literature further romanticizes this image, particularly in re-created stories about the wildness of the American West. No matter what the tale is, wild horses, their iconic images, and the perceptions people have of them are continuously changing. This narrative winds through fact and myth and tries to portray the many viewpoints through the lens of history.

Between 1934 and 1984 perceptions of wild horses underwent some transformations as a result of new legislation, individual and group efforts, and public media. This dissertation attempts to pull all of these segments together and provide a clear narrative about what it means to be a wild horse living on rangelands throughout the western United States. Myth, legend, and reality collide during these years, and wild horses are only a part of the overarching narrative. Humans, too, provide valuable perspectives on many relatable subjects including heritage, range and resource management, animal management practices, and the legislative process. The

purpose of this work is to present an addition historical lens through which to view the wild horse situation.

This work is broken into two sections. The first section consists of chapters one through four. In these chapters I focus on an episodic, or geographic, study of individual areas. Case-studies are valuable because they provide more pointed perceptions about a specific area. Chapters two through four are case studies. The last five chapters are developmental. In other words, each chapter covers a topical area, such as a specific piece of legislation, management practices, and slaughter. These are designed to lead readers along a path of awareness and understanding regarding the depth to which wild horses have become a part of American national identity. Their history is entwined within the nation's historical threads.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BLM……………………………Bureau of Land Management

FS………………………………Forest Service

DGC…………………………....Division of Grazing Control

GLO…………………………....General Land Office

HMA…………………………...Herd Management Area

HSUS…………………………..Humane Society of the United States

NMA…………………………...National Mustang Association

WHOA…………………………Wild Horse Organized Assistance

PETA……………….………….People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals

ISPMB………………………….International Society for the Protection of Mustangs and Burros

NEPA……………….………….National Environmental Protection Act

NAB……………………………National Advisory Board

AML……………………………Appropriate Management Level

SPCA…………………………..Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

LASPCA……………………….Los Angeles Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

NWF……………………………National Wildlife Federation

PVWHBC……………………...Palomino Valley Wild Horse and Burro Center

VJ...……………………………Velma Johnston

WB……………………………..Walter Baring

RO....…………………………..Robert O'Brien

CSH…………………………….Clifford and Sally Heaverne

YS……………………………....Yvonne Spiegelberg

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INTRODUCTION

"The horse's place in the development of the hemisphere has thus been unique in that from the time of his arrival he has been an integral and irreplaceable adjunct to man's conquest and the development of America."[1]

In the span of one hundred years the American public turned what was once an obscure animal into one whose existence became symbolic and representative of western myth. It thereby captured the hearts and minds of people all over the United States and beyond. Within this time frame perceptions regarding wild horses have undergone a vast amount of change. These changes are a result of cultural, economic, political, and social shifts that have taken place in modern American history. These shifts are documented in visual and written media, both of which influence public perception. Representations of myth occur in visual media. Art, photography, and film all capture perception. Written narratives provide another persuasive form of media. Physical evidence found and observed in these regions of study gives an additional element to narratives about wild horses. Newspapers, magazines, letters, and novels have played a role in the shaping of perceptions. Simultaneously, these various perceptions have given rise to alternative legends connected to the myth and legend of the wild horse. Combined, these have been useful tools to perpetuate the symbolic and mythic role of the wild horse in the United States.

For centuries wild horses have roamed the areas we now recognize as the Great Plains and the American West. Wild horses are those that roam freely in social groups of their own making and rarely, if ever, interact with humans. The Spanish explorers reintroduced domestic horses into the North American environment, where they came to thrive in massive wild herds. Historical records indicate that they arrived sometime between the late 1400s into the early

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[1] Robert M. Denhardt, *The Horse of the Americas*, New ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1975), 276.

1500s on the shores of what is now southern Texas. Robert M. Denhardt has suggested that Columbus "reintroduced Spanish bred mounts into the New World in 1493."[2] This raises the question of "reintroduction." Biologists and archaeologists have determined the true ancestors of modern day horses, the "dawn horse" or *eohippus* existed on the North American continent more than sixty-five million years ago.[3] *Eohippus* eventually evolved into *equus caballas*, the direct ancestor of the modern-day horse. This animal disappeared from the continent during the cataclysmic climate changes of the Pleistocene epoch, which occurred more than 10,000 years ago.[4] Academics have differing opinions on the actual timeline, but most agree that the animal vanished sometime between 8 and 11,000 years ago.[5] Evidence shows that horses existed in some way on the North American continent prior to that environmental change, but for some combination of reasons (environmental, migratory, or resource competitiveness) they disappeared. Whatever the true reasons for their disappearance, horses evolved and adapted in areas of open land, mostly consisting of deserts and grasslands. As a result they were built for the harsh environment they eventually encountered west of the Mississippi River.

The concept of wild horses roaming the Great Plains and the American West is not new. Myth and symbolism arise from their long history in America. Many of these animals came from domestic stock, whether directly related to the Spanish horses or from horses in the East. Early peoples, native and Anglo, knew about the existence of these wild herds. Many of them

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[2] Denhardt, 5.

[3] Deanne Stillman, *Mustang: The Saga of the Wild Horse in the American West* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2008), 37.

[4] Ibid., 40-41.

[5] Joel Berger, *Wild Horses of the Great Basin: Social Competition and Population Size*, Wildlife Behavior and Ecology Series, edited by George B. Schaller (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1986), 12; Elliott West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, & the Rush to Colorado* (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 49; J. Edward de Steiguer, *Wild Horses of the West: History and Politics of America's Mustangs* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2011), 49; For more information on this topic consult Joel Berger, *Wild Horses of the Great Basin*, and Robert M. Denhardt's *The Horse of the Americas*. Both of these works provide information on the adaptability of horses to the North American climate and environment. They also examine the early history of horses on the continent.

utilized the animal in different ways. In the five hundred years since these animals were reintroduced a plethora of things have changed. However, even with those changes, the wild horse has remained a symbolic figure in America.

Many figures have had to adapt to the Great Plains environment. The Spanish settlers also encountered their share of difficulties, many of which originated with Native American tribes. As the Spanish adapted to their surroundings, so too did the native tribes. Some of them were conquered and occupied by the Spanish. The Spanish used Native Americans for manual labor, allowing these people to care for the horses but never to ride them.[6] Horse husbandry became an asset on the plains. As these groups cared for the Spaniards' animals they became better acquainted with their needs. Raiding and stealing were two favored options for increasing the numbers of horses in their care. By the mid 1600s these Indian tribes began to utilize horses in more ways. They had learned to care for Spanish horses, but this knowledge grew as they became better equestrians. As a result, these people gained a plethora of information related to the upkeep and training of these fast, four-footed animals. It was their adaptation to a life with horses that brought about sweeping changes throughout tribes inhabiting the Great Plains and surrounding areas. They changed into nomadic (more so than ever before), fierce, and territorial entities, whom eastern settlers feared well into the nineteenth century. The tribes' use of horses in their day-to-day lives shows how they adapted and evolved over time.

In time, horses became central assets in the power struggles taking place throughout the central Great Plains. Without them, Native American tribes were unable to maintain territory and influence. With them, they managed to regulate trade and transportation through the Great Plains and into the eastern edge of the Rocky Mountains. This control of trade routes also blocked white settlement patterns from spreading out onto the Great Plains. Native cultures

[6] Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

relied on the horse for transportation, protection, and bartering. Horses were viewed as symbols of wealth and status among their people. They built their nomadic lifestyles around the use of the horse. Wild horses contributed less to Native American life than the domesticated animals used by Spanish missions, because trained horses were easier to use and steal. The natives nevertheless used training techniques from the Spanish, as well as those they taught themselves, to capture and train wild ranging horses.

Several historical works argue that the horse shaped the emergence of Great Plains cultures, making them formidable entities to settlers coming from the east.[7] Western historian Elliott West explains how "only the horse has held out the possibility of a full union between the human and nonhuman, not as a fantastic individual aberration, but as the basis for a new society."[8] And this new society was based on the horse. In one evocative statement West explains how it was this "organism, the horse," which "alone let loose changes broader and more vigorous than any in the region's history."[9] The horse, domesticated or wild, brought about a new way of life on the Great Plains. Historians Walter Prescott Webb and Dan Flores both maintain that the ideas of regionalism and bioregionalism have affected who and what can adapt to these harsh environments.[10] The people and animals who adapt end up staying, while those who do not migrate elsewhere. Webb argues that the environment determines change rather than people.[11] If the environment is disagreeable, people can always move in order to seek more amenable surroundings. Flores, on the other hand, argues that humans are agents of change

[7] Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Plains* (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1931); N. Scott Momaday and Al Momaday, *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1969); West, *The Contested Plains*; Dan L. Flores, *The Natural West: Environmental History in the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001); Hämäläinen, *Comanche Empire*.
[8] West, 56.
[9] Ibid., 58.
[10] Webb; Flores, *The Natural West*.
[11] Webb.

within their own environment.[12] He believes that these "agents of historical change," or humans, have reduced natural animal and plant populations and introduced species that adapt well to these harsher western climates.[13] As a result, humans affect the environment in a way that can have a lasting historical impact on its future. Unlike Webb's thesis on environmental determinism, West argued that "people never master their environment; they bargain with it."[14] It is a give and take relationship. In this way, the balance of life is based on reciprocity rather than monopoly. What he means by this is that the environment influences, but does not determine, free agency.

All these historians discovered the role the horse played, and continues to play, in the shaping of cultures and regions within the United States. These contributions to regional history are important because they highlight key concepts, including the environment and adaptation; cultural and economic shifts; and the creation of regional identity. In addition, they provide evidence that the relationship between humankind and horse is one that gives added meaning to life. It shows how humans adapt to change. Beyond that, during the Great Plains' transitory history, people viewed the wild horse as a mythic and symbolic creature, just as many people do now.[15]

Some historians choose to focus on the horse's influence. Denhardt analyzes how the horse effectively changed life on the Great Plains for Native American tribes. He places emphasis on the shifts in wealth, status, power, food, transportation, hunting methods, raiding, and trading. Pekka Hämäläinen, a historian who focuses on the complexity within Comanche society, discusses this evolution in great detail with his revisionist work, *The Comanche Empire*. In this work he analyzes these people, with their horses, as agents of change rather than as

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[12] Flores.
[13] Ibid., 4.
[14] West, 233.
[15] J. Frank Dobie, *The Mustangs: Valiant, Wild and Free They Roved the Western Plains*, 4th ed. (New York: Bantam Books, 1952).

victims of white control.[16] They had choices, virtues, and faults, irrespective of the encroachment of white settlers. Like the Comanche, other tribes of the Great Plains and the West became masters of the horse long before settlers began migrating westward.[17] They found a resource that thrived in their harsh landscape and used it to their advantage. Because it was an abundant resource, they took advantage of its availability and usefulness in regards to life on the plains. Even though Native Americans did capture and use wild horses to some extent, this was not a common activity, because trained horses were much more useful to the tribes, especially because they were excellent bartering tools.

Plains Indian cultures controlled the central region of the United States by the 1600s, mainly because of their adaptation to a life on horseback, but they were not the only people to understand the usefulness of these animals. In the year 1541, the Spanish first came into contact with the Apaches.[18] During ensuing generations, the Apaches consistently raided early Spanish settlements for supplies. These supplies often included horses. As a result, they gained some equestrian skills, and by 1700 they began migrating southward, as the Comanche and other tribes (like the Utes) took dominant positions on the southern and central plains. In time, powerful Comanche controlled the flow of materials, particularly horses, through the Great Plains. During the 1700s these tribes traded large numbers of horses to eastern markets, particularly to French settlers in the southeast.[19] Although the Comanche had access to trained, domesticated horses, they also had access to, as Hämäläinen notes, nearly "two million feral horses roaming within and near their border."[20] This provided Native Americans with a plethora of what he describes

[16] Hämäläinen.
[17] Denhardt, 110.
[18] Jeffrey D. Carlisle, "APACHE INDIANS," Handbook of Texas Online, Texas State Historical Association, http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/article/bma33.
[19] Dan L. Flores, *Horizontal Yellow: Nature and History in the Near Southwest* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999).
[20] Hämäläinen, 240.

as “exploitable animal wealth.”[21] The Comanche adapted their lives to include the horse, and they opened up a new era in Great Plains history, one that they ruled on horseback.

The nineteenth century brought with it a shift in settlement, as people in the East began looking for a new home out West. It began with cattle barons controlling immense tracts of land throughout the southern and northern Plains. Then, by the late 1800s, the Homestead Act of 1862, along with railroad construction, contributed to the vast numbers of white settlers moving into the West, looking for new opportunities and land. These settlers began fencing off the frontier, which Webb discusses in detail, creating borders between what did, and did not, belong to them.[22] The fencing of the frontier also brought about other changes, including the end of open range grazing in many areas. As the numbers of settlers rose, so, too, did their need for horses. A horse-powered, agricultural and ranching-centered economy could always use more horseflesh.

Because wild horses were a free, and seemingly unlimited, resource at that time, trapping them became a way of life for some individuals. Men who trapped these wild horses, which are also called mustangs, became known as mustangers. Cowboys and ranchers controlled the population of wild horses in the western states. Not only did they trap these rogue horses, but they would keep some for ranch work and sell the others. Oftentimes they were sold to assist war efforts, supplying mounts during the Civil War and again in World War I through the Army Remount Service.[23] Westerners could make a small profit by catching and selling horses to the government or anyone else willing to pay the right price. Eventually these men, mostly cowboys and ranchers, became known as wild horse runners, or mustangers. The act itself became

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[21] Ibid., 240-41.

[22] Webb, *Great Plains*.

[23] Heaverne, Clifford, 2011, Oral History, interviewed by Andrea Mott, digital audio recording, Fallon, Nevada, August 29.

commonly known as mustanging. Many of these men worked for cattle companies whose main purpose was to remove the horses, because they were eating up the forage their cattle or sheep could use. Range use and resource competition played a major role in managing profitable as well as wild herds of animals. In some cases, mustangers loaded the animals into railroad cars and shipped them to eastern markets. The more fortunate animals found homes as saddle horses and cavalry mounts, while the less fortunate ended up in slaughterhouses and rendering works.

The practice of removing wild horses from prime grazing land continued well into the early to mid-1900s. Local wild horse management was common at the time. As mechanization became more widely used the mustangers began incorporating new techniques. Although saddle horses were often used to flush the wild herds out of canyons and desert mountains, twentieth-century horse runners began operating mechanized equipment like trucks, small bi-planes, and helicopters. Some extreme stories have surfaced about the more uncontrolled roundups, while other stories focus on how men running horses with mechanized equipment would use inhumane methods to capture the horses, often resulting in multiple injuries, some of which were fatal. This has not always been the case. Some people treated horses much better than others. The negative view, however, has been perpetuated through media outlets and magazine articles for decades.

In some ways the removal of wild horses from rangelands was a direct result of the passage of the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934. Rangeland management is defined as the relationship between animals and the land as well as native versus non-native animals. This act explained that range utilization needed to be managed in order to prevent a recurrence of the cattle disasters and land abuses of the 1880s, when overstocked range conditions became disastrous, especially with blizzards and drought killing off thousands of animals. It was hoped

that the TGA would put a damper on continued range use and abuse. These instances are not the only ones that briefly describe examples of land or animal abuse. Denhardt describes this situation in relation to that of the plight of the American buffalo, also a symbol of the Great Plains, stating, "The range of the mustang was gradually pre-empted by farmers and cattlemen. Any that hung around were rounded up, sold, or shot. The influence of the wild horse lingered on a little while longer than that of the buffalo."[24] Incoming settlers from the east diminished buffalo herds and pushed wild horses farther into the West, into areas where hospitable landscapes were not the norm. Still, in many parts of the country, the same people who were drawn out and criticized for their ways of controlling the population of wild horses on public ranges happened to be individuals who understood the horse better than most of the American population.[25]

Controversy is at the root of the wild horse discussion. This began in the mid-1950s when Velma Bronn Johnston started her campaign to preserve wild horses in the United States. Their inherent symbolism and mythic representations were oft cited as reasons to save them. Johnston believed that future Americans should also have an opportunity to view them in the wild. These animals, it was believed, symbolized the wild, noble, and free spirit of the nation. Viewed in that light, it would not be right to target a national, living symbol.

Johnston's story, however truthful or embellished it is, is still a persuasive one. Many writers have tried to convey her life story on paper, and whether intentionally or not, each one has written in such a way that the readers will think twice about Velma Johnston and her efforts to save wild horses in the United States. Are they worth saving? Why should we, the audience,

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[24] Denhardt, 200.

[25] Heaverne, 2011, Oral History; Dawn (Walker) Nottingham, 2013, Oral History, interviewed by Andrea Mott, digital audio recording, Craig, Colorado, July 26; Tom and Elmora (Vaughan) Peterson, 2013, Oral History, interviewed by Andrea Mott, digital audio recording, Rock Springs, Wyoming, July 27.

care about what happens to them? Johnston, a small woman, a native Nevadan, child polio survivor, wild horse advocate, as well as the daughter of a man who caught and trained mustangs, eventually became nicknamed "Wild Horse Annie" because of her determination to save wild horses in their western habitat. Her crusade began in the early 1950s and did not come to a close until the mid-1970s. Johnston had a different perception of wild horses. "Perception," as it is used in this dissertation, indicates awareness, insight, and the forming of opinions on a particular subject, in this case wild horses. An example of this might be: why did Velma Johnston, also known as "Wild Horse Annie," perceive wild horses in Nevada differently than neighboring ranchers? She was the pivotal figure whose research formed the basis for initial legislation to protect wild horses in Nevada. She appealed to congressmen, writers, photographers, media outlets, and to children. In her eyes these wild bunches were an integral piece of the western landscape. Her perception about the animals changed one morning in 1950 when she was driving to work and witnessed the transport of wild horses, dripping blood from inhumane capture techniques, to a rendering plant near Sparks, Nevada.[26] This event gave Johnston a sense of purpose and her crusade began in 1950. In other words, her perception of the situation changed based on one encounter.

Other individuals' perceptions are also shaped by their life experiences. Clifford Heaverne is another person shaped by heritage and history. He is a born-and-raised cowboy as well as a trained helicopter pilot (and Vietnam War veteran) contracted to work roundups for the Bureau of Land Management.[27] His background, like Johnston's, is in Nevada ranch life. His

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[26] Cruise and Griffiths; Heather Smith Thomas, *The Wild Horse Controversy* (South Brunswick, N.J.: A.S. Barnes, 1979); Stillman; Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. This collection contains a wide array of primary sources regarding her observations about the plight of horses in the West.

[27] Clifford Heaverne, conversation with author, April 14, 2009; Note that hereafter, the Bureau of Land Management will be referred to as the BLM.

father, Pat Heaverne, was a widely respected Nevada horseman, as well as a man who also ran wild horses.[28] Because of his father, Clifford learned how to work with horses at a young age. As a child he also developed a lifelong fascination with flying. His father's friend Ted Barber, himself a cowboy and a pilot, encouraged Clifford's interest in the subject.[29] His experience growing up as the son of a renowned horseman, combined with his advanced piloting experience, made him a logical choice when the BLM began managing wild horse herds. Many years of rounding up wild herds for the BLM gave him knowledge of government practices. His background also contributes to his understanding of the balance between humans and nature. His livelihood, in part, depended on the management of wild horses and this may, or may not, have influenced his opinion regarding these renegade horses. As a result, his perception of wild horse control issues is going to be different than individuals who have no insider knowledge.

By the mid-1950s some American citizens began taking an interest in Johnston's campaign efforts. She made many enemies during this time, particularly among government officials, cattlemen, horse runners, rendering plants, and slaughterhouse owners. Gus Bundy, a well-known Nevada photographer, contributed several photographs to her campaign. Today these are regarded, one of her biographers asserts, as "among the greatest action news photographs of the twentieth century."[30] These images capture the wildness inherent in mustang captures during the 1930s and 1940s. The American public reacted to these images, and on September 8, 1959, Johnston won a small victory for the wild ones when President Eisenhower signed House Resolution (HR) 2725, which is known as "the Wild Horse Annie Law."[31]

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[28] Paula Morin, *Honest Horses: Wild Horses in the Great Basin* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2006).

[29] Ted Barber wrote "The Barnstorming Mustanger," which is an account of his times rounding up horses in different parts of the country. He discusses various methods of horse trapping and piloting. In addition, his perceptions about the interest groups who worked to save wild horses is evident throughout the text.

[30] David Cruise and Alison Griffiths, *Wild Horse Annie and the Last of the Mustangs: The Life of Velma Johnston* (New York: Scribner), 120.

[31] Ibid., 137.

The campaign did not stop in 1959, and neither did the efforts of wild horse runners working under the legal radar. This law was not enough to dissuade some of them. A more drastic political action plan was needed. Throughout the 1960s Johnston appealed to the public with newspaper and magazine articles, pamphlets, pictures, and letters, hoping that Congress would pass another law stipulating how wild horses would be federally protected from capture in the United States.[32] Her appeals were not just the protection of horses, but also the care of the range as a renewable resource. She wanted horses to be managed, but in a humane and less intrusive and abusive manner. As the daughter of a rancher and the wife of another, she understood the necessity of controlling populations of wild animals. In time, her efforts prevailed. In 1971 Congress passed the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act, which placed the management of wild herds under the authority of the United States BLM and the Forest Service (FS).[33] These two federal agencies still control the management of wild horses in the United States. Since 1971 several addendums have been added to this law, allowing for modernization of techniques, such as mechanized roundups and animal safety, to name a few, but its overall emphasis on managing wild horses has remained largely unchanged.

Government agencies are affected by their complex relationship with the wild horses and the American public. The United States departments of Agriculture and Interior, in conjunction with the BLM and the FS, manage thousands of wild horses in ten states, including Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, Oregon, Nevada, California, Arizona, New Mexico, Idaho, and Utah. This places government officials in the midst of an ever-changing environment, one that mixes and

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[32] Ibid., 137; Marguerite Henry, *Mustang: Wild Spirit of the West* (Chicago: Rang McNally, 1966).

[33] U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, *Testimony of Mrs. Velma B. Johnston Before the Public Lands Subcommittee of the Interior and Insular Affairs Committee of the United States House of Representatives* (Washington, D.C., 1971); U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, *Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971: Hearing Before the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs*. 93rd Cong., June 26, 1974, 2d sess. (Washington: GPO, 1974).

pits horse professionals, ranchers, media, the public, and groups that aim to protect wild horses, against one another. Since the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971, or Public Law 92-195, the BLM and FS have been in charge of managing and protecting wild horses because they are "living symbols of the historic and pioneer spirit of the West."[34] It is this living symbolism that provides much of the fodder used in current debates.

Perceptions regarding wild horses, or at least the horses we believe to be wild even if they are contained within fenced-in, and managed, ranges, have continued to shift throughout the twentieth century. During the first half of the century people showed a remarkable lack of knowledge, as well as a lack of interest, concerning horses in the wild. The second half of the century brought about various forms of legislation, awareness, opinions from advocate and activist groups, as well as research, although limited, from scholars and scientists. Even today, the plight of wild horses is still being discussed in great detail. Legislators, horse practitioners, wild horse managers, and other interest groups still cannot agree on what to do with them. This dissertation examines the events from the 1934 Taylor Grazing Act up through 1984. It argues for the power of perception, or perceptions, in wild horse history. During these fifty years, Americans changed their perceptions of wild horses, turning them into symbolic creatures that deserve protection, rather than treating them as either livestock or feral pests. This fifty-year time frame allows for the study of wild horse management before, during, and after Congress passed the Act of 1971. This dissertation does not mean to cover the current wild horse controversy within the United States, or events within the past twenty-five years. Concluding thoughts in this dissertation attempt to explain the reasons behind the continued debate regarding wild horses in the United States.

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[34] United States, Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service, *A Report to Congress by the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture on Administration of the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act, Public Law 92-195* (15 December 1971), 1974 Report, Appendix 1:1.

In less than a century the American public turned what was once an obscure, and as a result, mystical, animal into one that captured hearts and minds of people all over the United States and beyond. During that time the symbolism of the horse rose to a new level. Government documents, in particular the Act of 1959, describe the wild horse as a living historical symbol of the American West.[35] As a result, the public continues to romanticize and give mythic qualities to wild horses in the United States. The public has also inflated its views of these animals, bestowing them with more than a historical representation of the American frontier. The law has dubbed these animals symbols of freedom, an idea that forms the base of American identity. These symbolic associations with American ideals place added importance on the continued protection and care of wild horse herds in the United States. Changing perceptions and persuasive arguments influence the way we view this animal and its role in our society. They represent multiple complex relationships involving people and places as well as a variety of ecological and environmental factors. The complexity of this subject shows how emotional causes can engineer change when rational arguments cannot.

Groups, particularly activist and advocate groups, also play a strong role in affecting what people know about wild horse issues. These organizations often utilize media to catch the attention of supporters. Activists are more focused on taking a strong stance concerning a government cause, while advocates focus more on maintaining an ecological balance between wild horses and their surrounding environment. Many groups originated with the sole purpose of

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[35] Ibid.; Cruise and Griffiths; Stillman; United States Bureau of Land Management and United States Forest Service, *A Report to Congress by the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture on Administration of the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act, Public Law 92-195* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, 1974); U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, Subcommittee on Public Lands and Resources, *Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Public Lands and Resources of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.* 95th Cong., May 23, 1977, 1st sess. (Washington: GPO, 1977); U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, *Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971: Hearing Before the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs*. 93rd Cong., June 26, 1974, 2d sess. (Washington: GPO, 1974).

rescuing wild herds from slaughter and mistreatment. The International Society for the Protection of Mustangs and Burros (ISPMB) and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), veterinary and horse practitioner groups, and others have been campaigning for better methods of managing wild horse herds. Some advocate closer management, whereas others desire a hands-off approach. The approach varies depending on the group.

Subjects that inspire passionate views are difficult to look at critically. The wild horse issue is one that incites strong responses, and opinions, from all sides, causing more problems than solutions. Wild horses are not the only animals surrounded by myths and controversy. Other subjects also inspire passionate views. Among these are the Klamath River tribes of the Pacific Northwest and their issues with salmon regulations, supporters of wolves in Yellowstone National Park, and the bison of the Great Plains.[36] Like the wild horse, these animals are surrounded by myth and symbolism. There are few historical treatments of the wild horse situation that look from the inside out. This is due, in part, because people have consistently viewed the wild horse in subjective terms. Some details could assist in focusing the argument, or problem, on one area in particular. Wild horses are romanticized in American culture. They also retain mythic qualities. These are essential elements that influence public perception. In addition, it is important to distinguish the difference between viewing the horse as "wild," "feral," "native," or "exotic." Certain groups are specific in their terminology, and there are reasons why they choose one term over another.

[36] Jim Lichatowich, *Salmon Without Rivers: A History of the Pacific Salmon Crisis* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2001); Joseph E. Taylor, *Making Salmon: An Environmental History of the Northwest Fisheries Crisis* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999); Cat Urbigkit, *Yellowstone Wolves: A Chronicle of the Animal, the People, and the Politics* (Granville, OH: McDonald and Woodward Publishing Company, 2008); Andrew C. Isenberg, *The Destruction of the Bison: An Environmental History, 1750-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

Most recent historical pieces do not examine perceptions; rather, they focus on actual controversy. In order to understand the wide-ranging views regarding this subject, it is essential to break down the group and individual interests and perceptions. This is being done in an attempt to understand where interest groups' viewpoints originate, see what does and does not make sense, and bring them to the point where it is possible to see how all of these groups have been talking past one another, to the point where no one is understood. We lack good historical treatments of this issue because writers, even those who claim impartiality to their subject matter, are captured by one or another image of the wild horse. What we see is that they favor those who share their sentiments and opinions and objectify those who hold a different stance on the subject.

Major controversial issues involving wild horses help explain why this issue is such a prominent concern for many Americans. Their perception of the controversy is swayed by activists, advocates, government groups, and individuals. Individual motivations need to be considered and further developed. Perhaps if these issues are examined more thoroughly, then all groups will come away with something new, whether it is a new comprehension of current ideas, an understanding of people involved in the management problems, or at least a better model of why these groups are talking over one another. Velma Johnston took a stance on the treatment, transport, and management of wild horses, but she was not alone.

This dissertation critically questions the perceptions of various interest groups and individuals and examines how they have changed over time. Between the years 1934 and 1984 American perception of wild horses changed from one of near indifference to one of intense scrutiny as a result of media, individual and group efforts, and political legislation. At the same time, our understanding of wild horses and wild horse issues has been limited by the

development of, and devotion to, certain mythical images of wild horses. To achieve historical understanding, it is necessary to understand these images and motives.

The reason for this change lies with the decreasing availability of land and water in the West. These resources are under constant scrutiny. If free-ranging horses share in the use of these commodities, yet provide little to no monetary value to those managing the land and water resources, then why should they be allowed to live there? One argument is that these animals themselves became more of a commodity after the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 because some individuals who had vested interests in the land could compete for more grazing allotments on which to place domestic herds.

This dissertation uncovers the hidden, and oftentimes contentious and volatile, world surrounding the American mustang. The allure of the wild horse is not just an expression of a broader public, as many specific groups are also entwined with its past. Many of the stories that are generated over time have elements of truth, but with any story embellishment is a probable outcome. Persuasive language is often used to convince people to stand on one side or the other concerning certain issues. Each group has a different image of the wild horse and it is important to study these points of view, sympathetically, to understand and critique them, rather than to take sides with one or the other. Because many viewpoints carry an element of bias, it remains important to analyze this subject area without obvious biases one way or another. It is essential to develop methodically each perspective, so that all sides will be more clearly understood. This development includes the stories of specific individuals in different parts of the country, the process and problems of passing relevant legislation, the issues around how to manage horses, and what to do about resource management both now and in the future.

The public's perceptions of individual contributions to this subject are often clouded because of pre-set biases and prejudices based on who or what an individual represents. Velma Johnston and Clifford Heaverne are merely two individuals recognized in the debate surrounding wild horses in the United States. Velma is somewhat idolized by activists and advocates alike, while others view her as a meddler. How do these viewpoints shape what is known to be true? Clifford, on the other hand, has been depicted as a villain because of his role as a contracted roundup pilot for the BLM. What we learn is that the media can alter a person's perception about something. Heaverne faced his share of hardships while employed by the federal government, but yet he remained a humane individual.[37] The experiences of individuals like Velma and Clifford, juxtaposed to one another, provide valuable historical elements to this subject that might otherwise be overlooked.

A second element in this analysis includes the positions of the federal government on issues related to wild horses and wild horse management in the United States. Government agencies like the BLM and the FS manage the animals, yet they are not the only ones involved in the process of removing horses from public rangelands. Private contractors control the roundup operations, not-for-profit groups assist in care and adoption events, scientists analyze range impact and the relationships between native and non-native (horses) animals, horse practitioners examine humane options of working with wild horses, Native American groups still try to preserve certain wild herds for cultural reasons, and ranchers still have a tenuous relationship with groups managing wild horses as well as the horses themselves. Activist groups push to eliminate roundups, because they believe them to be inhumane, while advocate groups push for awareness.

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[37] Heaverne, Oral History.

Another part of this analysis includes the influences of popular and public media on opinions regarding wild horses throughout the United States and abroad. The American public is drawn in by popular media, children and young adult literature, and sensationalist news about current issues and studies on horses in the wild (whether historically accurate or not). Wild horses have been romanticized in literature (*Misty of Chincoteague*, *Wild Spirit of the West*, and *The Black Stallion*), movies (*The Misfits*, *Hidalgo*, and *Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron*), and television documentaries (*Cloud: Wild Stallion of the Rockies*). These popular stories provide a basis for the mythical treatment of wild horses because they help capture the imagination of people everywhere. Horses help bring the West to life. How many tales depict stallions rearing on the edge of a cliff, or herds galloping off into the distance, leaving a dust cloud in their wake? How many discuss the ferocity of a stallion defending his herd or a mare protecting her young? How many people have witnessed the joy of seeing them run across barren, open spaces looking just as comfortable in desolate environments as they do in lush, green pastures? Or have these people heard the rhythmic staccato beats of their hooves moving across the ground? Viewing a herd in the wild is somewhat like examining the social structure, or family tree, of one small group. These animals live on a combination of instinct, intelligence, and stamina. Nature weeds out the weak and nourishes the strong. And it is the images, captured in popular and public media sources, that resonate with the broader general public. It is what they know about the animals, but it is not all truth. It is more or less based on factual evidence and then engineered or written in such a way that it captures an attentive audience.

Without doubt, media, literature, and news outlets provide intriguing glimpses at how popular culture can also help alter people's' perceptions of certain situations. Written records provide a good indication of peoples' changing perceptions regarding wild horses. Early

literature focuses on their mystic image and the methods of wild horse capture. Later literature and movies focus on the movement to protect them, or show the reasons why people should take an interest in the subject. Government reports, group-published bulletins, and newsletters also provide information in a more specific, and pointed, manner. More recent works discuss the difficulty of managing wild horses merely because they are always in the news in one form or another.

Community members in wild horse regions view this issue through another lens. Communities like Maybell, Colorado, that at one time depended on wild horses certainly view them differently than people in bigger cities with no direct relationship to, or with, wild horses, the land, or the resources it provides. Perhaps it is necessary to ask members of the voting public how they perceive the wild horse controversy. Maybe they know about current happenings in the wild horse world. Or, maybe someone could ask if the public understands the underlying issues that fuel the so-called wild horse controversy. They are surrounded by wild horse country, yet interest in the subject is varied. It may or may not be a worthwhile cause. Additional information could bring an added dimension to the subject.

The latter portion of this dissertation discusses the pros and cons of the American slaughter industry. The industry and various groups hold different positions on proposed horse slaughter legislation. The various perceptions on this issue relate to the bigger problem. Professionals in the field also share multiple viewpoints. These views differ between range scientists, wild horse specialists, and horse practitioners especially concerning the care, treatment, and management of wild horses. In-depth scientific studies back up their observations, thoughts, and field studies. Compromises could be made between the various interest groups if they focus on a solution to slaughter. Velma Johnston took a strong stance for

the protection of wild horse herds in the United States, and as a result her actions have shaped public interest in the subject. People view her so-called legacy in various ways. Many complex issues come to the forefront in regards to this subject. In essence, wild horses are controversial, but it is still important to understand the roots of the controversy itself. The persuasive use of language in public and popular media has assisted in further developing and enhancing the controversy. The perceptions throughout this dissertation show various facets of the overall problem.

For historians, it is important to break down existing literature and explore the historiography of a topic. Many viewpoints must be examined. Analyses should be applicable to the current problem under discussion. These might advance or hinder further discussion on the topic. Viewpoints on the subject have been affected by what the public understands, or has heard or read, about wild horses from interests peculiar to the group or individual that has publicized them. Media, of all types, can be a volatile force. Historians must distinguish why people have said what they have, in an attempt to understand it, rather than persuade anyone to a particular position on the subject.

Regional areas included here also deserve some description. The first of these is the Great Plains, or the central region of the United States. It is commonly defined by Walter P. Webb in his influential work *The Great Plains* as being the region west of the Mississippi River, where the land turns into a semi-arid grassland, and continues to the foothills of the Rocky Mountain Range in central Colorado.[38] This region includes the states of Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota and North Dakota, as well as the eastern portions of Montana, Wyoming, and Colorado. The western states discussed in this dissertation include the western portions of Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, as well as Idaho, Utah, Nevada, New Mexico,

[38] Webb, *The Great Plains*.

Arizona, California, Oregon, and Washington. The states that are most involved in recent wild horse issues include Colorado, Wyoming, south central Montana, most of Nevada, as well as sections of California, Utah, and Idaho. Currently ten states have wild horse herds under federal jurisdiction.

This work intends to capture the perceptions of interest groups, and individuals, by examining them in case-by-case studies. By doing this it is possible to analyze the shifts in perception over time in one location instead of many. This is going to be an episodic, or locality-based, history rather than an era-based history. Episodes in this dissertation examine different issues by viewing them like regional snapshots. These mostly take place across Western states, in areas that are more deeply entrenched in the wild horse world, and a couple of them analyze how and why these issues are becoming more relevant in the Great Plains. This produces a more conclusive and encompassing perspective regarding the changing landscape of wild horses in the United States. This set-up will give readers a sense of place in the West and portray how different issues play out in various parts of the country. For instance, when round-ups are discussed, the focus turns more fully on the herds of Nevada, since the state cares for approximately 50 percent of the total number living in the United States, or about 17 to 20 thousand. When the impact of commercialism on wild herds is discussed, it is appropriate to examine a small town like Maybell, located in northwestern Colorado. The town's proximity to wild horses has dubbed this area the "Gateway to Wild Horse Country." Most of the individuals living there have connections to these animals and view them through a fascinating array of lenses, almost as if they are relatives. Oral histories from the region and abroad provide deeper insights into the people, history, memory, and complexity of certain areas.

As a whole this dissertation pulls together an analytical history with a narrative element. A topic such as this one needs to be examined in terms of how perceptions vary from group to group, or individual to individual. After that it is easier to bring them together and show how they are working for or against the same cause. Incorporating individual and corporate memory gives a broader lens through which to study these various episodes in the history of wild horses in the United States. Each chapter begins with a short historiography, which provides a sense of place in regards to current historical literature, which, because of the subject, is somewhat limited.

Utilizing an episodic format tends to make each case study an isolated experience, but they are still connected through the broader issues of perceptions and group complexity. This method meshes well with analyzing individual and group perceptions on rangeland issues, control issues, and government relationships. In chapters two through four the focus is more on locality-based case studies, which helps tell a larger story. Chapters five through eight are more developmental in nature, meaning the scope is more thematic. In these chapters the perceptions of broader interest groups in regards to a common subject, such as the Act of 1971 or horse slaughter in the United States, are developed. The research methodology answers the research questions by taking into account multiple perspectives on a case-by-case basis. The conclusion, chapter nine, ties the groups together and points out relevant issues of concern today.

Wild horses have slowly transformed from a resource to a nuisance among major groups in the United States. Native Americans, American citizens, ranchers, and cowboys pushed this change because many believed the range was better used to support domestic livestock than wild horse herds. In chapter two the episode takes place in the Sand Wash Basin of northwestern Colorado, an area known for its wild herds. For more than one hundred years cattle ranchers,

sheep ranchers, and wild herds have lived together in this border area encompassing eastern Utah, south-central Wyoming, and northwestern Colorado. Regional stories proliferate about wild horse catchers, their quarry, and even the traps used in the horse gathers. Interest groups include long-time locals, ranchers, and other people in the public who have come to view the herds as family. Narratives in this region are shaped by the present and the historical past.

The Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 affected ranchers, range managers, and wild horses in the United States because it altered the way each group interacted with one another. This act allowed the federal government to lease range land to cattle and sheep ranching operations throughout the Great Plains and Western states. This second episode examines why, as a direct result of the Taylor Grazing Act, many wild horse catchers sent massive numbers of wild horses to slaughter in an effort to rid the land of their unneeded presence. This chapter examines the regional area of Wyoming and Colorado. Scientists understood that the land needed to be cared for in a humane manner because resources are not limitless. This shows a changed perspective regarding how the public viewed the role of horses in the wild. This legislation turned wild horses into a targeted problem, because their presence in these grazing zones limited the number of livestock that ranchers could place therein. During the 1930s the number of mustangers rose because of this change, and the numbers of wild horses began to decrease.

A single narrative can provide an important perspective to the meaning of wild horses and range management in the West. Clifford Heaverne's heritage entwines with that of wild horses in many significant ways. This third episode takes place in Nevada, near Reno, but in some aspects it incorporates small pieces of other western places. Nevada has long been an area that battles with the meaning and importance of wild horses. This chapter incorporates the memories and experiences of men who have led wild horse roundups from the pilot's seat of a

helicopter. This job came with its fair share of criticism, but it is an important element in understanding the discussion of relationships between people and perception in relation to wild horses of the West. This interest group has a two-sided perception concerning wild horses, one that is connected to both public interests and government interests.

Individuals and groups pushed forward an initiative to save wild horses in the United States, using their historical significance, symbolism, and enduring image as a representation of America. In chapter five, "The Pledge to Protect," the first of the developmental chapters, the primary subject matter focuses on the efforts of wild horse advocates and activists to enact the Bill of 1959. These interest groups are important to the wild horse dilemma in the United States because they provide a direct, persuasive, and personal link to the public in a way that helps sway public opinion. It also gives a clue to the efforts put into its passage and Velma Johnston's personal sacrifices.

Public awareness of wild horses in the United States grew during the 1950s and 1960s, ultimately resulting in the passage of the 1971 Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act. This legislation changed the way people could interact with the horses on the range. In chapter six, "What Else Can We Do," the Act of 1971 is thoroughly examined in terms of how it affected life on the range for government employees and civilian contractors. There are many conflicting perceptions on this piece of legislation. Those are examined here, and government documents and personal letters provide direct written links to the past.

Breaking apart the undercurrents surrounding the contentious subject of slaughter, especially wild horse slaughter, is vital to understand American attitudes towards the management and future outlook of wild horse sin the United States. In chapter seven, "Off to the Cannery," issues of slaughter in the United States are examined. It is a highly contentious topic

and incites emotion among many people and it deserves recognition in its connection to wild horse herds in the United States. The government, as well as advocate and activist groups, is vocal about this volatile subject. Those perceptions are broken down here.

Continued management practices consist of using holding facilities and adoption centers, neither of which is a sustainable method of population control when more and more wild horses are being taken off of the range. Chapter eight, "Where Do We Go From Here," incorporates discussions surrounding the efforts to control wild horse populations through the implementation of two key elements in wild horse management practices: holding facilities and adoption centers. One of the largest holding facilities in the West, the Palomino Valley Wild Horse and Burro Center, near Reno, Nevada, takes center stage in this chapter. Most wild horses are evaluated here before being sent elsewhere. Since federal government officials began controlling wild horse populations, they have had to find an outlet for the increased number of horses in their care. Adoption programs have become one of their key programs for reducing the number of animals in holding facilities throughout the United States. Numbers are not dwindling and the efficacy of these programs is questionable.

Evidence in narratives, the media, and among groups shows that it is difficult to remain objective about an emotional subject. The final chapter, "When the Dust Settles," brings together what is known about perceptions and interest groups in the world of wild horses. There are major areas of difference between these groups, but there are also similarities. There is a chance of resolving them if people look at the bigger issues like animal and range health. A historical treatment of this subject reveals new, objective, material. Perspectives regarding wild horses are continually changing. This chapter re-defines and then combines the issues and perspectives introduced in each chapter. It introduces issues occurring now, in the twenty-first

century, and the future outlook for these historical symbols of Spanish settlement, Native American economic advancement, and European American westward migration. When the dust settles, there may or may not be a future for wild horses in the United States.

Five hundred years, at the very least, define the longevity of horses helping people of all cultures advance in a multitude of ways. Their mystique, once attained, has been the hearth (or homeland) of stories (some true, some not) regarding legendary stallions, colorful nomadic herds, and the horses people tried, but never succeeded, in capturing. These are the origins of wild horse fables and myths. Even now perspectives are altered based on one's feelings and knowledge about a subject that incites a variety of volatile or emotional outbursts. These viewpoints are expressed in any number of ways, and they still keep opposing sides from coming to an acceptable conclusion. These pieces are important to the overall puzzle. Knowing the placement of each small section gives a fuller understanding, indeed perception, of the entire picture.

FROM RESOURCE TO NUISANCE

"In this barren and nearly inaccessible territory, the wild horse has made his last stand against captivity."[1]

Picture this: a man, dirty and unshaven, sits hunched behind a low rock, his hands gripping a thick coil of worn, well-used rawhide, a thundering heart his only companion. His eyes focus on something in the distance: a cloud of dissipating dust accompanies a small herd of horses. The earth trembles with each strike of their hooves hitting the ground. The man waits, the brim of his hat pulled low, waiting for the precise moment to make his move. Any sudden movement will scare them off. Still a half-mile away, they gallop alongside the line of piñon and juniper trees which, unbeknownst to them, leads down into the valley where a well-hidden trap awaits them. The man springs up as the horses sweep past. Slam! The gate is shut. Captured! The horses mill around in the enclosed corral, kicking up dirt, whinnying, wild-eyed, and neighing to one another. Only the thickest trees, and the occasional, well-placed strand of cable wire, keep them from breaking through the enclosure. Standing outside of the corral, his heartbeat slowing, the man contemplates his reasons for doing this: family, money, a means to survive. Or is it more than that?[2]

Wild horses are not always viewed as a resource for range-savvy individuals. More recently, people of various backgrounds choose to describe them as "pests" or "nuisances."

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[1] Rufus Steele, "Trapping Wild Horses in Nevada," *McClure's Magazine* (December 1909), 198-209: 198. This work tells the story of Charles ("Pete") Barnum, who was a famous bronco rider at the turn of the century. Materials include photographs and illustrations of traps, breaking horses, bronco busting, trapping, and corrals. There are descriptions of traps including wing distance, which is an important feature when studying the techniques used to capture wild horses.

[2] L.C. "Jim" Buffham,1993, Oral History, interviewed by Sharon Andrew, Maybell, Colorado, August 8. Craig-Moffat County Library. I based this introduction off of several different works I have read on trapping horses in the Sand Wash. Some of these consist of oral histories, some on photographs. Other observations are based on field research conducted in the region. Buffham recollects when he "ran wild horses sometimes . . . . A horse trap would be built having wings out from the opening of the corral trap. One man with a fresh horse would stay at the corral to make 'the trap run.' When the horses got close he would follow them in and shut the gate fast so they wouldn't turn and run back out again." The photograph observations are based on pictures taken during a 2010 research trip to look at old horse traps.

Either description conjures an image of something unwanted or unneeded on the range. It is certain that in the past century and a half wild horses have undergone a change in the way people view them, transforming from their role as a tool to one resembling a troublesome pest. The image of the mustang as an iconic symbol of western American history has become a rare thing. One would need to visit remote parts of the country in order to glimpse this spectacle, but it will never hold the same meaning as it did between 1600 and 1900. Wild horses no longer roam the land in massive numbers. If they did, we would need to ask whether or not it would be good for the range. Small-town individuals once managed local herds, keeping them at manageable levels while still gathering a few for their own use as cowponies. Society, whether agriculturally, militarily, or economically, needed horses. A few tough, range-hardened men in northwestern Colorado played a role in the shift of wild horses changing from a resource to a nuisance, themselves becoming a local example of something that happened on a much larger scale in other regions throughout the Great Plains and Western states.

In the United States, wild horses have long been a resource to different groups of people, and a nuisance to others. Their adaptability to the human hand, whether it was Spanish, Indian, or European American, turned them into an essential tool throughout the southwest, the central plains, and the American West. This episodic study examines horses undergoing the shift from being a resource to a nuisance; their influence on other creatures, human and animal alike, became a range problem. Who were the individuals who captured them, what were their methods, and why did they do it? Was it just to supply themselves with more mounts, more money, or both? The area of study encompasses the northwestern area of Colorado and the south-central region of Wyoming, both of which share the same border. The landscape is rough, barren, and isolated. The only highways are long and lonely stretches of concrete. Despite its

isolated feel, the landscapes are captivating. The Sand Wash Basin is a stretch of land that runs northwest of the small town of Maybell. It encompasses land of varied elevations, it is bordered by a river, and sagebrush dots the hills and crevices of the land. The sandy, dry soil has given the land its name. The region surrounding the Sand Wash is home to men and women who have grown up around the truths and mysteries surrounding wild horses in the West. These people's' perceptions and understandings about how wild horses have shaped their regional identity can help the public begin to realize the broader story involving these symbolic creatures. Are they merely renewable resources, nuisances, both, or symbols of something greater?

Some scientific and historical works contribute to analysis of this subject, and show us how this transformation of horses from a useful tool to a pest began. Range scientists and ecologists add to our knowledge of how horses interact with their surroundings. Sometimes this involves other four-footed animals, such as deer and antelope, but it can also include humans. Livestock, like cattle and sheep, and wild ungulates (hooved animals) like deer, antelope, elk, and burros, serve as partners in range use, and as such, their contributions on the range should also be studied.[3] Range scientists share a good portion of this analytical data. Their conclusions, based on the evidence they collect in the field, are key elements in wild horse studies. The scientists are able to break down the data and show the scientific reasoning and evidence supporting specific instances in which wild horses can be examined as pests or nuisances. Range managers are supposed to study the conditions of the range, good or bad, and make judgments about land use based upon the evidence. However, because many of these scientists work for the government or academic institutions, they also have a fault. They view their subject clinically,

[3] Jerry Holechek, Rex Piper, and Carlton Herbel, *Range Management: Principles and Practices*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1998), 303-9.

from economic or environmental standpoints, with insufficient consideration of culture and perception.

Perhaps the best known of these scientific studies is an ecological study undertaken by Joel Berger, a former biologist and professor with the University of Nevada-Reno, who wrote *Wild Horses of the Great Basin: Social Competition and Population Size*. In this work, Berger presents some key biological points that provide evidence as to how, ecologically, horses are different from other grazing animals and why that could be a long-term problem. One of Berger's central themes is focused around what can limit wild horse population. In his study, he concludes that the availability of adequate food sources is the first limitation to population growth because when "food is 'limiting,' populations experience density-dependent effects, and intraspecific competition can be expected to intensify."[4] The next limitations, in order of importance, are weather, disease, predation, and minerals.[5] Besides locating food, horses had to do several more things: adapt to their current physical environment, avoid predators, and find shelter.[6] Another important factor is that horses have no effective animal predators.[7] In reality humans are, by far, their most efficient predators. Each of these limitations and adaptations plays a role in the survival of wild horses in the American landscape. It is also evidence as to how horses could reproduce and overrun the range if not managed at all. The same concepts Berger researched in the Great Basin can be used in this regional study of the Sand Wash. And although his is a detailed ecological study, more information on other herds in the United States would add to what we know about their lives in the wild.

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[4] Joel Berger, *Wild Horses of the Great Basin: Social Competition and Population Size*, Wildlife Behavior and Ecology Series, edited by George B. Schaller (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1986), 5.
[5] Ibid., 5-6.
[6] Ibid., 2.
[7] Ibid., 18.

Historians also provide important elements to this historiography, and provide useful clues as to the ways in which wild horses have been used in the past. Walker D. Wyman contributes one of the first thorough works that analyzes the history of wild horses in the United States from 1600 to the present. Wyman held a professorship in history at Wisconsin State College for many years, including the time his book, *The Wild Horse of the West*, was published. This book, first published in 1945, was reprinted in 1963. It predates many historical works concerning wild horses and is widely cited by current historians. Wyman analyzes the horses and their contributions to life on the plains and the area west of the Rockies. His discussion of Indians, range issues, and early herding (or roundup) methods provides a valuable early look at the influence of wild horses in the United States. One of his points encompasses wild horse problems in northwestern Colorado near the border with Wyoming.[8] Although the work is dated, it provides some interesting insight. However, it also has one problem, in that Wyman considers government programs as reliable, particularly in terms of Indians and the early land programs that were supposed to help them.[9]

A third genre involves a broader scope of regional history and how it relates to the study of wild horses. As discussed briefly in chapter one, the Great Plains and other Western environments were places for adaptation; both people and animals adjusted to their surroundings by working with, rather than against, environmental constraints. Historians Webb and West both studied these adaptations. In Webb's regional work he describes certain characteristics that define Great Plains inhabitants, the first of which was the regional boundary line. The ninety-eighth meridian is the boundary because the single defining factor for the land west of it is a

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[8] Walker D. Wyman, *The Wild Horse of the West* (Caldwell, ID: The Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1945), 172-3. It was published again in 1963 and 1975.

[9] Ibid., 192-4.

scarcity of rainfall.[10] The land east of the ninety-eighth meridian received more rainfall and as such, had a different climate and geographic layout.[11] Lack of water defines the West, yet it was an ideal place for the horse to live and thrive. Interestingly, though, when Webb discusses animals adapting to the plains, he fails to discuss the horse and its contributions to the plains environment. Instead, he brings up the buffalo, jackrabbit, antelope, prairie dog, wolf, and coyote. The horse can live, indeed thrive, in the same landscape, yet Webb does not mention it.[12] Because he was an environmental determinist, his work focused on how the environment shapes the decisions, actions, and innovative ideas of people living on a treeless prairie.[13] People, animals, and even plants can be defined to a specific region as a result of geographical preference. The Great Plains region is semi-arid, level, and treeless, and people and animals alike had to adapt to it. Horses, wild and domestic, figure greatly in Great Plains regional history because of the ways in which they helped open channels of travel, trade, and communication among different groups of people. In this way horses were a resource used to better one's way of life. Webb's work is a good study of how the environment shaped people, but he does not allow much room for gender, Indians, and horses in his work.

Elliott West analyzes the concept of horses being an asset to people crossing the plains. These people more or less negotiated with their environment.[14] Before people from the east began migrating west, the Indian tribes were starting to experience the difficulty of keeping massive horse herds. Limited resources, especially those influenced by access, competition,

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[10] Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Plains* (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1931), 17.

[11] Environmental historian Richard White examines the ninety-eighth meridian as the delineating line between the more arid regions of the west and the moisture-ridden regions of the east. For more information read "*It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own": A New History of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1947), 185.

[12] Webb, 33-40.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Elliott West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, & the Rush to Colorado* (Lawrence, K.S.: University of Kansas Press, 1998).

weather, and the locations of other tribes, began to be a serious problem. West discusses how the tribes "badly underestimated how much damage their horses did to grasses and especially to the cottonwood groves that gave them fuel and blunted the killing wind."[15] Although Indian tribes overused and abused their own resources, particularly riverine areas, the white settlers moving west helped deplete them even more. The 1849 Gold Rush motivated a new wave of settlers to move west across the unsettled plains.[16] They had to cross the ninety-eighth meridian, which Webb described as a boundary line, in order to reach the golden opportunities in far-off places. Crossing this line meant that people had to face various environmental and geographical challenges. *The Contested Plains*, like Webb's work, shows how individuals bargain with their environment in order to survive. This is the same issue confronting wild horse herds, and the people concerned with them, then and now. When do we cross the point of no return in the management of our natural and renewable resources?

Wild horses were not always a resource to Indians. Sometimes an overabundance of something, like horses, brought them to an unbalanced relationship with resource availability on the plains. In 2008 historian Pekka Hämäläinen published *The Comanche Empire,* a revisionist Indian history, in which he develops the concepts of Comanche agency. He explains how the Comanche made decisions and judgments based on their societal needs, rather than what the Spanish or Anglo settlers wanted. They acted on their own decisions. Indian control of the Great Plains was a major reason why Anglo settlement stopped around the Missouri River Valley, an idea West develops in more detail. Fear of this unknown treeless plain, combined with its fierce inhabitants, made settlement a difficult endeavor. European descendents accustomed to forging through wilderness were unprepared for the vast openness of the Great

[15] Ibid., 229.
[16] Ibid., 98.

Plains. Approaching a land without trees confounded them, which explains why many early white settlements stopped on the eastern edge of the ninety-eighth meridian. Although Hämäläinen thoroughly examines the world of the Comanches and their transformation of life on the Great Plains, his analysis of wild horses does not go far beyond that strong connection. As a result, his work will be discussed in terms of how Indian tribes and wild horses played a role in early changes on the Great Plains.

J. Edward de Steiguer wrote the most recent work, and its sole focus is wild horses, as indicated by the title: *Wild Horses of the West: History and Politics*. His analysis covers the large span of time between the native *eohippus* and the modern mustang. Though compelling, this work fails to take into account the experiences of those closest to the wild horses. The main individuals, such as Velma Johnston, are discussed in detail, but the narratives of ordinary people are missing. The book is a quality resource for scholars, yet without these other narratives, the story is not complete, because they also help tell the story of mustangs on the range. Despite that, de Steiguer brings a new political depth to the subject.[17]

These historical works play an important role in shaping what we know about how horses have been exploited as either a resource, something beneficial to the people capturing them, or a nuisance on the Great Plains and throughout the West. The first of these is Webb's analysis of the environment and how it shapes individual actions. It is important work because it establishes an environmental imperative.[18] The second, Elliott West's *Contested Plains*, examines how westward settlement influenced the ways people utilized the horse.[19] The third important work, Pekka Hämäläinen's *Comanche Empire*, breaks down the Comanche's complex social, political,

[17] J. Edward de Steiguer, *Wild Horses of the West: History and Politics of America's Mustangs* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2011).
[18] Webb.
[19] West.

and economic network, and gives readers a lengthy analysis concerning the role of horses in this society.[20] The last major work in this section is de Steiguer's good modern study on early politics and land management methods geared towards America's wild horses. Webb focuses on the environment while West and Hämäläinen break down the ways in which the horse was a resource that plains people used to get ahead in society. All of these works, whether scientific or historic, are relevant and add to our perceptions of wild horses as either resources, nuisances, or both.

Although important, historical works are not the only ones that should be studied concerning the effects of myth and symbolism surrounding the wild horse. Will James, a famous western author and cowboy, spent a lot of time, and words, detailing life in the American West. Horses were one of his most common subjects. One of his novels, *Smoky the Cowhorse*, was originally published in 1926 and advocated a common perspective of the wild horse.[21] In it he described the relationship between a man and his horse. But he was not just describing a relationship; he was describing a transformation, one that many others experienced. Smoky was a product of the untamed West, at least for the first few years of his life, until one man tamed him as a saddle horse. This tale chronicles life on the range that predates government management of wild herds. It also captures the imagery of a landscape shaped by its environment. The man and the horse named Smoky form a bond that few understand. It is works like this one that encapsulate the myth and spirit of the West and the strong ties formed between humans and horses.

The evidence supports that horses once belonged in the Great Plains and American West landscape, and that the people who settled in these regions utilized them as a local resource.

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[20] Hämäläinen.
[21] Will James, *Smoky, the Cowhorse* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926).

Extensive scientific research combined with field observations provides verification that horses, domestic and wild, have been living on the North American continent since the mid-1500s.[22] It is believed, among scientists and historians, that the Spanish reintroduced this species to the North American continent around 1540.[23] The Spanish brought tame horses that are now believed to be the ancestors of some modern-day wild horse herds. Although they evolved in Asia and the Middle East (desolate and remote areas similar in many ways to the Great Plains and areas between the Rocky Mountains and Sierra Nevada ranges in California), these animals quickly adapted to life in the new world.

During these early years, between 1600 and 1850, horses became a significant resource in the quest for control over the land and people.[24] At this point, horses were most often utilized as a resource. Outside of the buffalo, the horse became the most influential animal of the Great Plains.[25] For centuries people of various cultural backgrounds used horses to conquer new lands and used them to earn material success over their peers. The Spanish are an early example of this, and Indians are the second such example. It is more likely that current wild horses in North American "are . . . derived from stock that escaped from ranchers, miners . . . American Indians" and Spanish explorers.[26] Since the time of the Spanish explorers horses have roamed the West and have adapted to its landscape and environment. As settlement in the East increased, so, too,

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[22] For more information on this topic consult Joel Berger, *Wild Horses of the Great Basin*, and Robert M. Denhardt's *The Horse of the Americas*. Both of these works provide information on the adaptability of horses to the North American climate and environment. They also examine the early history of horses on the continent.

[23] Hämäläinen.

[24] West discusses the idea of the horse as a "tool" in more depth in *The Contested Plains*. As he explains, in time, the tool that gave them the most advantage in their nomadic lifestyles also hindered them: "the need *for* horses and the needs *of* horses put a practical limit on the size of nomadic groups. And that limit was reached fairly quickly," 84. In further analysis, we come to realize that there is a balance between man and nature, or the environment, and once that balance exceeds what can be sustained then the effectiveness of everything connected to it dwindles.

[25] In *The Great Plains* Webb stated how the bison was the single most influential animal on the Great Plains, while West and Hämäläinen might say the horse was the second most influential creature. This conclusion may be a direct result of their Native American research.

[26] Berger, 12.

did the number of European-blooded animals making their way West. Over the years many of these animals, whether through escaping or being let loose by their owners, found a home with the wild herds that roamed the Great Plains and the vast areas west of the Rocky Mountains. In many cases, wild horses were bred up because of quality stallions being let loose on the range to mate with wild mares.[27] Their use as a means for advancement was unparalleled.

Indians on the southern plains adapted to a new way of life that included the horse, and as a resource it changed their future. These people raided, captured, stole, sometimes trained, and took horses that they needed for economic control of the plains. Their herds numbered in the thousands and in time they became a fierce, horse-dependent culture. The Comanche, perhaps the strongest of plains tribes, eventually had an empire of their own, ruling the Great Plains with political, military, and economic dominance.[28] West states that by approximately 1750, "the Comanches had laid the basis for their legendary status as the plains' most adept and feared horseback warriors."[29] Unfortunately, as historian Hämäläinen showed, it was the Comanche's total reliance on horseflesh that both strengthened their empire and quickened its decline.[30] This reliance meant that horses needed the same resources as the bison, the Comanche's primary food source. Competition over food and water in the riverine areas created a backlash in their economy.

The Comanche and other Plains tribes' overall dependency on horses meant that they also relied on horse trading to provide an economic, political, and cultural boost within their various societies. This concept is introduced in chapter one, albeit briefly. The horse gave native tribes

[27] De Steiguer, 134. The term "bred-up" is often used in discussions about wild horses. Records indicate that people wanted a hardy horse with endurance combined with the speed of horses brought from the East. This made for tall, sturdy horses well-equipped to work on ranches. See Dawn (Walker) Nottingham, 2013, Oral History, interviewed by Andrea Mott, digital audio recording, Craig, Colorado, July 26, for more information on how local people bred up wild herds. Her father, Boyd Walker, is mentioned later in this chapter.

[28] Hämäläinen.

[29] West, 64.

[30] Hämäläinen.

a means for advancement. It also gave them the capabilities of transporting a large amount of goods and people across their territory. This advancement increased the reach of the Comanche's trading network, and opened up more possibilities. Raiding, theft, and trading of horses pushed the economy forward.[31] By the time Anglos moved westward, the Plains Indian tribes had already adapted to a life on horseback.[32] Indeed, they had become so adept on horseback that their claim to the central Plains remained uncontested for nearly two hundred years. The plains tribes held on to this vast central portion of the country because they had a superior and adept communication network as well as a feared cavalry. Their unlimited supply of horseflesh was helpful.[33] However, it was also a hindrance. By the mid-1800s, these tribes had come into contact with westerners and soon recognized the Anglo's heightened need for horseflesh to use on their farms and ranches. This was a resource they could provide. Dan Flores, a western and environmental historian, writes about the trading practices between Anglos and Indians in two separate works, first in his book, *Horizontal Yellow: Nature and History in the Near Southwest*, and again in his more recent article, "All the Pretty Horses."[34] His research identifies how westward expansion started a lengthy trading relationship between Anglo traders and Indians.[35] Plains Indians owed their livelihood to the horse. Its role in their society brought

[31] De Steiguer, 131. He discusses this idea that the Indians obtained horses through illegal means, gaining what they needed and then selling these animals to others. It was profitable for them, but it angered white settlers.

[32] West; Webb.

[33] Part of this "unlimited supply of horseflesh" came from wild herds roaming the plains. Native American cultures quickly adapted to using the horse in everyday life. Many historians would agree that the reason few eastern settlers chose to pass through the plains was because of the fierceness of Indian tribes. The sight of a fully mounted war party was probably a fearful image to westward bound travelers. The sources referenced here are Hämäläinen's *Comanche Empire*, Elliott West's *The Contested Plains*, and Dan Flores, "Bringing Home All the Pretty Horses: The Horse Trade and the Early American West, 1775-1825," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 58, no. 2 (2008).

[34] Flores, "Bringing Home All the Pretty Horses"; Dan L. Flores, *Horizontal Yellow: Nature and History in the Near Southwest*, 1st ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999).

[35] Ibid.

about economic stability (for a time) and political control. Yet, it was also part of the reason why their empires crumbled.[36]

Once European-American settlers began to move westward the dynamics of life on the open plains and western ranges began to undergo an era of change. Wild horses became a resource for white settlers, particularly ranchers and cowboys who often needed a fresh supply of horses.[37] As settlement flowed into western regions, conflicts arose between Indian tribes and groups of settlers headed towards Colorado and California. By the mid-1850s westward expansion, aided by the excitement of the gold rush in California and Colorado, opened the frontier to settlement.[38] It did not take long for whites to become "uncontested" in their settlement of the plains.[39] At about the same time, vast cattle operations began monopolizing good grazing land. During this time, horses were removed from the range because they could be used elsewhere as resources, particularly in agriculture and military operations. Hämäläinen and West both argue that the opening of the frontier brought too many competitive species into one area.[40] Berger also has the same opinion, concluding that uncontrolled "grazing…primarily by cattle, has seriously depleted most natural grassland communities."[41] This was an issue that Indian tribes faced in the early to mid-1800s when they realized that there was a limited amount of resources for them to utilize, particularly for cattle, sheep, and horses.[42] There was barely

[36] Hämäläinen. This revisionist history on the Comanche gives readers a strong example of a complex, fully functional, society. It is one that created its own economic network and its own downfall. Much Indian history portrays them as victims rather than as agents of their own history. The Comanche used a system that revolved around the horse. They controlled the vast Plains region between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains and much of this advancement is due to their adaptation of life on horseback. These people are just one example of how the horse can change the history of a region, or in this case, the history of a select group of people.

[37] James, *Smoky*, 73.

[38] West. This work on delves into the ways the gold rush changed life on the plains. He also explains why the central plains was a difficult area to conquer. The Indians had a lot of control over who and what journeyed through the land.

[39] West, 319.

[40] Hämäläinen; West.

[41] Berger, 29.

[42] Wyman, 190-1.

enough food on the range for the large number of animals relying upon it. Too much competition over too few renewable resources became a widespread problem.

The land that had nourished massive bison herds for centuries would soon become an open feeding range for Texas longhorns and domestic cattle herds. Miners, settlers, ranchers, traders, and other enterprising individuals left their lives, and sometimes their families, in the east to discover life out west. Some of these groups saw potential in the immense grasslands and sweeping prairies they crossed. As West explains, the plains environment "could sustain tens of thousands of contented cattle and horses and meet the inevitable demand for beef."[43] This need for beef quickly began to shape the American economy. It also brought about a boom in the industry that would become calamitous during the severe blizzards and droughts of the 1880s. By the mid-1880s large cattle operations had taken hold of the Great Plains and, as a result, overgrazing, starvation, severe weather, and predators eventually became major issues. There was an immense amount of money to be made in the cattle industry, and everyone wanted a cut of the profits. Like the Indian tribes, these new settlers and ranchers abused the lands' abundance to the point of near depletion. In the meantime, however, domestic cattle herds were large enough to compete with the native bison and wild horse populations. All three relied on the same combination of resources to survive. As a result, the ranching industry, cowboys, and even slaughterhouses became common horse buyers at the end of the nineteenth century.

Society's need for horses continued throughout the 1800s and early 1900s, but at the turn of the twentieth century there was a drastic shift. The concept of wild horses changing from being a resourceful, and indeed bountiful, entity to one described as pest-like began at the onset

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[43] Ibid., 241.

of the twentieth century. In 1945, Wyman used the term “pests” in reference to mustangs.[44] This turning point came during the early half of the twentieth century, as wild horses became less useful for industry and agriculture. The value of horses decreased as American industry shifted from horsepower to industrial powered machines. As Americans replaced their horses with machines, their usefulness lessened, as did their price. With the advent of motorized technology, namely the motorcar, people used fewer horses for day-to-day activities.[45] Mechanization and the reduced dependency on horses led to increased pursuit of wild horses, but not necessarily because they were resources. Numerous wild horses began disappearing from the Great Plains and the American West in the mid- to late 1800s. Trains provided the necessary transport to remove wild horses from the Great Plains and the American West in the early to mid-1900s. The same railroads that traversed the plains, shipping range-fattened cattle to Chicago slaughterhouses, also shipped wild horses off the range. Ranchers and cattle barons hired mustangers to remove wild horses from public land because they competed with domestic cattle and sheep herds for the same resources. It is evident that some individuals viewed them as an exploitable resource. These men trapped and gathered the horses before sending them to different markets via the railroad, sometimes sending them to the east and sometimes to the west.

[44] During the 1800s, mustangers removed wild horses from the range and sent them east. At this time wild horses were trained and then utilized in ranch work, on the battlefield, and even occasionally as saddle and bridle horses. Because horses were still a large part of American society at the turn-of-the-century, there was always a need for more horseflesh, Wyman, 131. He used the term “pests” to describe the way some people viewed mustangs, and in the 1870s and 1880s, it was a common opinion. This is the first instance where I found the term “pests” used in relation to wild horses.

[45] Clay McShane, and Joel A. Tarr, *The Horse in the City: Living Machines in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007). This work by McShane and Tarr points out turn-of-the-century changes and how the shift from horsepower to industrial power changed life both in and around major cities. They zero in on how these changes affected the need for horsepower in a country that had previously relied upon horses for transportation and energy. De Steiguer also discusses how mechanization changed the role of the horse in society. He explains that “Not until the early twentieth century did the internal combustion engine begin to replace horses, mules, burros, and oxen” (130). His explanation continues and shows how an increased population out west (Great Plains and beyond) meant that more horsepower was needed to run farms and serve as transportation (130-1). Horse value decreased dramatically once automobiles replaced them in different sectors of society, both urban and rural (137).

And sometimes they kept the good ones for themselves. The century of the horse had become the century of the automobile. This shift proved perilous for the plight of the wild horse in North America.

The Taylor Grazing Act was another important turning point for wild horses in the United States. When Congress, under the leadership of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, approved this act on June 28, 1934, it resulted in the first government-controlled grazing program in the United States.[46] The TGA of 1934 allowed ranchers to lease public land to graze their domestic herds.[47] This piece of legislation took away the idea of the common land, or land shared by everyone, and turned it into a government-controlled multiple-use act. Within the first year the Grazing Service controlled 80 million acres of public land, but by 1936 it was managing 142 million acres, an increase of approximately 56 percent in two years.[48] As the government began collecting unprotected western lands, it began turning many of them into multiple-use zones. As a result, grazing areas diminished to make room for more multiple-use areas like national parklands, conservation areas, and national forests, which accounts for the vast increase of acreage from 1934 to 1936. In the 1940s the Grazing Service underwent some changes. In 1946 it began a new branch of service called the BLM.[49] The TGA's multiple-use clause fell under the scope of the newly created BLM. As a result, this new branch became the sole custodian of huge tracts of uninhabited western land, including the one discussed in this chapter.

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[46] Joseph V. H. Ross, "Managing the Public Rangelands: 50 Years since the Taylor Grazing Act," *Rangelands* 6, no. 4 (1984). This paper highlights the changes the Taylor Grazing Act enacted throughout its first fifty year time frame. Some of these changes, discussed here, were more detrimental than others to the way the government manages wild horses on public rangelands.

[47] William Voigt, *Public Grazing Lands: Use and Misuse by Industry and Government* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1976); James R. Skillen, *The Nation's Largest Landlord: The Bureau of Land Management in the American West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009). Both of these sources delve into the subject of common land with greater detail. The Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 remains a heated subject surrounding the wild horse controversy within the United States. Some historians and authors believe it was this piece of legislation that forever changed the fate of wild horses.

[48] Roy M. Robbins, *Our Landed Heritage: The Public Domain, 1776-1970*, 2nd ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1976), 421.

[49] Skillen, 8.

Horses on the range in this period became an exploitable resource by which industrious cowboys could make extra cash. Between 1934 and 1984 this economic shift brought about a changed perception regarding wild horses in the West. The twenty-five year lag between the Taylor Grazing Act and the passage of the Wild Horse Annie Act of 1959 gave ranchers, cowboys, and corporations time to hire men to run wild horses off of public land areas. At this point prime grazing land became a hot commodity, and mustangers removed horses in order to make room for profitable livestock herds.[50] In a short span of time, humans and wild herds became foes in the fight over land, mainly as a result of the 1934 Taylor Grazing Act. At this time large numbers, indeed thousands, of horses found themselves in rendering plants and slaughterhouses, bound to be glue or animal food. During this fifty-year time frame their usefulness as a resource increased and then came to a halt when the federal government took over, through congressional and public approval, wild horse management and protection.[51] After this shift in wild horse management, local citizens (like those in the small towns of northwestern Colorado) could no longer legally roam the range searching and hunting for wild horses.

During the late 1940s well into the 1950s, the BLM regularized its operations while land-holders, ranchers, and cowboys in several western states tried to make space on the grazing lands for their cattle and sheep operations. Competition for natural resources is one major reason why many cattlemen and ranchers wanted wild horses removed from common land. It is also an explanation for their declining numbers at the turn of the century. The high number of sheep utilizing public land also played a role in the deteriorating range conditions. One area in

[50] Heaverne, Clifford, 2011, Oral History, interviewed by Andrea Mott, digital audio recording, Fallon, Nevada, July 29; James, *Smoky, the Cowhorse*; Parley J. Paskett, *Wild Mustangs* (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1986).

[51] For more information refer to the 1934 Taylor Grazing Act and the 1959 and 1971 legislative reports.

particular, the Sand Wash Basin of northwestern Colorado, stands out as a conflict zone for wild horses, the BLM, local parties, and outsiders.

The Sand Wash is an interesting area, one that captures the imagination with its sweeping views of mountains, plateaus, hills, and valleys.[52] It is evident how this region received its name; the rough, sandy, rock-infused soil is everywhere. Current BLM reports show the Sand Wash Basin encompassing approximately 154,940 acres.[53] Because it covered such a vast area, mustangers had to set up corrals they could easily find. These corrals became cultural and regional artifacts of the sport known as mustanging. They also stand as regional examples of economic opportunity and private enterprise. The basin consists of rolling hills, steep slopes, and the occasional coulée.[54] These changes in the land provided adequate cover for horse traps, which blended into the basin's natural landscape. Vegetation here consists of juniper and piñion trees, aromatic sage, forbs (non-grasslike plant life), and perennials (plants that return the following year).[55] The smell of the sage alone encourages the visitor to take a journey into the Old West, to the lands Zane Grey writes about in *Riders of the Purple Sage*. The lower valley

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[52] Andrea Mott, "IMG383," digital photograph, (2010); Andrea Mott, "IMG386," digital photograph, (2010); Andrea Mott, "IMG388," digital photograph, (2010); Andrea Mott, "IMG389," digital photograph, (2010); Andrea Mott, "IMG393," digital photograph, (2010); Andrea Mott, "IMG398," digital photograph, (2010); Andrea Mott, "IMG400," digital photograph, (2010); Andrea Mott, "IMG417," digital photograph, (2010). These photographs, shown in succession, provide a wonderful view of the Sand Wash landscape. The mountains, hills, valleys, coulees, are prominent as is the abundance of rough, rock infused, sandy soil.

[53] U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, "Bureau of Land Management: Colorado: Wild Horses in Northwest Colorado," http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/lsfo/programs/wild_horse.print.html.

[54] U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, "Sand Wash Herd Management Area: Wild Horse Removal Plan," Craig District Office, Little Snake Resource Area, 25 May 1995. This report is a draft of the conditions in and around the Sand Wash Basin and includes information about the wildlife, landscape, temperature, water sources, road conditions and locations, and boundary markers. It also provides an interesting take on counting the numbers of wild horses between 1971 and 1994, with the start date beginning the year Congress passed the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act. Most of the numbers are approximate because it is difficult to calculate an accurate number while counting in either a fixed-wing or rotor-wing plane. Besides that, these numbers helped the LSRA plan for the future when too many horses could become a problem for the range and the other animals who utilized it. The report mentions that deer, elk, and antelope are found in the basin, with antelope being by far the most numerous.

[55] Ibid., 4. Also see Andrea Mott, "IMG392," digital photograph, (2010); Andrea Mott, "IMG395," digital photograph, (2010); Andrea Mott, "IMG397," digital photograph, (2010); Andrea Mott, "IMG403," digital photograph, (2010); Andrea Mott, "IMG404," digital photograph, (2010).

and plains areas are covered in a smattering of brush and the occasional watering hole (mostly manmade), all of which are surrounded by large areas of dry sandy earth. Trails lined with massive anthills veer towards these waterholes, and a combination of hoof prints and paw prints in the sandy loam indicate wild horses are not the only ones who drink from it.[56] The Little Snake River, a winding, dark, blue-green entity, lines the outer portion of the eastern boundary of the Sand Wash Herd Management Area (HMA). This distinctive feature provides one method of easily locating the BLM managed land, both on satellite maps and in person. The high isolated areas are also home to various forms of wildlife, such as antelope, deer, and coyotes.[57] According to reports on the Little Snake Resource Area, printed by the BLM District Office in Craig, Colorado, the northern boundaries of the basin include the "Sand Wash Rim fence, Lookout Mountain and the Vermillion Bluffs."[58] The southern boundary is the Highway 318 fenceline, which flows west out of Maybell, Colorado. The western portion of the HMA includes "Dry Creek, West Boone Draw and Bears Ears fences."[59] There is a 2,000-foot difference between the northern and southern boundaries of the basin, with the north having the highest elevation at over 8,000 feet.[60] These changes in elevation throughout the Sand Wash provide cover for the animals, men, and traps hiding within its boundaries.

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[56] Andrea Mott, "IMG432," digital photograph, (2010); Andrea Mott, "IMG434," digital photograph, (2010); Andrea Mott, "IMG435," digital photograph, (2010); Andrea Mott, "IMG440," digital photograph, (2010).

[57] Andrea Mott, "Rabbitbrush," digital photograph, (2010); Andrea Mott, "Dead Coyote," digital photograph, (2010); Andrea Mott, "Antelope in the Sand Wash," digital photograph, (2010).

[58] "Sand Wash Herd Management Area: Wild Horse Removal Plan," 4.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid.

Figure 1. An eastern view of the Sand Wash Basin from County Road 67. This photograph shows the changes in elevation, the shrubbery, and the dry, sandy soil. Andrea Mott, “IMG393,” digital photograph, (May 25, 2010).

In Maybell, Colorado, a small, one-street town southeast of the Basin boundaries, it is difficult to avoid the subject of wild horses. Local people are deeply involved in the issue and their town is called “The Gateway to Wild Horse Country,” a romantic title that carries an implicit meaning. Emotion runs strong here, and history runs deep. Adults and elders in the town have lived their lives surrounded by the culture of wild horses, and more often than not have a family member who once ran horses. The methods, techniques, and knowledge of horse catching have been passed down from generation to generation. Sitting in the local café is a good way to hear random wild horse stories and tales of life on the range. In a town like

Maybell, memory and place coexist in a way that makes this particular locale historically significant. Its relationship with local wild horses has lasted for more than a century.

Horse running is a major reason for the decline of wild horses on western rangelands. Yet, these men, and the occasional woman, did it to earn a living, not necessarily with the purpose of removing all wild horses from the land. This region had a plethora of horses, and someone had to help control their numbers. Their goal was neither to eradicate them nor to let them reproduce uncontrolled. Rather, it was to use what they could, then release or sell the remaining animals. In effect, wild horses were both a resource, and, if left unmanaged, a nuisance. As a result, mustangers merely took control of the situation, controlling herd numbers using methods and techniques they used and perfected over the years. It was a well-honed system. In 1981, Paul Bonnifield, a well-known historian of the Dust Bowl era, interviewed Cecil Connors. Connors, a Colorado cowboy, had some insight regarding Colorado's wild horse population. He is one mustanger who has discussed his time trapping and selling wild horses in Colorado during the 1930s and 1940s. When Bonnifield asked him about his time running wild horses in the Sand Wash area of northwestern Colorado, Connors responded by saying "the whole thing was a bad deal. We were all predators."[61] Although this paints him and others in a negative light, at the time horses did not have a natural predator. Humans took over that role. The role of human predation is something both scientists and novelists have discussed in their works. Berger points out how these animals have no effective natural predators in the United States, and because of that issue humans had to take over that function.[62] James also suggested

[61] Paul Bonnifield, e-mail letter to the author, November 17, 2009.
[62] Berger.

this, mostly in terms of how wolves were not entirely effective predators when pitted against the toughness and strength of the wild horse.[63]

The landowners living around the basin took care of the wild animal issues they encountered prior to this area being protected by federal legislation. The fight over grazing land placed wild horse herds in the middle of the struggle between government and free-range enterprise. In the early to mid-1900s mustangers, like the Indians before them, removed wild horses from the range as a method of controlling overpopulation, earning a living, or finding new horses.[64] Cecil Connors was one of these men. The lack of available jobs in the 1930s forced many men like Connors to search for work in strange places. Horses competed with cattle and sheep for the same resources, and as historian Dan Flores states, it was about this time that "wild horses had gone from being a resource to being pests…. And ranchers paid their cowboys to shoot them on sight."[65] Yet, it is important to note that this transition did not occur so easily. Locals often viewed the animal as both, depending on their needs at the time. Their identity was tied to the way they used local resources, like the wild horses. The competition between domestic herds and wild horses became an untenable situation for ranchers and resulted in more horses being removed from western rangeland.[66] In an effort to reduce the number of horses on the range, mustangers would round them up like they did in the 1800s, and take them to market.[67] It was unusual for them to be killed outright because they served many uses. Some of

[63] James, 62-70.

[64] Paula Morin, *Honest Horses: Wild Horses in the Great Basin* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2006), 220.

[65] Flores, *Horizontal Yellow*, 123.

[66] This statement comes from an unpublished review of *Horizontal Yellow* that I wrote in 2010.

[67] Homer Hoyt, "Catching Wild Horses," *The Colorado Magazine* vol. xi, no. 2 (March 1934), 41-5. In this work, Hoyt himself a one-time mustanger, describes what it was like catching wild horses in the time period around 1887. His writing, though informative, also gives readers clues as to wild horse social hierarchy, materials necessary to catch these animals, and the methods catch and then move them from the corrals; A. R. Ross, "Wild Horses of the West," in *Colorado Magazine* XXV, no. 6 (November 1948), 266-69. In this source, the author Ross provides a nice explanation of how many horses roamed the Colorado plains and mountain regions in the 1870s and 1880s, saying

these wild horses were destined to become saddle horses, but the unlucky were sent to slaughterhouses, canneries, and rendering factories, bound to become dog food or some other item bound for the general store.

Ranchers and cowboys in south-central Wyoming and northwestern Colorado controlled these wild mustang populations using methods they honed over the years. These methods have advanced over time, but these were widely used in, and around, the Sand Wash. It took a lot of preparation to construct a horse trap of any size, and during the 1930s these required a hands-on approach. This process included finding an adequate location for the trap, building it, finding the horses, herding them, capturing them, and then figuring out a way to take them off the range. An understanding of wild horses was an essential attribute for these men. It was difficult enough to ride up Seven Mile Ridge, and at that time anything that was not easily found on the land would have been difficult to transport through the harsh landscape. Mustangers hauled the wires used to create parts of the wings and the trap, but they found everything else on the land. Men like Cecil Connors, Boyd Walker, Ernest Lang, Minford Vaughan, Guy McNurland, and Shorty Creel often spent much time trapping horses.[68] Ernest Lang is considered the creator of the trap on Seven Mile Ridge, and records (including photographs) verify that it is referred to as "The Seven Mile Ridge Horse Trap."[69] Just like Will James' character Clint in the book *Smoky*, these men also learned that catching wild horses was a dangerous and time-consuming job, as well as one that required an inordinate amount of patience.

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how they competed with cattle and that "their presence on the range was a decided loss" (266). He explained further, stating how adept the horse was at avoiding man, especially if he had already tasted domestic life. As he puts it, "other animals are not so wise or sagacious as the horse" (267).

[68] Tom and Elmora (Vaughan) Peterson, 2013, Oral History, interviewed by Andrea Mott, digital audio recording, Rock Springs, Wyoming, July 27. Elmora is Minford C. Vaughan's daughter. She has some great mustanging stories about her father and his work with Boyd Walker and some of the other men. This is also examined later in the dissertation.

[69] Jim Buffham, "Notebook of Recollections," Maybell Library; Bonnifield, letter, 2009; Mott, Photographs of the Seven Mile Ridge Horse Trap, 2010. The photographs I took in 2010 match those contained in Buffham's notebook where he labels one by this name.

Connors learned the art of wild horse running from Ernest Lang and Minford Vaughan, both of whom happened to be World War I veterans as well as highly skilled horsemen.[70] Connors spent three years working for Vaughan's outfit. According to Bonnifield's research, Lang was also an experienced horseman, partly because he "was in the Colorado Calvary and fought in France" during World War I.[71] "He was a superb horseman and…an individualist."[72] Connors, who knew nothing about "gathering horses in the big open," learned the craft from Lang.[73] Lang had both a horse corral and a cabin along Snake River. This river lies along the eastern boundaries of the Sand Wash.[74] This location meant easy access to the horses and traps located within the basin. Fortunately for Connors,

> all he had to do was sit and listen to other men who came to Lang's door. Horses, range horses, wild horses, all kinds of horses and the men who rode them and worked them was the only subject talked about.[75]

Such conversations turned into an educational and enlightening experience. Because he paid attention to the old-timers, Connors' precision improved over time, and before long he became a skilled and much-sought-after horse runner.

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[70] Bonnifield, letter, 2009.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Buffham, "Notebook."
[75] Bonnifield, letter, 2009.

Figure 2. The eastern boundary of the Sand Wash Basin. The ravine in the center of the image is the location of the Little Snake River. The high ridges show Seven Mile Ridge. Andrea Mott, "IMG003," digital photograph, (May 27, 2010).

Oftentimes Connors and Minford's nephew Boyd Walker ran horses together. Both of them earned an adequate payday catching them, yet it was hard, backbreaking work. Like Connors, Walker was also a skilled horseman.[76] Connors knew him well and explains how, when Walker was young, both his mother and father left which put him in charge of his siblings: a brother and two sisters. Because jobs were scarce, Walker had to do what was necessary and joined a ranching outfit. This eventually steered him towards the business of catching wild horses. In time he and Connors became skilled enough to work on their own. They developed a

[76] Boyd Walker was Minford Vaughan's nephew.

workable partnership, and each knew how the other worked on the range. The two of them ran horses together for nearly ten years, into the 1940s, spending a bit of time in the Sand Wash and at Snake River.[77]

According to Connors, they "made a pretty good living" on the resources roaming the Sand Wash.[78] Sometimes they were contracted out to clean up horses on grazing land.[79] The prices for wild horses were not always in their favor. Sometimes Connors and Walker sold them for three to four dollars a head, while during the good times they could earn about twenty-five dollars a head. As Connors explains, "at twenty-five bucks a throw we didn't miss much."[80] In addition, the men camped on the range, which lessened their expenses. They could easily live on ten dollars a month.

Minford C. Vaughan, Guy McNurland, and Shorty Creel also had traps of their own in the Sand Wash.[81] Vaughan (Connors's boss for a time) ran horses with Lang and McNurland. According to local resources, McNurland "had a wild horse camp and dug-out at Two Bar Springs," in addition to a wild horse trap.[82] The camp and dug-out came in handy when they had to stay out on the range. An older photograph of McNurland shows him looking the part of a horse runner: an old cowboy hat perched on his brow, bowlegged, deep craggy lines on either side of his mouth (probably because of a hard life eking it out on the range), and a gruff exterior.[83] Two Bar Springs is approximately 17.5 miles west of Maybell, located near the southern boundary of the Sand Wash, along Highway 318. Shorty Creel was another man who ran horses in the basin. His fellow mustangers describe him as an unfriendly sort, both towards

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[77] Cecil Connors, 1981, Oral History, interviewed by Paul Bonnifield, Phippsburg, Colorado, October 26.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Buffham, "Notebook."

[82] Ibid. Pictures in Buffham's notebook show Guy McNurland with his brother Pat. Others provide clues to the dug-out, Two Bar Springs, and the wild horse trap.

[83] Ibid.

humans and horses. Creel's wild horse trap was located at "East Dripping Rock," near "Lookout Mountain Rim."[84] These men often ran horses without permission, but sometimes local cattle and sheep outfits did hire them to remove horses.

Each of these men used a variety of techniques to put horse their traps together. Some of these, the early ones in particular, took an immense amount of time to construct. Older traps do not have the portability of modern ones. They could not be moved with ease. Indeed, the sweat, dirt, and time that went into these meant they would not be moved. Sturdy wood beams cut from locally found trees made up part of the trap. At other times the men used trees growing along their preferred route because their natural appearance helped fool the horses into believing they were following a natural tree line.[85] The trap here consisted of a mixture of free-standing trees, cut trees, cable wire, thinner bands of wire, brush, and a plethora of nails that helped hold everything together.[86] The entrance gate was at the highest point, directly opposite the strongest wall of the trap.[87] This was built for impact. Horses running at full speed might hit the far wall, and it needed to be strong enough to withstand a possible collision.[88]

[84] Ibid.

[85] Andrea Mott, "IMG419," digital photograph, (2010).

[86] Andrea Mott, "IMG430," digital photograph, (2010); Andrea Mott, "IMG431," digital photograph, (2010); Andrea Mott, "IMG436," digital photograph, (2010); Andrea Mott, "IMG442," digital photograph, (2010); Andrea Mott, "IMG443," digital photograph, (2010); Andrea Mott, "IMG444," digital photograph, (2010); Andrea Mott, "IMG445," digital photograph, (2010).

[87] Andrea Mott, "IMG501," digital photograph, (2010); Andrea Mott, "IMG503," digital photograph, (2010).

[88] Andrea Mott, "Strong Wall," photograph (2010).

Figure 3. This image shows the man-made and natural landscape that leads towards the hidden corral. Note the appearance of brush piles on the left of the picture. These helped form a continuous tree line that the horses followed. The trail continues and evidence of human disturbance is limited in this area. Andrea Mott, "IMG024," digital photograph, (May 27, 2010).

In 2010, field research in the Sand Wash Basin revealed a long-abandoned horse trap as well as some of the methods involved in creating it. This trap is located along Seven Mile Ridge and follows a dirt and gravel road, riding the ridgeline on the eastern edge of the Basin. It is in an obscure and well-hidden venue. The vistas towards both the east and the west are eye-catching and provide reminders of the difficulties of catching horses in vast remote landscapes.[89] It also gives the land a romantic and mythical appearance. It is a landscape in which wild horses seem to belong. This isolated area was a prime location for a wild horse trap. Indeed, unless a

[89] Andrea Mott, "Observations in the Sand Wash Basin," (2010).

careful observer came along the right path, it would be difficult to locate the beginnings of manmade additions to a seemingly streamlined and naturally made trap lined with piñons, juniper, and a thick growth of brush. With two friends nearby also looking for signs of a manmade structure, it was not long before the evidence of a trap began to take shape.

The Seven Mile Ridge Trap is a wing trap, perhaps the most commonly constructed trap. Two wings, often unequal in length, spread out from either side of the corral.[90] Their purpose was to lead the horses (unknowingly of course) towards the hidden corral at the juncture of both wings. The wing pointing towards the southwest was much shorter than the one facing southeast. This made it easier to fool the horses into following a certain pre-designated path. Knowledgeable horsemen would be quick to point out the difficulty of fooling a wild horse. These horses have acute senses built around the necessity of watching for changes in their surrounding environment. Knowing this, the men utilized natural features in a barely discernible pattern. They pulled fallen juniper trees into a parallel pattern with free standing trees in order to make a fence-line that would lead the horses straight into the waiting corral. In addition to the already existing trees, the men nailed a combination of cable wire and chicken fencing over each connecting tree. This line of connected wire, which was quite dilapidated in 2010, formed a mostly intact straight line from the short wing to the hidden corral. The corral wings form a "V" shape, with the left or western-facing side shorter than the other. In this case, the shorter corral wing took shape near the side of the road, perpendicular to Seven Mile Ridge on the trap's western boundary. Following it seemed like a natural thing to do, which makes it easy to see how the horses did the same thing. It makes sense that the horses would also follow the same path.

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[90] Andrea Mott, "Southeast Wing, IMG512," digital photograph, (2010).

After a few minutes of walking, mostly downward and in a northeastern direction, the research team came upon a small valley hidden by groups of juniper trees and sagebrush. Then, almost suddenly, the remains of an old trap appeared on the path directly in front of us. It became evident how the trail led the horses directly into the trap's confines. With well-placed corrals like this it is apparent that these men knew the land and the instincts of the horses that lived on it. This well-preserved and secluded trap provides additional clues to the science and thought behind trapping wild horses in the Sand Wash Basin during the 1930s and 1940s. Aerial and satellite imagery shows the trap dimensions and the way it curves into the natural tree line before dropping into a well-hidden corral.[91]

The corral is no longer used for its original purpose, but it remains a testament to regional and cultural dependency on a specific resource. The corral itself is not large, and five separate sides and gate give it the appearance of an uneven hexagon.[92] It measures approximately 196 feet in circumference.[93] A tape measure helped provide dimensions to a hand-drawn map held down on a field-worthy clipboard. The corral's separate sides, beginning at the gate, include measurements of 21', 64'4", 42'10", 23'10", and 44'5".[94] These numbers account for measured gaps between posts, including tree separation due to age and constantly changing weather conditions.[95] The men constructed corral walls with what were once live trees, many of which have long since died, forming spaces between brush piles, posts, and trees. The entrance gate is

[91] Colorado Division of Water Resources, Department of Natural Resources, "Aquamap," edited by Department of Natural Resources (2010).

[92] Ellen Bonnifield and Andrea Mott, *Ernest Lang's Trap*, 2010. This is based off of a drawing we made of Ernest Lang's horse trap in the Sand Wash. We calculated wall lengths and took note of materials used in the trap's construction.

[93] Ibid. There is room for error in these measurements because they were taken without the use of survey equipment.

[94] Ibid.

[95] Ibid.

fairly small with a ten foot diameter, faces the east, and has just enough room for horses to run through side-by-side.[96]

The corral sits on a slope and the farthest wall, directly opposite the south gate entrance, is the strongest and meant to withstand the most force. The tree trunks are thicker at this juncture.[97] The mustangers had their reasons for doing this, particularly since scared horses will continue running and may hit the far corral wall. Because of this possibility, they reinforced the northern wall with thicker trees in order to substantially increase the amount of force the walls could withstand. Horses running into the trap would have a difficult time stopping before reaching the opposite end of the corral, and the men had to prepare for that likelihood. This plan was not entirely foolproof, and an occasional horse could get over the wall, often by jumping over it.

Either side of the trap was made using the same technique exhibited in the wings. Free-standing junipers, often the thickest ones, stood connected by a series of less thick tree trunks, most of which are now dead and have the appearance of carefully placed brush piles, or branches.[98] These usually numbered between three or five poles placed parallel to the ground and perpendicular to the standing trees.[99] Cable wire and chicken wire provided two other strength-enhancing materials. One consistent string of cable wire topped the highest placed parallel piece of wood.[100] It was most prominent on the wall opposite the gate. This was an additional deterrent for the horses contemplating a big jump to freedom. With well planned trap construction, Lang, Vaughan, Connors, and Walker could find resources they needed by capturing, utilizing, or selling wild horses.

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[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Andrea Mott, “Cable Wire,” digital photograph, (2010).

Figure 4. This image emphasizes different features of the hidden corral. Note the appearance of natural and man-made walls. Still-living trees, dead trees, and cable wire help tie everything together. The gate is in the foreground. At the far end of the corral is a fence in a “V” shape. This was the thickest portion of the corral and was meant to stop horses from jumping over it. . Andrea Mott, “IMG036,” digital photograph, (May 27, 2010).

Running wild horses was hard, back-breaking work, especially when done from the back of a horse. Connors talked about how he and his fellow runners used good, strong horses to help them herd the wild ones.[101] Only the stronger horses could hold onto a running pace equivalent to that of the wild horses. Some of them relished the chase. He remembers how he had

> this old black horse . . . he was so rough you could hardly stay on him. That old horse he’d just break your heart. It would get to where you’d think he couldn’t take another

[101] Connors, interview.

> step and you'd get to that gap, boy, and he'd just fly like a racehorse. It'd make you cry . . . how that old, tired horse could just get up and run.[102]

And they ran, a lot. Sometimes the men had to bring the horses in from quite a distance, maybe twenty miles or more. The men had to take the horses far from their home range because unfamiliar territory made them easier to herd or drive.[103] That being said, it could take all day long just to get them off of their familiar range.[104] Connors and Walker worked well together. He remembers how "ole Boyd and I, we understood each other. Why, we'd get out there, one on each side of a bunch of horses" and balanced it out, never pushing them too much on either side.[105] Understanding one another in these situations was essential to success. Each man had to trust the other to do what was needed, when it was needed.

Sometimes the men succeeded in trapping horses, and sometimes they did not. If they were successful the men needed an exit strategy in place. They had to figure out how to get the horses out of the traps. The methods Connors describes included either blindfolds or linking the horses together using a chain of sorts. Normally three men helped out in this process, "one guy on each side and one in front."[106] By the time they were ready to leave the corral, they only took two horses to each man. This meant that if only two men trapped the horses then they could only remove four horses at a time from the corral.[107] Connors and his comrades took care of the horses they captured, oftentimes bringing them "a little sack of hay" as nourishment.[108] At that

[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Ibid.

time, during the 1930s and '40s, they caught decent sized horses around 600 to 900 pounds.[109] They had to trail them into town in order to load them on trains or sell them locally.[110]

Legal and illegal gathers are somewhat responsible for the decreased mustang population in the American West. Connors, Walker, and Lang ran wild horses for nearly ten years, in a time before laws prohibited these roundups. Others, like Vaughan, McNurland, and Creel also shared in this role. These men assisted in efforts to remove wild horses from the open range, but at the time they were merely a small part of a larger operation. The same thing took place in other parts of the country. Although Connors and his comrades ran wild horses on horseback, it was not the only method they used. He and his fellow Sand Wash Basin mustangers seem to have understood the potential for inhumane treatment in wild horse captures. The only comment about cruel treatment regarded the ways in which Shorty Creel handled the horses he caught.[111] Their actions in both past and present gathers show a trend towards the humane treatment of these animals. As James once stated,

> the spirit of the wild horse is the same after years of riding as it was before he ever felt a rope . . . and there's no human in the world wants to preserve that spirit in the horse like the cowboy does."[112]

Though many other groups and individuals acted to remove horses from the western states by using crippling methods, some, like Connors and a few others, attempted to do so in a humane manner. The spirit of the wild horse seemed to live on, even after being captured. Even so, not every horse was treated the same. There are still bad endings and bad stories that haunt these men.

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[109] Ibid.

[110] Dawn (Walker) Nottingham, 2013, Oral History, interviewed by Andrea Mott, digital audio recording, Craig, Colorado, July 26.

[111] Buffham, "Notebook of Recollections." The comment in this notebook indicates how "Shorty was very mean to his horses, the most were ring tails and crazy."

[112] James, 98.

Individual narratives are merely a small part of the larger story of wild horses on the western landscape. Men like Connors and Walker help us understand their historical significance in western history. Their stories, and that of the horses they ran with, are important elements to understanding how and why these animals became targets, both as a resource and a pest, throughout regions in the Great Plains and West. Their adaptability, resilience, and ability to thrive in harsh environments are a testament to their continued survival. Are these animals more of a resource than a nuisance at the turn of the twentieth century than they became during the mid-1970s and '80s? Over the centuries many people utilized them as a resource for cultural advancement. Horses were used for various reasons: trade, transportation, and even economic stability. The men depicted here needed to catch horses in order to earn the money necessary to care for their families. Their wise-use policy of conserving, and not eradicating, the horses can teach us something about personal responsibility of caring for the range and the lives it supports.

The Sand Wash Basin is merely one locality, of several, that provides interesting details about the men and horses that helped shape the West. These experiences and adventures reverberate in other regions throughout the West, yet this location is an important study about how the concept of history and place coincide. The people living here feel as if the horses belong to them, and at one time, they did. Wild horses, though today somewhat protected from exploitation, as a result of the laws of 1959 and 1971, are victims of westward expansion, the cattle industry, ranchers, mustangers, the automobile, and even the federal government. It is not accurate to blame one single factor for causing this adjustment, as they all had a role in affecting how the public views wild horses. By redefining, or in a sense changing, what was a resource to a nuisance we come closer to understanding the reasons behind horse running in the 1930s and 1940s. We also come closer to accepting how these animals were used as a resource. The

craftsmanship, knowledge, and horse-sense these men displayed while building traps that fit into the landscape is a key point to Western history that could easily be lost and overlooked. Walking in their shoes puts us in fascinating and desolate places like the Sand Wash. The traps hidden within these locales are both beautiful and rustic, a testament to a different time, a time when men and animals both ran free on unclaimed land; a time before legislation warned them not to bother the wild ones. Wild horses still roam this region, and although they are watchful of humans, they still seem confident in the stark environment they call home. The men of the Sand Wash might be lost to annals of history, but their experiences have been told in the stories passed down to their children. The traps are crumbling and overgrown with sagebrush, and the horses might be a few generations removed, but a powerful collective memory, tied to this Western place, remains.

NO HOME ON THE RANGE

Some animals are inextricably tied to the history of the Great Plains and American West, so that stories of all types portray them in near mythic proportions. The buffalo, an icon of Native American tribes, served many purposes, including as a source of food, shelter, clothing, and weaponry.[1] Although Webb, Hämäläinen, and even West, all explain how the buffalo was the source of life for native tribes, it was not alone in its significance for people living in the Great Plains and the American West. Native American culture and traditions had a better chance of survival as long as two animals remained: the buffalo and the horse. The survival of both species was important.[2] Despite the overall importance of the buffalo, the horse was an essential tool for these people. Their reliance on the horse invoked many changes in the cultural traditions of nomadic and pastoral life. The horse was arguably the single most significant animal on the Great Plains.

Land management has been important for centuries. In some regions of the country this has taken on additional duties. Managing the range is essential because it helps balance co-usage of the land by domestic and wild animals. Some people have lived their lives surrounded by the subject of co-existence, and their perceptions of the range and its inhabitants are essential pieces to the controversy surrounding wild horses. Perspectives of this subject focus on different things such as grazing rights, water rights, land rights, and even the quality of the land being used. Oftentimes it includes the problems encountered between domestic and wild animal usage. Individual narratives help show perspectives on local range management and federal control.

[1] Richard White, *"It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own": A New History of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1947). In this historical work White analyzes the newer histories of the region, including minority groups, environmentalism, and gender. His focus on the environmental and ecological impacts of Native American horse and bison based cultures is a key element to any history focused on horses in North America. The introduction of the horse to these tribes started a wave of changes, including: cultural, political, economic, environmental, and ecological changes; White, *"It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own,"* 219-220. The buffalo was an essential piece of Plains Indian culture and the continuation of tradition.

[2] Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Plains* (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1931), 44.

Each of these has had to balance animal numbers with existing resources, water, and food. Past and present techniques often collide in their differences, but both are evidence of the difficulties in balancing animals and range use.

Localities along the Wyoming and Colorado border serve as good case studies on the co-evolution of human and horse relationships because they provide prime examples of resource management, local range management, and herd management practices. In order to understand these three elements it is essential to examine the history of settlement and land management practices in the United States from its early years to its most recent. This evolution involves the convergence of cultural differences regarding resource use, animal use, and land use. Native Americans, early settlers, and their descendants are key figures in determining how the public perceives wild horses in a modern world. These early individuals set a key standard regarding why the wild horse is associated with the myth of the West. Examining these localities is essential to comprehending the changing roles of wild horses in the United States.

Regional differences and attitudes concerning animals and the range are relevant because they depict variations in how the horse is viewed. This co-evolution between horses and humans meant that people often blurred the lines between viewing the animal more as a companion and less like livestock. In certain regions the land became overrun with cattle, sheep, and horses, which placed a strain on them as well as on the wildlife that also depended on these resources. Consequently, land and water are particularly valuable in these regions, and without a balanced ecosystem, these resources could be depleted.

People with experience regarding both wild horses and the range came to understand the delicate balance needed to maintain healthy animals and a healthy range. People like George Salisbury II and Dawn (Walker) Nottingham, who have a plethora of hands-on knowledge and

experience, provide perspectives based on realistic decisions they have made concerning the health of the land and its inhabitants. The Salisbury family, and George II in particular, has a wealth of heritage built up over several generations of living and working the same land. George was a third-generation Salisbury who took over the family's ranching operations after the death of his parents. His lifelong focus was centered upon balance on the open range. His regional perspective is valuable, for this sage provides a fascinating case study about those who try to balance ecological concerns and daily living. Dawn's heritage is also deeply rooted in the region and her perceptions are also valuable in the study of regional issues such as wild horses. Her family used to spend many hours on horseback catching them. These two individuals provide priceless insight regarding the complexities of the range and the identity of the people who live on it.

Horses irrevocably changed the way different peoples lived their lives on the Great Plains. After the Spanish reintroduced them to North America in the mid-sixteenth century, they quickly adapted to the environment, terrain, and massive open spaces covered in lush grassland.[3] In short, these animals introduced a historical shift to the peoples inhabiting the vast areas of the North American Plains. Hämäläinen explains in detail how the horse played an all-encompassing role in "altering the parameters of human existence on the . . . grasslands that covered the continent's center."[4] It can be argued that the horse altered cultures more than the buffalo.[5] They could travel farther and much faster than they could before their adaptation to life on horseback, which meant they could more easily hunt buffalo. In addition, horses gave

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[3] White, *"It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own,"* 18; Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

[4] Hämäläinen, 19.

[5] Elliott West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, & the Rush to Colorado* (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 58; Webb, 117.

them a distinct advantage in terms of attacks on others, raids, and defensive maneuvers.[6] It helped them defend, and retain possession of, their territories. This adaptation crossed borders. Gerald Friesen, Canadian historian and author of *The Canadian Prairies: A History*, argues that the Métis, the mixed-blood people of what is present-day Canada, became a force to be reckoned with and even feared because of the horse.[7] The horse was the catalyst of change on either side of the border. It became easier for all Native American tribes inhabiting the Great Plains to control the flow of European immigrants coming west of the Missouri River. Several tribes, such as the Comanche, Apache, and Pawnee that utilized the horse changed the trajectory of their tribal history.[8] They became fearsome entities to individuals wanting to travel west. They became agents of their own history, unchallenged and feared.

The Native Americans' dependence on horses also led to their collapse. The ecological balance between the native tribes, buffalo, and the horse became entangled with the land, its climate, and the resources it should have been able to provide.[9] Maintaining this ecological balance was extremely difficult when the number of horses the natives owned grew by the thousands. The Comanche needed water sources to sustain their growing horse herds and increased their efforts to retain water rights in the river valleys because the locations were sheltered during bad weather, and there were good sources of food and water.[10] Competition over water and buffalo led to conflict between tribes.[11] Horses would strip the browse available

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[6] Richard White, *The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 153-54.

[7] Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 38-9.

[8] Hämäläinen, 346; White, *The Roots of Dependency*, 100, 188; White, *"It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own,"* 21.

[9] West, 86.

[10] Hämäläinen 37.

[11] Ibid., 31; Walker D. Wyman, *The Wild Horse of the West* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963), 181. The first publication of this book was in 1945 by Caxon Printers, Ltd. In this work Wyman describes the horse as a "symbol of Indian culture"; Richard White analyzes the ecological and environmental impact of the Native American and horse relationship. Mutual dependency on one another led to serious problems. These two works

in the valleys, which made it difficult for other animals to find what they needed to survive.[12] The surrounding environment and weather patterns often determined resource availability and depletion.

Competition between thousands of horses and thousands (or more) of buffalo lessened the amount of quality range and water resources accessible to them on the Great Plains. The resources were not substantial enough to nourish these massive populations, especially in a drought or during harsh winters. Situations worsened when they were placed within close proximity to one another. Changing temperatures and severe fluctuations in the weather also affected the tribes' limited resources.[13] Animal health, domestic and otherwise, could easily worsen due to lack of food. Buffalo herds traveled farther in search of food and water, and, as environmental historian Richard White explains, this gave Indian tribes the opportunity to follow their primary food source on horseback.[14] Unfortunately, this dependency on both animals continued the cycle of range abuse. It was this competition between the horse and buffalo (arguably the two most influential animals on the Great Plains) that shifted the ecological balance between animals and humans on the vast central plains of the United States.

During the mid-1800s life on the Great Plains began to undergo some major shifts. The massive migration west was triggered by two causes: the gold rushes of the mid-19th century and the Homestead Act of 1862.[15] These sweeping transformations influenced the future of man,

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provide evidence to these ecological issues: White, *The Roots of Dependency*, and White, *"It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own"*; Carol Higham and William H. Katerberg, *Conquests &Consequences: The American West from Frontier to Region*, "The First West: Native Peoples," 21-49 (Wheeling, IL, and Cody, WY: Harlan Davidson, Inc. & The Buffalo Bill Historical Center, 2009), 25.

[11] West, 86.

[12] Ibid., 87.

[13] Ibid., 230.

[14] White, *"It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own,"* 21.

[15] Roy Robbins, *Our Landed Heritage: The Public Domain, 1776-1970*, 2nd ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1976), 143-144; William K. Wyant, *Westward in Eden: The Public Lands and the Conservation Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 15, 168.

bison, horse, and cattle and how they would coexist with one another. As American expansion continued past the ninety-eighth meridian, Native American control of the land was challenged by Anglo settlers seeking new lives. The Homestead Act was signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln and it placed the possibility of land ownership in the hands of individuals willing to work the property.[16] Choosing the land they could farm or ranch was a strong motivator for people to move west. Anglos from the east, both United States citizens and foreigners, began traversing the Great Plains. With the government backing them with pieces of legislation like the Homestead Act, people braved the western environment in their quest for land on this vast, unsettled frontier. Settlers adapted to life in an unforgiving region west of the ninety-eighth meridian.[17] Growing populations changed open frontier into one that included railroads, fences, and homesteads.

The West was also something that people viewed in subjective ways. Popular imagery depicted the cowboy in a romantic light. Novels, like those by Will James, portrayed a West in which the wild horse carried a mythic quality. According to Ernest Staples Osgood, historian and author of the 1929 publication titled *The Day of the Cattleman*, the perpetuated view of this imagined West has enraptured people for decades.[18] This West, though still shown in novels and western films, gave way to the ranching and cattle frontier. This dependency on cattle, or beef, has shaped American identity. This reliance on beef cattle also gave way to a competitive view

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[16] Richard M. Highsmith, Jr., J. Granville Jensen, and Robert D. Rudd, *Conservation in the United States*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1969), 14; U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, "About the Homestead Act," www.nps.gov/home/historyculture/abouthomesteadactlaw.htm. Approximately 10% of the land area in the United States was settled based on this piece of legislation. After the Taylor Grazing Act was passed, the amount of land available to homesteaders decreased throughout the West; Higham and Katerberg, *Conquests &Consequences: The American West from Frontier to Region*, "Putting Down Roots," 148-181 (Harlan Davidson, Inc. & The Buffalo Bill Historical Center: Wheeling, IL, and Cody, WY, 2009), 152.

[17] Wyant, 44.

[18] Ernest Staples Osgood, *The Day of the Cattleman* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1929), v.

regarding the wild horses that roamed the same areas. Both relied on the same resources, but the former was more economically viable than the latter.

More economic opportunities on the Great Plains and throughout the West meant that cities began growing. These growing urban populations meant that cities demanded more land and water: limited resources for an expanding populace. [19] Elliott West argued that people are always in a constant state of bargaining with the existing environment, and wild horses and cattle were no exception.[20] People who lived west of the Missouri Valley bargained with their environment because natural resources like fresh water and fertile land were not guaranteed. Many homesteaders tried to set themselves up near water sources, but that was not a guarantee.[21] It was something these early settlers, much like the Plains Indian tribes, often fought over.[22] Marc Reisner, author of *Cadillac Desert*, concluded that in "the West, lack of water is the central fact of existence, and a whole culture and set of values have grown up around it."[23] Towns grew around water sources, and dams provided reservoirs as well as an energy source. In later years, after Congress passed the 1902 Reclamation Act, waterways became important sources of irrigation on arid and semiarid lands.[24] Reservoirs, aqueducts, and dams are all used to control the amount and flow of water.[25] Many animals that inhabited the Great Plains and West, like horses and bison, relied on these limited water sources.

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[19] Marc Reisner, *Cadillac Desert: The American West and Its Disappearing Water* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986), 43; Jerry Holechek, Rex Piper, and Carlton Herbel, *Range Management: Principles and Practices,* 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1998), 51.

[20] West, 233.

[21] Highsmith, Jensen, and Rudd, *Conservation in the United States*, 15, 35, 245.

[22] Ibid., 245.

[23] Reisner, 12; J. Russell Penny, and Marion Clawson, "Administration of Grazing Districts," in *The Public Lands: Studies in the History of the Public Domain*, edited by Vernon Carstensen, 461-478 (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1963), 468. Livestock could not be placed a large amount of western ranges because there was no water to sustain them.

[24] Robbins, 332, 376; Highsmith, Jensen, and Rudd, 20; Wyant, 68-9.

[25] Ibid. The Reclamation Act of 1902 was engineered to "promote the conservation and utilization of one of the most precious resources of the West – water – through Federal leadership."

Following the land competition resulting from the Homestead Act, the federal government halted its intense promotion for westward settlement and instead began allowing for long-term land management, which included various forms of multiple-use methods, from grazing to mining and recreation.[26] It also became essential to protect America's stunning landscapes from over-production and resource extraction. By the mid-1870s the government started to create multiple national parks, forestland, and wildlife refuge areas.[27] These public-use methods are still implemented today.

Sometimes this resulted in land-use disagreements and led to discussions on how to manage the land for long-term possibilities. Environmental historian James R. Skillen reiterates the point that overgrazing was one of the largest issues that land ownership committees faced.[28] That problem, plus overstocking the range, had disastrous results in the 1880s.[29] Bad outcomes in previous decades made it more imperative that land managers focus their attention on formulating responsible land management practices.[30] In the beginning of these land negotiations the federal government, which was under the leadership of President Herbert Hoover from 1929 through 1933, proposed that the states would take control of managing their land.[31] Land owners and representatives in different western states strongly opposed the president's proposal because it did not allow for "federal range rehabilitation."[32] Rehabilitation

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[26] Ibid. Yellowstone National Park was created in 1872; Penny and Clawson, 470; Robbins, 457; Wyman, 120, 141.

[27] Highsmith, Jensen, and Rudd, 19-20. Gifford Pinchot was a groundbreaker in promoting the continued preservation and protection of forests across the United States.

[28] James R. Skillen, *The Nation's Largest Landlord: The Bureau of Land Management in the American West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009).

[29] Earl Pomeroy, *The American Far West in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Richard W. Etulain (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 2; Osgood, 91-92, 216-222.

[30] Skillen, 5.

[31] Ibid., 5-6.

[32] Ibid., 7.

meant that the land would have ample time to recover from overuse and overstocking.[33] On June 28, 1934, these groups came to an agreement known as the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934.[34] The two main areas outlined in this agreement called for the stabilization "of the western livestock industry" as well as improvement of "range conditions."[35] These pieces did not go together well, because the very idea of improving and stabilizing the livestock industry meant that more land would be used for grazing. Historian Sanford Mosk explained how a huge portion of the western lands were used "mainly by private enterprise for grazing."[36] Private grazing interests had a way of influencing land policy. In the act's first two years the amount of public grasslands that the Grazing Service controlled rose from 80 million acres to 142 million by 1936.[37] This resulted in less land being rehabilitated than originally proposed. Some individuals realized that separate agencies were needed to help control land abuses and misuses.

Wild horses roaming the Great Plains and the West adapted to continually shifting environments as the influx of people and their cattle operations pushed herds farther away into remote, often mountainous, regions.[38] As the landscape continued to open up so, too, did the settlers' need for horsepower. Operating equipment was made easier with the help of flesh-and-blood horsepower. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century horses still continued to be the main source of agricultural power and of transportation in the cities. Massive stables

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[33] Robbins, 421. Robbins explains that Representative E. Taylor wanted an act that would focus on land management and keep the public lands from being completely defaced.

[34] Highsmith, Jensen, and Rudd, 23; U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, *Environmental Statement: Proposed Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Management Regulations* (1973), 10. This ES is shown to follow the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, which reiterates and analyzes the environmental issues affecting the Wild and Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971.

[35] Skillen, 7.

[36] Sanford A. Mosk, "Land Policy and Stock Raising in the Western United States," in *The Public Lands: Studies in the History of the Public Domain*, edited by Vernon Carstensen, 411-432 (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1963), 411.

[37] Robbins, 421.

[38] U.S. Congress, House, *Amendment of Title 18, United States Code to Prohibit the Use of Aircraft or Motor Vehicles to Hunt Certain Wild Horses or Burros on Land Belonging to the United States*, 86th Cong., August 11, 1959, 1st sess., H. Rep. 833, p. 2. Box 690 FF24. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

took up huge portions of buildings in urban areas, particularly in fire houses, police stations, and other large structures.[39] The existence of horses alongside humans was merely a fact of life in urban areas, as they were utilized as transportation and work animals. [40] It was a different story on the open range, particularly in reference to wild horses. Humans and wild horses competed over the same land, and as a result, the horses migrated further away from human interference; yet humans still tried to capture them. These small group roundups are often referred to as mustanging or horse running operations.[41] Ranchers utilized what land they could to nourish their domestic herds, but land quality and grazing quantities were not always equal. In fact, as Richard Rhodes writes, "the cattlemen thought the horses competed for forage . . . but the cattlemen overloaded the range with cattle, overgrazed the range until the cattle business about went bust."[42] Many historians share this view.[43] Evidence points to land abuse by the cattle operators, but wild horses have become the pests to blame. It was so bad that by the time the 1920s came and went, the quality and condition of forage on the public range was in a disastrous

[39] Clay McShane and Joel A. Tarr, *The Horse in the City: Living Machines in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2007).
[40] Ibid.
[41] Men and women who ran horses often referred to this as "mustanging."
[42] Richard Rhodes, "How the West Was Lost: Notes on Some American Misfits," *Esquire*, 1972, 186. Rhodes is an accomplished writer of a large number of books, articles, essays, and screenplays. He writes both nonfiction and fiction works, including works ranging from drugs, wild horses, Los Alamos and the atomic age, coyotes, pioneers, presidents, and agriculture.
[43] Osgood, *The Day of the Cattlemen*. Osgood, a historian of the West, argued that the range cattlemen are the ones who deserve credit for opening up the Great Plains to more economic uses. After the bison disappeared the cattle came in and filled the void. Cattlemen had to evolve and adapt, just as the Plains Indians did before them. The arrival of the railroads further pushed the beef industry as cattle could be easily shipped to eastern slaughterhouses and markets. In this work Osgood places the cattlemen in the position of agents of change in the history and formation of the Great Plains as a region. This industry was a defining element of Great Plains regionalism and cannot be ignored. The cattle industry shaped the way people lived, it helped build communities, and it created an economic viability in the vast central region of the United States; Bernard De Voto, quoted in Roy Robbins, *Our Landed Heritage: The Public Domain, 1776-1970*, 2nd ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1976), 434. De Voto, himself a historian "charged the western stock interests" with "ruining the range and waging a vendetta against the Grazing Service."

shape.[44] As a result, in a short amount of time, wild horses ended up roaming areas that can only be described as remote.

Some settlers, or homesteaders, over-utilized and depleted resources in their zealous attempts to claim and settle the land. Depletion occurred with water sources, trees, and grasslands, and even socially accepted uses for different types of animals caused their numbers to decline.[45] In *Conservation in the United States* the authors examine how Americans have had rich resources at their disposal, yet this is "clouded by ideas of abundance and inexhaustibility and largely guided by a desire for immediate individual profit."[46] As historian John Dorst explains, the vast herds of bison roaming the plains were no exception, because their demise stands as the North American example for the reckless destruction of a continent's natural resources.[47] Early American settlers learned how to live off of the land, and utilized the available resources, before new irrigation, agricultural, and ranching methods became available. As trains, automobiles, and tractors altered the face of the American West, they also altered the

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[44] William Brandon, "Wild Horses of the West," Sierra Club Bulletin, 1972: 8.

[45] Many sources discuss the overuse and depletion of various types of resources, including animals, plants, and even renewable and non-renewable resources. In 1962, Rachel Carson published her environmental work *Silent Spring*. In this pivotal work Carson explains how pesticides and other chemicals affected different bird species, and was, in fact, causing a severe population drop. The use of chemicals on crops affected the thickness of bird eggs, causing many to be too thin. As a result of her groundbreaking work, Carson helped push a new environmental movement. Today many bird species have begun increasing their populations because of new controls on chemicals. It was in this same work that Carson wrote about the extinction of the passenger pigeon. This bird, and many others, became important on a social (urban) scale. People used them as ornamentation on clothing and hats, as food, and as the focus of sports shooting endeavors. Because of this confluence of circumstances the passenger pigeon faded away from existence. Even millions of birds could not be saved from a society bent on destroying them (albeit unintentionally). Carson, Rachel, Lois Darling, and Louis Darling, *Silent Spring* (Boston Cambridge, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin, 1962). In *The Great Plains* Webb argues that the American buffalo was the most influential native animal on the plains. However, during westward expansion even the iconic buffalo became the target of avid sportsmen and their numbers, like those of the passenger pigeons, also declined; Highsmith, Jensen, and Rudd, *Conservation in the United States*, preface. According to these authors, citizens must pay attention and be better stewards of their land resources; Robbins, *Our Landed Heritage*, 335. Robbins, a historian of land policy, stated how "no nation in world history had so wasted its natural resources or opened up its natural treasure to unbridled exploitation as had the United States of America."

[46] Highsmith, Jensen, and Rudd, preface.

[47] John Dorst, "Watch for Falling Bison: The Buffalo Hunt as Museum Trope and Ecological Allegory," in *Native Americans and the Environment: Perspectives on the Ecological Indian*, edited by Michael E. Harkin and David Rich Lewis, 173-191 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 173.

way rural societies interacted with livestock and wildlife. Everything had a purpose, including the wild horses they encountered on the range.[48] Somehow they managed to live a balanced life with these wild horse herds. They culled, or round up, a small number of animals at a time, and utilized them on the farm or ranch, or sold them to earn a little money.[49] Horse running and mustanging became commonplace terms in certain parts of the country.[50] Financial gain was enough motivation for some men to start culling wild horse herds on their own, using their own techniques, and their own crews.[51]

There are rural communities in the south-central section of Wyoming and the extreme northwestern portion of Colorado where citizens remember the way things used to be when they could round up horses without the federal government interfering in their business. Because the population of wild horses would continue to grow without human interference, it was necessary for people to round up some of the animals. These individualized operations were common. People had to depend on themselves, and often a few neighbors, to take care of local and regional range problems. Higher populations meant that wild horses would compete with

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[48] Velma Johnston's father was known for capturing horses and then training them to work in his cargo-carrying business. Clifford Heaverne's father was also known to capture wild horses and use them on the ranch. He trained some well known former wild horses. Dawn (Walker) Nottingham's father also captured and trained horses, but the wildness of the ones he trained can be left to speculation. Dawn is adamant that the horses near Douglas Mountain were a part of their family's herd. They let them roam in the winter then recaptured them for use in their cattle business. Elmora (Vaughan) Peterson's father Minford C. Vaughan, and her husband, Tom Peterson, sometimes ran wild horses with Boyd Walker.

[49] Wyman, 170-71. As Wyman claimed, these mustangers actually helped the range between 1900 and about 1914. In addition, he asserted that cowboys were able to make capture small numbers and sell them at about eight to ten dollars apiece (171). Numbers also declined due to severe weather. These forms of population control, manmade and natural, helped control increasingly large herd numbers.

[50] The use of "mustanging" and "horse running" is as much a part of regional culture as it is a part of rural culture. Outside of the horse world it is a term that few ever hear. Before my studies regarding wild horses in North America these were terms I knew nothing about.

[51] For more information about these horse runners refer to the following sources: Cecil Connors, 1981, Oral History, interviewed by Paul Bonnifield, Phippsburg, Colorado, October 26; Clifford Heaverne, 2011, Oral History, interviewed by Andrea Mott, digital audio recording, Fallon, Nevada, July 29; Dawn (Walker) Nottingham, 2013, Oral History, interviewed by Andrea Mott, digital audio recording, Craig, Colorado, July 26; Tom and Elmora (Vaughan) Peterson, Oral History, interviewed by Andrea Mott, digital audio recording, Rock Springs, Wyoming, July 27; Wanda (Ramsey) Walker and Dawn (Walker) Nottingham, 2011, Oral History, interviewed by Paul and Ellen Bonnifield, Douglas Mountain, Colorado, June 1. All of these individuals either ran horses themselves or were related to someone who did.

livestock and native animals for access to the available water and plant resources. This predicament meant that legislators, ranchers, and landowners needed to reach an agreement on what could be done to manage the use of resources on vast tracts of public land in the United States. The most significant result of these negotiations was the Taylor Grazing Act (TGA) of 1934.[52] As a direct result of the TGA, wild horses became a target, because they competed for resources, they were not a financial asset, and their usefulness to the public was minimal.

Grazing methods began to change in 1934 when the United States government established a federal grazing office called the Division of Grazing Control (DGC). What eventually became the BLM started as two separate offices, the General Land Office (GLO) and the DGC. In 1935 the Division of Grazing Control changed its name to the Division of Grazing. Then in 1939, a mere four years later, it became the Grazing Service. Within the span of a decade this new entity, the U.S. Grazing Service, became the root organization for the BLM.[53] It continued to manage the land according to legislation.[54] According to Deanne Stillman, an American writer and wild horse enthusiast, many advocates of wild horses in the West have long considered this land act as a symbol for the demise of the mustang.[55] One of the reasons the Taylor Grazing Act endangered the livelihood of wild horses was that its purpose aimed to keep public rangelands productive, both financially and physically.[56] As a result, some federal land managers believed wild horses should be eliminated, especially since they did not contribute to

[52] A wide variety of sources on the West examine and analyze the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934. Robbins, *Our Landed Heritage*, is one of the preeminent resources on American land policy.

[53] Skillen, 7; Jerry L. Holechek, Rex D. Pieper, and Carlton H. Herbel, *Range Management: Principles and Practices*, 3rd ed. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1998), 53.

[54] Penny and Clawson, “Administration of Grazing Districts,” 474; Holechek, Piper, and Herbel, 60.

[55] Deanne Stillman, *Mustang: the Saga of the Wild Horse in the American West* (Boston: Mariner Books, 2009), 244.

[56] Brandon, 8.

financial interests or serve a useful purpose.[57] Livestock owners, on the other hand, had to pay nominal grazing fees to keep their herds on federally owned parcels of the public domain.[58] In these cases, wild horses competed for the same resources as profitable herds, and therefore had less usefulness to the public.

As a direct result of the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934, many wild horse catchers sent massive numbers of wild horses to slaughter in an effort to rid the land of their unneeded presence. The horses were not financially valuable and therefore not essential, to the ranchers, the environment, or the broader American public. When domesticated animals and wild horses compete for natural resources, such as water and grass, both lose. This is similar to the case of resource competition between horses and bison. Financially, it makes more sense to remove the horses, not the livestock. Between the 1930s and the late 1950s cattle and sheep companies hired men they called wild horse catchers to round up excess animals.[59] Because these individuals initiated the roundups, they also had the freedom to sell or keep the captured animals. These methods meant that a significantly higher number of wild horses ended up in meat markets throughout the United States. One source estimates that there were around 25,000 wild horses left by the latter 1950s.[60] By the 1950s, as a result of culling efforts, the number of horses left in the wild had taken a dramatic downward turn from the estimated two million that once roamed lands west of the Mississippi.

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[57] Ibid.; James P. Sterba, "Would Law Changes Allow Slaughter? Wild Horse Controversy Resumed," *Nevada State Journal*, August 18, 1974.

[58] Robbins, 431. In 1947, grazing fees were added to an amended version of the Taylor Grazing Act.

[59] See the following oral histories: Clifford Heaverne, 2011, Oral History; Dawn (Walker) Nottingham, 2013, Oral History; Tom and Elmora (Vaughan) Peterson, 2013, Oral History; Cecil Connors, 1981, Oral History; Wanda (Ramsey) Walker and Dawn (Walker) Nottingham, 2011, Oral History. Men like Boyd Walker, Cecil Connors, and M.C. Vaughan worked for these types of outfits.

[60] U.S. Congress, House, Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, *Testimony of Mrs. Velma B. Johnston before the Public Lands Subcommittee of the Interior and Insular Affairs Committee of the United States House of Representatives* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, April 19, 1971), 2.

Federal land managers had to balance range use, mineral use, and public use in conjunction with wildlife, livestock, and wild horses on these public lands. When Congress passed the Wild and Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971, many of these officials referenced the TGA and the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) to help them manage the public land.[61] The dwindling availability of renewable resources on public land meant that it was imperative to maintain an ecological balance between domestic and wild animal usage.[62] By 1969, this act made it essential for federal agencies to pay more attention to how its actions or decisions affected the environment.[63] These reports contained detailed information about land, water, climate, and rainfall. NEPA reports also detailed how, if land was leased to a strip-mining corporation, there needed to be a thorough written statement about possible environmental effects on the animals that depended on that land for survival, as well as the land itself. Perceptions about the amount each group should use varied. Specialists in biology, ecology, wildlife management, wild horses, fish, and forestry are only a few people who worked alongside government officials to provide data that would assist in managing the land for long-term public use. Sometimes private interests became entwined in the issues as many of these government officials were well acquainted with local citizens, particularly ranchers and land owners.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s a new realization about the environment swept through America. People joined wilderness societies, conservation groups, animal protection societies,

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[61] Skillen, 7; *Environmental Statement*, 10.

[62] Penny and Clawson, "Administration of Grazing Districts," 470. These two individuals concluded that the public lands that fall into grazing districts are not only used for livestock grazing. Other types of animals, wild and domestic, also utilize these lands. In addition, the public also has recreational access to these same areas. Balancing usage between everyone is a challenge.

[63] Skillen, 73.

and preservation groups.[64] This fervency carried over into federal legislation. A more environmentally conscience public questioned the usefulness of government policies that were seemingly meant to protect the public domain. Once the federal government began managing these grazing allotments, land and water resources became even more valuable, and it was more important to track usage amounts. Ranchers, in accordance with the TGA, could lease land to graze their cattle and sheep, yet the main objective of the wild horse managers was to "manage their habitat in a manner to achieve and maintain an ecological balance and a population of sound and healthy individuals."[65] These intentions often counteracted one another, particularly since ecology is the study of how one organism or many interact with each other and their environment.[66]

It was difficult for land managers to try and maintain this ecological balance between grazing allotments and areas of land rehabilitation. It was not uncommon to have disagreements regarding the amount of forage wildlife ate and the amount domestic herds utilized. In 1974 Gene Nodine, a BLM district manager, pointed out that ranchers took advantage of their grazing permits and wild horses were not the only ones to blame for deteriorating range conditions.[67] Sometimes individuals tried to take the law into their own hands, which resulted in illegal roundups occurring even after Congress passed the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971. One 1973 article in the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* recounted a brutal tale of illegal horse-catching. In this illegal roundup, the individuals charged with the crime stated their purpose was to remove wild horses from the land where they competed with cattle for grass, and then sell the

[64] Robbins, 460. Different conservation groups, such as the Sierra Club, the Audubon Society, and the Wilderness Society supported the idea of raising awareness of conservation efforts in the West.

[65] *Environmental Statement*, 5.

[66] Holechek, Piper, and Herbel, 7.

[67] "Old, Sick, Lame Wild Horses Probably Will Be Destroyed," *Reno Gazette-Journal*, March 31, 1975.

horses "for dog food."[68] However, although horses do compete for range use, they are not its sole users, and are not the only ones causing damage. Many other variables should be considered, such as public use, wildlife use, and domestic herd use.[69] Animals are not always the only entities that damage the land. Strip-mining enterprises, drought, and fire can kill off native and non-native plants.[70] Each problem can result in lower amounts of available forage. When animals try to find sustenance in an environmentally unstable area, they strip the plants that are left, even if they are unpalatable. In the article "Run Like the Wind Itself," William Brandon succinctly sums up the problem of wild horses on the range when he states how they "have never been much of a cash-register resource."[71] They use forage that could be eaten by more financially valuable domestic herds.

In the years before and after the enactment of the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934, the numbers of wildlife and wild horses increased simultaneously in the Douglas Mountain area of western Colorado and in the Sand Wash Basin area of northwestern Colorado. One situational analysis of these two areas noted that the range had deteriorated by the early 1930s.[72] By this time homesteaders and settlers in this region already utilized much of this open area for sheep and cattle grazing purposes. The Salisbury and Walker operations are good examples of early homesteaders whose individual efforts left a mark on the countryside.[73] With this much range

[68] "Brutal Slaughter: Wild Mustang Killers Used Chain Saws," *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, May 14, 1974; George C. Wilson, "Mustang Slaughter Stirs Court Battle," *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, May 14, 1974; Rhodes, 150; Tod Bedrosian, "'Slaughter': 'Wild Horse Annie' Criticizes Proposals," *Nevada State Journal*, June 30, 1994. Courtesy Nevada State Historical Society, Reno.

[69] Robbins, 457, 466. The Multiple-Use and Sustained-Yield Act of 1960 and the Multiple Use Act of 1964 outlined how the public lands could be used. This included grazing, recreation, timber, water, and the maintenance of wildlife.

[70] Highsmith, Jensen, and Rudd, 348.

[71] Brandon, 6.

[72] *Situation Analysis of Douglas Mountain, Sand Wash Wild Horse Use Areas*.

[73] Like many homesteaders the Salisbury and Walker ranches are reminiscent of early settlers. Their rustic ways of life were essential to their families' early survival in the West.

use it is not surprising that, by the latter 1930s, the range condition was classified as "poor."[74] One government employee noted in his analysis that most "of the principal browse plants now show evidence of excessive grazing for many years. A serious range problem has built up here from the competition between big game and livestock."[75] The trend of resource competition continued.

Through the 1950s and 1960s range problems did not decrease, and herbivore use was at an all-time high. Not only were deer utilizing the land in greater numbers, but livestock continued to forage on these lands, and wild horses also continued to use the same land areas.[76] A key pressure was the increase in the deer population, which rose steadily between the 1930s and by the late 1940s. At the end of the 1940s deer numbers in the Douglas Mountain area had grown to approximately four times the numbers they had been in 1936.[77] Officials noted that the concentration of deer was much higher in the summer months, when browse was more readily available. Increased wildlife use, in addition to continued livestock use, exacerbated the poor range conditions. It was commonly known that some families let their ranch horses feed out on the open range during the winter months.[78] The Walkers, who called the Douglas Mountain area home, were one of these ranching families. Even today, Dawn (Walker) Nottingham, the only daughter of Boyd and Wanda Walker, says those horses roaming the Douglas Mountain region are not wild.[79] She says this with conviction, because her family managed horses on the open range and then rounded them up for ranch work. Many of the current wild horses are descended from these free-range domestic animals. For part of the year the Walker family kept the horses

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[74] *Situation Analysis of Douglas Mountain, Sand Wash Wild Horse Use Areas*.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Dawn (Walker) Nottingham, 2013, Oral History.
[79] Ibid.

nearby. They fed, watered, and rode them as a way to complete their daily ranch chores.[80] For the other part of the year these horses were released to range free in the mountains, free to find their own food and water during the off months. Because of these free-ranging horses, it became even more difficult to tell the difference between claimed and unclaimed horses.[81]

Figure 5. This image shows one of the horses of the Sand Wash Basin. This particular stud is colored in a way that suggests he could be a descendant of horses that once belonged to local ranchers. Dawn (Walker) Nottingham noted that paint horses were bred by one of the local ranchers who lived near the area. This image was taken looking to the west from the Seven Mile Ridge Road. Andrea Mott, "IMG146," digital photograph, (May 27, 2010).

Land inspections often showed the commonalities, or lack thereof, between forage use by cattle, elk, horses, and mule deer. During a May 1, 1969, inspection of the Douglas Mountain allotment, officials Dave Hillberry and Neil McCleery determined that overgrazing was so

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[80] Ibid.
[81] *Situation Analysis of Douglas Mountain, Sand Wash Wild Horse Use Areas*.

extensive that continued use could not be calculated.[82] All four groups of animals had similarities in terms of what they grazed. Their options included plants like sedge (*carex*), needlegrass (*stipa*), and serviceberry (*amelanchier utahensis*), which were chosen over forage like bluebells (*mertensia*), gambel oak (*quercus gambeli*), and boraginaceae.[83] Data also pointed, however, to a significant difference between the plants horses preferred and those that deer preferred. In fact, out of the ten grazing areas discussed in this allotment, deer were the only herbivores that ate the snowberry (*symphoricarpos*) plant.[84] Cattle, elk, and horses all avoided it. Evidence pointed out the grazing preferences of these four herbivore groups. It stands to reason that overgrazing on specific plants can be blamed on certain herbivore groups. It is more difficult to place the blame (or even prove) that one group is more to blame than any of the others. Despite this inconclusive evidence about which group is to blame, it remains that continued management of wildlife and horses is important in order for the improvement of range conditions.

Sometimes individuals can represent the history of a region, its connection to horse and ranching culture, the myth and appeal of the West, and to regional land and range management practices. In the case of lifelong Wyoming rancher George Salisbury II, working on the land meant that you both respected it and understood it. His parents, George Salisbury Sr. and Emma (Terrill) Salisbury, welcomed him to the world on March 7, 1921, in the family's ranch house.[85] At the time, the senior George was a well-known rancher in the Snake River Valley.[86] The Snake River Valley traverses the Wyoming and Colorado border. Extensive family connections

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[82] Ibid.

[83] Ibid., Table 3. The average and standard deviation of the percentages of foods common to the diets of cattle, elk, horses, and mule deer on ten sites grazed by all four herbivores in northwestern Colorado.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Richard L. Knight, "George Salisbury: Sharing a vision," *Range Magazine* (Summer 2002), 27. Courtesy Museum of Northwest Colorado; "George Ralph Salisbury Jr." in *Steamboat Pilot & Today*, January 2, 2011.

[86] "Funeral Rites for Snake River Rancher Held," March 6, 1946. Courtesy Museum of Northwest Colorado.

in the surrounding area meant that he always had someone to work with, no matter what. In 1937, at a youthful sixteen years of age, George graduated from high school.[87] Not only did he grow up in a ranching family, but he was raised with an understanding of horse husbandry. This meant he had a thorough base of practical knowledge (through years of hard, back-breaking work) concerning what it meant to be a true cowboy. His parents raised him to be a good cowboy, one who understood sheep, cattle, and horses, in addition to life beyond the ranch's boundaries. His family's cattle and sheep ranch is still located near the small town of Savery, Wyoming, a short distance north of the Colorado border. It is nearly equidistant between Rawlings, Wyoming, and Craig, Colorado.[88] This region is remote, and the terrain alternates between flat and hilly. Occasionally a shepherd's wagon, usually located near large flocks of sheep, can be viewed from the main highway. This location placed the Salisbury ranch in the middle of prime livestock grazing land along the Little Snake River Valley and between areas favored by wild horses in both Wyoming and Colorado.[89]

After his high school graduation George, encouraged by his parents, left home to attend college at Colorado State University.[90] While there he attained a degree in Forestry and Range Management as well as the attention of a young woman by the name of Laura Eleanor Kinne.[91] They married soon after his graduation in 1941.[92] At this time he was still a young man of twenty years. Then, like so many other young men during the 1940s, he was called to serve the United States in the fight against Germany. George's obituary states how, during his four year tour of duty, he spent his time as a "Commander of Battery C, 399th Armored Field Artillery

[87] "Obituaries," in *The Fence Post*, January 10, 2011.
[88] Andrea Mott, Field Notes, May 30, 2010.
[89] Knight, 27.
[90] "Obituaries," 2011.
[91] Knight, 27; "George Ralph Salisbury Jr.," 2011; "Obituaries," 2011.
[92] "George Ralph Salisbury Jr.," 2011.

Battalion, 8th Armored Division, under George Patton in the European Theatre."[93] At the end of his tour George returned home to his beloved Laura and continued to work the land. Soon, the two had three children to care for as well as a ranch to keep them busy. After his father George Sr. died at the age of 63 on February 28, 1946, George II, who was only about twenty-five years old, continued to keep the ranch going with his own young family.[94]

Eventually things settled into a routine on the ranch, and George decided to involve himself in other activities. He became involved in local and state politics and his former leadership role in the military became an asset. His background and experience on the range, the ranch, and his degree from CSU all reaped some rewards. George's ranching heritage and college education pushed him farther into local range management. He held office in the Wyoming Stock Growers Association, on the Wyoming Board of Agriculture, and over a decade as a representative in the state legislature.[95] George was a steward of the land. According to Richard Knight, author of the article "George Salisbury: Sharing a Vision," George believed that "land is too important to be managed generically. It must be managed specifically."[96] This perspective was shaped by decades of living on a ranch. As a rancher and legislator he had to work with people from many different backgrounds, both in the government and outside of it, in order to promote specific land management practices. Even though he was raised in a rural, remote, section of the United States, George believed people could learn from ranchers and farmers in other countries who had other cultural values. He traveled extensively outside of the

[93] "Obituaries," 2011; "George Ralph Salisbury Jr.," 2011.

[94] "Funeral Rites for Snake River Rancher Held." George II's father was born in 1883 and he died on February 27, 1946. His mother Emma (Terrill) Salisbury was born on April 7, 1885 in Linn, Missouri. Her family traveled west and ended up settling in the Little Snake River Valley, the same region where the Salisbury family had been living for many years. She and George Sr. met, courted, and then married on July 25, 1909. She died at the age of 79. "Emma Salisbury Funeral Thursday in Dixon Church," December 31, 1964.

[95] "Obituaries," 2011; "George Ralph Salisbury Jr.," 2011.

[96] Knight, 27.

United States, and observed firsthand other ways to manage grazing land for sheep and cattle.[97] Because of these experiences he had a strong familiarity with the range, the people who worked it, and the animals it supported.

During the last week in May of 2010 the author had her first, and only, encounter with George Salisbury, Jr.[98] The short trip to the Ladder Ranch started as an accident in the basement community room of the Little Snake River Museum in Savery, Wyoming.[99] At the end of this unexpected meeting, the author and her two friends received an invitation to visit the Salisbury ranch near Savery. On that day it was apparent that George was no longer a spry young man. However, he was a man who knew the history of the region and was aware of those who lived in nearby communities. This is merely one of the things that made him an effective representative. On that day in May George sported a snow-white beard, and crows-feet along his eyes, evidence of a man who either smiled a lot or one who spent a lot of time outside.[100] In his case, both are applicable. Despite walking with a cane, the elder Salisbury patriarch carried himself well. At the age of eighty-nine, George still called the Ladder Ranch home. His daughter's family lived nearby, which meant that there was always someone around to check on him.[101]

In 2010 the Ladder Ranch appeared much the way it would have a century before, plus a few more modern buildings, electricity, and automobiles.[102] Sheep, cattle, dogs, and horses filled the surrounding landscape. In earlier years George would purchase Boyd Walker's horses

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[97] Mott, Field Notes, 2010.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid.; "Little Snake River Museum," museum flyer.
[100] Mott, Field Notes, May 30, 2010.
[101] During my visit to the Ladder Ranch in May 2010 I met Sharon O'Toole, George II's youngest and only surviving child. She was born January 27, 1953. "Salisbury," January 28, 1953. His son, George R. Salisbury III, died in February 1988 at the age of 45; "Death of rancher probed," February 8, 1988. His other daughter, Charlotte (Salisbury) Gros, spent most of her life living in Brazil with her husband and son. She passed away October 10, 2006 in that country; "Charlotte Emma Salisbury Gros," October 17, 2006.
[102] Mott, Field Notes, May 30, 2010.

because he knew the quality of the animals was excellent.[103] It was possible to see why the Salisbury family wanted to stay on the ranch. Its remoteness and beauty were appealing. Perhaps even more important, a shared heritage connected them to the land, its inhabitants, the environment, and the surrounding rural communities. These bonds are important pieces of regional history. In cases like this one a family's past, present, and future are entwined with the continued health and longevity of the range they depend upon for their livelihood.

George's stewardship took many things into account. He had to consider range quality, herd rotation and upkeep, and environmental effects on all of them. Bad drought and tough winters could take their toll on sheep and cattle herds, as well as on the wild horses sharing the same rangelands. Like many other men of his generation who lived near the Sand Wash, he was well acquainted with local wild horse herd management practices. Controlling these populations was as important as managing domestic animal numbers. Overgrazing and unhealthy animals could be a consequence of no management. Like other families in this locality, before the BLM controlled the wild horses and managed the range, they took it upon themselves to do it. In addition, predators are an issue for animals on the range. Ranchers had to protect herds from cougars and coyotes.[104] It was the reverse situation for wild horses. They had very few effective natural predators and humans filled the most effective role. Men like George were the only ones who could truly control wild horse populations because they interacted with them on a regular basis.

On Christmas Day 2010 George passed away.[105] Much like Clifford Heaverne and Velma Johnston, this man lived through the myriad changes that occurred in western life throughout much of the twentieth century. His family—grandparents, parents, children,

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[103] Wanda (Ramsey) Walker and Dawn (Walker) Nottingham, 2011, Oral History.
[104] Ibid.
[105] "George Ralph Salisbury Jr.," 2011.

grandchildren, and even great-grandchildren—has and will continue to work the same land. The Salisbury's heritage will continue to leave marks on the surrounding communities of people, animals, and rangeland. An educated land steward is an important entity in the western United States. In 2011 George's daughter Sharon O'Toole, herself an educated range steward, spoke about her father, saying, "He lived a fascinating life. . . . he was always a long-term thinker."[106] Change can happen when a single individual, or group of people, continue to work towards amenable multiple-use methods and conservation practices on the range. The land rewards those who manage it with an eye towards the future.

Many families who lived in the region of south-central Wyoming and northwestern Colorado had to deal with the issue of wild horses. The Salisbury family was just one of them. One of their regional neighbors, the Walkers, also paid close attention to the balance of range health and animal health. Dawn (Walker) Nottingham's father, James Boyd Walker, of Browns Park and Douglas Mountain, Colorado, often had his own run-ins with wild horses, domestic horses, and government officials. Boyd, as everyone called him, was born to Dio and Laura Vaughan Walker on June 16, 1919.[107] Boyd's parents left him and his brother Elbert when they were young, which left Boyd in charge of caring for his younger sibling.[108] As a result, Boyd

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[106] Sharon O'Toole, quoted by Jeff Gearino in "Little Snake River Valley ranching patriarch is laid to rest," *Casper-Star-Tribune*, January 6, 2011, http://billingsgazette.com/news/state-and-regional/wyoming/little-snake-river-valley-ranching-patriarch-is-laid-to-rest/article_13c3d1bc-d32a-5e84-a49e-2f294db663.html. Sharon O'Toole is the last surviving child of George and Laura Salisbury. She is a prolific writer and a cowboy poet. Her work can be found online at the old site, http://www.westernfolklife.org/weblogs/artists/sharono/, and the new site, http://ladderranch.wordpress.com/. Sharon's blog about life along the Little Snake River, as well as life on the Ladder Ranch, and family are good indications of the closeness the family retains with one another. Her photographs are windows into the rewards and difficulties of ranching in this remote part of the country.

[107] "Obituaries," James Boyd Walker, August 2, 1993. Courtesy Museum of Northwest Colorado; "Elmora Vaughan," ancestry.com, http://trees.ancestry.com/tree/27017379/family?fpid=12557201567. Courtesy Museum of Northwestern Colorado. This family tree indicates that Charles Minford Vaughan (1891-1976) married Chloe Bunker (1902-1990) and had a daughter by the name of Elmora (Peterson) Vaughan. This family tree also indicates that Dio, Boyd's father, married Charles Minford Vaughan's sister Laura. Dio Lockart Walker (1884-1960) married Laura Vaughan (1888-?) and they had two sons, Boyd and Elbert Walker.

[108] Dawn (Walker) Nottingham, 2013, Oral History; Wanda (Ramsey) Walker and Dawn (Walker) Nottingham, 2011, Oral History; "Obituaries," 1993.

experienced independence at a young age. This solitary lifestyle left a mark on Boyd. He was often gruff, difficult to get along with.[109] That, however, did not keep him from courting the woman who would one day be his bride. On February 13, 1945, he married Wanda (Ramsey) Walker of Browns Park in Rock Springs, Wyoming.[110] She was regarded as a gem by nearly everyone who knew her.[111] She was also tough, and worked the land and the ranch alongside her husband. Most of their time was spent working cattle in Browns Park or Douglas Mountain, but the two were also known to chase wild horses.[112] In fact, in the article, "A Cowgirl and a Lady: Wanda Walker Embodies the Best Attributes of Cowgirls and Other Quality Folks," Wanda herself explains how her own father, Jim Ramsey, would pull her out of school to help him chase wild horses.[113] She once remarked how her father Jim would rather run horses than do anything else.[114] Dawn said that running wild horses was what her grandfather lived by.[115] Wanda thought getting out of school in search of wild horses was wonderful because "there is nothing like seeing a bunch of wild horses running and trying to catch them. They can be so pretty, and of course, as a kid, you want to keep every one of them."[116] This perspective is still shared by

[109] Tom and Elmora (Vaughan) Peterson, 2013, Oral History. Elmora is one of Dawn (Walker) Nottingham's cousins. Her husband Tom had a difficult time getting along with Boyd, but both Tom and Elmora loved Wanda; Dawn (Walker) Nottingham, 2013, Oral History.

[110] "Obituaries," 1993; Dawn (Walker) Nottingham, 2011, Oral History. Dawn often spoke about her mother being an excellent cowhand and horsewoman.

[111] Tom and Elmora (Vaughan) Peterson, 2013, Oral History.

[112] Ibid. Tom confirmed that he used to chase wild horses with Boyd, partly because Charles Minford Vaughan was his father-in-law, as well as Boyd's uncle.

[113] Dan Abernathy, "A Cowgirl and a Lady: Wanda Walker Embodies the Best Attributes of Cowgirls and Other Quality Folks," in *American Cowboy*, May/June 1996, 56-58. Courtesy Museum of Northwest Colorado.

[114] Wanda (Ramsey) Walker and Dawn (Walker) Nottingham, 2011, Oral History.

[115] Ibid.

[116] Wanda Walker, quoted in Dan Abernathy "A Cowgirl and a Lady: Wanda Walker Embodies the Best Attributes of Cowgirls and Other Quality Folks," in *American Cowboy*, May/June 1996, 56-58. Courtesy Museum of Northwest Colorado.

many children, many of whom have never seen a wild horse.[117] Wanda's perspective as an adult was still shaped by the images she remembered from her childhood.

The Walker cattle ranching outfit required the use of several hundred head of horses, most of which were free-range horses that Boyd and his workers wrangled up for work in the spring. His horse-running days with the likes of Charles Minford Vaughan (his uncle and Elmora Vaughan Peterson's father), Cecil Connors, Guy McNurland, Pat McNurland, and Shorty Creel, prepared him for the days he would be running cattle and horses on his own ranch.[118]

In 1952 Boyd and Wanda had a daughter whom they named Barbara Dawn. She would be their only child, yet she worked alongside her parents and cared for the land and the animals. Hard work was not a stranger to her then, nor is it now.[119] Her parents, gruff father, lady and cowgirl for a mother, raised her with a strong sense of understanding about life on western ranges. It is easy to see why the Walker family, to this day, continues to believe the horses in and around the Sand Wash Basin are not truly wild.[120] They used them on the ranch and as local resources. After all, many of them are likely the descendents of their own domesticated ranch

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[117] This evidence came out in the letters children wrote to Velma Johnston about saving the wild horses. They wondered how something so pretty could be sent to slaughter.

[118] Dawn (Walker) Nottingham, 2013, Oral History. Throughout this oral history Dawn brought up many names used in reference in other parts of this dissertation. The most familiar include Charles Minford Vaughan (the link with Elmora Peterson is in this connection as she is C. Minford Vaughan's only daughter), Cecil Connors, the McNurland brothers, and little Shorty Creel. These men ran horses in the Sand Wash as well as in other parts of northwestern Colorado. "Elmora Vaughan," ancestry.com, http://trees.ancestry.com/tree/27017379/family?fpid=12557201567; "Funeral," November 5, 1990. This funeral announcement is regarding C. Minford Vaughan's wife Chloe (Elmora's mother) who passed away November 1, 1990, in Vernal, Utah; "Funeral services for C. Minford Vaughn held in Gd. Junction," April 28, 1976. In this announcement the connection between Elmora, C. Minford, and Chloe is made in a little more detail; "Services in Memory of C. Minford Vaughan," March 7, 1891 – April 17, 1976. Funeral Announcement. All sources here are Courtesy Museum of Northwestern Colorado.

[119] By "now" I am referring to July 26, 2013, when I met with Dawn in Craig, Colorado. She drove the ranch work truck into town, wore Wrangler jeans and a plaid work short. Her boots and truck alike were covered in the dust of hard work. Her walk was proof that she had spent a lifetime on horseback.

[120] Dawn (Walker) Nottingham, 2013, Oral History.

horses. Dawn, the reigning matriarch of the family after her father passed away in 1993 and her mother in 2012, continues to say that the horses roaming these areas are not wild.[121]

Local ranchers like the Walkers caught and removed wild horses. Their action put them in the distinct role of mustangers. It was just one way they could reduce competition over limited water and land resources and cull the wild herds. It was also another method of adding stock horses to ranching operations. Stories about catching wild horses are merely a small part of life in the rural communities of this region, as we see with the Walker family and their connections within these communities.[122] Unless someone asks about specific stories, these narratives are often left out of every day conversations. Yet, many people remember how, from the 1920s through the 1950s, some men still sought out the thrill of running wild horses. Competition on the range, though fierce before the Taylor Grazing Act (as people fought over the best grazing land), was also strong after its passage when land owners had to lease grazing land from the federal government. In some cases the government placed trespassing charges on individuals who could not contain their horses within the specified boundaries.[123] Ranchers continued to fight wild horses for range access, even after the government granted them access to specific grazing allotments. Men like George would often reflect on the days when many people (men and women) spent some of their time catching wild horses. Men like Boyd Walker, Cecil Connors, and Charles M. Vaughan, who ran horses in the Sand Wash, often worked for cattle and sheep ranchers. The extra money they made was a bonus.

In the early days their methods of catching wild horses were gained through personal experience, trial and error, as well as knowledge of the range. The men had to know where to

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[121] Ibid.

[122] This is also evident in Will James' portrayal of Clint and Smoky in *Smoky*.

[123] The Walkers found themselves in lawsuits against the BLM because of the question surrounding trespassing horses.

run the horses before they began, otherwise they risked losing all of them to the hills and valleys that dotted the terrain. Their methods began to change once mechanized equipment became more readily available.[124] Trucks, small planes, and helicopters replaced domestic horses.[125] Through all of it, these horse catchers ran on a combination of horse know-how, raw toughness, and a daily dose of danger and risk. These tough men knew how to work the land and the horses, and they knew that they could earn some money by selling them. They knew how to use these animals as a resource and how to catch them if they became a nuisance by competing for resources with other animals. In these communities, embraced by the borders of two states, people knew one another and often worked together. Sometimes they were also related to one another. Some of these men utilized Ernest Lang's corral on the eastern border of the Sand Wash Basin, which runs parallel to the Little Snake River Valley in Colorado.[126] In Rhodes's 1972 article he discusses range competitiveness between cowboys, cattle owners, and horses, stating "the cowboys" are mad "because they were getting six cents a pound for their labors and the cattlemen are worried because they have to share the public-domain lands they lease with the horses."[127] In other words, the cowboys were crazy to work so hard for a mere few cents per pound of horseflesh. In addition, the cattlemen were opposed to sharing the land they leased with the local wild horses. In some cases the rancher and cowboy roles were entwined, which meant one person had to deal with both sides of the situation. The ranchers, and the cowboys who worked for them, were angry and frustrated. George, who was a cattleman, a cowboy, and a

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[124] Jim Buffham, "Notebook of Recollections," Maybell Library. This source gives more explanations and details about wild horse catchers in the Sand Wash. Buffham also describes the trapping techniques he and others used to corral horses.; Dale C. Brannon, 1994, Oral History, interviewed by Sharon Andrew, Maybell, Colorado, Spring, 6. Maybell Library. This source provides further tales of horse catchers in the Sand Wash.; L.C. "Jim" Buffham, 1993, interviewed by Sharon Andrew, Maybell, Colorado, August 8. Maybell Library.

[125] For more information about mechanized roundups listen to Clifford Heaverne, Oral History. Or read Ted Barber's *The Barnstorming Mustanger*. These describe the variable methods used in horse roundups.

[126] Mott, Field Observations, 2010; Buffham, "Notebook of Recollections." Pictures show evidence of Lang's trap in the Sand Wash. Maybell Library.

[127] Rhodes, 150.

legislator, understood these issues better than most. Boyd, a loner cowboy and rancher, also understood and was vocal about disagreeing with government management practices concerning wild horses. Locals had managed the land and its animals for many years and had kept populations at reasonable levels. The government, on the other hand, struggled to co-manage the land and its wild horses.

Scientific views regarding horses, particularly wild ones, are based on studies in the fields of biology and geology. Scientists believe horses are a non-native, or exotic, species that have adapted and flourished in this environment.[128] They have not always lived here, which makes this claim valid.[129] Wild horses are descendants of tame animals, but because they have had centuries to adapt to rough environments, including unpredictable weather patterns, they evolved the abilities to adapt in strange places. They are found in the mountains and on sea-level, in areas of high and low precipitation, and in areas where most of their forage does not include quality grazing land.[130] Yet, despite hardships, these animals have found homes in these desolate environments. Because wild horses did not originate here in their present form, it is inaccurate to call them "wild." Instead, scientists prefer the term "feral" to refer to these animals. Although livestock are equally non-native to this environment, they are welcomed more readily than the wild horse herds.[131] Feral animals are not considered to be nearly as important as cattle or sheep raised by regional ranching operations.[132] Even range scientists like Holechek, Piper, and Herbel explain how "they were generally considered undesirable by

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[128] Holechek, Piper, and Herbel, 49, 394. This section of the Holechek book goes into more detail about when and how people introduced horses, cattle, and sheep into the southwest. Because the environment was suitable to their reproductive needs, these animals flourished. Later in the book the authors explain the ease in which wild horses and burros adapted to their new environment in North America.

[129] White, *"It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own,"* 18, 26.

[130] *Environmental Statement*.

[131] Hale Sparks, "Survivors of the West," *UCLA Radio-Television Administration*, no. 3921– U.E. 1710, December 27, 1959; Holechek, Piper, and Herbel, 394-5.

[132] Mott, Field Observations; Stillman, 245.

ranchers and federal land managers."[133] Above all, wild horses are resilient, and as hard and tough as the lands they call home. These attributes contribute to the difficulties involved in managing them.

Managing the land meant that problems centered on resource competition and profitability, not the wild horses that lived there. As a result, horses often lost the battle and became targets. In the 1920s and 1930s, wild horse catchers, or mustangers, like Boyd, Cecil, and others, worked for ranching operations and helped livestock managers round up wild horses. They had a purpose and it centered on local animal and range management. Someone had to limit populations and these men helped balance resources. The horses were then shipped off to slaughterhouses or rendering works.[134] This kind of extraction eventually built a market for the pet food industry, because wild horse meat was used in their food compounds. One 1930 account detailed how "six carloads of desert mustangs went out on last evening's train billed to a cannery in California where the animals will be reduced to chicken feed."[135] In addition, zoos took advantage of the opportunity to get low-cost meat and used a large quantity of horse meat to supplement the diets of animals in their care.[136] Up until the late 1950s wild horses were rounded up in massive numbers across most western states. Eventually the media, Velma Johnston, and a few government officials were able to start changing what people thought of these animals. By the late 1950s the Taylor Grazing Act had already caused a lot of damage.

Literature on the Taylor Grazing Act has led to conflicting reports and opinions regarding its overall effectiveness. Some people believe that it has done nothing but harm the welfare of

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[133] Holechek, Piper, and Herbel, 394.
[134] Cecil Connors, 1981, Oral History; Heaverne, 2011, Oral History; Rhodes, 186.
[135] "Desert Horses Sent to Coast," *Reno Gazette-Journal*, October 24, 1930.
[136] Laura J. Durfee, "Anti-Horse Slaughter Legislation: Bad for Horses, Bad for Society," *Indiana Law Journal* 84 (2009), 355.

wild horses in the United States.[137] Others take the scientific approach and explain that, in a balanced environment, it is essential that there are enough resources to go around.[138] The true basis for this act was to help control land uses and abuses. Without some type of grazing management plan in place, ranchers, farmers, and others would continue to argue over who could use the land. Not only that, it was easy for them to overstock and overgraze the land, and thereby eliminate the possibility of continued use.[139] In order for these vast lands to thrive, someone needed to take an active position on controlling grazing methods and locations. Where government failed, local citizens took action in regard to wild horses.

In her 2009 book on wild horses in the American West, Stillman examined the effects of the TGA on the horses, ranchers, and others. She concluded that it was this piece of legislature that changed the fate of the wild horse, because it became "an invisible fence that constrained the West in a new way."[140] It may have constrained the West, but it was also meant to increase range sustainability. William Voigt wrote something similar in his 1976 book on public grazing lands in the West. He asserted that "the Taylor Act was no prize package, except to the ranchers to whom it was granting monopolistic rights to federal ranges."[141] Livestock, the main cash crop, held more sway in terms of land use than the wild ones that called the same ranges their home because they had a strong financial standing in the American economy. The wild ones did not.

On a clear, sunny, and mildly warm May afternoon, the author traveled to an isolated area in northwestern Colorado in search of a 1930s era horse catchers' corral. The resulting find at

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[137] Stillman.
[138] Holechek, Piper, and Herbel.
[139] Ibid., 51.
[140] Stillman, 244.
[141] William Voigt, Jr., *Public Grazing Lands: Use and Misuse by Industry and Government* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1976), 67.

that location was a strong example of survival and resilience in the West. It was a remote area that incorporated cliffs, dry washes, steep valleys, and high windswept plateaus. A soft cool breeze took the sting out of the heat on that sunny afternoon in early May. Miles of sagebrush, sand, and loose gravel composed this place. Yet, in spite of its barrenness, wildlife found the resources they needed to survive. Antelope, always watchful, roamed the hills in sizable herds. Off to the side, separated from her herd, a lone female sheltered her kid in a cluster of dry brush, the only evidence of its existence the color of its chestnut coat, which contrasted with the surrounding dry dirt and dry brush. Meanwhile, a lone coyote prowled the brush with its head down and ears alert, its eyes scanning the horizon in search of its next meal. These examples of wildlife are just a few native species one might encounter on this remote section of government-owned and managed land.

Although wildlife abound, they do not live alone in this ecosystem. Indeed, they share this stretch of land with the occasional adventuresome human and several herds of wild horses.[142] A lone cream-colored camper stands next to several small gravel dunes. That, plus the four-wheeler tracks, confirmed the region's use as a recreational venue. Evidence showed that multiple-use is epitomized here. Ecologically, it remains important to study the interactions of these wild horses with their surroundings in order to analyze how they attempt to remain in balance with one another.[143]

Evidence in the Sand Wash portrays a history of human and horse co-habitation. This evidence points to a long history of resource acquisition, population control, and a rustic form of land management. Animal tracks follow trails in varying directions, yet, despite that, these wild horses can be seen following the man-made gravel and dirt roads that traverse the public-owned

[142] Mott, Field Observations.
[143] Holechek, Piper, and Herbel, 130-1.

land. Not far from one of these man-made trails is the wing to a hidden corral. This corral, built by Ernest Lang, follows a natural tree line made up of juniper and piñon trees. A sandy trail lined with these trees and dotted with the occasional hoof print, leads down the hill and towards the hidden entrance of the corral. After a quick turn in the sandy track, the corral appears. It was not large, but it was sufficient for its purpose: capturing wild horses. The ravages of time and weather have taken a toll on this evidentiary artifact of life in the West, but it stands as a testament to the way things were when locals managed the land and its resources. It also provides some proof to the wild horse's transitory time on the range.

Perceptions about how this land should be used are varied, but are still rooted in regional heritage. These narratives add perspective to the difficulties of defining what a wild horse is and how it does, and does not, compete with domestic herds. Overall, the theme of establishing a balance between native, feral, and domestic animals and their use of the land remains important. Sometimes owners of domesticated herds also become actors in this continuous drama of survival on the range. Their regional narratives and rural heritage play out on a daily basis. Cattle may dominate the West more than wild horses, but horses continue to be relied upon by rural, ranch-dwelling individuals. As one author states, "Wild horses are . . . a state of being," which is something that Wanda Walker also describes.[144] Another writer explains how wild horses are "not a target animal and they have no real use, but if you're lucky enough to catch a glimpse of them they seem like the wind and the West itself."[145] These may just be individual perceptions, but they have given the rest of the public an idea of what it might be like to encounter a wild horse on its non-native, but still important, home terrain.

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[144] Brandon, 5.
[145] Rhodes, 150.

Despite the controversy over range use and misuse, wild horses have earned the right to live in a land that people, livestock, and even other wild animals sometimes avoid. They, like the people who homesteaded and ranched in these remote lands, are equally resilient. No matter what we may think, wild horses (some of whom are descendants of their more domesticated cousins) have given the public a glimpse into a different time, a time when Native Americans could see the initial beauty, and usefulness, in a creature much larger than the dogs they were used to working with. It is also possible to see how their mystical characteristics were earned: strength, beauty, even a touch of arrogance. The settlers needed them, the war efforts needed them, traders utilized them, and in time they became viewed more as pets than as livestock. Why, then, in a modern world, have they gained appeal with some groups and not others? While the controversy over land use and range rights marches forward, wild horses will continue to live their lives in limbo, competing for their livelihood, resources, and the right to live untamed in a too-tame world.

Alternative perspectives are necessary pieces to the continuing saga of wild horses in the United States. The mustangers' viewpoints may not always be seen under the guise of positive range management practices, but their narratives are no less important to the history of local range management. These men are not alone. Clifford Heaverne can also be viewed as an alternative to the legend presented as Wild Horse Annie. As the male hero, his narrative is no less significant than hers. Viewing his perspective through the lens of history presents a broader picture. Journalists and others have helped to perpetuate the image of him as a villain. At the same time other representations, such as the one depicting Cliff carefully carrying an orphaned foal to his helicopter, provide sympathetic insight. Just as the legend of Wild Horse Annie showcases one viewpoint, Cliff's showcases another.

PILOTING THE HERD: WILD HORSE ROUNDUPS FROM THE COCKPIT

"Recreation in the form of chasing horses has been a pastime of cowboys for decades . . . The cowboy and the mustang are both a part of the 'pioneer spirit of the west.' Maybe it's inconsistent to eliminate this means of population control."[1]

Wild horse roundups have long been a topic guaranteed to incite passion and emotionally charged outbursts. The bonds humans create with horses can be life-changing.[2] Recent works suggest that the reasoning for this is based on the horse's role in American history. It is a lengthy, involved history. It ties together a history of horse husbandry with different cultures and groups. These animals have long been entwined with advances in civilization, particularly in the Great Plains and vast arid regions of the West. Wild horses have also grown as icons of the West, much like cowboys and Native Americans. These animals are symbolic of the relationship with the settling of the western frontier. Their images are cast and recast in media, literary sources, and personal narratives. Pop culture and literary culture have wrought a change in the way people imagine wild horses and the West. These images, provided in public and personal perceptions, are a basis of biases that surround this subject in its entirety. Their wildness, spirit, and endurance make wild horses a captivating subject for audiences, and while these attributes enhance the animal's iconic image, they make it difficult for the government to manage them without public involvement.

Wild horse historiography is minimal, but sources on popular culture and literature are useful study areas. Each resource provides important details about how the subject of wild horses became more popular in the post-World War II years. Perceptions about these animals are also complex and varied. People like Clifford Heaverne, Dawn (Walker) Nottingham, and

[1] Ron Hall to Velma Johnston, 24 January 1973. Box 686, FF27. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[2] Barbara Jones, "Just Crazy About Horses: The Fact Behind the Fiction," in *New Perspectives on Our Lives with Companion Animals*, edited by Aaron Honori Katcher and Alan M. Beck, 87-111 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 87.

Velma (Bronn) Johnston are defined by their ties to the West as well as their connections to wild horses.[3] Their perceptions are important elements in this tale of survival. Some people negatively view the individuals who removed wild horses from the range. On the other hand, oral histories focused on individuals who have lived their lives near these animals provide a realistic aspect to this often myth-like subject. Not all of these individuals were out there to deplete the range or abuse the animals that lived on it. Rather, these men and women conducted roundups in order to collect prime stock for their own ranches or for the federal government. At one time, the wild herds provided thousands of extra mounts for the United States' troops. These once-wild horses were trained and served as cavalry mounts and artillery haulers. They were a resource, and used as such. It is not by chance that these roundups continued well into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. These narratives, as told through personal experiences, popular literature, and the media depict an alternative view of life on the range. Analyzing the intersection of these works with the tales of roundups in the United States is helpful in trying to understand how current ideas and perceptions about wild horses in the West are shaped by what people thought they knew, rather than by what the historical record has shown.

Several historical works increase knowledge about the background of wild horse roundups in the United States. Folklorist J. Frank Dobie's collection on wild horses is the first of these. In his work, *The Mustangs: Valiant, Wild and Free They Roved the Western Plains*, Dobie focused on the folklore that surrounded wild horses on the southern plains, particularly in the areas around Texas.[4] The second historical work is Parley J. Paskett's *Wild Mustangs*, which is a

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[3] Clifford Heaverne, 2011, Oral History, interviewed by Andrea Mott, digital audio recording, Fallon, Nevada, August 29; Dawn (Walker) Nottingham, 2013, Oral History, interviewed by Andrea Mott, digital audio recording, Craig, Colorado, July 26; Velma Johnston's correspondence is a good source to uncover some of her family history.

[4] J. Frank Dobie, *The Mustangs: Valiant, Wild and Free They Roved the Western Plains*, 4th ed. (New York: Bantam Books, 1952).

collection of stories about mustanging told from the author's point of view. In this piece, Paskett explains the complexity and coordination involved in these dangerous undertakings. His experiences chronicled the excitement of horseback roundups.[5] The final work that could assist in shaping views about mustanging in the West is Ted Barber's *The Barnstorming Mustanger*. In this autobiographical account Barber shares his experiences as a pilot rounding up horses on the western ranges, particularly in the states of Utah and Nevada. His personal accounts, like those of Paskett, shape understanding of the mysterious nature of early airborne roundups in the United States.[6] Each of these works has contributed to the overall understanding of wild horses and their roles in western landscapes.

Dobie's stories point out the mystical qualities of wild horses and how they contributed to the social and ranching structure of southern Texas. These tales take readers on a journey through wild horse country on the southern plains. Dobie moves chronologically through details about the horse in that part of the country. The narrative takes into account Spanish influences, Native Americans' adaptation to life on horseback, and the constructed world of horse stealing and trading. This activity occurred regularly between the Spanish, Native Americans, and whites. The tales continue when he discusses the mythical white mustang, called "The Ghost Horse," that no mustanger, cowboy, or anyone else could catch or claim.[7] Dobie's work also introduces some racial awareness; the white mustang represents white supremacy on the southern plains.[8] He could not be captured or bent to another's will, yet, at the end of the tale, he is captured: "no more will be seen his noble form, with head up and eye dilated, standing on the

[5] Parley J. Paskett, *Wild Mustangs* (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1986).

[6] Ted Barber, *The Barnstorming Mustanger: His Life and Times* (Orovado, NV: Barber Industries Inc., 1987).

[7] Dobie, 119.

[8] Dobie, 137; The white horse is also viewed as a symbol in other ways. M. Oldfield Howey, *The Horse in Magic and Myth* (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, Inc., 2002), 221. Howey explains how the white horse was believed to gift its owner with special powers.

prairie-knoll, snuffing danger in the breeze, and dashing off at lightning speed when it becomes apparent."[9] Evocative images like this one spread quickly in western literary works.

Paskett's *Wild Mustangs* carries significance in its reference to mustanging and roundups. This work, which comprises the author's personal experiences, chronicles the methods used to capture wild horses. In this particular case, Paskett discusses the skills necessary to round up wild horses while on horseback. He compared his methods to modern ones when he says, "using helicopters today to run down wild horses removes both the thrill and sport in their capture."[10] In his eyes the helicopter removed the skills required to capture a wild horse while on horseback. Clifford Heaverne would probably disagree since his roundups were almost always done from the air. Paskett's writings contribute to the historiography of wild horses and roundups, especially those that incorporated older capture methods, yet they do not provide much information about modern airborne captures. A different kind of expert is needed to discuss that subject. In other words, Paskett thinks a true cowboy should use his skills on the ground, not in the air. It did not take long beffore newer roundup techniques became employed on the range, but it can be argued that those also required a great amount of horse-sense and skill.

Ted Barber's experiences, which he recounted in *The Barnstorming Mustanger*, are a valuable resource on the history of using airplanes in wild horse roundups. These provide a balance between Paskett's experiences and Heaverne's. In the years following the Great Depression, Barber, a pilot by trade, sought a way to earn his living. He had heard stories of hired men shooting vast numbers of horses to remove them from the range, but Barber, along with a few other individuals, thought it would be better to capture and then remove the horses

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[9] Captain W. S. Henry, "Campaign Sketches of the War with Mexico," quoted in J. Frank Dobie *The Mustangs: Valiant, Wild and Free They Roved the Western Plains,* 4th ed. (New York: Bantam Books, 1952), 120.

[10] Paskett, viii.

rather than witness them being killed.[11] These circumstances compelled Barber to work as a pilot for various ranches. This made him one of the first individuals to use an airplane as a tool to round up horses. He could recall only two attempts at rounding up horses from the air, and both of those attempts, one in 1930 and the other in 1932, failed.[12] Riders on the ground assisted him in efforts to roundup horses using an airplane, and in 1933 Barber made his start at a mustang camp.[13] He chronicled his experiences in *The Barnstorming Mustanger*, where he provided details about horse camps, roundups, the range, costs to run these operations, and information about the airplanes he flew.[14] It is a valuable book because few sources like this exist, particularly from someone quite knowledgeable about aircraft and the technicalities involved in rounding up herds of wild horses from the air. It makes an important connection between past and present roundup methods.

Perceptions about the people who control airborne roundups are diverse. Some people believed that these men were the ones at fault for removing wild horses from the range. Despite the many perceptions about them, it is important to examine who hired them and their reasons behind culling herds throughout the West. Local management of wild horse herds was common. These reasons are complicated, and the federal government, land managers, and others have had to work together to make the range a more sustained environment. The range should support a wide range of animals: native and non-native alike. If the land is not managed for long-term range use, then the quality of grazing decreases. This leaves less quality forage for the animals that rely upon it for their very livelihood.[15] The men in aerial roundups are viewed as villains

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[11] Heaverne, Oral History. Barber worked with Pat Heaverne, Cliff's father, to capture horses.
[12] Barber.
[13] Ibid., 4.
[14] Ibid., 139-146.
[15] Stanley H. Anderson, *Managing Our Wildlife Resources*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1991), 201.

because of the roles they play in removals, yet it is essential to look beyond that outward perception. They know many things about the range and wild horses that the common public may not. In order to understand this it is important to look deeper into the situation.

Within the past sixty years wild horse roundups in the United States have incited massive public controversy.[16] Wild horses have incited emotional outbursts from people around the United States and the world. In the 1940s and 1950s this public attention focused on the practices of mustangers in and around the state of Nevada, the home of most wild horses in the United States.[17] Within a few decades, thousands of wild horses were captured and sent to slaughter, sometimes for pet food. They were also sold, traded, or kept and raised as ranch livestock.[18] Until the 1950s few people questioned these practices, for after all, humans had been managing wild herds for centuries.[19] In many cases this was a necessary thing to do because the range had a limited carrying capacity.[20] During the early years of settlement, when cattle

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[16] Heather Smith Thomas, *The Wild Horse Controversy* (South Brunswick, N.J.: A.S. Barnes, 1979); Martha Bellisle, "Battle brewing over Nevada's mustangs," *Reno Gazette-Journal*, February 9, 1997.

[17] Bureau of Land Management, "Wild Horse and Burro Quick Facts," September 23, 2011, http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/whbprogram/history_and_facts/quick_facts.html. This site gives the most recent estimated numbers of wild horses on federal lands. The data includes information for ten different states.

[18] Robert M. Denhardt, *The Horse of the Americas*, New ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1975); David Cruise and Alison Griffiths, *Wild Horse Annie and the Last of the Mustangs: The Life of Velma Johnston* (New York: Scribner, 2010); Smith Thomas, 39, 43, 62; Robert W. Eigell, "Rounding up 'Canners' for the 'Corned Beef and Cabbage'," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 36, no. 4 (1986): 64-68; Michael Wolfe, "The Wild Horse and Burro Issue, 1982," *Environmental Review* 2, no. 7 (1983): 180; Peter Hassrick, "William Ranney's 'Hunting Wild Horses'," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 110, no. 3 (2007): 349-50.

[19] More information referencing human interaction with wild horses in North America can be found in the following works: Denhardt, *The Horse of the Americas*; Dan Flores, "Bringing Home All the Pretty Horses: The Horse Trade and the Early American West, 1775-1825," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 58, no. 2 (2008): 3-21; Dan L. Flores, *The Natural West: Environmental History in the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001); Walter P. Webb, *The Great Plains* (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1931); Elliott West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, & the Rush to Colorado* (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 1998); One resource in particular provides excellent analyses of the roles horses (wild and domestic) had in Native American Plains cultures. Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); Popular literature also highlights the controversy of the United States' wild horses: Deanne Stillman, *Mustang: The Saga of the Wild Horse in the American West* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2008); Marguerite Henry, *Mustang: Wild Spirit of the West* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1966); Marguerite Henry, *Misty of Chincoteague* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1947).

[20] Durward L. Allen, *Our Wildlife Legacy*, rev. ed. (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1974), 59; Frederick F. Gilbert and Donald G. Dodds, *The Philosophy and Practice of Wildlife Management* (Malabar, F.L.: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company, 1987), 61.

operations reigned supreme, large ranching outfits utilized a large number of horses because the work was hard and horses tired out.[21] They needed several extra mounts for each cowboy. The summer months were the most arduous because of long-distance cattle drives on the Great Plains.[22] During the winter months, when extra horses were not needed, the cowboys turned them loose to free range.[23] As a result, some of these animals mingled with the wild herds and were never caught. As Dobie puts it, "The instinct to turn mustang is always showing up in domestic species."[24] On occasion, ranchers turned loose well-bred stallions to help breed up the wild stock.[25] This gave them a better pool to choose from during the next seasons roundups. Once turned loose, many of these horses lost their domesticity and continued to roam the West with wild herds.

Like any other animal living on the range, such as cattle and sheep, wild horses, too, needed to be managed. Clifford Heaverne, the man headlining this chapter, grew up around these symbolic animals. His experiences with wild horses, and his perspective of them gained from decades sitting in the cockpit of a Bell 47 helicopter, provide a distinctive individual's perspective on the management and meaning of wild horses in the West. What do we really know about the complex, and oftentimes complicated, relationships they have with ranchers and landowners? How do myth and western imagery affect how these horses are viewed? Cliff's experiences are important additions to the study of wild horse management practices in the western United States because they are an alternative view of what happens away from the cameras, in a world where mental and physical challenges are the norm.

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[21] Will James, *Smoky, the Cowhorse* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926).

[22] Ernest Staples Osgood, *The Day of the Cattleman* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1929), 48. See the footnote on Texas cattleman and their huge need for cow ponies. Osgood wrote about how more than one million were driven north to help cowboys manage their massive cattle herds.

[23] Dawn (Walker) Nottingham, 2013, Oral History. Dawn's father Boyd Walker turned loose all but the ranch's most essential horses. They would round them up again in the spring.

[24] Dobie, 268.

[25] Dawn (Walker) Nottingham, 2013, Oral History.

The historical background of the wild horse protection movement is important to understanding Heaverne's own western heritage. This movement began in the middle of the twentieth century with the help of a tough Nevada native by the name of Velma (Bronn) Johnston. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s Johnston, an early advocate for the protection of wild horses, approached congressmen about creating a bill to save the herds. With the help of two individuals, her neighbor, state Senator James M. Slattery, and her friend, Democratic Congressman Walter S. Baring, Johnston gained momentum with the movement, in the hope that, in some way, they could save these animals. [26] Johnston felt a strong affinity towards these wild ones. It was almost family tradition. Her father, Joe Bronn, and her grandfather Benjamin Bronn, would catch wild horses and supplement their income by training and then selling them to assist in the war effort.[27] Like her father and grandfather, she believed that wild horses epitomized the West, and that a West without them would not carry the same meaning. They symbolized the wild, stark landscape of the West and should be protected.[28]

Early on in her campaign Johnston focused on wild horses in Nevada. On April 10, 1957, she wrote a letter to Douglas Kennedy, the editor of *True Magazine*, wherein she emphasized how, "In 1955, the Nevada State Legislature passed a law which prohibits the capture of mustangs through the use of airplanes and other mechanized vehicles."[29] This was one of many letters she wrote to magazine and newspaper editors in order to try and broaden the scope of what the public knew about wild horses in the West. In an August 2, 1957, letter,

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[26] Cruise and Griffiths, 43, 48-9, 85-88, 108, and 241; Velma Johnston to Zelda Smith, 2 August 1957. Box 685, FF1. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[27] Cruise and Griffiths, 6.

[28] David Hamilton Murdoch, *The American West: The Invention of a Myth* (Reno, NV: University of Nevada Press, 2001), 180. Murdoch explains how the very idea of western values, such as "nobility, chivalry, and honour" was untrue, and that they were values made up by a naive public.

[29] Velma Johnston to Douglas Kennedy, 10 April 1957. Box 685, FF1. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

Johnston responded to an inquiry from a woman curious about the wild horses. In this letter she referenced her need for help and asked the supporter to "get eye-witness stories from others" about the mistreatment of mustangs on the range.[30] Johnston wanted specific evidence to support legislation, including "specific incidents . . . descriptions . . . dates and locations" about problems regarding wild horses.[31] Any information they collected could be used to help further their case in Washington, and Johnston did a thorough job of enlisting help through various means, including the help of special interest groups.

Campaigning for the wild ones took a lot of work, but Johnston's attitude was one of excitement. Her devotion to the cause was evident in her correspondence with other individuals, yet she stayed grounded in her work. On December 9, 1957, she wrote Edward Gladding, a fellow crusader, and informed him that she was "already in communication with Walter Baring, who . . . said he will introduce the bill" for them.[32] She continued, "I am so enthusiastic about all our nation-wide support that I can hardly think of anything else."[33] On December 11, merely two days after this letter to Gladding, Johnston wrote to Baring, who was working in Washington, D.C.[34] In this correspondence, one of the points Johnston made is that she does not want any legislation "that would work a hardship on the cattle or sheepmen."[35] She said:

> You will probably hear a lot of hogwash about the damage the horses do to the ranges, and that is why I am having a man thoroughly familiar with range management, draft the bill. Also, I am supported by lots of cattlemen who feel that the mustangs are a benefit, and I have found that the majority of those cattlemen who wish the horses exterminated are more of the 'Johnny come lately' type and the 'get rich quickers' through whose lack

[30] Velma Johnston to Zelda Smith, 11 August 1957. Box 685, FF1. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. This is just one piece of correspondence providing evidence of how Johnston was able to seek help from outside sources.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Velma Johnston to Edward "Tex" Gladding, 9 December 1957. Box 685, FF1. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Velma Johnston to Walter S. Baring, 11 December 1957. Box 685, FF1. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[35] Ibid.

> of foresight it was necessary to have operations 'hay lift' some time back, and whose judgement does not always seem to be very sound. Surely the condition of the ranges in Nevada is nothing to brag about, and they are overgrazed, shamefully, but it is by the cattle and sheep. The horses have been driven into the rimrock for so long that they haven't had an opportunity to harm the lands, if they could be considered harmful, which I do not buy.[36]

Her goals are more evident in this statement, when she points out who she believed was to blame for the existing circumstances. It is also evident that she was not trying to drive cattle and sheep ranchers out of business. She wanted the horses to gain some protection from others who needed resources on the same range.

Johnston's efforts brought on the nickname "Wild Horse Annie." At the time this was more derogatory than complementary. Over the years, however, the name became a symbol to the wild horse protectionists. One of her self-imposed duties involved collecting research about roundups. She would spread firsthand information about them to a variety of groups in an effort to stop the destruction of wild horse herds.[37] These research escapades were dangerous, and Johnston had her husband Charlie with her for protection. More than once she had to pull out a gun while collecting photographs of roundups in Nevada. Her tireless efforts paid off with two landmark pieces of legislation, the Bill of 1959 and the Act of 1971.[38]

The Bill of 1959 was also called the "Save the Mustangs Bill," which Congress passed in January of 1959; in September of that same year President Dwight Eisenhower signed it into law.[39] Soon known as the Wild Horse Annie Bill, this was the first major piece of legislation that protected, at least in some measure, wild horses and burros. Its important provision outlawed the use of mechanized vehicles – trucks or airplanes – in horse roundups. This was an

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[36] Ibid.

[37] Henry, *Mustang: Wild Spirit of the West*.

[38] Bureau of Land Management, *The Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971 (Public Law 92-195)*, 2006, http://www.blm.gov/pgdata/etc/medialib/blm/wo/Planning_and_Renewable_Resources/wild_horses_and_burros/sale_authority.Par.69801.File.dat/whbact_1971.pdf.

[39] Smith Thomas, 69.

essential piece, because when people used equipment with excessive force, the horses were sometimes severely or fatally wounded.[40] Johnston provided field research, including photographs and notes (some of which were provided by her crusaders), that documented these occurrences. However, despite the passage of this bill, between 1959 and 1971 little was done to stop illegal poaching of wild horses. Poachers continued their escapades because the punishments for being caught were not severe enough to deter them, especially not at the state level. Indeed, the fines were miniscule.[41] More legislation needed to be passed in order to ensure these problems were not ignored.

Twelve years later, in 1971, Congress passed the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act, the second and arguably most important piece of political legislation involving wild horses. This act placed the management of wild horses located on public lands under the direction of the BLM and the Forest Service (FS).[42] To this day these two agencies operate together under the direction of the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture, with the BLM taking on the most responsibility because there were more horses on BLM land. The act declared these animals "living symbols of the historic and pioneer spirit of the West" that, as such, should be protected and maintained for future generations.[43] Myth and fact clashed in this law. How are wild horses

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[40] United States, Bureau of Land Management and United States Forest Service, *A Report to Congress by the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture on Administration of the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act, Public Law 92-195*, 92nd Cong., 1116 sess. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, 1974), 57.

[41] Doug McMillan, "Nevada justice easy on wild horse killers," in *Reno Gazette-Journal*, December 25, 1988, Sec. 1A, 16A, 17A. Fines for killing protected horses and burros ranged from 250 dollars to 500. This was not much of a deterrent for potential lawbreakers. Other articles were written about wild horse killings with titles like "Calls pour in to express concern over horse killings," in *Reno Gazette-Journal*, December 31, 1998, Sec. 3A; "Experts suspect killers may have sadistic personalities," in *Reno Gazette-Journal*, December 31, 1998, Sec. 3A; "This time slaying upset everyone in local community," in *Reno Gazette-Journal*, December 31, 1998, Sec. 3A.

[42] *The Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971 (Public Law 92-195).*

[43] United States, Bureau of Land Management and United States Forest Service, *A Report to Congress*, 92nd Cong., 1116 sess. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, 1974), Appendix 1:1.

symbolic of the pioneer spirit?[44] According to Mark Trahant, a Nevada newspaperman, just watching wild horses "run free" makes people "think of what the American West is all about: freedom and independence."[45] It is an idea worth considering. In her support of this act, Johnston gave testimony before the United States House of Representatives on April 19, 1971, wherein she stated that it is the duty of the people to protect wild horses as well as "plan for their control…so that there will never again be an excuse for the mass extermination programs as heretofore."[46] As evidenced by her correspondence throughout the 1950s, she was a strong supporter of maintaining the range for long-term use, and this included population control measures. Two years later, on September 25, 1973, Velma looked back on her work from the 1950s and defended her actions with these words:

> My own personal observations of the abuses and indiscriminate harvesting resulting from the use of aircraft, and the campaign I spearheaded in the 1950s to outlaw the use of aircraft and mechanized vehicles…which prohibits the hunting by aircraft or motor vehicles for the purpose of capturing or killing, any wild unbranded horse, mare, colt or burro running at large on public lands or ranges of the United States, and it defines 'aircraft' as being any contrivance used for flight in the air.[47]

Unfortunately, outlawing the use of aircraft in roundups would make capturing wild horses much more dangerous, expensive, and time-consuming.[48] It was not until after 1971 that government officials began understanding the complexity involved in the roundup process, and it was even later when they acted upon these observations.

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[44] Mark Trahant, "Western mustang, like flag, stands for freedom," in *Reno Gazette-Journal*, July 30, 1989; Murdoch, 180.

[45] Trahant, "Western mustang."

[46] U.S. Congress, House, *Testimony of Mrs. Velma B. Johnston before the Public Lands Subcommittee of the Interior and Insular Affairs Committee of the United States House of Representatives* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management) April 19, 1971, 3.

[47] Velma Johnston, (25 September 1973), quoted in National Advisory Board for Wild Free-Roaming, Horses, Burros, United States, Bureau of Land Management, and United States Forest Service, *National Advisory Board for Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros: Billings, Montana, July 16-17, 1973: Proceedings* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, 1973), Appendix 6:3.

[48] Smith Thomas, 151; "Wild Horse Roundup a Failure; Saddle Horses Can't Keep Up," *Las Vegas Sun*, June 25, 1974; Jan Bedrosian, "'The Great Roundup' Fizzles: Without Planes or Vehicles, Cowboys Can't Catch Wild Ones," *Nevada State Journal*, June 25, 1974; "Western-style Roundup Planned for Wild Horses," *Nevada State Journal*, April 17, 1975.

After 1971 most of the public's attention focused on the federal government's management practices of these wild herds, specifically those that involved aircraft roundups. Certain individuals, such as Clifford Heaverne, received specific attention based on their involvement in the planning and implementation of these controversial roundups.[49] Not all of this attention was positive. On June 15, 1974, an amendment to the Wild Horse and Burro Act of 1971 proposed to bring aircraft back into federal roundups, which would make it more feasible for contractors to capture excess horses.[50] This amendment passed on October 21, 1976.[51] It was this piece of legislation that affected what Heaverne and his colleagues could do with wild horses on the range.

Even after the BLM and FS took over wild horse operations it still took several years before their management methods resulted in a viable plan to control wild horse populations throughout the West. As part of the agencies' efforts to consider outside opinions, the BLM organized a National Advisory Board for Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros, a committee put in place to provide ideas and discuss possible management scenarios. This committee included no more than nine individuals, none of whom were federal or state employees, and each person had specific knowledge of wild horses, burros, wildlife, and range or resource management.[52] The BLM encouraged board participants to discuss issues pertinent to wild horse management and then advise them on the most suitable course of action. The public was allowed to contribute opinions. In the early years Johnston herself played a role on this committee.

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[49] Clifford Heaverne, 2011, Oral History.

[50] Velma Johnston, *Fact Sheet on Wild Horse and Wild Burro Abuse*, WHOA!, Wild Horse Organized Assistance, Inc., A Foundation for the Welfare of Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros (February 1976), Box 1, 90-34/4, Tina Nappe Collection, Special Collections, University of Nevada, Reno Libraries.

[51] "The Wild Horse Annie Act," 2010, http://www.wildhorsepreservation.com/resources/annie_act.html.

[52] *The Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971*.

Prior to the Act of 1971 many western men had devoted part of their lives to managing wild horse herds. However, after Congress passed the new piece of legislation, these men, whose capture methods soon became viewed as cruel and inhumane, could no longer gather wild horses. Instead, as years passed, these ranchers and cowboys (who had experience capturing wild horses) deferred to wild horse experts appointed by the federal government.[53] The new management plan took time to set up. In the meantime, the numbers of wild horses had risen because of a combination of uncontrolled reproduction and a lack of roundups.[54] Consequently, government officials affiliated with the BLM and the FS sought contractors to round up herds. Cliff Heaverne was one of the few men with the skills necessary to conduct wild horse roundups while flying a helicopter. This man's heritage is entwined with the history of wild horses in the West as well as with the wild horse controversy in the United States. The skills he gained, and then honed, on and off the range gave him the ability to combine the lessons his father taught him with his passion for flying. It is often difficult to look beyond the controversy itself to the individuals it affects, but Cliff's case is an example of how one person's experiences and perspectives can shape the way others view a particularly emotional subject.

In April of 2010 a chance encounter with Clifford Heaverne, a Vietnam Veteran and retired helicopter pilot, at the Louis Basque restaurant in downtown Reno, Nevada, left me with more questions than answers regarding the wild horse controversy.[55] With his easy smile and congenial, yet tough attitude, Cliff Heaverne fits the part of a westerner—a man who has lived a

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[53] Heaverne, 2011, Oral History.

[54] Ibid.; United States, Bureau of Land Management and United States Forest Service, *A Report to Congress*, 92nd Cong., 1116 sess., 2.

[55] On April 15, 2010, I met Clifford and Sally Heaverne at the Louis Basque restaurant in downtown Reno. This encounter opened up a new area of research and left me with many more questions regarding air controlled roundups in the United States. The conversation started with a discussion about food –Basque in particular—and veered towards talks about sheep herds and the problems with coyotes. Before long we were discussing wild horses and helicopter roundups. This encounter inspired the idea of planning an interview. A piece about this, titled "Chance Encounters," appeared in the August 18, 2010, Western Social Sciences Association newsletter.

hard life on the range, a man adapted to, and comfortable with, his environment. This is by no means unusual, considering his western heritage dates back a few generations. Both his grandfather, Andrew Jackson Heaverne, whom people fondly called A.J., and his father, Pat Heaverne, lived their lives surrounded by horses.[56] A.J. Heaverne spent a few years working for William Frederick Cody in his Buffalo Bill Wild West Show, riding bareback broncos and traveling around the country.[57] A.J., Cliff said, "raised horses and sold them to the Army" back "when the Army" was "still using a lot of horses."[58]

Eventually A.J. settled in Oregon, where Cliff's father Pat was born. When Pat was a young boy his father, A.J., and mother split.[59] Show business required time and travel, which meant that Pat did not spend much time around his parents. A.J. and his wife performed in these Wild West Shows, which took them away from their only child.[60] As a result, at the age of seven young Pat went to live with the Dorrance family, and they ended up raising him.[61] The Dorrances, particularly brothers Tom and Bill, were a horse-centered family. These two men influenced Pat's lifelong passion for working with horses. They taught him about natural horsemanship. Those lessons seem to have played a major role in the way Pat also trained his own world-class horses.[62] To this day the Dorrance brothers are viewed as pioneers of the "natural horsemanship" movement. As Cliff put it, that experience was perhaps his father's "first introduction into . . . the psychic of horses."[63]

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[56] Heaverne, 2011, Oral History.

[57] Ibid.; Murdoch, 36.

[58] Heaverne, 2011, Oral History; Walker D. Wyman, *The Wild Horse of the West* (Caldwell, Idaho: The Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1945), 321.

[59] Heaverne, 2011, Oral History.

[60] "Pat Heaverne," Hall of Fame – National Reined Cow Horse Association, http://www.nrcha.com/HallofFameDetail.aspx?aid=26.

[61] Heaverne, 2011, Oral History; "Pat Heaverne."

[62] Ibid.

[63] Ibid.

Pat spent his childhood in Oregon and as an adult became a mustanger, a man who catches wild horses.[64] He worked for the Grassy Mountain Cattlemen's Association out near the Owyhee River in southeastern Oregon.[65] In the 1940s, he recalls, "the ranches at that time were all taking care of the wild horses themselves."[66] Local management was an efficient process. In the early to mid-1900s ranchers and cowboys throughout the West and the Great Plains controlled wild horse populations. Pat, himself a born cowboy, learned early to understand the way horses worked both on and off the range.[67] Pat Heaverne was an old-time mustanger, a man who rode the range in the same manner as Paskett. This man was well-respected by his peers. He earned his living on the back of a horse and passed on those same lessons to his son.[68]

Pat and his wife Rita settled in northeastern Oregon along the Imnaha River.[69] They welcomed a baby boy, whom they named Cliff, on July 24, 1943.[70] Both Cliff and his sisters were born on an isolated ranch thirty miles north of the Imnaha.[71] As a young boy with a bronco-riding grandfather and a horse trainer, and occasional mustanging, father, it was inevitable that Cliff, too, would learn about horses. It was in his blood. As a youngster his fascination evolved into other areas, particularly that of aircraft. This interest originated and

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[64] United States, Bureau of Land Management and United States Forest Service, *A Report to Congress*, 92nd Cong., 1116 sess., 53.

[65] Paula Morin, *Honest Horses: Wild Horses in the Great Basin* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2006), 220. Morin's book is based on interviews she conducted in the Great Basin with individuals having something to do with wild horses; For further reading on the subject of mustangers, or wild horse runners, refer to Dobie, *The Mustangs*. Dobie, a folklorist, shares the stories and experiences of mustangers in this classic work.

[66] Heaverne, Oral History.

[67] Ibid.; Paskett, *Wild Mustangs*. This work provides a glimpse into the world of the old horseback roundups.

[68] For further reading about mustanging consult Wyman, *The Wild Horse of the West*, and Dobie, *The Mustangs*.

[69] Heaverne, 2011, Oral History.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Ibid.

grew with Ted Barber, one described as a "legendary mustanger" who helped Pat gather horses in remote parts of the country.[72] Cliff explained it this way,

> Ted's wife was my schoolteacher in the first and second grade. So she stayed at…the ranch…and so Ted would show up every morning before he went to runnin' horses…and his wife and I would get in. She'd get in the back of the Super Cub, I'd sit on her lap, and he'd fly us to school.[73]

Those moments in the Piper Super Cub airplane made Cliff want to become a pilot, and Barber, a highly skilled pilot, was a role model for someone on that career path. In Ted's personal piece of work, titled *The Barnstorming Mustanger*, he described the many years he spent gathering horses with an airplane. According to him, "It is a fairly easy job to move horses with an airplane," however, once they spot humans or a trap, "even the airplane cannot turn them."[74] Gathering horses this way required a high level of patience in addition to thorough knowledge of the backcountry, especially since the horses almost always knew the land better than the invasive humans.[75]

Over the years, Pat witnessed his son's growing interest with aircraft. He would say things like, "Heck, ever' time an airplane comes over that kid gets the roof of his mouth sunburned."[76] As a lad, Cliff would have rather been a pilot than a cowboy, but his father still taught him a great deal about horses. It was practically inevitable. An older Cliff reflected on his father's opinion of the situation, mentioning that he would say things like "ole Ted Barber mighta been a good pilot but he sure ruined a good cowboy."[77] Cliff watched and learned from

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[72] Lee Juillart, "Chasing Wild Horses," *Capital Press*, Agriculture Weekly, November 10, 2000: 25. CSH Private Collection; Ted Barber, "The Barnstorming Mustanger," *The Humbolt Historian*, North Central Nevada Historical Society Quarterly 9, no. 3 and 4 (1986). This shortened piece of Barber's book (also titled *The Barnstorming Mustanger*) zeroed in on his experiences as a roundup pilot with various ranches, cattlemen associations, and individuals throughout the West.

[73] Heaverne, 2011, Oral History.

[74] Barber, "The Barnstorming Mustanger," 4.

[75] Barber.

[76] Heaverne, 2011,Oral History.

[77] Ibid.

experienced horsemen and a pilot who knew how to work an air-controlled roundup. Barber spent many years as a pilot and a horse runner and was able to teach Cliff some of his methods. In his younger years the men still ran the horses from horseback.[78] It would be many years before Cliff would have an opportunity to work with wild horses from the air.

In 1960, seventeen-year-old Cliff enlisted in the Army and gained a vast amount of knowledge about flying helicopters in stressful situations.[79] After he served two tours in Vietnam, from 1966 to 1967, and again from 1969 to 1971, as a helicopter pilot with the Delta Troop of the 1st Air Calvary, Cliff was prepared to continue high-risk flying ventures at home.[80] In 1973 he left the Army, but continued to fly helicopters in Alaska and Nevada.[81] In later years he combined his two areas of interest: flying helicopters and working with horses. Perhaps he is a cowboy after all, a flying cowboy. Unless he is asked, Cliff will not mention the more than 30,000 hours of flight time he has attained over the years.[82] He once responded to a statement about this, saying, "I would imagine I'm one of the highest timed helicopter pilots in the world, but I'm sure if a guy looked, there's somebody that's got more."[83] Even Barber, his role model, had only reached 25,000 flight hours by the end of his career.[84]

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[78] Ibid. Heaverne reflected a little more on this subject. He remembered how his father Pat and Ted Barber would run horses up in the Battle Mountain area of north-central Nevada, which is located midway between Winnemucca and Elko.

[79] Chris Hansen, "No doubt about it; Cliff Heaverne is a flying cowboy," *Fallon Star Press*, May 4, 2007, 3A. CSH Private Collection.

[80] Paul Carter, "The Wild Ones: Adoption program brings 21st century cowboys to a desert roundup," *OregonLife and Travel*, September 30, 2001, 2H. CSH Private Collection; Heaverne, 2011, Oral History; Morin, 224; David C. Henley, "Former Army pilot now herds horses & burros in his helicopter," *Lahontan Valley News*, January 10, 2000, vol. 97, no. 7:1, 8.

[81] Heaverne, 2011, Oral History.

[82] Hansen, "No doubt about it."

[83] Clifford Heaverne, quoted in Chris Hansen, "No doubt about it; Cliff Heaverne is a flying cowboy," *Fallon Star Press*, May 4, 2007, 3A. CSH Private Collection.

[84] Barber, 52.

Cliff entered the roundup business in 1975 and started his own company, High Desert Helicopters, in 1980.[85] With the creation of High Desert Helicopters, Cliff worked his way farther into the business of wild horse roundups. As he soon discovered, the government-managed roundup planning process required multiple steps before the helicopter could leave the ground.[86] It was a complicated and complex relationship. Contracts comprised layers of details and huge amounts of money, and as a result competitive bids became the norm. The first of these steps involved a bidding process. Heaverne described this: "you have to…tell everything from the capture of 'em to…how you're gonna haul 'em, to what kind of traps you're using. And, you have to…have diagrams of all this stuff."[87] Photographs from roundups supported his detailed explanation of the equipment the work entailed, including: wing traps, corrals, large trucks for hauling the horses, and an aircraft.[88] Some jobs only required an aircraft and a pilot, but others required the assistance of his skilled ground-based roundup crew.[89]

In Heaverne's position as the helicopter pilot, a detailed understanding of horses was the first essential element to success. Not only did he utilize a wide array of low level flying skills, which he claimed were more or less "second nature," but he also had to avoid flying into obstacles at the lower levels.[90] This was difficult in rough country.[91] Fortunately, his tours in Vietnam prepared him for these high-risk, low flying ventures all over the country. Cliff began flying helicopters in 1964, but did not begin working horses from the cockpit until 1975 or 1976.

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[85] Heaverne, 2011, Oral History.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Clifford Heaverne, Photograph, "Chute," CSH Private Collection. This photograph, along with Cliff's descriptions of older traps, verifies what I have seen on the range during my own explorations; In Paskett's *Wild Mustangs* he describes the old wing traps cowboys used to build on the range; Andrea Mott, Photograph, "Ernest Lang's Horse Trap," 2009. This image of a trap in the Sand Wash Basin of northwestern Colorado shows trap wings built into the surrounding landscape. This type of construction was normal and consisted of permanent structures, such as trees. Modern portable horse traps are constructed using techniques similar to those found in these old traps.
[89] Heaverne, 2011, Oral History; Clifford Heaverne, Photograph, "Ground Crew." CSH Private Collection.
[90] Heaverne, 2011, Oral History.
[91] Ibid.

This was several years after Congress enacted the Wild Horse and Burro Act and then amended it to say that helicopter roundups were once again needed to control growing wild horse populations.[92] As a pilot, he favored the Bell 47 helicopters for roundups because they were less problematic when flying close to the ground. He described these times in flight, saying "basically, I'm just riding a really good horse."[93] Each flight picked up a lot of dirt, but consistent maintenance, which included a major overhaul every 700 to 1000 miles, kept the aircraft in prime flying condition.[94]

Watching him take control from the cockpit was a sight to behold. One bystander, a newspaper man, wrote: "Dust from the unshod hooves of 34 excited mustangs lifts into the morning sky Wednesday. An old Bell 47 helicopter with a bubble canopy swoops over the running horses, beating the air with its rotors."[95] In this case, the newspaper man was swaying perception because of the way he wrote his article. In situations like these Cliff had to be one step ahead of the animals, and knowledge built over a lifetime spent with horses came to his aid. Pilots had to focus on not overworking the horses, because it was essential that the horses arrive at the corrals in good condition. If overworked they would quit, veer off, collapse, or end up at the corrals overworked and exhausted, which could result in injuries.[96] A skilled pilot knew when to back off or when to give them an extra push to get them started again. As Cliff explained it, "you can watch 'em and see how they're reactin', and you can tell when they need a little more push or whether . . . they're doin' just fine."[97] If pushed too hard, some of the horses

[92] Ibid.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Richard Cockle, "Wild Horses couldn't drive them away: Wranglers roam the area south of Burns to help rein in a growing number of mustangs on the move," *Oregon & The West*, 19 August 2001, Sec. A17. CSH Private Collection.
[96] Heaverne, 2011, Oral History.
[97] Ibid.

will "just quit ya," while others will simply find a path and veer off in a different direction.[98] The clear, glass-covered helicopter cockpit gave Cliff an open view of the range as well as an unobstructed view of the horses running in front of, and slightly below, the aircraft.[99]

The roundup business took Cliff all around the country. He has gathered horses in Nevada, California, Arizona, Idaho, Oregon, Wyoming, Montana, Washington, New Mexico, Texas, and Colorado.[100] As a result of these diverse experiences around the country, he knew which horse-gathering strategies would work and which would not work.[101] During a job in Burns, Oregon, Cliff mentioned that he preferred keeping the herd going at approximately five miles per hour so the horses would not tire out before reaching the trap.[102] Still, even at slow paces mothers and their babies could become separated. In 1998 Cliff and his crew worked a BLM roundup in which one foal became separated from its mother. Don Banks, the Utah BLM spokesman, witnessed the instance, recalling that "the pilot landed the helicopter, gathered the foal into his arms and carried it to the corral where it was united with its mother."[103] Banks was pleased that Cliff had paid attention to the foal's situation. Later on, Sally Heaverne, Cliff's wife, noted in the article's margin that he "got all bruised and skinned up" for his efforts.[104] These were the actions of a man who cared about his work and the animals entrusted to him. These are also examples of how perception can be swayed based on what the public knows about

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[98] Ibid.

[99] Clifford Heaverne, Photograph, "Helicopter." CSH Private Collection.

[100] Heaverne, 2011, Oral History; Bureau of Land Management, *Herd Management Area and Herd Area Maps by State*, http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/whbprogram/herd_management/HMA_and_HA_Maps.html. This website lists the BLM horse management areas, or HMAs. These areas show the many places where Cliff could be found conducting federally mandated roundups.

[101] Heaverne, 2011, Oral History.

[102] Cockle, A23; Lisa Dines, *The American Mustang Guidebook: History, Behavior, and State-by-State Directions on Where to Best View America's Wild Horses and How to Adopt and Gentle Your Very Own Mustang* (Minocqua, Wisc.: Willow Creek Press, 2001), 22. Dines briefly discusses the "use of slow-moving helicopters and riders on horseback" in federal wild horse roundups.

[103] Jerry Spangler, "Tests on horses encouraging: Wild herds may not have deadly disease," *Deseret News*, May 27, 1998.

[104] Sally Heaverne, article notation, Jerry Spangler, "Tests on horses encouraging."

the individual in question. In this case Cliff is presented as a sympathetic figure in the wild horse narrative.

Anyone who has led a roundup knows that danger often lurks around the corner. Conducting wild horse roundups is a risky business; threats, shootings, and intrusive media become a part of life. He understood that "the horse is such . . . an emotional attachment" for so many people, which means they take a strong stance concerning the welfare of these animals.[105] Cliff himself has been vilified merely because of his status as the man in the chopper, the one removing horses from the range. It was not an easy job. People against wild horse management and roundups voiced their anger through threatening phone calls and letters. In one phone message, Cliff recalled the unidentified individual stating something like, "you better hope you kissed your husband goodbye 'cause you ain't never gonna see him again."[106] People expressed their displeasure physically and verbally, and encountering an occasional gunshot was sometimes part of a day's work. Cliff remembered spending a good majority of his "life getting shot at while . . . flyin' around up there."[107] In cases like that, wartime exposure paid off. His double tours in Vietnam with the Delta Troop prepared him for these hostile environments. It took more than the echoing sound of a gunshot to intimidate a man with his own stash of war medals.[108] Despite that, it was apparent that working with wild horses was, indeed, a risky venture.

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[105] Aubrey Manning, "Ethological Approaches to the Human-Companion Animal Bond," in *New Perspectives on Our Lives with Companion Animals*, edited by Aaron Honori Katcher and Alan M. Beck, 7-16 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 15. Manning has a Ph.D. in Zoology and at the time this chapter was published she worked at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland; Ann Ottney Cain, "A Study of Pets in the Family System," in *New Perspectives on Our Lives with Companion Animals*, edited by Aaron Honori Katcher and Alan M. Beck, 72-81 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 73. In this chapter Cain wrote that a pet can be defined as "an animal that is tamed, kept as a companion, or to which one forms an emotional attachment." This could apply to the ways people viewed wild horses in the United States; Anderson, *Managing Our Wildlife Resources*, 259. Anderson wrote about how wildlife of different kinds have an "*aesthetic* value. For some people the *emotional* content of their reaction to wildlife is very real."

[106] Heaverne, Oral History.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Carter, "The Wild Ones," 2H. CSH Private Collection.

Growing up in, and spending his life surrounded by, wild horse country taught Cliff the tricks of the trade. His natural horse sense, passed down from his knowledgeable grandfather and his father, gave Cliff a clear understanding of horse psychology. That, combined with the education he received flying with Ted Barber, helped classify him as one of the best roundup helicopter pilots in the country. One of the biggest problems the roundup business faced was "trying to find pilots . . . because a lot of guys just didn't have the desire to do it."[109] "It's tedious work" he recalled, and it's frustrating "if they [new pilots] don't know what they're doin'."[110] The work itself, low-level flying while keeping track of wild horses, is also pretty hazardous.[111] Sometimes Cliff tried to train new pilots, but they never truly worked out.[112] "There is so much involved," he said, and a person needed to "have some idea of what that horse's psychic is."[113] He continued, saying "it is hard to teach someone that from an aircraft if they haven't . . . been on a horse."[114] Most of the skills he was trying to teach others were either ingrained or second nature, which made it even more difficult to teach them to someone who did not have a background either in a helicopter or working with horses. What "people don't understand," he pointed out, "is how long it takes to become a proficient helicopter pilot."[115] In the early years, the men flying helicopters in these roundups had already undergone years of flying experience, without the horses being a factor. Adding in wild horses on the range just created an additional element to consider. Cliff was fortunate because he "transitioned into it pretty easily because of" his background.[116] There are some people who are excellent pilots, but

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[109] Heaverne, 2011, Oral History.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid.

who do not have the patience "to be good horse pilots."[117] Cliff followed that up by stating there are perhaps no "more than ten of us who've ever done it . . . with any success, for any amount of time."[118] Even among the few roundup crews out there, Cliff's company was somewhat unique because he "was the only guy who owned the company and did the flying too."[119]

Patience is a major element in horse roundups. Cliff grew up around animals, and even trained horses and dogs.[120] As a result, he has much less patience with people than he does with animals. With animals it is all about repetition and redundancy, but you cannot lose patience with them; some always learn faster than others. In regards to the horses, pilots wanted to have control over them, but as he said, "you can have a certain amount of influence over them, but control is a different thing."[121] One of the points he made is that "all the pilots" he knew that worked with horses "had some sort of background in ranching."[122] This attribute gave the roundup crew a well-rounded understanding of the business, particularly when the pilot could give them instructions from the air. It was essential that the pilot know how to direct his ground crew.

Cliff's seventy years bear witness to the shifting dynamics of life on and off the vast western ranges. The quality of wild horses coming off of the land has decreased (which is evident by their deteriorating conformation), the federal government now controls management options, and political issues involving wild horses are constantly altering. Cliff's experiences are evidence that working with wild horses can be a demanding and dangerous career. These challenges were normal on the job experiences. For Cliff encountering obstinate horses, facing

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[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid.; The men who ran horses in the Sand Wash Basin of northwestern Colorado also understood that patience was essential to catching any wild horses.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid.

thrilling and dangerous backcountry, and working through obstacles was the best part about the job. Indeed, only a few individuals were qualified to run helicopter-controlled roundups, partly because the combined skills, which included horse know-how and experience as a pilot, required a fair amount of life experience. Growing up with horses and experienced horsemen meant he learned the tricks of the trade at a young age. It is probable that Pat passed down his own influences from the Dorrance brothers on to his son. As a child he experienced what it was like to fly with Barber in Barber's airplane. Influence came in many different shapes, both on the ground and in the air. Cliff's heritage is rooted in the West, his knowledge of horses and the land were acquired over time, and his understanding of that same land from the air is possibly unequalled. Cliff's perception of the wild horse dilemma is based on a combination of heritage and career experience.

In 2003, after nearly thirty years in the cockpit, Cliff retired from his position as the owner of High Country Helicopters and sold the business.[123] In fact, Cliff sold his company to a man who had worked for him, a man he had trained as his apprentice pilot.[124] Cliff, whose personal heritage is entwined with the role of the horse in the American West, is still a cowboy whether in the air or on the ground. He is one of the few flying cowboys left in the United States, a true icon of a different time, a time when horse capturing techniques began to undergo some modern changes. Thirty years of managing roundups through the bubble-fronted window of his Bell 47 makes Cliff's heritage and roundup experiences important to the continued study of how perceptions on wild horses have changed in the past sixty years.

More than fifty-five years have passed since Wild Horse Annie first tried to make catching wild horses illegal. At that time Johnston predicted that "unless proper legislation is

[123] Ibid.
[124] Ibid.

enacted to prevent the complete anhiliation of the horses and to provide for the building up of their quality, this will be" another "example of the many times our American heritage has been sold down the river."[125] On August 11, 1957, Johnston wrote a letter to Robert O'Brien stating her concern for the welfare of wild horses on the ranges of Nevada.[126] She reported tales of abuse towards the horses and the wild burros, mentioning how one cowboy familiar with the isolated Nevada ranges, stated his feelings regarding "planing," as he called it. It was reported that he felt "very strongly about planing the mustangs and is most hopeful that it will be stopped completely."[127] After the Wild Horse Annie Act passed in 1959, wild horses on the western ranges faced a new problem, illegal hunting.

It has been forty-two years since the Wild Horse and Burro Act of 1971 made it illegal for private individuals to gather wild horses. In that time, the BLM's Wild Horse and Burro Program has survived the backlash of critics and remains a federally mandated program. As Cliff once stated, "everyone agrees they need to be managed but they can't agree on how."[128] From the early years of the program up to its most recent, the public has still been unable to reach a compromise on how wild horses should be managed. Each year the program faces an enormous amount of media attention.[129] In addition, the BLM's management practices are constantly being reviewed and called into question. Cliff, who himself was once a part of this system, became a target because of his stance on aircraft-based roundups. The notion of airborne capture—the "very issue which motivated" Velma Johnston "to champion the wild horse" in the

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[125] Johnston to Baring, 11 December 1957. Box 685, FF1. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[126] Velma Johnston to Robert O'Brien, 11 August 1957. Box 685, FF1. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[127] Ibid.

[128] Heaverne, 2011, Oral History.

[129] Anthony Amaral, "Threat to the Free Spirit: The Question of the Mustang's Future," *American West* 8, no. 5 (1971), 13-17, 62-3.

first place—is still considered "the greatest threat to their existence."[130] It is also the safest means of rounding up wild horses. The fact remains that without a feasible management program, wild horses will continue to reproduce at a faster rate, deplete the range, and compete with the livestock and native animals that also rely on the land for sustenance.[131] The debates surrounding this controversy are multifaceted.

A few sources provide insight into the multi-faceted aspect of wild horse roundups. Dobie, Paskett, and Barber give readers and scholars an idea of what these roundups were like, what skills were needed to conduct one, and the amount of time it involved. These works reiterate the mythic figure of the horse in the American West. Past and present mustanging experiences are important to the continued study of wild horses on the range, and these men give examples concerning both aspects. Recent narratives, like Clifford Heaverne's, give new meaning to the continuing saga of wild horses on the range. These accounts are helpful and detailed. There are very few resources about roundups done from the air, particularly those provided by the men doing the work, and new narratives provide new perspectives about wild horses and the people who work with them. As a result, they are valuable because they provide an added dimension to the ongoing controversy.

Clifford Heaverne's memories provide an additional element, indeed perspective, to the somewhat vilified role of mustanging. Not all men, pilots or cowboys, rode the range with the main goal of removing the wild horses in inhumane ways. Stories about clipping noses, running herds off of remote cliffs, and running them until their hooves bled hold a brutal element of truth.

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[130] Cruise and Griffiths, 272.

[131] Kyle V. Hansen and Jeffrey C. Mosley, "Effects of Roundups on Behavior and Reproduction of Feral Horses," *Journal of Range Management* 53, no. 5 (2000): 479-482; Joel Berger, ed., *Wild Horses of the Great Basin: Social Competition and Population Size*, Wildlife Behavior and Ecology Series (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); Frank W. Olsen and Richard M. Hansen, "Food Relations of Wild Free-Roaming Horses to Livestock and Big Game, Red Desert, Wyoming," *Journal of Range Management* 30, no. 1 (1977): 17-20.

However, it was also true that there were good people working on the land. In Heaverne's experience, it is important to understand the land as well as the animals it supports. He respected the horses and understood their mannerisms so well that working with them while flying a helicopter was similar to working with them on horseback. By examining the roles that Cliff and others held in removing horses from ranges throughout the West, the public can come closer to understanding the many facets involved in the wild horse story. Perception about wild horses is not easily defined or easily understood. It is not about one person or one animal. It is a complex, continuously evolving relationship between humans, animals, and nature. Understanding and trust are difficult things to be developed between the public, the government, and interest groups. Looking at the perspective of one group at a time may bring everyone closer to a solution that will save the United States' wild horse population.

Sympathetic viewpoints about mustnagers are not the norm, but they do exist. Some journalistic accounts have helped perpetuate the idea that mustangers are villains, yet evidence shows that this is not always the case. A man who carries a foal to safety cannot be as bad as reports have indicated. Cliff Heaverne can be viewed as the male alternative to the legend of Wild Horse Annie. His history with animals is one of patience and longevity. It is worthwhile to explore the experiences and perceptions of persons integrally involved with the management of wild horses, and to do so without the heat and light of media attention. Just what happens on the range during a wild horse roundup, and what should we think about it? Cliff Heaverne's view from the cockpit is one to be considered.

THE PLEDGE TO PROTECT

"I have made it very clear that it is the commercial exploitation of the mustangs for personal financial gain that must be stopped . . . this will be just one more example of the many times our American heritage has been sold down the river."[1] Wild Horse Annie

During the 1950s and early 1960s the United States faced a tumultuous time. The post World War II era brought in economic successes, yet multiple presidents struggled in the face of foreign and domestic upheaval. The Cold War, civil rights, social unrest, and trouble in Indochina proved a breeding ground for social change. Citizens vocalized their support and their disapproval for foreign conflicts. On the domestic front, individuals like Martin Luther King, Jr., John F. Kennedy, and Lyndon B. Johnson pushed for social change.[2] The nation was primed to listen to non-government programs and conservation efforts. In Kennedy's 1961 inaugural address he talked about how it was time to make way for more "natural resource and land-use programs."[3] Yet, even with the country in disarray and in disagreement, specific people were able to voice their support for different causes. Granted, many of these individuals had a higher social stature than Velma Johnston. In addition, they had the advantage of filmed media and newsreels to help them. The wild horses appealed to a nationwide audience and their images appeared in magazines like *Reader's Digest* and *Time*, as well as in local newspapers around the country. This perpetuated the myth of the wild horse as already told by novelists like Will James and Marguerite Henry. Literature of the time also reflected a greater concern about animals and the human-animal relationship. This emphasis on pets is another reason why commercial

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[1] Velma Johnston to Walter Baring, 11 December 1957, Box 685, FF1. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[2] Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream Speech" is told and retold. He is an icon of the Civil Rights Movement. John F. Kennedy's also tried to take care of issues on the domestic front. He urged people to think beyond what they could do for themselves, and instead think about others; Lyndon B. Johnson helped push the Great Society. He also passed the 1965 Voting Rights Act to promote equal voting rights under the law; Wyant, 383. Unfortunately the problems in Vietnam "heightened public concern about the environment."

[3] Roy Robbins, *Our Landed Heritage: The Public Domain, 1776-1970*, 2nd ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1976), 458; William K. Wyant, *Westward in Eden: The Public Lands and the Conservation Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 128.

slaughterhouses wanted more horses. It promoted a higher level of horse capture in the western United States. Perceptions about wild horses became more public as social and cultural movements swept through the United States, which resulted in a strong tide of support for legislation that became known as the Wild Horse Annie Bill of 1959. Views about Velma Johnston have been perpetuated through novels, biographies, letters, and have given rise to a conflicting vision of her being a woman and a legend in the modern West.

It seems fitting that Velma Johnston would fight on behalf of the mustangs, because the toughness of the wild ones seems to have manifested itself in her own family tree. Her paternal grandparents, Benjamin and Mary Bronn, moved across the country from Maine to settle in Nevada.[4] In 1884, they welcomed Velma's father Joe to the family.[5] It seems likely that this connection with the wild ones began even before Joe's birth in Ione, Nevada.[6] Benjamin, an enterprising and fair man, caught and trained his own horses. He was an old-time mustanger, a man who utilized what he took off the range. If he caught a horse it was to train it and then put it to use. The family used these steeds on their covered-wagon journey back into Nevada when Ben no longer had his job at the mine in California. It was during this trip east into Nevada that Mary, dehydrated from the trip, was unable to continue nursing the newborn Joe. Instead, she and Ben relied on the milk from their mustang mare who was nursing her own young colt. It was this milk that helped tiny Joe survive despite the odds being against him.[7]

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[4] David Cruise and Alison Griffiths, *Wild Horse Annie and the Last of the Mustangs: The Life of Velma Johnston* (New York: Scribner, 2010), 4; Alan J. Kania, *Wild Horse Annie: Velma Johnston and her Fight to Save the Mustang* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2012), 9.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Velma Johnston to Phyllis, 29 August 1959. Box 685, FF6. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[7] Marguerite Henry, *Mustang: Wild Spirit of the West* (Chicago: Rand McNally and Co., 1966), 13-20. In this particular part of the book Henry is able to tell a wonderful story about a curious young Velma in regards to her father. It is here where Henry shows how a young girl becomes enraptured by the tale of her father's survival because he drank the highly nourishing milk from a mustang mare; Kania, 9-10.

As a young man, Joe romanced one of the neighboring rancher's daughters, a Miss Gertrude (Trudy) Clay, and eventually married her on December 25, 1910.[8] At the young age of 17 Trudy gave birth to their firstborn at "the Painted Rock Ranch on March 5, 1912."[9] As a husband and a father Joe provided for his family, including Velma, his eldest of four children. While his wife cared for their newborn back at the ranch, Joe wandered the range in order to look for good mustangs. He was a resourceful man and the wild horses roaming nearby made strong mounts and workhorses. At that time Joe, much like his father, was a mustanger. Unlike the commercial mustang operations that followed in later years Joe used the animals with a thought towards necessity. He utilized the horses he caught on the range, and spent a good amount of time to train them as working and riding horses. His business, the Mustang Express, was merely one outlet through which he incorporated his love for these animals.[10] Fortunately, Joe's patient side was not meant solely for his horses. Narratives that focus on Velma's life sometimes portray how, as a young girl, Velma experienced this side of her father's personality.[11]

Tragedy struck the Bronn household between 1917 and 1918. At the tender age of five and half years old Velma came down with the feared virus polio.[12] Statistics and historical accounts explain how this virus affected approximately 27,000 in 1916 and about 6,000 of those

[8] Velma Johnston to Phyllis, 29 August 1959. Box 685, FF6. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; Kania, 9-11.

[9] Kania, 13; VJ to Phyllis, 29 August 1959. Box 685, FF6. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[10] Kania, 11. Kania goes into more detail about the ways in which Joe caught and trained mustangs taken from the Nevada ranges. At that time horses were not as scarce and they were commonly taken, trained, and then utilized in other areas off of the range.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid., 12; Cruise and Griffiths describe Velma's onset of polio to be near the age of 11, not 5. Much of this research is possibly from the Marguerite Henry Collection at the University of Minnesota. There are no footnotes indicating where this information was gleaned. Kania's information on Velma's bought with polio is from the authors private collection, naming the Marguerite Henry, "In Her Moccasins," Press Release, Rand McNally as the source.

cases ended in death.[13] With those numbers, her odds of surviving the polio virus rested at about 78 percent. This epidemic mostly affected children, but not exclusively. The Bronns had reason to be afraid, and scrambled to find the funds to send her to the San Francisco Children's Hospital.[14] Unfortunately, when doctors released Velma from their care her body already bore the severe, and life-altering, affects of polio. She fought the polio virus for five years, and it, combined with a dreadful full body cast, left her face and body disfigured: "the twisted back, the face, neck and shoulders askew . . . The good days that are at best most uncomfortable, and the bad days that really hurt."[15] She bore the pain and scars of polio for the duration of her life, and learned ways to cope with the pain and change her appearance. She altered her hair and clothing styles in order to balance out the way polio had altered her looks.

Despite her unusual childhood, Velma's purpose in life was still on the horizon. As a young woman she worked in Reno, and eventually achieved a stable position as the respected secretary of Gordon Harris, a well-connected businessman.[16] This was a normal career for young unmarried women at that time.[17] The same secretarial skills she honed over the decades she worked for Harris are evident in her paperwork, correspondence, and relationships. Her life took a new turn when, in 1936, at the spinster age of 24, she met the love of her life, Charles.[18] She fondly referred to him as "Charlie."[19] Charles Johnston was a large man, a war veteran, and had a way with horses.[20] Velma was smitten. In July 1937 the two married in secret after only a

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[13] Smithsonian, National Museum of American History, "Polio: Communities," http://amhistory.si.edu/polio/americanepi/communities.htm.

[14] Cruise and Griffiths, 10; Kania, 13.

[15] VJ to Phyllis, 29 August 1959. Box 685, FF6. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[16] Cruise and Griffiths, 16-7; Kania, 16.

[17] Martha May, *Women's Roles in Twentieth Century America* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 2009), 6.

[18] Cruise and Griffiths, 19.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid., 19-20.

few months of dating.[21] This marriage became a partnership and Charles supported Velma's efforts to save Nevada's wild horses, sometimes wielding a firearm to protect her. Indeed, without his protection her courage to face what was to come might have wavered. Together they presented a united front: he as the silent, strong, male supporter, and she as the civilized pursuer of social change. Charles was a hard worker, but a heavy smoker and drinker (normal for the time), two habits that affected his health in the 1960s. He recognized Velma's need to work, and knew that without her help their lifestyle, meager though it was, would have been more difficult to maintain.[22] Her purpose was to call people out to account for their actions in a civilized way. These are significant examples of 1950s gender roles.

Velma's heritage, like that of many others throughout the West, revolved around the availability of wild horses on the range.[23] Her grandfather Ben trained them to use on the ranch and her father Joe caught and trained mustangs for World War I, in order to sell them for a profit to the Allied cause.[24] The horse Joe used to chase the wild ones was a trained mustang stallion, one as rough and sturdy as the land, whom he called "Old Baldy."[25] It is, therefore, not strange that Velma's love and respect for the wild ones developed at a young age. She is a self-described "'mustanger's daughter . . . and'" she recalls, "'the one I got bucked off of when I was

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[21] Kania, 17; Cruise and Griffiths, 23.

[22] More information about gender roles can be found in the following works: Karen Beckwith, *American Women and Political Participation: The Impacts of Work, Generation, and Feminism* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986); Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Dell Publishing Company, Inc., 1963).

[23] More information can be gathered by looking through the following oral histories: Cecil Connors, 1981, Oral History; Clifford Heaverne, 2011, Oral History, interviewed by Andrea Mott, digital audio recording, Fallon, Nevada, August 29; Dawn (Walker) Nottingham, 2013, Oral History, interviewed by Andrea Mott, digital audio recording, Craig, Colorado, July 26; Tom and Elmora (Vaughan) Peterson, 2013, Oral History, interviewed by Andrea Mott, digital audio recording, Rock Springs, Wyoming, July 27.

[24] Cruise and Griffiths, 6-7. The demand for horses rose and horses roaming freely on the vast western ranges of the United States were a resource for many enterprising ranchers and cowboys. Velma's father was merely one of many mustangers who caught horses and sold them to assist in the war effort. Joe Bronn often worked alone, chasing horses on the back of his own mustang stallion whom he referred to as "Old Baldy."

[25] Ibid., 7.

only three years old had been caught by my dad by running him into a box canyon on his own mount.'"[26] Joe's business, the Mustang Express, relied on his ability to supply fresh horses.

There is an important distinction between individuals who caught wild horses for use and those who caught them for slaughter. Some individuals had a working purpose for the horses in mind before they captured them. Joe Bronn and Pat Heaverne both captured horses because they could use them in some way, whether it was to pull a delivery wagon or to train as a riding mount. In addition, both of these individuals lived near the areas they captured wild horses. Clifford Heaverne often mentioned how wild horses were more visible when he was a child.[27] Wild horse catchers like these men were plentiful in different regions of the west. They saw available resources roaming the nearby hills and mountains, and when they needed one they could capture it and leave the others.[28] It seems odd to think of these same men capturing horses in large numbers, transporting them in questionable vehicles, and then selling them to rendering works or slaughterhouses. What, then, made it different for the horse catchers who strove to capture the animals merely to sell them to meat-packing plants? Their connection to the land was probably nonexistent, whereas for men like Joe, Pat, and even Cliff, their heritage bound them to these rural places.

As a result of the war in Europe, increased automobile use, and competition within the pet food industry, the numbers of horses in the wild took a dramatic turn downward in the 1930s and 1950s.[29] However, part of the problem with this reasoning is that the canning industry played a role in pushing the slaughter of horses. In addition, there is a distinction between

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[26] Johnston to Howard H. Caudle, November 10, 1967, as quoted in Kania, *Wild Horse Annie: Velma Johnston and Her Fight to Save the Mustangs* (Reno: The University of Nevada Press, 2012), 12; Dawn (Walker) Nottingham and Elmora (Vaughan) Peterson were also the daughters of mustangers and shared similar experiences.

[27] Heaverne, Oral History.

[28] Will James, *Smoky the Cowhorse* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926).

[29] Velma Johnston to Robert O'Brien, 11 August 1957. Box 685, FF1. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. In her letter to O'Brien, Johnston recounts how canneries were promoting the continued exploitation of wild horses on the range.

individuals who caught horses in order to use them and those who captured them solely to sell them to the slaughterhouses.[30] Gathering wild horses became more difficult for mustangers like Joe and Pat once mechanized equipment took over the horses' roles in society.[31] They no longer needed them to pull buggies and wagons. Nor did they need them to transport people. The automobile helped change the outlook of the horse in the United States and abroad. This shift also affected Joe's ability to find and catch wild horses on the Nevada ranges. Corporate owned companies, particularly in the pet food industry, paid a large amount of money to individuals willing to capture these animals on the range.[32]

During the post-World War II years the push of American capitalism in the slaughter industry seemed to spell out the fate of wild horses on the range.[33] It also brought about an intense amount of scrutiny and public disapproval at the local and national levels. Unfortunately, these same years saw a rise in the number of people who had domestic pets, particularly dogs and cats. And this increase brought about another: a higher need for food to feed these pets. However, people did not like being confronted with the possibility that the same food they fed their domesticated pets at home came at a price, and that price was the life of a mustang.[34] Frank McMahon, Director of Field Services for the Humane Society of the United States, wrote to William Harrison in the House of Representatives. In this letter he pointed out that "the absolute

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[30] Velma's father captured horses in order to utilize them in his business. Clifford Heaverne's father Pat also did the same thing. Their purpose behind capturing wild horses was not motivated by the slaughter industry. Rather, it was a means to an end. They needed horses to help with work, and the range provided the animals they needed.

[31] Paul G. Irwin, "Overview: The State of the Animals," (HSUS, 2001), 8.

[32] Mustangers received payment based on a price per pound basis.

[33] Irwin, 8.

[34] Peggy Smith to Velma Johnston, March 1973. Box 686, FF43. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. In her letter Peggy questioned why these men could not wait until the horse was too old or dead before it was used for dog food. She continued, "I feel like writing to the dog food canneries" and "to Pres Nixon and telling them to stop killing horses." Others wrote letters voicing opinions similar to Peggy's.

majority of these wild mustangs rounded up and auctioned are sold to producers of dog food."[35] The pet food industry created a demand for these resources, yet, at the same time, the same individuals harboring domestic pets were also playing a role in the overall problem: mustang exploitation. This need backlashed; these people had to try and reverse the problem and protect the very animal they had created a demand for. Someone would come into the picture and help save a western icon.

At the age of 38 Velma witnessed a scene that changed the trajectory of her life. It was 1950, she said, when "my own apathetic attitude was jarred into acute awareness."[36] On this fateful early morning when she was driving to work in Reno, she happened to follow a truck loaded with wild horses.[37] Multiple sources indicated her disbelief when she noticed their injuries and the blood that dripped from the rear of the truck.[38] This observation spurred Johnston into action, and pushed her into uncovering as many facts as possible about what was happening to the wild horses in Nevada. Her efforts to find more information often placed her in precarious and dangerous situations. Charles, who played the strong protective male role quite well, also provided the gun-toting protection she needed. On August 11, 1957, Velma wrote to Robert O'Brien (a writer for *Reader's Digest*), wherein she detailed why mustang exploitation

[35] Frank J. McMahon to William Harrison, 17 June 1968, p. 2. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[36] Velma B. Johnston and Michael J. Pontrelli, "Public Pressure and a New Dimension of Quality—Horses and Burros," in *Thirty-Fourth North American Wildlife Conference* (Washington, D.C., March 4, 1969), 240-252, 241. Box 1, 90-34/2. Special Collections, University of Nevada-Reno, Library. This source includes an interesting discussion on human emotions as they relate to wild horses. See pages 250-2 for more insight on these discussion points.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Cruise and Griffiths, 42-44; Kania, 7; Deanne Stillman, *Mustang: The Saga of the Wild Horse in the American West* (Boston: Mariner Books, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2008), 245; J. Edward de Steiguer, *Wild Horses of the West: History and Politics of America's Mustangs* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2011), 3; Henry, 82-6.

must be stopped.[39] She explained, based on personal observations like those mentioned above, that

> the handling and loading of the animals is rough, and their physical suffering is treated with complete disregard. To confine more than one wild animal in a small space is to invite pandemonium, and in the case of the mustangs, crowded into trucks for transportation to the rendering works, difference in size, trampling and biting in an effort toward self-preservation, produces a sorry mess of abused horseflesh.[40]

She continued to explain how the hunters often left the injured and young horses behind, and in those situations the animals frequently died.[41] For nearly seven years she strove to compile as much information as possible about roundups, transports, inhumane treatment, and photographs that documented the ways horse hunters trapped and caught their animals. In one letter to her friend Congressman Walter Baring, Velma described how she and Charles sometimes went to desperate measures in order to gather documentation.[42] Baring and Velma's boss Gordon Harris constantly warned her to be careful.[43] In time, these excursions worked in her favor. The additional documentation assisted Johnston and those who worked with her towards putting together locally effective legislative policies that would diminish the role of local horse hunters.

Media outlets, both small and large, helped push Velma's agenda for the wild horses into a larger public arena. Editors, writers, and publishers wrote to her inquiring about the first piece

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[39] Velma Johnston to Robert O'Brien, 11 August 1957. Box 685, FF1. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; Velma Johnston to Robert O'Brien, 23 January 1958. Box 685, FF2. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. In this letter Johnston expressed her thanks to Robert for his January article in the *Reader's Digest*. This article helped inform the public about what was happening with Nevada's wild horses.

[40] Velma Johnston to Robert O'Brien, 11 August 1957. Box 685, FF1. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Velma Johnston to Walter S. Baring, 7 January 1958. Box 685, FF2. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. In this letter Johnston described how she and Charlie collected information from the rooftop of their car. They photographed several bunches of wild horses that had been caught and placed in various corrals. The men they witnessed doing this avoided being photographed by escaping into the safety of a nearby building. In Henry's work one of Robert Lougheed's illustrations depicts Velma on the roof of the car snapping a photograph of a roundup while Charlie wields a pistol and watches protectively from the driver's seat.

[43] Velma Johnston to Walter S. Baring, 13 March 1958. Box 685, FF2. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

that appeared in a February issue of the *Sacramento Bee*.[44] Soon after, this sparked a fuse that helped light up awareness about mustang mistreatment. Then, when O'Brien published his article "The Mustangs' Last Stand" in the December 1957 issue of *Reader's Digest*, the "hearts of the American people" were stirred.[45] Through media focused on a nation-wide audience subscription, combined with her own intense letter-writing campaign, Velma gained support for her cause in some of the least likely places. Letters began pouring into Reno from far-off states like Texas and New Jersey and countries across the world like England, Denmark, and even the African Congo.[46] Soon after that article was published and mustered nation-wide and worldwide support, Velma thanked O'Brien for the "fine job" he did "on the mustang story."[47] Accolades and attention pushed the protection efforts into high gear.

From the time she witnessed the tragic horse-hauling event in 1950, Velma pushed to outlaw the mistreatment and commercial exploitation of wild horses in Nevada. It was not because she was fully opposed to mustang capture; after all, her grandfather and father both caught wild horses. What she objected to was the inhumanity involved in commercially

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[44] Velma Johnston to Zelda R. Smith, 2 August 1957. Box 685, FF1. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[45] Velma Johnston to Verne Wood, 4 February 1958. Box 685, FF2. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; Velma Johnston mentions the title of O'Brien's article in her letter to the Clark County Humane Society on 6 February 1958. Box 685, FF2. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[46] Velma Johnston to Edward Gladding, 9 December 1957. Box 685, FF1. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; Velma Johnston to Douglas S. Kennedy, 10 April 1957. Box 685, FF1. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; Velma Johnston to Zelda R. Smith, 2 August 1957. Box 685, FF1. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; Velma Johnston to Walter S. Baring, 11 December 1957. Box 685, FF1. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; Velma Johnston to Robert O'Brien, 17 December 1957. Box 685, FF1. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; Velma Johnston to Mae, 18 December 1957. Box 685, FF1. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; Velma Johnston to Judge Eugene Gunby, 11 December 1957. Box 685, FF1. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; Velma Johnston to Tommy Thompson, President of the Washoe Horsemen's Association, 7 February 1958. Box 685, FF2. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[47] Velma Johnston to Robert O'Brien, 17 December 1957. Box 685, FF1. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

motivated roundups. In 1955 the Nevada State Legislature passed a law that protected wild horses within the state. However, there was one caveat that Velma had to agree to in order for this to pass the committee:

> 'But the provisions of this act shall not be construed to conflict with the provisions of any Federal law or regulation governing the hunting or driving of horses, mares, colts or burros by means of airborne or motor driven vehicles.'[48]

This stipulation limited the reach of the local Nevada government entities. Because the state consisted of mostly government-owned land this was not as inclusive a law as the wild horse protection groups preferred. For this reason she decided to continue her appeals to a wider, more nation-based audience. Her letters to Baring detailed why she wanted to continue working towards federal legislation. Local laws, and their not-so-severe punishments, were not going to be enough to deter lawbreakers from continuing to capture and sell wild horses to the meat market.[49]

In the years 1957 and 1958 Velma worked copious long hours outside of her paid job in Reno as Harris' esteemed secretary to garner support for her wild ones. When her cause became more public she produced an astounding outflow of letters addressed to friends, supporters, and Nevada's political appointees.[50] These letters detailed her efforts to stop the commercial

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[48] Velma Johnston to Eugene Gunby, 26 December 1957. Box 685, FF1. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. In multiple other letters Johnston introduced her subject by explaining the legislation that had already been passed by the Nevada State Legislature regarding wild horses. Velma Johnston to Douglas S. Kennedy, 10 April 1957. Box 685, FF1. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; Velma Johnston to Walter S. Baring, 11 December 1957. Box 685, FF1. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; Velma Johnston to Tommy Thompson, 7 February 1958. Box 685, FF2. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. This is not a conclusive list. Many of her letters began by mentioning the 1955 Nevada State Legislature.

[49] U.S. Congres, House, *Amendment of Title 18, United States Code to Prohibit the Use of Aircraft or Motor Vehicles to Hunt Certain Wild Horses or Burros on Land Belonging to the United States*, 86th Cong., August 11, 1959, 1st sess., H. Rep. 833, p. 5. Box 690, FF24. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[50] See letters in the Velma Johnston collection for more detail.

exploitation of wild horses and appealed to others for support at the national level.[51] Edward Gladding, the postmaster in the mining town of Virginia City, Nevada, received letters asking for his continuous help. Velma had a difficult time keeping up with and responding to the "sea of letters," which was overwhelming.[52] Included in these letters were written responses from teenage girls in England to which Velma enlisted the help of an American teenage girl to write them back.[53] Marketing opportunities such as this one did not get wasted, and this type of communication helped push mustangs into the spotlight like never before.

Political supporters pushed the cause along in different ways. Congressman Walter Baring, Velma's childhood friend, worked long hours to turn her work into a report he could present to Congress.[54] He often asked her to send him the legislation once it was prepared, as he would "be most happy to sponsor it . . . in the House."[55] Senators Alan Bible and George Malone also heard from her regarding her wild ones.[56] In Johnston's responses to these well wishers she would tell them to take charge and write their state congressmen and senators in

[51] Velma Johnston to W. H. Ringe, 4 May 1959. Box 685, FF4. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; Velma Johnston to Eugene L. Conrotto, 31 March 1959. Box 685, FF4. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[52] Velma Johnston to Edward "Tex" Gladding, December 9, 1957. Box 685, FF1. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; VJ to RO, December 17, 1957. Box 685, FF1. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[53] Velma Johnston to Louise Huhne, April 14, 1958. Box 685, FF3. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[54] Velma Johnston to Robert O'Brien, March 10, 1958. Box 685, FF2. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. In this letter she writes in clearer terms that he is "a very old and good friend of mine from school days." In other correspondence and in Kania's work it is pointed out how Baring supported Velma in the trying days of her youth while she was recovering from a long bought of polio. She told O'Brien that it took her more than seven years to compile all of this research and that it should be used to support her cause in Washington, D.C.

[55] Walter Baring to Velma Johnston, 18 December 1957. Box 685, FF1. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; In a letter dated March 8, 1958, Box 685, FF2, Walter Baring wrote Velma Johnston in regards to preparing legislation. In it he said "If the two Senators," meaning Bible and Malone "will introduce it in the Senate, it will help a whole lot. Bills which are co-sponsored have a better chance of passing."

[56] Velma Johnston to Senator Alan Bible, 13 March 1958. Box 685, FF2. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; Velma Johnston to Senator George W. Malone, 13 March 1958. Box 685, FF2. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

support of the bill meant to cease mustang exploitation.[57] As a result, letters poured into congressional offices across the United States. The Washoe Horseman's Association, various local humane societies, the Nevada Sage Riders, the National Wildlife Federation, the Los Angeles Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (LASPCA), and even members of the Rodeo Cowboys Association shared Johnston's opinion regarding the treatment of these animals.[58]

Sometimes another individual could help push issues farther into the public eye. In this Velma had help. In June of 1952 Gladding put together a petition against aerial roundups.[59] He recognized early on the need to protect mustangs from aggressive roundup tactics. From this point on Gladding and Velma cooperated with one another, and sent letters back and forth. In 1957 she wrote her "fellow crusader" in order to say that nation-wide support of the wild horses "will carry our legislation along."[60] At this stage in their so-called crusade, the two worked long hours to gather, present, and write about their research. Once compiled this information was mailed to media, newspapers, and public supporters. In 1958 Velma wrote her good friend Louise Huhne, a Dutch writer, to say that she and "Tex" made such a good team that there is

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[57] Velma Johnston to Walter S. Baring, December 11, 1957. Box 685, FF1. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; Velma Johnston to Robert O'Brien, December 17, 1957. Box 685, FF1. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; Velma Johnston to Mae, December 18, 1957. Box 685, FF1. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; Velma Johnston to Verne Wood, February 4, 1958. Box 685, FF2. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; Velma Johnston to Clark County Humane Society, February 6, 1958. Box 685, FF2. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; Velma Johnston to Tommy Thompson, February 7, 1958. Box 685, FF2. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[58] Velma Johnston to Walter S. Baring, February 27, 1958. Box 685, FF2. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[59] Cruise and Griffiths, 72-4.

[60] VJ to EG, December 9, 1957. Box 685, FF1. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

almost no doubt "we will score a success" in passing their proposed legislation.[61] She often voiced a positive outlook regarding the possibility of legislative success.

Throughout the campaign to save a piece of American western heritage some local and non-local groups rose in support while others continued to oppose the protection of these animals on public lands. In part, these people supported the cause because, in Velma's words "hardly anybody is immune to the picturesque thoughts that horses conjure up."[62] It is an emotional image. Her perceptions on the issue are rather obvious, yet not everyone shared those views. Lowell Sumner, Chairman of the Sierra Club's Natural Sciences Committee, wrote a supporter by the name of Rex Berry, and stated what he believed was the club's stance on the wild horse issue. In this letter he wrote: "I believe that H.R. 2725 contains such sweeping prohibitions that it cannot be passed over the strong opposition of the livestock industry."[63] Sumner was aware of the power in the livestock industry. He continued, writing "the stockmen have some right to be considered too, for when bands of horses multiply they compete seriously with the cattle (and sheep) for scarce forage and water on the arid western ranges."[64] Berry not only sent letters to the Sierra Club representatives and the BLM. He ended up receiving a response from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service instead.[65] This response pointed out that "The animals"

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[61] Velma Johnston to Louise Huhne, 28 May 1958. Box 685, FF3. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[62] Velma Johnston to Walter S. Baring, 27 February 1958. Box 685, FF2. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[63] Lowell Sumner to Rex Berry, 2 July 1959. Box 686, FF3. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. This letter was 3 pages long. Sumner discussed the cattle and stockmen issues concerning wild horses, which consisted of crowded ranges, competition over resources, and voices that the clubs stance remains "to be for the protection of primeval wilderness areas, with wildlife protection sharing in this concern when it is relevant and appropriate to the larger framework of wilderness protection."

[64] Ibid.

[65] M. Kerr to Rex Berry, 6 July 1959. Box 686, FF3. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. The Fish and Wildlife Service wrote to Berry in response to his June 25, 1959, letter to their organization. They stated their stance on the subject of wild horses.

(referring to wild horses) “cannot be compared with our native wildlife.”[66] Although they shared the same land native and non-native species were not regarded through the same lens. Despite that, the letter continued to state that wild horse numbers still need to be controlled in order to make room for livestock and game animals that provide important commodities to the American public.[67] Was financial gain the primary motivator? Sumner’s stance in opposition of the proposed legislation was apparent, but Berry still felt an urge to push the issue a little farther. He wrote Velma on August 11, 1959, to discuss the challenges involved in getting his organization to take a stand, one way or another, on the wild horse subject.[68] Although he supported the cause, other members of the Sierra Club did not: “I had hoped” the club “would at least give HR 2725 its endorsement and some publicity in its periodicals.”[69] Unfortunately, that was not the likely outcome of his efforts. The Sierra Club recognized that other actors shared the same stage.

The subject of wild horses belonging on western ranges has been a debatable subject for decades. It is not surprising that in the early stages of the protection movement groups varied on the treatment that these animals should receive. Should they be protected? Should they be removed and sold to slaughterhouses? Should they be treated like livestock or game animals? These questions sparked discussions among humane organizations, wildlife groups, and even horse related groups (riding clubs and horsemen’s associations).[70] Despite the confusion some

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[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Rex Berry to Velma Johnston, 11 August 1959. Box 686, FF3. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Frank J. McMahon to Velma Johnston, 28 August 1968. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; Christine Stevens to Velma Johnston, 2 March 1968. Box 686, FF44. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

groups conveyed on their stance regarding wild horses, there were always others ready to take up the cause. The humane societies and SPCA's often supported her.[71]

Velma often wrote organization members. In these letters she asked them for their support regarding legislative efforts currently being undertaken in Washington. She kept a similar writing format for each request, stating how "I am writing a similar letter to all the riding groups throughout the state."[72] On February 7, 1958, she penned a letter to the president of the Washoe Horsemen's Association asking them to join the other groups supporting her cause.[73] A written affirmation of their position on the subject was included. She usually sent them a pre-written letter that they could use as a template to send to their political appointees. It read: "this riding organization . . . wishes to join in the plea for" federal "legislation for the protection, control and rehabilitation of the few mustangs remaining in the west."[74] A month later she sent out a letter to Baring, in which she detailed who had pledged support in addition to those who seemed interested in acquiring more information about wild horses. At this point she mentioned the Conservation Department of the National Wildlife Federation's curiosity about the mustang cause.[75] However, they needed additional information before deciding whether or not they

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[71] McMahon to Johnston, 28 August 1968; Patrick Parkes to Velma Johnston, 1 August 1968. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; David Claflin to Velma Johnston, 12 November 1968. Box 686, FF18. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. Claflin was the President of the Massachussetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. He offered his assistance.

[72] Velma Johnston to Clark County Humane Society, 6 February 1958. Box 685, FF2. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; Velma Johnston to Mary Todkill, Nevada Lariettes, 18 February 1958. Box 685, FF2. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. She includes a handwritten list of other riding clubs she was sending similar letters, including: the Carson Valley Riding and Roping Club, Ely Riding Club, Mc Gill Riding and Roping Club, Kit Carson Riding Club, Nevada White Hats, and the Nevada State Horsemen's Association.

[73] Velma Johnston to Tommy Thompson, 2 February 1958. Box 685, FF2. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Velma Johnston to Walter Baring, 26 March 1958. Box 685, FF2. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. On March 18 Velma received a letter from the National Wildlife Federation, written by a James S. Pacy. From the tone of her letter it seems as if the

would support the cause. Towards the end of 1958 Velma had already received written communication from organizations voicing their support for the mustang cause.[76]

An intense letter writing campaign created a shift in public perception. Information about the wild horse issue in Nevada began to reach local and state representatives in Washington. People from across the country sent requests for additional information to their legislators. This caught the attention of politicians in Washington, especially considering the vast quantities of letters they received. The campaign to save the wild horses from mass exploitation was making a mark on state representatives in Washington, D.C., particularly in Baring's offices. On April 30, 1958, Congressman Baring wrote Velma to say that his "bill for the protection of the mustangs was introduced" the day before, on April 29.[77] It seems that some individuals were confused as to the purpose of the bill, in which case Baring had to clarify to supporters that it was meant to make it unprofitable for commercial interests to hunt or mistreat wild horses, and to penalize those who did.[78]

Continued correspondence between Velma and Baring showed that there was some clarification needed in terms of what they called "wild horses." As she explains, "From past experience I really feel that there is going to be a lot of controversy over what is and is not a wild horse."[79] She was correct. Many individuals both inside and outside of the government worked to clarify the term. In order to avoid heightened controversy over the definition of "wild horses,"

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group may have been leaning favorably in support of the mustangs. Without the original March 18 correspondence this is a difficult assumption to make.

[76] Velma Johnston to Gordon Davies, 16 October 1958. Box 685, FF3. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. In this letter to the Editor's Assistant at *Reader's Digest*, she explained which organizations have rallied in support, including: the Massachussetts SPCA, the American Humane Association, and the Rodeo Cowboys Association.

[77] Walter Baring to Velma Johnston, 30 April 1958. Box 686, FF2. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Velma Johnston to Walter S. Baring, 9 May 1958. Box 685, FF3. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

she suggested they change the wording in the bill to "'any wild, unbranded horse, mare, colt or burro running at large on any of the public land or ranges.'"[80] This was the same terminology they used in the 1955 legislation in Nevada. A few days later, on May 13, 1958, Congressman Baring brought the wild horse bill to the attention of the United States House of Representatives.[81] He assured Velma that the new definition would be changed in a revision to the bill.[82] Several months passed, during which time many clarifications and revisions were incorporated into the Mustang Bill. The final version was the bill he introduced to the House, the one pushed forward by national momentum.

Members of the Senate also voiced their support for this bill. Senator George Malone heard from Velma during the summer of 1958, requesting his support for H.R. 12477.[83] She reminded him that the legislation is a means to help control excessive numbers of wild horses roaming the ranges, and to do it in a humane way. She explained that "there is a great demand for these horses here in the West for use as saddle stock, and that would tend to take care of a great deal of the available numbers."[84] Realistically this was a fine idea. Ranchers and cowboys, like Velma's father and grandfather, have utilized wild horses as saddle stock for a long time. Continuing this method would keep that element of western heritage alive. It is a part of western culture as are the true cowboys who share the range with the wild horses. She knew that range control, population management, and humane treatment were essential pieces of a larger, more complex system.

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[80] Ibid.

[81] Velma Johnston to Louise Huhne, 28 May 1958. Box 685, FF3. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[82] Walter Baring to Velma Johnston, 14 May 1958. Box 686, FF2. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. In this letter Baring explains how H.R. 12233 would be removed because the wording was inaccurate. In its place they would propose H.R. 12477, which would supercede the previous motion and contain the correct phrasing.

[83] Velma Johnston to George Malone, 21 July 1958. Box 685, FF3. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[84] Ibid.

By the end of 1958 Velma was still sending appeals to congressmen while some people were still attempting to gain permits to run wild horses in Nevada. As a result, she hoped to get more support for the Mustang Bill before it was introduced. On December 29 she wrote to Howard Cannon, a Nevada State Senator, asking if he could co-sponsor the bill with Baring.[85] By this point in the campaign the stress was multiplying. Velma wrote Gladding on January 5, 1959, in order to tell him "This thing is assuming the proportions of a snowball rolling down hill, and I feel like I'm right in the middle of it. I'm taking vitamins like mad, and only hope I hang together."[86] For a seemingly frail-looking woman Velma was strong. She rarely voiced how the constant workload affected her, but when she did it was only to close friends. It was extremely important for their measure to pass the House, and no amount of stress slowed her down. After all, opportunistic commercial hunters in Nevada still sought to gather horses while they could do so without breaking the law.[87]

On January 19, 1959, Baring once again introduced the bill to the House, this time as H.R. 2725.[88] The bill itself listed what need to be done in order to protect the wild horses and burros that roamed on public lands, including to "prohibit the use of aircraft or motor vehicles to hunt" said animals "on land belonging to the United States . . . ."[89] By including the phrase "on land belonging to the United States" Velma was hoping to halt the unregulated harvesting of these animals on the vast areas of federally owned lands. The law that passed through the

[85] Velma Johnston to Howard Cannon, 29 December 1958. Box 685, FF3. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[86] Velma Johnston to Edward Gladding, 5 January 1959. Box 685, FF4. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[87] Velma Johnston to Walter Baring, 12 January 1959. Box 685, FF4. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[88] Walter Baring to Velma Johnston, 24 January 1959. Box 686, FF2. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. In this letter Baring discussed how their bill was gaining support in the congressional session. In a March 10, 1959, letter to Johnston, Baring explained how they were still receiving letters from people across the nation in support of the mustang bill. In addition, he was constantly receiving inquiries from other congressmen about this piece of legislation. By this point it was gaining a vast amount of attention; Walter Baring, U.S. Congress, House, *H.R. 2725*, 86th Cong., January 19, 1959, 1st Sess.,

[89] Baring, *H.R. 2725*, 1.

Nevada State Legislature in 1955 was not meant to conflict with any federal law concerning public land use. As a state law it could not be applied outside of Nevada. A majority of the land in Nevada is owned by the federal government, which made it a key issue to address.[90] On January 29, 1959, a Leap Year, Velma wrote Baring with a heartfelt thank you, and told him he had played a major role in helping her reach her destiny.[91] The quiet supporters she found along the journey found the strength to push her along, even when she was pushed to the edge of exhaustion and illness.[92] "We have many unsung heroes in this saga of the Old West," she once confided to Gladding.[93] Those heroes were members of the general public.

A variety of academically inclined individuals and groups sought information about the horses, hoping that at some point they could publish their own research on the subject. Geographers, range and animal scientists, as well as large and small scale newspapers and magazines wrote about the wild horses in Nevada. Velma welcomed this publicity and scholarly interest because she fervently believed that "every written word on behalf of our wild ones . . . will protect them."[94] Astoundingly, she also received a letter from the Chief of the Sioux indicating his support and pride in her efforts.[95] This is even more interesting when one realizes this horse-centered culture used to rule the southern plains from the backs of their own trained mustangs and hardy horses. Interest was growing.

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[90] Velma Johnston to Marguerite Stitt Church, 23 February 1959. Box 685, FF4. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. Velma explained to an interested individual why it was essential to pass H.R. 2725 because of state law limitations on federally owned land. She told Marguerite that Nevada was 80% federal land and, as a result, a federal law would need to be passed to prohibit wild horse hunting.

[91] Velma Johnston to Walter Baring, 29 January 1959. Box 685, FF4. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[92] Velma Johnston to Edward Gladding, 4 February 1959. Box 685, FF4. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. This detailed communication explained how she had been fighting a few weeks' long bout with pneumonia. Her mother was included amongst the quiet supporters she discussed.

[93] Ibid.

[94] Ibid., 2.

[95] Ibid.

Organizations as large as the United States Humane Society and as small as the local riding clubs discussed what could be done to save a segment of American history.[96] The Society for Protective Animal Legislation sent brochures to thousands of its subscribers, wherein the organization voiced support for the Mustang Bill.[97] Organization newsletters played a large role in keeping the public aware of what was taking place in Washington. The ever-present SPCA also sent out publications to its members.[98] This was one certain method of swaying the views of their readers and sponsors around the country. During this wave of the wild horse protection movement the vitality and constant presence of media attention was a bonus. Books focusing on the West and on wild horses, photographs, articles, and letters all became fodder for discussion among enthusiasts and opponents alike. Velma and her supporters did not underestimate the power of the press because of how close it had brought them to federal legislation.

Opponents to the wild horse legislation sought to influence H.R. 2725, and they sent in requests for amendments to its phrasing. Despite intimidating techniques employed to turn them

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[96] Velma Johnston to Walter Baring, 26 May 1959. Box 685, FF4. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. This letter mentioned how "so many tremendously strong and wealthy organizations, as well as individuals, have entered this battle . . . ." She told him they have had a great deal of support throughout the country; Jock Taylor, "Eastern Humanitarians Upset Over Cruelty to 'Beautiful' Wild Horses," *Reese River Reveille*, June 17, 1959. In this article (which Velma commented about in a June 24 letter) Taylor asserted that the information about cruelty to the wild horses was obtained under false pretenses. According to him and his researcher, individuals who submitted photographs of the inhumane treatment were not even sure where they originated. His efforts to refute the cruelty Velma herself witnessed was an interesting take at the other side of the wild horse dilemma. He commented on the SPAL's attempts to appeal to a readership comprised of humanitarians, writing how it contained "a wealth of hair-curling assertions, accompanied by a group of photographs purporting to show how the brutal wild horse hunters of Nevada run down and capture the horses." His scathing retorts continued throughout the entire article: "a wild horse . . . a runty, moth-eaten, mangy little scrub critter of no value anywhere outside a can." They are not the beautiful, proud horses that the public imagines them to be. Taylor later referred to getting rid of wild horses as being similar to that of "getting rid of cockroaches in the kitchen and moths in the clothes closet." His perception of wild horses was somewhat apparent; In a June 24 letter to Edward Gladding, Velma mentioned her feelings of shame concerning Taylor's attitude towards their cause; Cruise and Griffiths, 127-8. They discussed how this "annoyed Velma to be . . . lumped in with 'easterners.'"

[97] Velma Johnston to Walter Baring, 16 May 1959. Box 685, FF4. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. She mentioned how the organization was sending out 10,000 brochures.

[98] Velma Johnston to Eugene L. Conrotto, 7 April 1959. Box 685, FF4. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

off of their course of action, those supporting the Mustang Bill stayed true to their cause.[99] The proposed amendments often came from local and national federal offices, like the BLM. Congressman Baring received a letter from the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources in Nevada asking him to amend the bill, which would essentially render all of the former work useless.[100] By the middle of 1959, supporters for the protection of mustangs finally received a date for the bill to go before the House: July 15.[101] Then, towards the end of June Velma received word the Senator Cannon of Nevada would be introducing something similar in the Senate.[102] On July 24 he wrote Velma and explained that the Mustang Bill "passed the Subcommittee unanimously" on the 23rd.[103] Letters flowed back and forth between Washington and Nevada. Baring's continuous and tireless efforts in Congress, and his communications with Velma and people throughout the nation, resulted in some attention. His tireless efforts paid off and he eventually gained additional support through Nevada Senator Alan Bible, who ended up declaring his support for the bill.[104]

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[99] Walter Baring to Velma Johnston, 22 April 1959. Box 685, FF4. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. In this letter Baring strengthened his fighting stance, when he wrote "I will do everything I can to have the Mustang Bill enacted into law."

[100] Walter Baring to Velma Johnston, 22 May 1959. Box 685, FF4. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. This department wanted to change H.R. 2725 so that it read as follows: "'Nothing in this Act shall be construed to conflict with the provisions of any Federal law or regulation which permits the Land Management Agency responsible for administration of the public lands to hunt, drive, round up, and dispose of horses, mares, colts, or burros by means of airborne or motor driven vehicles but humane measures will be used and all operations will be under struct [sic] Government supervision.'"

[101] Walter Baring to Velma Johnston, 19 June 1959, Velma Johnston Collection, Denver Public Library; Walter Baring to Velma Johnston, 30 June 1959, Velma Johnston Collection, Denver Public Library. Baring was looking forward to seeing Velma for the hearing. He arranged for her to have a nice hotel room. In addition, one of his female staff members gave her a tour of the White House. This outing was scheduled for the day after the July 15 hearing; Velma Johnston to W. H. Ringe, 22 June 1959. Box 685, FF5. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[102] Velma Johnston to Howard W. Cannon, 24 June 1959. Box 686, FF2. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[103] Walter Baring to Velma Johnston, 24 July 1959. Box 686, FF2. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[104] George H. Seward to Velma Johnston, 14 August 1959. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

In the few weeks leading up to the Judiciary Committee hearing Velma wrote hundreds of letters.[105] Yet, despite the time-consuming work she was excited at the prospect of going to Washington for a cause dear to her heart. This was her chance to represent the cause and those who helped push it forward. In a few of these she commented on how busy she was preparing for her big talk before the committee.[106] Although public speaking was not her forte, Velma pushed the limits of her physical and mental endurance in order to prepare for this monumental trip east. She faced, and conquered, many hurdles on behalf of the country's wild horse herds. Efforts like these are what helped push her into a figurehead position. When people thought about wild horses and the West, they thought of her role as well.

In addition to the stress of the workload communicating with constituents, supporters, and others throughout the country, Velma was going through some personal issues. Charles, who had been ill for some time, was becoming too ill for the two of them to remain at the Double Lazy Heart Ranch.[107] As a result, they sold the ranch and were planning to move into town.[108] She explained to Baring how "it broke our hearts to sell."[109] This piece of her heritage, the one they bought from her parents when it was called the Painted Rock Ranch, was no longer going to be a place of peace and refuge from the outside world. Her connection to the land would undergo a change, one from rural to urban: the city of Reno awaited their arrival. Despite the overload (in almost every manner of speaking) Velma trudged on, certain she and everyone who had supported her over the years would leave Washington feeling a sense of success.

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[105] Velma Johnston to Walter Baring, 24 June 1959. Box 685, FF5. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[106] Velma Johnston to Walter Baring, 2 July 1959. Box 685, FF5. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Kania, 54.

[109] VJ to WB, 2 July 1959. Box 685, FF5. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

The weeks leading up to her departure for Washington were full of long days at work in Reno and long evenings, indeed nights, answering a multitude of letters at her desk at the Double Lazy Heart Ranch. She arrived in D.C. exhausted and worn out from an unceasing workload. It was essential that she give her statement in front of the committee because this project began with her at the steering wheel, and it needed her at the helm. Upon her arrival in Washington on July 13, Velma prepared to give her testimony before the committee two days later. This was important and she had been preparing a report, and compiling vast amounts of information, for years.

On July 23, 1959, the "Save the Mustang Bill" unanimously passed the House Judiciary Committee, which rendered the legislation a partial success for the continued protection of wild horses in the United States.[110] As the bill moved along in its process to the Senate, Velma, Baring, Gladding, and thousands of supporters around the country waited to hear the news. The Senate bill was titled S. 2167 and Senators Prescott Bush from Connecticut, John S. Cooper from Kentucky, James Murray from Montana, Mike Mansfield from Montana, and Howard W. Cannon from Nevada sponsored it.[111] On August 17 Baring sent word from Washington that the House had unanimously passed H.R. 2725.[112] This was part of the news that she and thousands

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[110] Velma Johnston to Eugene Conrotto of *Desert Magazine*, 27 July 1959. Box 685, FF5. Box 685, FF5. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[111] Velma Johnston to Prescott Bush, July 29, 1959. Box 685, FF5. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; Velma Johnston to John S. Cooper, July 29, 1959. Box 685, FF5. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; Velma Johnston to James Murray, 29 July 1959. Box 685, FF5. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; Velma Johnston to Howard W. Cannon, July 30, 1959. Box 685, FF5. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; Velma Johnston to Mike Mansfield, September 3, 1959. Box 685, FF6. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; Cruise and Griffiths, 129.

[112] Velma Johnston to Walter Baring, August 17, 1959. Box 685, FF6. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

of others had been waiting to hear.[113] In fact, she had to clarify what the law meant to a few interested bystanders, explaining how:

> there is no intent to prohibit controls of the numbers of these animals, but only to prohibit the inhumane manner in which they are carried out, and to eliminate any profit in connection therewith which would tend to bring about overenthusiastic controls by professional hunters should the profits be allowed to continue.[114]

She had to continue explaining how horse numbers still needed to be controlled but so did the numbers of domestic livestock grazing the same rangeland. There had to be some give and take on both sides. Humane removal was a key element to remember.

Objections to the bill's passage were minimal. Amendments and changes to it were also miniscule because those in favor of the bill saw how the additional amendments would weaken what the bill was meant to accomplish. She did not gain the support of the Sierra Club, despite continued correspondence with its representatives in Washington and numerous other supporters.[115] Despite that, Wild Horse Annie received donations and supportive letters from near and far.[116] In the end, her advocacy for the wild ones came to fruition. On August 24, 1959, Velma wrote to her dear friend Baring (who had remained in Washington) exclaiming about the good news on the passage of S. 2167. "Dear Walter," she wrote "Bells are ringing – pulse is racing – stars are blinking on and off . . . ."[117] She was still in shock. The next day she

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[113] Velma Johnston to Rex Berry, August 18, 1959. Box 685, FF6. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. Berry was a supporter of the wild horse protection legislation as well as a member of the Sierra Club.

[114] Ibid.

[115] Ibid.; Rex Berry to Velma Johnston, 11 August 1959. Box 686, FF3. Box 685, FF5. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[116] This is a thank-you note to a supporter in Ontario, Canada who forwarded a check to Johnston in the amount of $50.00. Box 685, FF5. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[117] Velma Johnston to Walter Baring, 24 August 1959. Box 685, FF6. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. Kania indicates that S2167 did not pass until August 25, but this letter dated the 24th indicates otherwise. In addition, Cruise and Griffiths also use the date of August 24 as the date it officially passed the House and the Senate. In an August 27, 1959, letter Velma wrote to *Desert Magazine* Editor Eugene Conrotto she indicated that it passed the Senate on August 25. Box 685, FF6. Box 685, FF5. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public

penned a heartfelt note of appreciation to Senator Cannon for his efforts in helping the bill pass through the Senate.[118] Then, on September 8, 1959, Velma's nine long years of working hard on behalf of her mustangs were recognized when President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed H.R. 2725 as Public Law 86-234.[119] She wrote to Eugene Conrotto, the Editor of *Desert Magazine*, on the same day she received a telegram telling her Eisenhower signed the bill. In this lengthy letter she discussed her gratitude, pride, and an overwhelming sense of accomplishment that she and so many supporters were able to pledge their support towards something so worthwhile.[120] In conclusion she asked, "How does it feel to touch a star?"[121] Well, she explained, "It feels real good."[122] The following month, despite being inundated with letters from across the country and the world, Velma still made time to be recognized for her advocacy on the part of the wild horses. In September, the Massachusetts SPCA awarded her the Angell Memorial Gold Medal. She took this home with her to Reno, but was welcomed with bad news: Charles had taken ill again and this time he was in the hospital.[123] Good news and bad news had collided.

Was "Wild Horse Annie" a myth, a legend, a woman, or a purely historical figure? Perhaps she was a combination of a few of these. It is true that her name resonates with meaning

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Library. This is interesting because when Velma wrote Senator Cannon on August 24, 1959, Box 685, FF6, she had not yet heard of the bill's passage.

[118] Velma Johnston to Howard Cannon, 25 August 1959. Box 685, FF6. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[119] Velma Johnston to President Dwight D. Eisenhower, 21 September 1959. Box 685, FF6. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; Velma Johnston to Yvonne M. Spiegelberg, 17 September 1959. Box 685, FF6. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; Cruise and Griffiths, 137; Walter Baring to Velma Johnston, 11 September 1959. Box 686, FF2. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. Baring mentioned the conclusion of congressional sessions and his eminent departure for Reno. He also forwarded several copies of PL 86-234 so that Velma would have a few extras in her files.

[120] Velma Johnston to Eugene Conrotto, 8 September 1959. Box 685, FF6. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[121] Ibid.

[122] Ibid.

[123] VJ to YS, September 17, 1959. Box 685, FF6. Box 685, FF5. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

among wild horse and animal protection groups. It is synonymous with the protection movement that began because one person believed it necessary to protect these animals on their remote range habitats. It took an extreme amount of courage for one woman to stand for something that much of the public was unaware of in the 1940s and 1950s. Perhaps one of the key points that should be remembered here is that Ms. Velma Bronn Johnston was unafraid to stand for a cause, and she did so in a time when gender roles were slowly beginning to change. It is difficult to view her work through an unbiased lens, as shown through the works already written about her, as it is simple to be enraptured with the western legend, and the woman, known as "Wild Horse Annie." Her efforts to protect an enduring historical symbol of the West prevailed when she found others to support her "pledge to protect" American mustangs living on public land. And like many western figures portrayed through media outlets in the 1950s and 1960s, the "imagined West" as seen through her eyes paints a picture of an uncivilized world undergoing change at the hands of a genteel woman with a backbone made of steel. It took a lot of time and effort for her to become a symbol for an entire movement. Is Wild Horse Annie then a figure of mythic proportions or does her image straddle the line between myth and history?[124] This woman's legacy lives on in many ways: through the people who knew her well, through the biographers who wrote children and adult literature based on her life, through the horses that continue to live (somewhat protected) on the range, and through the enormous amount of written materials she sent and received between 1957 and 1976.

[124] Richard White, "The Imagined West," in *"It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own": A New History of the American West*, 613-632 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1947), 614-615. In White's chapter on the "Imagined West" he examines the development of the imagined west and the mythic west. The stories taken from Westerns are often doing so to serve a greater purpose. In many cases this purpose is symbolic of something. In Johnston's case her role as a symbol of the horse protection movement battles against the iconic figure of the genteel white woman in western societies.

Throughout the course of American history certain subjects have wrought emotional responses from different sectors of society.[125] And in an American society, western films, media, and photographs helped the public imagine a different kind of West than it was in reality. The image of the wild horse, the cowboy, and the demure white woman symbolized the West in early literature and media. In the mid-1950s, the height of the western, society also began to focus on environmental and animal rights.[126] Wild horses are an emotionally demanding subject: people love them, people hate them, and some people want to protect them. Who, then, would put forth the effort towards protecting them?

This promoted a lot of discussion amongst multiple conservation, protection, wildlife, and animal rights groups.[127] Conservation, as defined by historian William Wyant in *Westward in Eden*, is when "any individual or group characterized by an interest in and regard for the land and its creatures and a desire to protect both from needless disturbance or insult" come together.[128] A few leaped onto the cause, particularly animal rights groups like the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and factions of the Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA). Others, like the conservation and wildlife groups (the Sierra Club for example) stayed at a distance because members could not agree on what stance they should take regarding the management or preservation of wild horses on public lands. The Sierra Club and the Audubon Society analyzed other areas, such as plant re-growth, soil quality, and the continued survival of co-existing bird and animal species. They also supported President

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[125] Paula Morin, *Honest Horses: Wild Horses in the Great Basin* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2006), 29. Paula interviewed Bob Abbey, the Nevada State Director of the BLM in Reno, and in the course of the interview he mentioned the pull of emotion regarding wild horses. "I think for too long we've let emotions drive the Wild Horse and Burro Program." It's important to put a realistic, operable, program together that will focus on future tasks to ensure the heritage of the wild horse remains on public lands.

[126] White, "The Imagined West," 613. White explains how, by 1958, "Westerns comprised about 11 percent of all works of fiction . . . in the United States."

[127] Robbins, 291, 301-324. Discussions about conserving natural resources began much earlier, in the 1880s.

[128] Wyant, 375.

Kennedy's resource conservation initiative in the early 1960s.[129] Their idea was to conserve the ecological balance between the plants, soil, and native fowl and wildlife, not just the horses.[130] The differences and similarities of opinion between these groups and Johnston created a continuous dialogue, one that continued even after her death in 1976, as some people chose to carry on her mission towards conservation and preservation of wild herds. Wild horse and animal rights groups helped push the movement to a new level when they appealed to people across the nation to support a new effort devoted to protecting a vital piece of American heritage.

Early historiography about wild horses is easier to find than materials on Velma Johnston. Even these are in short supply. The early history is discussed more thoroughly in the first four chapters of this dissertation. Marguerite Henry's book *Mustang: Wild Spirit of the West* is the oldest work featuring an inside perspective of this woman's life. Henry, a children's book author, weaved a fascinating tale about Johnston's life, which she based on a series of interviews, conversations, and on-site research.[131] There are other works that focus on Johnston, all of which provide a biographical glance at this woman and the movement she is remembered for having started. A variety of new biographical works have appeared in the last several years that provide an excellent look at how this woman inspired a nation. It must be noted that these authors seem a little swept away by Johnston's image. These include David Cruise and Allison Griffiths' 2010 book *Wild Horse Annie and the Last of the Mustangs*, J. Edward de Steiguer's work *Wild Horses of the West: History and Politics of America's Mustangs*, published in 2011, and Alan J. Kania's book *Wild Horse Annie*, published in 2012.[132] The archival resources

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[129] Robbins, 460.

[130] Richard M. Highsmith, Jr., J. Granville Jensen, and Robert D. Rudd, *Conservation in the United States*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1969), 184.

[131] Henry visited Johnston in Reno, Nevada, several times in order to gather research. More information on these visits can be read about in their letters to one another. Some of these letters are located in the Velma Johnston Collection at the Denver Public Library.

[132] Cruise and Griffiths; De Steiguer; Kania.

available at the Denver Public Library include multiple boxes of correspondence, photographs, government documents, and scrapbooks that focus on Velma Johnston's life before and during her wild horse protection crusade from 1950 to 1976. These valuable written materials provide an insightful experience for researchers, but they are also documented artifacts from mid-twentieth century American history. These resources are a combination of myth-makers and historical analyses, which provide interesting insight into the world of Johnston and her western image.[133]

In the 1960s Velma Johnston's appeal to the public to protect wild horses in the United States was beginning to gain nationwide attention, particularly from schoolchildren across the country. For this reason, acclaimed children's author Marguerite Henry began communicating with Velma Johnston.[134] Henry personalized her work, deciding to visit Velma at her home in Nevada. She visited with her and her husband Charles Johnston at their ranch as well as with various friends and acquaintances. This close relationship helped Henry accumulate additional details to incorporate into her upcoming book manuscript. By the time *Mustang: Wild Spirit of the West* was published in 1966, Henry and Johnston had built a fond working relationship. This children's book opened up a different perspective regarding Johnston because it gave her life a childlike innocent quality. The illustrations transport the reader to a different time and place, one where the open range was a place of escape and adventure for a girl who loved horses.[135] It also made readers believe she was destined to help the wild ones. The story also pushed youthful readers to identify and sympathize with a little girl's struggles after being crippled by polio. The

[133] White, "The Imagined West."

[134] Velma Johnston to Marguerite Henry, 20 May 1968. Box 685, FF11. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; Velma Johnston to Marguerite Henry, 13 April 1966. Box 685, FF7. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; Velma Johnston to Marguerite Henry, 21 February 1967. Box 685, FF7. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[135] These "western" experiences are reminiscent of the myth of the West. See White's chapter on "The Imagined West" for more details regarding this concept.

themes of family, courage, and standing for what you believe in appear throughout Henry's narrative.[136] The youthful audience that Henry appealed to with this book became a backbone of support for the petition to protect the historical integrity and aesthetic value of wild horses in the United States.[137]

Marguerite Henry already had an established presence as a children's author before *Mustang* was published. She had been writing well-circulated novels about wild horses for many years. *Misty of Chincoteague*, one of her most famous books, was published in 1947.[138] Her readership included devoted wild horse fans from all over the country. This work not only regaled young people about wild horses on the east coast, it provided them with an outlet that would alter their own perceptions regarding the treatment of wild horses in the United States. Many books followed after the publication of *Misty*. These sequels and stand-alone novels provide evidence that the myth of wild horses became known even before Velma's work rose into the national spotlight.

Marguerite Henry's relationship with Johnston is what makes *Mustang* valuable. When Henry called her in 1965, it was to inquire whether or not "Velma would be willing to be interviewed for a book she was considering writing."[139] The set of interviews that followed became the basis for *Mustang*. Johnston once exclaimed at how Henry and her husband were coming to Reno for a visit.[140] It was exciting for a ranch raised woman with a low-key career to have an acclaimed New York writer in her home. They came from completely different worlds, yet their correspondence continued back and forth for a few years. Johnston once wrote Henry,

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[136] It is possible that, because of Henry's timing regarding this book's publication, she was creating this "myth" of Wild Horse Annie for a purpose. The purpose was to save wild horses. Popular literature like this was important in swaying public opinion.

[137] Henry, *Mustang: Wild Spirit of the West*.

[138] Marguerite Henry, *Misty of Chincoteague* (Chicago: Rand McNally and Co., 1947).

[139] Cruise and Griffiths, 147, 150.

[140] Velma Johnston to Marguerite Henry, April 13, 1966. Box 685, FF7. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

saying "I am so grateful to you for making the little girl who is Annie Bronn a courageous person. You know, she never wanted sympathy—and she's never changed."[141] The two women, despite being from completely different backgrounds, had some commonalities. It was the differences that eventually drove them apart; Henry was wealthy and affluent, while Johnston was neither. Continued correspondence between the two indicated how their relationship became strained in 1967, partly due to the way individual feelings were hurt through a lack of communication.[142]

The recent wave of twenty-first century writings on Johnston provide an idea of the resurgence of the movement and how wild horses still remain a prevalent issue in modern day American life. These works provide additional fodder regarding the legend known as Wild Horse Annie. Although each of these works are more recent, they rely extensively on primary source material found at archives, libraries, and personal collections throughout the country: written records, interviews, audio recordings, photographs, letters, and government-based correspondence are all included in these written accounts. In addition to the focus on primary source material, the writers portray Johnston in different ways. Her communications with wildlife and animal rights groups are also played out to a certain extent.[143] Many of these relationships lasted for years. The three most recent works provide an interesting perspective of Johnston's life more than forty years after Henry's book arrived on the shelves of booksellers across the country. They also provide a glimpse into how modern westerns began to portray a strong female character.

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[141] Velma Johnston to Marguerite Henry, 17 January 1966, quoted in Cruise and Griffiths, *Wild Horse Annie and the Last of the Mustangs: The Life of Velma Johnston* (New York: Scribner, 2010), 163.

[142] The indicators for this particular comment can be garnered by reading "Out of Cold Storage," a chapter in Cruise and Griffiths, *Wild Horse Annie and the Last of the Mustangs*, 165-184.

[143] Johnston wrote to many groups, including: various SPCAs, the HSUS, the National Wildlife Federation, the Sierra Club, riding associations, and fish and game associations, to name a few. These letters can be found in the Velma Johnston Collection at the Denver Public Library.

The first work is Cruise and Griffiths' somewhat biographical account of Johnston's life.[144] These writers, more so than the others, give a literary quality to their subject. Johnston's history, including that of her family paints a picture of a woman whose life revolved around the rough Nevada range as well as the animals who lived there. Her pride in place was apparent.[145] Wild horses became a part of her life at a young age, and Cruise and Griffiths tell this tale in a fascinating and compelling way. Although not a traditional historical work (like those by Webb or West) this book helps readers and horse enthusiasts understand some of the struggles and triumphs that the mysterious woman known as "Wild Horse Annie" dealt with on a frequent basis. It also portrays the effects of her work on individuals and groups throughout the country and how they continue to look back upon her legacy. Her status as an icon in the horse world seemed to grow in their narrative of her life. One of the problems with this work is the lack of footnotes, which makes the researcher or reader question how, and from where, some of the information was attained. As a historian, this is definitely one of the bigger issues because it is difficult to backtrack and look at these materials. Of this information, how much is imagined and embellished by the authors, and how much is taken from historical records?

J. Edward de Steiguer's *Wild Horses of the West* is the second work that pulls in details from Johnston's background and showcases how she motivated and divided different sectors of American society.[146] One of de Steiguer's pivotal arguments is centered on developing the confluence of history and politics regarding wild horses. Politics are central to the argument regarding the status of wild horses as symbols of the West. Johnston argued for legislation and worked with legislators to get laws passed that favored wild horse protection. Throughout the book he focuses less on one person's contributions than he does on the subject as a whole. He

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[144] Cruise and Griffiths.
[145] Pride in place is discussed in White's "The Imagined West." See page 617.
[146] De Steiguer.

does emphasize Johnston's role as an advocate. Although she does feature prominently in his analysis, de Steiguer develops his work on the variety of problems this movement faced, including: landowners, government officials, federal organizations, and opposition from individuals at every turn.[147] His focus on politics is detailed and the work is less literary than that of Henry or Cruise and Griffiths', however, it is no less valuable to the entire narrative. Unlike other historical works, this complex analysis does not take advantage of footnotes within the text. As a whole, the pledge to protect was not meant for everyone and de Steiguer's analysis made the sequence of events come to life since he focused more on the timeline of events and less on one individual.

The third work under discussion is Alan J. Kania's recent publication, *Wild Horse Annie*.[148] This book, as indicated by the title, largely revolves around Johnston's life. Kania is unique in this mix of authors because his background focused on photojournalism and equine photography. In addition, he also knew Johnston well, having spent many hours interviewing her, her mother Trudy, and various other friends and close associates. Over the years he built up a relationship with her and her associates, and that friendship can be felt throughout his narrative. Many of the sources he uses are taken from his personal collection of correspondence and recorded (taped) interviews. Because of his personal connection to Johnston it is relevant to point out the bias he holds in her favor. At one point Kania states that at all times, Wild Horse Annie "shared her lifelong belief that the legacy of the West followed the hoofprints of the horse."[149] He warns the reader up front that this story is about Johnston and "her twenty-seven-year national campaign to save, protect, and control the wild horses and burros of the American

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[147] Ibid., 155-56. There is a continued discussion here about the various factions who opposed Johnston's legislation. It is difficult to lump these individuals into one category because sometimes hunters, landowners, and ranchers held both pro and con stances on the subject of protecting wild horses from continued eradication.
[148] Kania.
[149] Ibid., 196.

West."[150] The experiences and adventures that Kania brings to life are telling about the way he felt for Wild Horse Annie and her grassroots campaign.[151] This book is not just a story, it is a dedication.

Together, these four works provide a thorough look at Velma Bronn Johnston's life, both before and after she became known as the somewhat legendary figure popularly called Wild Horse Annie. Although this chapter is not solely about her, it is about the movement she began, and the relationships that grew because of it. People tend to view her as a symbolic figure, yet she was a woman who led a simple life and who loved all animals, the range, and the West. Her role in the West is symbolic in that it combines historical truth with mythical qualities. It is important to supply a background on her life to provide the context for the laws she helped draft throughout the 1950s. Her efforts connected some advocate groups with one another who worked towards a similar cause, created a few, and caused dispute among others.[152] This piece offers a glimpse into those other perspectives as well as Johnston's own motives in creating the early legislation meant to protect wild horses.

In the years immediately following the passage of The Wild Horse Annie Bill (PL 86-234) the United States was facing changes on domestic and foreign soil. Changing presidencies, questionable foreign policies, and new social, civil, and cultural movements began sweeping across the country. During these same years Velma had many other things to occupy her time. First and foremost, the weight of protecting her wild ones had lifted and she had a little breathing

[150] Ibid., ix.

[151] I met the author at the 2012 Western History Association's annual meeting in Denver, CO. This panel was part of a trend. In 2011 I put together a panel on wild horses in the West and this panel at the 2012 meeting also carried this theme. It became evident how complex the subject of wild horses in the west truly is; panelists (like Kania) brought to life the individuals involved in the legacy of this subject: Velma Johnston and Gus Bundy were merely two of the many characters.

[152] It was during these years that Johnston began the ISPMB, known as the International Society for the Protection of Mustangs and Burros. There was some dispute between wildlife societies on how to manage wildlife conservation with wild horse protection. Would helping one infringe on the protection of another? Issues like these caused intense discussions about how these animals could be protected and managed for future generations.

room for the first time in years. In 1960 the Johnstons made the transition from the Double Lazy Heart to their new house on the north side of Reno.[153] It was here that Velma cared for Charles within the confines of their new house, but it would not be long before his illness took over and left her a widow.[154] Her personal struggles coincided with many struggles on the domestic front. By this point she had been away from the center of wild horse issues for many years, but her connections to them remained.

It took a lot of time, effort, sweat, and stress to gain momentum in the pledge to protect a quickly disappearing icon of the American West: the mustang. This story is chronicled in children's books, literary narratives, political analyses, and personal dedications. Despite the struggles and the intense time commitment required to respond to thousands of letters from across the country and abroad, one woman remained true to her cause. Wild Horse Annie is the definition of a woman shaped by her western heritage: tough, tenacious, and tiny, much like the animals she represented. Her image as a Western heroine has remained constant, despite it being a combination of mythical creation and historical happenings. Understanding the land and the animals that lived on it was only a part of what she gained from her father and grandfather. Her western heritage came through in her love for the land and the animals that depended upon it. Her paternal influences gave her an appreciation for what the land can provide. And how, if it is well managed, it will be able to provide adequate resources in future years. The turn-of-the-century decreased society's reliance on the horse and increased the potential of commercial slaughtering interests across the country. By fighting those commercial interests, and encouraging good land and animal stewardship, she was protecting an icon of the West while unknowingly creating another one in her image.

[153] Cruise and Griffiths, 141.
[154] Ibid., 145. Charles passed away on March 14, 1964.

Would Wild Horse Annie's campaign vilify Cliff's years of rounding up the horses under the BLM's direction? Like her, Cliff realized how important it was to preserve range integrity as well as the integrity of wild herds. Too many could damage the range. It is probable that these two would share some areas of common interest. However, as this campaign moved further into full preservation of the wild horses would the people who supported her efforts applaud Cliff's? The answer is probably not. In Cliff's recollection, the media was out to paint him as a villain. So while Annie might agree with the point of the roundups, she might not agree with the mechanized methods employed to do them. In all, she worked hard to promote the continued preservation of wild horses in the United States. The media, legislators, and supporters seemed to recognize her devotion to the cause. Her legacy lives on through her friends, supporters, written media reports, books, and organizations created to continue what she started in the 1950s and 1960s. In their writings they continued to promulgate her legendary status. Little did these advocates realize that much more would need to be done in order to continue protecting America's wild horses and burros. Years later her wild ones would once again need the assistance of a resilient woman memorably named Wild Horse Annie.

WHAT ELSE CAN WE DO?

"…the wild horse shares space with indigenous wildlife and domestic livestock. However, unlike wildlife, which are hunted, and livestock, which are harvested, there are no natural predators to control wild horse populations."[1]

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s the nation, and indeed the world, learned a vast amount about wild horses living on rangelands within the United States. This awareness was aided by other social and cultural movements occurring at the same time. When Congress passed the Wild Horse Annie Act of 1959, which prohibited the use of mechanized vehicles in wild horse roundups, attention was just beginning to focus on events in the West. The act passed with the assistance of thousands of supportive individuals and groups, throughout the country. Despite opposition from ranchers, land owners, conservation groups, and various government officials, the new limitations in dealing with mustangs were an advantage to those who wanted to preserve the integrity of free-roaming herds. The media spread information about wild horses along with their advocates and antagonists, whether it was accurate or not. This network of communication sometimes aided the cause of the supporters, and sometimes it hurt them. Human emotion trumped scientific data, turning the tide strongly towards what the American people wanted—protection for the wild ones.

In 1971, a little over one decade after the Wild Horse Annie Act, Congress passed another law, this one more detailed than its predecessor. The new law strengthened punishments for lawbreakers. It also defined what constituted a wild horse, as it had become a subjective term for many. Biologists, wildlife experts, and some conservation groups agreed that the horse was feral, while others were staunch supporters of using the term "wild" because it showed the

[1] Paula Morin, *Honest Horses: Wild Horses in the Great Basin* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2006), 12.

animals' state of unmanaged existence on the open range.[2] The new act also defined multiple parameters for the Department of the Interior's management of them, dictating what it could and could not do with this so-called "*living symbol.*"[3] Although the Act of 1971 is important, the years surrounding it are also key for examination. Its passage affected government workers and contractors working with the animals, as well as range workers and scientists who studied the land in regards to animal and plant relationships. These varied perceptions regarding the act are necessary elements of this study, because they provide different lenses through which people view how this legislation affected life on and off the range. How did people view the wild horses? What was it like working with the horses that many people considered a direct link to another time and place in American history? Did the myth of the horse ever outweigh the practicality needed when making decisions that affected their livelihood on the range? Through it all, some people have remained staunch supporters of the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971, some remain undecided, and others are vehemently opposed to what it represents.

Several different works come to mind regarding discussions of life on the range for horses and their human subjects. Many of these relate directly to this chapter because they combine the past with the present. In other words, these individuals discuss the changes on the range between the 1950s and the 1980s. Above all, they cover the time period before and after the 1971 wild horse legislation. The compilation of oral histories includes contributions from range managers, horse gatherers, veterinarians, ranchers, horsemen, cowboys, trainers, scientists, wild horse specialists, and BLM officials. One of these sources is Paula Morin's fascinating book, *Honest Horses: Wild Horses in the Great Basin*. This work, unlike many others that are examined in this dissertation, is both a narrative and oral history compilation. This collection of

[2] There has been a long-running argument around terminology involving "wild" or "feral" horses. Specific uses of these terms are often defined by the individual's field of expertise, or even lack of expertise.

[3] Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971.

oral histories examines what life was like for government workers and others who worked with and around mustangs.[4] Another source providing information regarding range life post-1971 is Clifford Heaverne's oral history. As a government contractor he understood the complexities involved when working with horses, particularly wild ones. He also comprehended the minute details required in putting together government contracts. In addition to the above sources, there are thousands of letters written by advocates, public supporters, government workers, and political appointees between 1959 and the mid-1970s that set the stage for the way things progressed before and after the Act of 1971. They also provide perspectives as to public sentiment during the 1960s and 1970s. Pop culture, global conflicts, national crises, and the media affected how people approached the subject of wild horses.

In *Honest Horses*, Morin indicates her intent in the title. Honesty is difficult to find when the public is entranced by the mythic quality of life out West. The media used it as a selling point, and often inflated what was happening or attempted to slant the news towards a few topics, such as: the government is the enemy, Annie is a hero, western ranchers are villains (an inversion of Western myth), and the horses are symbols of freedom.[5] The myth of the West is evident here, particularly in Annie's persona as the savior of wild horses.[6] Morin uses oral histories to break the boundaries between inflated news pieces and harsh reality. Her conversations with range managers, government contractors, politicians, ranchers, and not-for-profit groups provide a long lens through which we can examine the way different people and groups managed to continue working with or around the wild herds of mustangs roaming a combination of public and private land.

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[4] Morin.

[5] Mark Trahant, "Western mustang, like flag, stands for freedom," in *Reno Gazette-Journal*, July 30, 1989.

[6] Western myths have been perpetuated in many ways. Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show helped push these perspectives into the public during the late 1800s. David Hamilton Murdoch, *The American West: The Invention of a Myth* (Reno, NV: University of Nevada Press, 2001).

In her first appeal to readers, Morin warns them they will not find a definitive answer, or solution, regarding wild horses in her book. In addition, any attempts to find modern data will also be disappointed. The point of this work is to show how some equine traditions are entrenched as a part of the western experience, and that horse culture is part of a heritage the earlier settlers passed down to the next generation.[7] This heritage played a role in the way different people viewed the animals and how they should be treated. Her research was undertaken with the knowledge that, particularly in reference to an emotional topic such as this one, there is no clear answer to the problems surrounding wild horses.

> The general public, typically eager to do what is proper and good on behalf of animals and nature, has a tendency to swallow whole whatever incomplete or alarming reports about wild horses it may see, hear, or discover through the media, on the Internet, or even via common heresay . . . . The media often draw from or perpetuate certain stereotypes about the western lifestyle and worldview that can in turn be manipulated or misinterpreted in other arenas or for other purposes.[8]

These stereotypes, good and bad, are evident in many media reports between the mid-1950s and mid-1970s. As a result, Morin wanted to make her audience think more deeply about how views about wild horses are perpetuated and disseminated throughout society. Is every person who assists the government in managing them bad? Are scientists wrong to consider every avenue of range conservation? Are roundup contractors evil because they are helping remove wild horses from the range, or do some of them truly understand that an ecological balance is essential for good quality of life?[9] The people who work with the animals have to take many issues, environmental and otherwise, into consideration.

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[7] J. Frank Dobie, *The Mustangs: Valiant, Wild and Free They Roved the Western Plains*, 4th ed. (New York: Bantam Books, 1952). In this work Dobie examines the idea of "Horse Culture" in more detail.

[8] Morin, xiii.

[9] James A. Tober, *Who Owns the Wildlife? The Political Economy of Conservation in Nineteenth Century America* (London: Greenwood Press, 1981), 81. Animal distribution and health depends on several factors, including "climate, vegetation, competition, and predation."

Cliff Heaverne's oral history provides an insider's perspective on why it is important to be stewards of the land and its animals. Clifford Heaverne has a deeply rooted heritage in the West, particularly within the Nevada landscape. His father Pat was a mustanger as well as a renowned horse trainer.[10] Like Velma's father, Joe, Pat also took the animals he needed off of the land, using a lifetime of horse know-how and cowboy techniques to help guide his roundup methods. He caught and used them for a purpose. Cliff's heritage is entwined with that of the mysteries and myths of the West. It is not strange he gained a thorough understanding, and appreciation, of horses at a young age. The skills he acquired as a cowboy, and the training methods his father taught him, carried over into his adult years. As a Vietnam veteran and skilled helicopter pilot, he returned to the land he called home and found a way to earn a living doing the two things he loved most: flying and working with horses.[11] Although his work brought him into the public eye, indeed the media often focused on him as a villain of sorts, his care of the horses is what the public recognizes. Because he understood them, their characteristics, and their social and behavioral instincts, he knew how to work with them better than most. He once stated that his patience with animals is limitless, it is his patience with humans that is more frequently called into question.[12]

Newspapers and magazines used Heaverne's public notoriety and unique skill-set as a basis for their articles, good or bad.[13] Journalistic accounts, however, lack grounding and nuance. Partisanship is evident among reporters, advocates, the broader public, and even some government officials. After all, each individual had a purpose for saying or doing something, an

[10] Clifford Heaverne, 2011, Oral History, interviewed by Andrea Mott, digital audio recording, Fallon, Nevada, August 29.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.
[13] David C. Henley, "Former Army pilot now herds horses and burros in his helicopters," in *Lahontan Valley News*, January 10, 2000; Chris Hansen, "No doubt about it; Cliff Heaverne is a Flying Cowboy," in *Fallon Star Press*, May 4, 2007.

overriding motive. Some people wrote books with a skewed purpose, some were educational, and others were inflammatory. Many news reports and organization newsletters often painted the government as the bad guy. Was the government out to get the wild horses? Was Heaverne a bad man? More evidence concerning land management practices and these individuals' roles as stewards of the public land needs to be examined before this can be stated in such a blatant manner. It is not, and will possibly never be, a clear-cut issue.

Correspondence, primary documents, and popular culture studies provide valuable elements in the study of wild horses, legislation, and how they appeared on the national stage. Johnston's collection of written documents shows how connected she was with people across the country, from small-town rural folks to city dwellers, politicians, writers, scholars, pet-food factory workers, and a multitude of government officials who worked both on and off the range in different parts of the country.[14] Post-1971 records include a number of changes that the Department of the Interior incorporated into new land management policies and procedures. The National Advisory Board for Wild-Free Roaming Horses and Burros helped with these initial management decisions. Johnston herself sent out few letters for several years after 1959. She spent more time on this matter after 1964, which is when her husband passed away. It also happened to coincide with political concerns and problems back in Washington, D.C.

The years following the passage of the 1959 Wild Horse Annie Bill were tumultuous ones in the history of the United States. National and global news overshadowed wild horse legislation: assassinations, global conflicts, riots on the home front, and a vibrant youth counterculture took over news headlines more so than issues with wild horse herds out West. While many new wild horse advocate groups appeared in the mainstream public, other activist

[14] Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

organizations moved to the forefront of mainstream publicity. Most headlines were of major events began taking place on a national and global scale: the spread of Communism, the race to explore space, Cuba, and conflict in Southeast Asia were big stories from 1960 to 1963. In addition to increased global challenges, the United States was experiencing some extreme social changes on the domestic front. Civil rights groups, social welfare groups, and animal welfare groups forced the government to examine the struggles that were prevalent in everyday America, particularly concerns with equality and liberty.

In 1960 John F. Kennedy was elected the 35th President of the United States. During his three years in the Oval Office he exerted a global presence. His famous inaugural address clearly emphasized how citizens can help their country: "Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country."[15] On March 1, 1961, Kennedy signed an Executive Order to establish the Peace Corps.[16] This initiative pushed Americans to think outside of the economic and social issues in their immediate vicinity and encouraged young Americans to think more globally. At the same time, Kennedy supported a renewed interest in the protection and conservation of natural resources.[17] In the midst of domestic and foreign policy concerns, it became more difficult to calm the waters at home, particularly in light of the civil unrest that was occurring throughout the country.

[15] "Inaugural Address of President John F. Kennedy January 20, 1961, 01/20/1961," *National Archives*, Collection: JFK-POF: Papers of John F. Kennedy, President's Office Files, 01/20/1961-11/22/1963, Series: Papers of President Kennedy: President's Office Files: Speech File, 1961-1963, File Unit: John F. Kennedy President's Office Files; Speech Files; Inaugural Address, 01/17/1961-011/20/1961, http://research.archives.gov/description/193870.

[16] "Executive Order 10924 dated March 1, 1961, in which President John F. Kennedy establishes the Peace Corps., 03/01/1961," *National Archives*, RG 11: General Records of the United States Government, 1778-2006, Series: Executive Orders, 1862-2011, http://research.archives.gov/description/300010.

[17] Roy M. Robbins, *Our Landed Heritage: The Public Domain, 1776-1970*, 2nd ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1976), 458-9; Stanley H. Anderson, *Managing Our Wildlife Resources*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1991), 3, 19.

In the early 1960s, civil rights was a fundamental issue in the United States. Figures such as the well-spoken Reverend Martin Luther King Jr., who tried to instill the concept of non-violence in his followers, and Malcolm X, a man who also wanted equal rights, but converted to Islam and became a different type of leader than King, became figureheads of the Civil Rights Movement.[18] On August 8, 1963, King gave his "I Have a Dream" speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, wherein he inspired hundreds of thousands.[19] In this speech King spoke about how one day whites and blacks would put aside their differences and work towards a new tomorrow.[20] A mere few months later, in November of 1963, President Kennedy was assassinated while in Dallas, Texas. Despite that disastrous event, the domestic turmoil and unrest did not stop. Under Lyndon Johnson's guidance, the government and military became more embroiled in the situation in Vietnam, sending troops to the other side of the globe in an extreme, and seemingly fruitless, attempt to tamp down the spread of communism. Media reports fueled Americans' dissatisfaction with the nation's political battles and discontent with the government. Thus, during a period of pivotal importance in the history of wild horses on the western range, events engendered a culture of mistrust, conflict, and turmoil in America.

Americans tuned in to radio and television broadcasts which kept them apprised of the issues in Vietnam. In 1966, a seventeen-year-old western pilot by the name of Clifford Heaverne began his first of two tours in Southeast Asia.[21] The piloting skills that the media and wild horse activists criticized him for (because he was using them against animals) were the same ones he

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[18] Clayborne Carson, Garrow, Gill, et al., eds, *The Eyes on the Prize Civil Rights Readers: Documents' Speeches' and Firsthand Accounts from the Black Freedom Struggle 1954-1990* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 112, 474.

[19] "March on Washington Handbill," 1963, for date August 28, 1963, digital record at the National Museum of American History, Kenneth E. Behring Center, http://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/search/object/nmah_510350.

[20] Gary Gerstle, Emily Rosenberg, and Norman L. Rosenberg, eds., *America Transformed: A History of the United States Since 1900* (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1999), 385.

[21] Heaverne, 2011, Oral History.

used to protect and defend his fellow countrymen during a dangerous and much contested conflict abroad. The bullets he faced overseas somehow prepared him to face his future with the wild ones. Getting shot at was not exactly a new concept. His war-time experiences were similar images to those of media reports being broadcast at home—except he was in the pilot's seat.[22]

Radios and television sets in American homes transmitted an explosive amount of pop culture material. Changes in the music industry promoted a rebellious youth counterculture defined by pushing domestic boundaries.[23] The popularity of loud rock music increased in the 1960s, particularly with bands like the Beatles, The Rolling Stones, The Beach Boys, The Doors, Jefferson Airplane, The Supremes, and The Temptations. At the same time, some families were trying to band together, often spending time in front of that new family hearth, television. These folk embraced that staple genre of television and film, the western.[24]

Memorable Western films included the 1961 motion picture, *The Misfits*.[25] It featured a rugged Clark Gable, a vibrant Marilyn Monroe, and a handsome Montgomery Clift. The film spends a short, but important, amount of time showing a wild horse roundup in the desert. There is a striking similarity between these scenes and those that Gus Bundy photographed in his iconic black and white photographs that helped push wild horse legislation forward.[26] Visual representation like this often struck a chord with the public. In 1969 a Miss D. Long wrote Johnston about the way the movie affected her. "This movie," she said,

> so deeply moved me and awakened in me the awful realization that humans do inflict such injustices on the wild horses of the range that I have been steadily vehement in my

[22] Ibid.

[23] Gerstle, Rosenberg, and Rosenberg, 364.

[24] Ibid., 365; Richard White, "The Imagined West," in *"It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own": A New History of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1947).

[25] *The Misfits*, DVD, directed by John Huston (1961; Santa Monica, CA: Seven Arts Productions, 2001).

[26] Gus Bundy's photographs can be viewed in the University of Nevada, Reno's, Special Collection Department.

> efforts in behalf of the wild mustangs and horses ever since. I remember I cried throughout the entire film as I have always been a lover of horses and wildlife of all varieties.[27]

These silver-screen mythic recreations and representations of a bygone era gave citizens a chance to focus on Hollywood's depiction of the past alongside the ever-changing present. They also gave moviegoers a chance to escape into their own imagined West.[28]

Media of all types played a major role in spreading news about wild horse preservation concerns. Radio listeners and television viewers quickly learned about the post-1959 efforts to continue protecting wild horses in the United States.[29] The appeal of the West, in particular its mythic media-created past, was a strong draw for children and teens during this time.[30] The mythic appeal of anything western led some families to join the cause: some offered their time, some donated money, and others pledged their handwriting skills to scribe letters to governing officials.[31] These individuals ranged in age from children to seniors. None were immune to the emotional draw and overall appeal of wild horses.

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[27] D. Long to Velma Johnston, 18 August 1969. Box 686, FF32. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[28] More information about the "imaged west" can be read in Richard White's *It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own*.

[29] K. L. Bueghly to Sirs, March 11, 1973. Box 686, FF5. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. In this letter Bueghly writes to one of Johnston's associations (WHOA! Or ISPMB) exclaiming how "We listened to the Broadcast on Radio station – WCCO, Minneapolis, Minn. to Save the Wild Horses! We are very interested . . . . This is a very vital subject to our family!"; Kathy Downer to Sirs, March 1973. Box 686, FF5. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. Downer heard about horse slaughter on her local radio show.

[30] Marguerite Henry's novels are evidence of the youthful fascination of wild horses.

[31] Don Brusette Sr. to Wild Horse Annie, March 5, 1973. Box 686, FF5. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. He "would like to help . . . . And I'm sure you know the power of the press"; Diane Broske to Velma Johnston, March 6, 1973. Box 686, FF5. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. In this letter Broske offers her time to help with the wild horse cause; Mary Browning to WHOA!, April 14, 1973. Box 686, FF5. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. She wrote a letter and sent it to 11 governors in western states; Rebecca Buffington to Velma Johnston, March 1973. Box 686, FF5. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

Distrust in their government fueled by the war in Vietnam, compelled many people to join animal welfare, conservation, preservation, and wildlife associations throughout the country.[32] A couple of these organizations began with Velma Johnston at the helm. She urged, supported, and promoted the continued diligent protection of wild horses across the country, not just those in Nevada. Although there were many interest groups, Johnston and fellow advocates put together their own society. In the mid-1960s, in Badger, California, these individuals created the Society for the Protection of Mustangs and Burros, which later became the International Society for the Protection of Mustangs and Burros.[33] During this same timeframe Johnston created the group, Wild Horse Organized Assistance, commonly referred to as WHOA.[34] With the creation of these new organizations came additional responsibilities and time constraints, two things Johnston seemed to be struggling with on a daily basis. Another organization, called the National Mustang Association, began in Utah under President Tom Holland. This group's focus centered more on protecting wild horses whose ancestry indicated a direct link to the Spanish Barb.[35] ISPMB and WHOA strove to protect all mustangs, not just those with known ancestry.[36] These two organizations eventually would combine under one name as the ISPMB.

As momentum picked up throughout the early 1960s, Velma enlisted the help of her friends. The Reillys helped her manage the organizations' day-to-day correspondence

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[32] Anderson, 19.

[33] Velma Johnston to the Denver *Post*, April 5, 1966. Box 685, FF7. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; Velma Johnston to R. B. Randel, February 25, 1972. Box 685, FF28. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. In this letter VJ states that the ISPMB has been operating for approximately seven years.

[34] Http://www.sdpb.org/WildHorses/wild_horse_annie.asp. The website claims how Velma Johnston started WHOA as another way to further promote the protection of wild horses in the United States.

[35] Velma Johnston to Tom Holland, 2 October 1967. Box 685, FF7. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[36] Ibid.

requirements.[37] Although she was quite dedicated to the mustangs, her husband Charles was more important. He was quite sick, fighting a severe case of emphysema. His failing health problems prompted Velma to spend more time with him during the early 1960s, and he died from the disease in 1964, which left Velma a widow. This is one major reason why the Reillys inherited the larger role as co-presidents of the ISMPB. Johnston acted as the organization's vice president, choosing to hand off the reins and responsibilities to the Reillys.[38] That being said, she also kept them informed on issues, details, or any other problem dealing with the wild horses.[39] On March 16, 1967, Velma wrote to the editor of *True* magazine, in which she provided more publicity regarding the ISPMB.[40] She told the editor how they were a group "comprised of individuals in Canada and the United States who worked tirelessly toward the establishment of a fair and workable program for all concerned in the protection of the wild horses and burros of both countries."[41] Helen Reilly worked diligently to keep members informed. She put together a bulletin in 1964 that members received through the mail.

Organizations of all types relied heavily on publicity and media reports to push along their causes. These external and internal news pieces also helped perpetuate the myth of the West. In the case of wild horses, Johnston repeatedly stated how the involvement of the media throughout the country helped push wild horse concerns into the public eye.[42] This continued in the 1960s, as she wrote to editors and writers in order to thank them for articles they may have

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[37] International Society for the Protection of Mustangs and Burros, "The Story of Wild Horse Annie," 2011, http://www.ispmb.org/AnniesStory.html.

[38] Velma Johnston to the Editor, *TRUE Magazine*, 16 March 1967. Box 685, FF7. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[39] Velma Johnston to Reillys, 5 April 1966. Box 685, FF7. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[40] Velma Johnston to the Editor, *TRUE Magazine*, 16 March 1967. Box 685, FF7. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[41] Ibid.

[42] "BLM Studies Possibility Culling Wild Mustangs," in *Lovell Paper*, May 6, 1971; "Mustangs Get Reprieve From Meat Factory," 11 August 1968 as quoted in Velma Johnston to Walter S. Baring, 16 August 1968. Box 685, FF13. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

already published. At that point she would ask them if they needed additional information for new articles.[43] Helen Reilly and Johnston also wrote hundreds of newsletters under the banners of both groups.[44] They mailed these informative bulletins to supporters across the country. Sometimes they received reports about illegal hunts (those engineered with the assistance of airplanes and mechanized vehicles) and would provide information, such as legislative reports passed in the mid and late-1950s, to help the individuals assist in catching the perpetrators.[45] Many people knew Johnston as Wild Horse Annie, and as a result they sent her reports about illegal activities across the country.[46]

WHOA and ISPMB became the go-to groups for up-to-date information about wild horse issues across the country, but many other groups were also involved. These organizations advocated on behalf of the horses, but were not concerned solely with them. The Humane Society of the United States, SPCAs, and the National Wildlife Federation groups around the country are just a few examples of those who helped.[47] The Audubon Society and the Sierra

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[43] Velma Johnston to Charles Remsberg, 15 December 1966. Box 685, FF7. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. This letter to Charles contained multiple documents, including articles, legislative pieces, news-releases, letters, and even a management plan. Johnston provided copies of these to the writer so he could put together his article for *TRUE*.

[44] Velma Johnston to Drumm, 5 April 1966. Box 685, FF7. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. In this letter to an avid supporter, Johnston explained how she is certain "that Helen Reilly will keep us all informed through the BULLETIN . . . ." This was a response to an inquiry regarding the Montana-Wyoming wild horse herds and the continued problems between some landowners, government officials, and community members; Velma Johnston to Ann Blackmore, 11 April 1966. Box 685, FF7. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. In this piece of correspondence, sent out to a supporter in Michigan, Johnston reiterates "how important favorable publicity can be."

[45] Velma Johnston to Lynn H. Augustine, 25 February 1968. Box 685, FF8. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. The information Johnston received about an illegal hunt came from San Jose, California. She cites PL 86-234 and explains how publicity could help his cause and concern about the wild horses.

[46] Velma Johnston to Charlie Rager, 6 June 1967. Box 685, FF7. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. This request for information came from Rager, an inhabitant of Susanville, California. He sent her information about violators and she sent him a copy of PL 86-234 and then referred to State Law as well.

[47] Velma Johnston to Walter S. Baring, 11 May 1959. Box 685, FF4. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. Johnston discussed the NWF's support in this letter to Baring.

Club, two of the oldest conservation groups, were not as swept away by the wild horse issue.[48] Some, like the National Mustang Association, were not quite as benevolent to the mustangs as they seemed. On November 17, 1967, Johnston wrote Tom Holland, president of the NMA, to explain that she knew his "organization favors removing all controls for hunting the wild horses from the province of the Boards of County Commissioners."[49] She informed him that the controls put in place in 1959 prohibited this.

Johnston's presence at local, regional, and national events helped publicize what was happening in Nevada and other western states. In addition, when Marguerite Henry's book *Mustang* hit the shelves in 1966, it caused a furor amongst young horse enthusiasts. This, in addition to all the westerns being shown on prime time television, the *Misfits* film, and soon afterward the new movie *Misty*, reached audiences around the country. Children flocked to Wild Horse Annie's cause. Children adored Wild Horse Annie's persona. They wrote letters addressed to her as "Wild Horse Annie." The children, of all ages and locations, were easily taken in by the images portrayed on paper and in film.[50] Johnson also spoke at school functions and public libraries.[51] Children responded by sending her hundreds of letters. In addition to her youthful audiences, Johnston also spoke to Kiwanis groups, cattlemen associations, and wildlife groups.[52] It was her desire to extend the advocacy for wild horse preservation. However, out of

[48] Robbins, 460.

[49] Velma Johnston to Tom Holland, November 17, 1967. Box 685, FF7. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[50] Kim Cory to Velma Johnston, March 1973. Box 686, FF21. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. This admirer, a girl by the name of Kim, wrote Velma a letter that said she loved Wild Horse Annie. She was swept away by Johnston's image and that sentiment is evident in this piece of correspondence.

[51] Velma Johnston to Belton, March 5, 1967. Box 685, FF7. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. Children were particularly entertained by stories about Wild Horse Annie's adventures on the range and others about her mustang Hobo. On this particularly birthday, Annie had no problem sending out letters regarding her wild ones and her current efforts to protect them.

[52] Ibid.

all the groups and organizations she spoke to around the country, the children remained her favorite, and probably most enthusiastic, audience.

One of the biggest problems Johnston and her fellow wild horse protectors faced throughout the 1960s revolved around a small band of wild horses clustered along the Wyoming and Montana border. This particular debacle took place in the Pryor Mountain Range, a beautiful, rugged landscape shared by multiple bands of wild horses, elk, deer, antelope and other forms of wildlife. In addition to wild game use, livestock owners also used this public domain land to graze their cattle. This was a common example of multiple use employed on public lands around the West.[53] The standoff between the Tilletts and the government made national news in 1968. The Tilletts, a local family, and the BLM, along with its local representatives, grabbed the nation's attention because of what the BLM wanted to do with the local herds. Because of media attention, organizations, and the Bill of 1959, there was already a heightened awareness regarding anything dealing with wild horses.

The Tilletts wanted to stop the BLM from slaughtering these Pryor horses and went to vast lengths to ensure it did not happen. On April 5, 1966, Johnston wrote to Lloyd and Alana Tillett to explain that she had received "many appeals for help in regard to the small band of horses which has now become the latest target for the BLM, and for which you are fighting so valiantly."[54] She was cognizant of how helpful the right kind of publicity could be, and wanted to impart some wisdom: "It is your greatest weapon at this time, and it appears that you are getting plenty—and most of it favorable."[55] Publicity could slant opinions for or against the

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[53] William K. Wyant, *Westward in Eden: The Public Lands and the Conservation Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 141.

[54] Velma Johnston to Lloyd Tillett or Alana Tillett, 5 April 1966. Box 685, FF7; William K. Wyant, *Westward in Eden: The Public Lands and the Conservation Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982). Johnston sent this letter directly to the Tillett Ranch "TX Ranch" in Lovell, WY.

[55] Ibid.

cause. In Johnston's case, during the 1950s many of her own local newspapers did not discuss her or the wild horses in Nevada. It was almost a sign of disapproval through outright omission. Fortunately, for the Tilletts this was not the case. Newspapers around the country showcased this story on the front pages of their papers.[56] It was yet one more area in which the media could feature the government in an unfavorable light.

Livestock groups and hunters, two groups that utilized land in and around the Pryors, pressured the BLM. In the late 1960s it became more apparent that additional legislation would be needed to protect wild horses in the United States. During one meeting between BLM officials and local citizens, Johnston related how one woman spoke up and said, "'we call for the immediate extermination of the horses on the grounds that you cannot eat horses and we are sportsmen.'"[57] (Many cultures, of course, are known to eat and enjoy horsemeat, but it is viewed negatively in the United States.[58]) It seems apparent, based on this woman's statement, that the primary reason some people were against keeping the wild horses on public rangeland is that they could not be hunted like big game animals. It should also be noted on the other hand that wild horses could not be treated in the same way because public sentiment and human emotion, favored the horses. What, then, was the point of these animals utilizing good resources in the Pryors?

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[56] Velma Johnston to Howard H. Caudle, 5 April 1966. Box 685, FF7. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. VJ explains to Caudle how the clipping from the Denver *Post* was advantageous publicity for the Tilletts. She commented that "It appears to me that the newspaper is definitely on the side of the horses, and if we can get enough people stirred up, I think we can win this thing. Bless the Tilletts for their courage!"

[57] Velma Johnston to William D. Powell, January 2, 1968. Box 685, FF8. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. Powell was a D.V.M as well as the Assistant Director of Technical Services of Syntax Laboratories, Inc. in the Animal Health Division. In this letter Johnston includes an ISPMB Bulletin and informs Powell about the types of influences the BLM is dealing with in the Pryors.

[58] James Serpell, *In the Company of Animals: A Study of Human-Animal Relationships* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 54.

Despite the clamor of major news in 1970s America—Civil Rights, Vietnam, the youth counterculture, the assassination of public leaders—Johnston, the BLM, politicians, and the general public spent a considerable amount of time discussing the local problems taking place in the Pryors. The BLM and its officials were under constant scrutiny. It became obvious that Johnston and the BLM's representatives did not think along the same lines. On March 14 the BLM proposed three alternatives, none of which sat well with wild horse protection groups.[59] In essence, it was dubbed the "remove, remover, removest" plan by *Newsweek*.[60] Finally, on September 12, 1968, after several years of discussion, the current Secretary of the Interior Steward L. Udall created a wild horse refuge and a wildlife range in the amount of 31,000 acres in the Pryor Mountains.[61] This was the first sanctuary of its kind. The Tillets and other concerned local citizens, homeowners, and ranchers were pleased with this federal decision. Others, particularly concerned ranchers in the area and wildlife hunters, were not so fond of it. No matter, the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range became an established area for a small group of protected horses.[62] This declaration made organizations and individuals more determined to secure lasting legislation protecting and preserving other wild horse herds in the United States. Saving the Pryor horses was an important steppingstone.

Throughout 1969, 1970, and early 1971 some people still broke the law by conducting roundups of wild horses on federal rangeland. Now it became more pivotal to get a new federal law. Members of conservation and animal protectionist groups discussed how they could further

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[59] Velma Johnston to Helen and John Reilly, April 24, 1968. Box 685, FF10. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. In this letter VJ quotes the proposal.

[60] Velma Johnston to Gene Dillehay, May 27, 1968. Box 685, FF11. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[61] Velma Johnston to Miss Murray Johnson, September 19, 1968. Box 685, FF14. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; Kania, 71.

[62] "Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range," Map of designated area. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

protect the animals.[63] Because of civil unrest throughout the country prosecutors took careful steps when preparing any sort of charge. In one case the lawbreaker, who happened to be "Indian," was not prosecuted because lawyers believed it "would be ill-advised to prosecute in view of the feeling throughout our country about minority groups."[64]

In the summer of 1971 two resolutions made their way through the appropriate channels in the Senate and House of Representatives. United States Senator Henry M. Jackson sponsored S.1116.[65] Many other senators co-sponsored the bill, and it soon passed the Senate without opposition on June 29, 1971.[66] This, however, was not the end of the road. Congressman Walter Baring, Johnston's old friend, made another appearance on behalf of the mustangs when he sponsored H.R. 9890, formerly (and probably more commonly) known as H.R. 5375.[67] Fellow Congressman Roman Pucinski also received letters about the current legislation. He responded to a letter from a Mrs. William Faber and assured her that he "will vigorously support" H.R. 9890 "when it reaches the House floor."[68] Congressmen received many letters from citizens concerned about the future of wild horses in America. It seems emotion and myth worked well

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[63] Velma Johnston to Steve Pellegrini, August 6, 1968. Box 685, FF13. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. Velma warns him about a possible roundup, telling him to be aware of what was going on. She provides details such as license plate numbers, names, descriptions, and even any physical ailments of the potential perpetrators. Pellegrini, one of Dr. Michael Pontrelli's advisees, was a doctoral student in biology at the University of Nevada. She hosted him at her house so he could do wild horse research over the summer (1968). He discusses his relationship with Wild Horse Annie in Paula Morin's *Honest Horses*, 33-41. His knowledge and hands-on research about the range, wild horse behavior, and biology made him a valuable individual to know. Johnston thought he would be able to shed some objective research on how wild horses did not destroy the range.

[64] Velma Johnston to George (Lea), 9 June 1971. Box 685, FF25. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[65] Velma Johnston to Henry M. Jackson, 1 February 1972. Box 685, FF28. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[66] Velma Johnston to Araby Colton, 16 September 1972. Box 685, FF29. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. At that time Colton was the President of the organization known as Canadian and American Wolf Defenders. The group was also trying to work towards legislation that protected wolves from being shot from aircraft.

[67] Ibid.; Velma Johnston to Thomas S. Mulroy, Jr., 6 July 1971. Box 685, FF26. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[68] Roman C. Pucinski, Member of Congress, to William C. Faber, 30 July 1971. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

together. With such staunch supporters in Congress, it seemed as if the legislation would pass, and soon, it did. Johnston wrote to President Richard Nixon on December 13, thanking him for his letter regarding her continuous fight to "save the wild horses and burros of Western America."[69] Two days later, on December 15, 1971, Nixon would pen his name on S.1116, turning it into Public Law 92-195, also known as The Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971.[70]

This act placed all wild horses and burro management concerns under the federal government's jurisdiction. These federally protected herds relied on the departments of the Interior and Agriculture for their continued vigilance. Managing the animals in the wild meant that administrators and managers had to figure out how to balance management plans with public sentiment. Emotion played a role in saving wild horses, and it also meant the people would be involved in their management. The law mandated the creation of an advisory board, one that consisted of non-governmental individuals who would advise current and future action regarding wild horses. Nine individuals made up the advisory board. It included professionals from many fields of study: range managers, wild horse and wildlife experts, and even Johnston (because of her public role), became a member of this board. In the early 1970s they held meetings at different western cities, including Billings, Montana, Salt Lake City, Utah, and Reno, Nevada. In these meetings they discussed range problems, management issues, and concerns about the animals now under their protection. The results from these board meetings became government publications accessible to the public.

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[69] Velma Johnston to President Richard M. Nixon, December 13, 1971. Box 685, FF27. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[70] Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971; Velma Johnston to Henry Jackson, February 1, 1972. Box 685, FF28. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

Advocacy groups like the ISPMB, the American Horse Protection Association, the Humane Society of the United States, and many smaller organizations welcomed the new law.[71] Emotion and sentiment had won out over scientific practicality. However, not all so-called conservation or protection groups regarded it in the same manner. In the few years after Congress passed the new law, a few things changed in wild horse circles. One group, the National Mustang Association, and its president Tom Holland, became the focus of a public controversy. In 1972 the organization had been making false claims to its members and supporters. It solicited funds for a privately funded horse sanctuary. Concerned citizens wrote other wild horse protectionist groups asking about the validity of these claims.[72] Unfortunately for their pocketbooks, these allegations did turn out to be true. Holland solicited funds from supporters for a private range when Johnston and others had been working hard to gain a foothold in federal legislation that would protect the animals on federal ranges. Why, then, did Holland need to garner funds on his own?

Soon after this scandal broke in the media, Johnston broke contact with Holland and the NMA. She stated that their divergence in beliefs led to the rift. At one point she even explained to Marie Della-Volpe, a New Jersey supporter of the wild horses, that "Neither the ISPMB as an

[71] Velma Johnston to William H. B. Clark, May 4, 1971. Box 685, FF25. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. This letter explains how the Horse Protection Association has backed the wild horse proposal with the ISPMB. It is not like Holland's association.

[72] Velma Johnston to Marie Della-Volpe, September 17, 1971. Box 685, FF27. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; Velma Johnston to Sharon Stroble, January 29, 1971. Box 685, FF24. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; Velma Johnston to P. D. Kurtz, February 3, 1972. Box 685, FF28. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; Velma Johnston to Robert G. Barrett, February 10, 1972. Box 685, FF28. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; Velma Johnston to Carroll Ann, February 10, 1972. Box 685, FF28. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; Velma Johnston to L. L. Harris, August 3, 1971. Box 685, FF26. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; Velma Johnston to William H. B. Clark, May 4, 1971. Box 685, FF25. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

organization, nor I as an individual, is associated in any way with either Tom Holland or National Mustang Association."[73] It is obvious she did not want to be connected to him in any way. Johnston received numerous inquiries about Holland's association with the ISPMB.[74] She never solicited funds to buy land for the horses. The NMA, on the other hand, had no qualms about doing so.[75] To one such inquiry Johnston replied that "the president [by whom she meant Holland] has caused me no end of heart-break and worry, and it makes me ill when I think of the money that an unsuspecting public has poured into his coffers."[76] Many people were taken in by Holland and his organization.

In the midst of turmoil between interest groups, the wild horse management plan was still in its creation phase. The reason for this was because multiple factors had to be established before anything could be implemented. Herd Management Areas, called HMAs in government documents, became designated in ten different western states, and included Nevada, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, Utah, California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Oregon. Now, in addition to managing these HMAs, range scientists had to determine the range capacity. How many horses could the range support? Data had to be compiled to show the range capacity. Between 1971 and 1974 or 1975 few, if any, roundups took place. As a result, wild horse populations rose to considerable numbers. Humans, their only true predator, could not capture them, and as a result herd sizes grew. Not only did range scientists have to deal with resource

[73] Velma Johnston to Marie Della-Volpe, September 17, 1971. Box 685, FF27. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[74] Velma Johnston to Sharon Stroble, January 29, 1971. Box 685, FF24. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977; Velma Johnston to P. D. Kurtz, February 3, 1972. Box 685, FF28. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; Velma Johnston to Robert G. Barrett, February 10, 1972. Box 685, FF28. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[75] Velma Johnston to L. L. Harris, August 3, 1971. Box 685, FF26. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[76] Velma Johnston to Carroll Ann, February 10, 1972. Box 685, FF28. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

overuse, but they had to figure out a humane way to round up excess animals and send them to regional wild horse centers. The Palomino Valley Wild Horse and Burro Center, located between Reno, Nevada, and Pyramid Lake takes in horses trapped in roundups throughout the West. It is a massive holding center.[77] Routine veterinary checkups provided additional information about individual animals. This had to be done before they could be shipped elsewhere.

Perceptions regarding the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971 varied greatly depending on one's heritage, knowledge, and even occupation. Emotion infused nearly all media coverage of the matter. According to Bob Abbey, a former Nevada State Director of the BLM office in Reno,

> The biggest challenge is trust. There are many people who believe that we in BLM have a hidden agenda, and that this agenda is more in line with trying to support livestock interests than expanding energy to provide range for healthy herds of horses and burros.[78]

This has often been the public sentiment towards BLM actions. Abbey argued it was time to focus less on emotion and more on putting together a realistic scientific plan that would let people know what the land can support.[79] Heaverne, a man shaped by life on the range, has also seen the changes wrought by time and the passage of new legislation. Not only has the quality of horses decreased due to inbreeding, but the complexity involved in planning roundups has increased.[80] As one of the two most sought-after helicopter pilots in government roundups after 1971, he was qualified to speak on such things.[81] Piloting the herds gave him a distinct advantage when it came to observing the quality of the range and the animals it supported.

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[77] Andrea Mott, Research Notes and Observations collected during field research at the Palomino Valley Wild Horse and Burro Center, April 2009.

[78] Morin, 29.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Heaverne, 2011, Oral History.

[81] Morin, 14. Morin's interview with Tom Pogacnik, of the National Wild Horse and Burro Program in Reno, Nevada, revealed some interesting data. Pogacnik revealed that these pilots are:

Social movements provided an outlet for individuals seeking change. The environmental and conservation movement in the United States was still going strong in the 1970s. Although there were differences between the purposes of environmentalism, conservationism, and animal rights, people often confused them. Steve Pellegrini, a former graduate student from the University of Nevada, noted the difference between animal rights and environmentalism when he said, "I think the public too often confuses animal rights and environmental protection."[82] Too many horses could damage regional environments, just like a bad environment could damage the quality of herds. Johnston responded by changing her motto from just saving the wild horses to also protecting their habitats.[83] Members of the public, however, often did not realize that protecting an animal meant that a new management plan had to be implemented in order to control its numbers.

The National Enrivonmental Policy Act (NEPA), the 1969 environmental law, stipulated that agencies had to compile and publish an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) before doing any work on the range.[84] In the case of wild horses, range managers and wild horse specialists had to explain specific details regarding the condition of the range and the animals. John "Jack" Artz, a natural resource manager, witnessed overgrazing on the range while putting together environmental impact statements in the 1970s. He recalled his time spent on the range, reminiscing that "whenever people say there is no damage by overuse of horses, it's simply not

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flying in a very dangerous situation – low and slow – and they're trying to move animals, which takes flying experience as well as know-how about horse behavior and livestock herding. We're dependant on our pilots, so any time we have to search for a new one everything gets more difficult. We've gathered 175,000 wild horses since the 1970s, and the pilots who have done most of that work are Jim Hicks and Cliff Heaverne.

[82] Ibid., 37. This section on Pellegrini clarifies and gives more detail regarding his relationship with Velma during the 1970s.

[83] Frederick F. Gilbert and Donald G. Dodds, *The Philosophy and Practice of Wildlife Management* (Malabar, F.L.: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company, 1987), 101. The quality of a habitat can limit wildlife populations.

[84] Ibid., 215. This work goes into length detail about the EIS and its overall complexity.

true."[85] He saw it because he spent time on the range. Decades spent observing the same ranges gave him a unique insight about how, and in what ways, they have changed over time. Part of the reason for doing EIS was to help determine how roundups would help the range. How healthy were the horses? How would proposed actions affect their habitat? These reports included pages upon pages of detailed information pertaining to wild horses, wildlife, and livestock that utilized range resources.

Media reports also varied in the way they presented the 1971 Act. In 1974, an article in *Oregon Wildlife* focused on how emotion brought about the law's passage.[86] Not only that, but the writer asserted biologists "felt there were no wild horses in Oregon."[87] The article continued the wild horse discussion when it explained how emotion may have dictated the result, but the public rarely understands the concepts of land carrying capacity combined with the wild horse's ability to increase its numbers. "They are not a *native* wild form," the author (who remained unnamed) argued, "but through an enactment of federal legislation, they may be on the verge of threatening the existence of some of our native wild forms."[88] This sentiment is one held by some scientists: balancing different animals, under different management plans, was not an easy feat.[89]

In the years following 1971 range protection became a central feature in discussions about livestock, wildlife, and wild horses. How could they be balanced? In 1977 an effort was made to increase the dialogue about wild horses and the range as well as to seek solutions to bigger problems. That is when the first National Wild Horse Forum convened. It was held from

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[85] Morin, 43. Artz's oral history includes details about wild horse groups during the 1970s, range observations, and Annie's momentum in the effort to protect wild horses.

[86] "A Look at Three Laws," in *Oregon Wildlife* (February 1974). Box 686, FF4. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[87] Ibid.

[88] Ibid.

[89] Gilbert and Dodds, 87-90.

April 5-7 in Reno. This seemed appropriate, particularly considering the city's history with wild horses. This was where everything began in the 1950s. Speakers included people from across the country, from academics to range specialists and other government officials, to livestock men and even environmentalists.[90] Everyone had a voice at the forum.[91]

The forum consisted of scholarly papers and presentations that dealt with the current situation facing wild horses. Papers focused on horse symbolism, perceptions, and politics. In "Hoof Beat and Heart Beats," presenter Douglas A. Reynolds, an Extension Horse Specialist with the University of Nevada, Reno, argued that horses inspire "people to do, write and say things which may be foreign to their training and background."[92] In other words, people perceive something a certain way regardless of how much they actually know about the subject. Entertainment in the form of books, movies, and television shows has given people confidence and opinions regarding wild horses that they might not have otherwise. Mass media helped perpetuate views of horses. The forum was successful in that it brought out varying opinions from experts in different fields of study. Velma was one of the more well known attendees, but others provided additional insight into this matter. One thing that did result from this meeting was an agreement that people would continue to debate the future of wild horses and their place in the United States.

Throughout the 1960s and early 1970s the lure of the West was both imaginary and real. So-called western scenes, events, and stories played out in many ways. Popular culture

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[90] Morin, 44.

[91] *Proceedings*, National Wild Horse Forum, April 5-7, 1977, Reno, Nevada. Some contributions included the following: Charles Fisher, "Horses on Indian Reservations." Fisher was a Conservation Specialist; Douglas A. Reynolds, "Hoof Beats and Heart Beats." Reynolds was an Extension Horse Specialist at the University of Nevada, Reno; Anthony Amaral, no title. Amaral was a writer. Amaral, "Selective Major Literature Relating to Wild Horses." This literature review is perhaps the first of its kind detailing available sources concerning wild horses. His collection ranges from items published in 1934 to those published in 1977, the same year as the forum.

[92] Douglas A. Reynolds, "Hoof Beat and Heart Beats," in *Proceedings*, National Wild Horse Forum, April 5-7, 1977, Reno, Nevada.

embraced a new western symbol: the wild horse. In addition, young Americans focused on a new wave of cultural icons and moved farther away from traditional family values. Parcel to this they joined wildlife protection groups and pushed for animal rights. Rather than detracting from the cause of wild horse preservation, the American culture of protest and activism seemed to augment it.

The individuals and groups who worked with wild horses had their own motives. Some, like protection groups, wanted to see that they were preserved in the wild so that future generations could also enjoy watching them.[93] Range scientists understood the appeal of these animals to the public. Some of them felt the same way. Despite that, the range managers could not disregard the state and quality of the range just because they liked a specific animal. They knew that an ecological balance was essential in order for multiple wild and domestic species to coexist on the same rangelands. Oftentimes the public assumed that these range managers and government officials did not like the horses and would do anything they could to remove them from the land. That is not entirely true. Pogacnik reminisced about the government's role in the business, and concluded, "The truth is people who work in our program are dedicated to these horses. They don't want to see them gone, and what they really don't want is to see the horses suffer." Suffering is a key issue. Too many horses on the range means that the animals suffer because they cannot find the resources they need to survive. It is a problem that can be maintained only if the numbers of wild horses are also maintained. This is a concept that both Johnston and Heaverne understood, albeit in their own separate ways.

Wild horses intrigued people in the past, and they continue to do so in the twenty-first century. There is no doubt that wild horses appeal to many people. Yet, confusion about what to do with them has been a constant subject of discussion and outright controversy. If numbers are

[93] Wild horses are said to be aesthetically pleasing.

to be maintained, per the Act of 1971, then roundups need to happen. If wildlife, as well as livestock, is to thrive on the same rangelands, then animal maintenance must remain a key issue in their continued management. It may not be something that everyone agrees on, as agreed at the 1977 Wild Horse Forum, it should still be attempted. Perhaps with continued discussions about what can be done, politicians, American citizens, and interest groups may all find a way to compromise on the wild horse situation in the United States.

OFF TO THE CANNERY

"The slaughter of horses for market remains today an extremely contentious issue."[1]

Slaughter, particularly horse slaughter, is a subject guaranteed to bring about a variety of emotional opinions. It was a rarely discussed matter in early western America newspapers, but on occasion a short note was written about wild horses being sent to slaughter.[2] In the United States these were called canneries or slaughterhouses.[3] Horsemeat and other parts of the animal were used in different ways. Sometimes they would become chicken feed; at other times they would end up as meat for zoo animals, or even as pet food.[4]

The association between animals as pets and animals meant for work became unclear as American society underwent change during the early to mid-1900s. Advances in technology resulted in a shift that affected animals and society.[5] More and more people chose to live in urban areas, because machines replaced hands-on jobs in the country. The rural exodus had begun. As a result, the numbers of horses needed to pull plows, farm machinery, and even wagons decreased with the advent and popularity of the automobile, the tractor, and other types of modern equipment.[6] Once this change occurred, people living in urban areas viewed animals through a different lens: they became a source of pleasure, not a work machine. Pets, including dogs and cats, were not the only animals to make the transition into companion animals. Horses, too, became more for pleasure than work, particularly in urban areas. In addition, people viewed

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[1] J. Edward de Steiguer, *Wild Horses of the West: History and Politics of America's Mustangs* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2011), 141.

[2] "Desert Horses Sent to Coast," in *Reno Gazette Journal*, October 24, 1930. Courtesy Nevada Historical Society.

[3] United States, Bureau of Land Management and United States Forest Service, *A Report to Congress by the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture on Administration of the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act, Public Law 92-195*, 92nd Cong., 1116 sess. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, 1974), 9.

[4] "Desert Horses Sent to Coast."

[5] Earl Pomeroy, *The American Far West in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Richard W. Etulain (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 57.

[6] Ibid., 383.

horses as an upper-class kind of pet.[7] Because of the high costs of keeping pleasure horses, the rich could afford to raise and show them much more easily than others.[8] Citizens who lived in rural regions, such cowboys, ranchers, and horse trainers, often viewed horses through an altogether different lens than their urban-living counterparts.[9] In their remote, rural world, horses had a role to play. They worked just like anyone else. They earned their keep.

Diverging perceptions about animals' roles on and off the range played a part in how interest groups view the issue of slaughter. The advent of animal rights groups, environmental groups, and other special interest groups throughout the 1950s and 1960s has contributed to this viewpoint. It is not easy to manage thousands of wild horses living on ranges throughout the country. Every solution has proven difficult, especially in the sense that the majority of horses removed from the range find themselves living in an array of holding facilities or short and long-term pastures throughout the United States. Wild horses used to manage their own existence, and a new reliance on humans for basic resources like food and water was a foreign transition. Never before had they needed to rely on someone or something to care for them. Are holding facilities a humane alternative for these excess animals? Some believe it is better than them being sent to slaughter, while others would disagree. Perceptions about horses and slaughter are varied.

Since Congress passed the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971, thousands of horses have been removed from the range, yet more continue to take their place through natural reproduction. The repetitive routine of rounding them up, moving them off the

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[7] Barbara Jones, "Just Crazy About Horses: The Fact Behind the Fiction," in *New Perspectives on Our Lives with Companion Animals*, edited by Aaron Honori Katcher and Alan M. Beck, 87-111 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 90-1; Joel S. Savishinsky, "Pet Ideas: The Domestication of Animals, Human Behavior, and Human Emotions," in *New Perspectives on Our Lives with Companion Animals*, Aaron Honori Katcher and Alan M. Beck, eds., 112-131 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 116.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Savishinsky, 128.

range, and holding them for the rest of their lives in corrals and pens is one that does not have a clear solution. At one time, ranchers and cowboys managed their herds without any government involvement.[10] Pat Heaverne, Joe Bronn, Boyd Walker, and Minford C. Vaughan are individual examples of men who helped manage bunches of local wild horses. It was a resource base, and that was how they cultivated, or culled, the herds.[11] In fact, some would even go so far as to say that there are no wild horses.[12] Instead, they might say that their own stud horses became range stallions, thereby improving the quality of their free-roaming herds.[13] The Walkers were known to do this. They bred up their ranch and working stock, and raised horses with traits like surefootedness and endurance. These horses grazed on ranges in the public domain. The Walker crew would then round them up to train and provide quality work horses for the ranch. They also employed their own methods to manage the animals; often devising and implementing an array of innovative techniques to catch horses.

These men could continue doing this until the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971. At that time, open range grazing was the preferred method for feeding stock animals. After 1971, the government employed civilian contractors like Cliff who had the knowledge and experience necessary to round up the animals. The world of wild horses was a tight-knit

[10] Clifford Heaverne, 2011, Oral History, interviewed by Andrea Mott, digital audio recording, Fallon, Nevada, August 29; Dawn (Walker) Nottingham, 2013, Oral History, interviewed by Andrea Mott, digital audio recording, Craig, Colorado, July 26; Tom and Elmora (Vaughn) Petersen, 2013, Oral History, interviewed by Andrea Mott, Rock Springs, Wyoming, July 27. All of these individuals spoke about how local range management was once managed by the people living in the area. The government did not intrude then so individuals had to take it upon themselves to cull herds in order to protect the range and increase their own equine base.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Dawn (Walker) Nottingham, 2013, Oral History. Dawn is adamant that the horses roaming in northwestern Colorado are descended from domesticated horses that used to be utilized on local ranches.

[13] Ibid.

community, particularly among those living in the same region.[14] Twentieth-century contractors learned how to round up wild horses using old tried and true methods.

Between the years 1934 and 1984 opinions for and against slaughter were made more public. Intense discussions regarding wild horse slaughter have brought a shift in the management of these animals. After the passage of the 1971 legislation the government could not legally slaughter wild horses. Public scrutiny of the wild horse program, and the symbolism of the animal itself, meant that something else needed to be done. Slaughter became a more prevalent topic for various interest groups, Congress continued to pass legislation that protected different animals, and people became more aware of what was happening. Breaking down the undercurrents surrounding the subject of wild horse slaughter, varied as they are, is essential in understanding American attitudes towards the continued management and future outlook of wild horses in the United States.

There are no good historical works that discuss horse slaughter in the United States. There are articles and scientific studies that focus on slaughter, but no examination of the subject on a larger scale. The slaughter of other livestock, such as cattle, swine, sheep, and even chickens, is a different story. Extremist animal rights' groups, such as People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), oppose this type of slaughter. Many other groups realize the necessity of killing animals to supply the American meat market. It also helps control overpopulated groups of animals. In this chapter perceptions about slaughter are brought in via a variety of peer-reviewed articles and letters, rather than from more lengthy monographic works. Professional journals on subjects such as health, animal science, science, geography, social

[14] In the region of Northwest Colorado and South-Central Wyoming families have been surrounded by wild horses and wild horse country for decades. They remember a time when the horses had free range of the landscape and were not fenced in. They also remember a time when they could roundup the horses they needed (often bred using a stud they turned out on the range) on the ranch without being punished for it.

science, and history provide lenses through which to view slaughter and the reasons why people get angry or emotional when it is brought up.

The beginning of the animal rights and animal welfare movements took place in the late 1950s and into the 1960s. This trend towards civil liberties, even for animals, has continued well into the twenty-first century. In "Animal Welfare, Animal Rights: The Past, the Present, and the 21st Century," author Morton S. Silberman explains and analyzes how the animal welfare movement has affected the lives of both humans and animals.[15] One does not exclude the other. This article is particularly relevant regarding slaughter in addition to treating the concerns of animal rights groups (centrist, liberal, or conservative) and how they have changed since the mid-1900s. In the United States, local and state governments are now holding people more accountable for the humane treatment and care of animals, both in public viewing areas like zoos and research facilities. This concept carries over into homes. It is evident in important laws like the Animal Welfare Act of 1966 and both wild horse laws (1959 and 1971). Vocal support of animal protection legislation has influenced the accountability of government agencies to the American public. It played major roles in the successful passage of wild horse legislation. Additionally, animal rights groups are important for the continued protection of animals (domestic or wild) in the United States. The Animal Welfare Act continues to be regarded as the most important piece of legislation passed that provides for the good of animals in the United States.[16]

Silberman's views towards wild horse legislation in the United States are another matter. In reference to the Bill of 1959, he states "This Act gave minimal protection to wild horses,

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[15] Morton S. Silberman, "Animal Welfare, Animal Rights: The Past, the Present, and the 21st Century," in *The Journal of Zoo Animal Medicine* 19, no. 4 (Dec. 1988): 161-167, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20094884.

[16] Ibid., 164.

which apparently did not satisfy anyone."[17] He may have said this because just over a decade later, in 1971, another law was passed that further controlled wild horse management. Congress passed this law to ensure in order to further protect animals that ranged on government-owned land.[18] Indeed, the Department of the Interior directed the BLM, the government body entrusted with the care and continued management of wild horses on American rangelands, to take charge of management. It is one of several instances in which a government body became the protectors of a specific animal species. Persistent animal advocates supported the laws of 1959 and 1971. One of their chief underlying objectives was to keep wild horses from being rounded up and sold to slaughterhouses across the country and beyond.

A second article provides an interesting perspective about the wild horse situation in the United States. In "Animal Experimentation: Issues for the 1980s," authors Judith Zola, Jeri Sechzer, Joan Sieber, and Anne Griffin come to a somewhat groundbreaking discovery. They determine that "the concern for animals also follows from an urban lifestyle, where animals are encountered only as pets, not as potential meals and not in nature, and where—for members of disintegrating families—pets often fill an important void."[19] This hypothesis should be applied to the ways in which various members of the American public view wild free-roaming horses on the ranges. Are the horses taking the place of children for adults who have none? Also, why are horses, particularly wild horses, viewed as pets and not the untamed, dangerous animals they are

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[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Judith C. Zola, Jeri A. Sechzer, Joan E. Sieber, and Anne Griffin, "Animal Experimentation: Issues for the 1980s," in *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 9, no. 2 (Spring 1984): 40-50, 41, http://www.jstor.org/stable/689542.

in reality? Human and animal bonds form an interesting perspective that must be analyzed in more detail.[20]

The focal point of the "Animal Experimentation" article is the humane treatment of animals used for scientific purposes. The laws mentioned here are geared toward the proper handling and treatment of animals in laboratories. Wild horses, being somewhat outside of the typical laboratory, are still studied in terms of how they coexist with other animals, domestic and wild, on public land. The authors conclude that "some individuals believe that animals' intrinsic value does obligate human society to safeguard them."[21] Could this belief also apply to the wild horse situation that is so often discussed in varying circles? Is a wild horse's "intrinsic value" what keeps public interest groups involved in, and concerned with, its overall welfare? In addition, the authors qualified how scientists should look at the animals they research: "for science to rationalize forms of unwarranted harm to living beings is unacceptable."[22] As stated in chapter six of this dissertation, range managers showed concern for the animals in their care, whether they were wild game animals or wild free-roaming horses. In the end, the authors ask, what will determine how legislation is passed? "Will feverish public opinion and politics determine the outcome, or will there be adequate testimony from all constituencies and reasoned ethical analysis?"[23] These concerns also apply to what is happening with wild horses in the United States. This article helps connect the emotion about wild horses to the connections people make with their pets. Do they truly consider horses, even wild ones, as a pleasure animal (a pet) and not as a living, breathing, working machine?[24] The human relationship with horses

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[20] Aaron Honori Katcher and Alan M. Beck, eds., *New Perspectives on Our Lives with Companion Animals* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983). See this work for a fascinating array of articles on the human-animal relationship.

[21] Zola, et al., 45.

[22] Ibid., 46.

[23] Ibid., 47.

[24] Jones, 92.

has been a long-lasting one. It is also one of the reasons why people are drawn to the wildness of these free-roaming horses. It is because they view them symbolically. Making connections between the wild horses and the spread of urbanization, much like the authors did here with pets and their owners, brings historians closer to understanding why people view them through such a variety of lenses.

A third article applies to the issues surrounding horse slaughter, but focuses more on its legislative aspects. In “Federal Wildlife Law Achieves Adolescence: Developments in the 1970s,” author George Cameron Coggins dissects the underlying issues surrounding animal legislation in the United States.[25] One of the case studies examined involved the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971. In his discussion regarding viewpoints towards wildlife, he postulates,

> Philosophies toward wildlife espoused by the major interested groups have radically differing objectives and methods. The spectrum of attitudes toward wildlife regulation ranges from beliefs that all lower species exist only to serve man’s various appetites to equally rigid dogma that the killing or harassment of any species under any circumstance is inherently immoral.[26]

This has been the issue for a long time. Viewpoints on wild horses also range this broad belief spectrum. Part of this is because of the first three earliest wildlife laws passed in the early 1970s, the earliest was the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971. Legislation requires interest groups. Without the attention of concerned groups it would be difficult to get the support necessary to pass laws in Congress.

In the 1960s and even later people came to the realization that without assistance, certain animals could disappear forever, as in the case of the passenger pigeon, or be severely reduced

[25] George Cameron Coggins, “Federal Wildlife Law Achieves Adolescence: Developments in the 1970s,” in *Duke Law Journal* 1978, no. 3 (Aug. 1978): 753-817, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1372208 (accessed July 19, 2013).

[26] Ibid., 755.

by unnecessary slaughter, like the vast buffalo herds on the prairies.[27] As the author concluded, "rational self-interest generally provides an inadequate protection of the environment."[28] Things progressed similarly in the case of wild horses. Unregulated commercial market hunting between the 1930s and 1950s was pushing wild horse populations into a rapid decline. Their story was following a similar path to that of the American bison and the passenger pigeon. These uncontrolled roundups, typically by non-locals who were looking for a quick buck, meant that thousands of animals ended up as fodder for pet food factories, rendering works, or zoos, and even as horsemeat in other countries. The slaughter of an animal viewed as being an integral symbol of the American West made for an untenable situation.

In addition to the Act of 1971, Congress also placed environmental restrictions on government agencies, requiring them to report on conditions prior to doing anything that could affect the environment. Coggins explains how the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, also known as NEPA, was a shift in American domestic policy because it required details about resources on the land before anyone, or anything, disturbed these land areas.[29] Balancing range use and wildlife quality was another major consideration.[30] Referring to the Act of 1971, Coggins believes it had "no . . . parallel in federal wildlife law. The affected species technically are feral . . . rather than wild, and they are physically indistinguishable from their domesticated

[27] Ibid., 757; Richard White, *"It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own": A New History of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1947), 219; Richard M. Highsmith, Jr., J. Granville Jensen, and Robert D. Rudd, *Conservation in the United States*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1969), 184; Durward L. Allen, *Our Wildlife Legacy*, rev. ed. (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1974), 11; Roy Robbins, *Our Landed Heritage: The Public Domain, 1776-1970*, 2nd ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1976), 302, 335; Pomeroy, 2; James A. Tober, *Who Owns the Wildlife? The Political Economy of Conservation in Nineteenth Century America* (London: Greenwood Press, 1981), 4, 17, 42, 93-4, 97; Frederick F. Gilbert and Donald G. Dodds, *The Philosophy and Practice of Wildlife Management* (Malabar, F.L.: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company, 1987), 6, 175, 200; John Dorst, "Watch for Falling Bison: The Buffalo Hunt as Museum Trope and Ecological Allegory," in *Native Americans and the Environment: Perspectives on the Ecological Indian*, edited by Michael E. Harkin and David Rich Lewis, 173-191 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 173.

[28] Coggins, 757.

[29] Ibid., 763; William K. Wyant, *Westward in Eden: The Public Lands and the Conservation Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 382-3.

[30] Coggins, 759.

cousins."[31] This is one of the bigger debates surrounding so-called wild horses. It is the opinion of career biologists, Coggins relates, that "the new Act will be oversuccessful to the point of becoming self-defeating. They assert that the high breeding success rate of these feral ungulates, coupled with a lack of natural predators, will result in rapid, unchecked population growth."[32] Predators, at least those who could prey on horses, such as the puma (or mountain lion), cannot keep horse numbers down on their own.[33] If left unchecked, population growth patterns could grow incrementally larger from year to year. If roundups are not taking place, the damage to the range could be irreparable. In *Our Wildlife Resources* Anderson concludes that when the land has reached its carrying capacity, then the animal population "either . . . produces fewer young or fewer young survive."[34] Coggins' conclusion takes into account a different perspective of the wild horse issue, and even looks towards the future:

> Merely increasing wild horse . . . populations could be self-defeating if they crowd out other species and harm the carrying capacity of the ecosystem. What is needed is an approach directed at a balanced, healthy habitat where a strong diversity of species is sustainable.[35]

These same issues are under discussion today, and remain pertinent in the debate over what to do with wild horses in the United States. This takes into consideration those still on the range and those being held in pastures and corrals throughout the country.

The final article under discussion regarding the slaughter of wild horses in the United States paints a picture similar to that of "Animal Experimentation" because of its focus on human and animal relationships. In "The Zoological Connection: Animal-Related Human Behavior," Clifton Bryant points out how American culture emphasizes the relationship that

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[31] Ibid., 778.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Cougars are known to prey on wild horses, but there is very little evidence about it. For more information see Joel Berger, *Wild Horses of the Great Basin*, 17-18.
[34] Stanley H. Anderson, *Managing Our Wildlife Resources*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1991), 42.
[35] Coggins, 786.

human beings make with their pets.[36] Bryant clarifies how we tend "not to recognize, to overlook, to ignore, or to neglect . . . the influence of animals, or their import for, our social behavior, our relationships with other humans, and the directions which our social enterprise often takes."[37] In other words, animals are variables that influence how humans think about certain subjects. Even a lack of animals, or pets, in one's social circle could be an influential factor in the opposite direction. Studying these types of relationships is imperative, because they help people understand why others are so opposed to humane slaughter options. These types of disconnects lead people to view wild horses more in terms of a pet-like animal then one who has been captured and utilized for work purposes over multiple centuries. There is a shift in the way people perceive wild horses. As such, members of the public continue to oppose the slaughter of horses in the United States.

Pets cost money, yet people normally do not give up their pets just because they have to purchase their food and manage their health.[38] Humans form bonds with their pets when they feed them. It is a form of dependency. Pet food industries made huge strides in the 1940s and 1950s and utilized whatever meat was available in order to supply the increased demand for pet food. This became more important when house pets became common companions in American homes. At that time, wild horses were still an abundant resource, and some forward-thinking individuals put a price tag on their heads, knowing that they could serve another purpose off the range. To put the pet food industry in perspective, in 1974, just three years after the Act of 1971 prohibited the slaughter of wild horses, data showed that Americans were spending

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[36] Clifton D. Bryant, "The Zoological Connection: Animal-Related Human Behavior," in *Social Forces* 58, no. 2 (Dec. 1979): 399-421, http://www.jstororg/stable/2577598.

[37] Ibid., 399.

[38] John A. Hoyt, "The Animal Welfare Perspective," in *New Perspectives on Our Lives with Companion Animals*, edited by Aaron Honori Katcher and Alan M. Beck, 516-518 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983). Hoyt provides an alternative perspective. He says that although human and animal relationships are important, history still shows us that not all humans are satisfied with their pets. This has contributed to the rise in humane societies and SPCAs around the country.

approximately 2.5 billion dollars to feed their pets.[39] This amount included more than 150 different types of pet food.[40] It is probable that many of the people who protested wild horse slaughter in the late 1950s and through the 1960s had no idea that they might have been purchasing pet food made from the carcasses of these animals.

In the United States, it could be said the connections people make with their own pets do influence the way they view the passage of laws related to other animals. Groups and individuals who support animal welfare and, in particular, humane treatment, may not always look at the big picture. The definition of humane treatment focuses on compassion and sympathy for animals in non-ideal situations.[41] According to Zoology Professor Aubrey Manning of the University of Edinburgh, sometimes people view wild animals as their "babies."[42] This perception, which Bryant analyzes in his article, places animals in the role of surrogates. If individuals and couples of any age try to replace a human relationship with that of an animal, just to fill a void, then they bond more with the animals.[43] This bond may lead to irrational points of view, and may keep them from looking at issues on a broad scale. Sometimes people do not view wild animals as a danger to themselves.[44] This misjudgment can be costly.[45] In the case of wild horses, the bigger picture involves public land use, forage quality, herd health, and even the health of native flora and fauna. All of these factors are important in their own

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[39] Bryant, 405-6.

[40] Ibid.

[41] *Dictionary.com*, s.v. "Humane," http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/humane?s=t.

[42] Aubrey Manning, "Ethological Approaches to the Human-Companion Animal Bond," in *New Perspectives on Our Lives with Companion Animals*, edited by Aaron Honori Katcher and Alan M. Beck, 7-16 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 15.

[43] Ibid.

[44] "Nevada officials urge caution around feral horses," September 11, 2013, http://www.thehorse.com/print-article/32532.

[45] Alice Wondrak Biel, *Do (Not) Feed the Bears: The Fitful History of Wildlife and Tourists in Yellowstone* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006). This book is a wonderful source on the way people, tourists in this case, anthropomorphize wild animals. This makes them a danger to themselves, the environment, and also to the wild animals. Horses are also wild, yet people view them through a somewhat domestic-like lens because of the way society portrays the animals.

right. A balanced ecological habitat makes for healthier animals and plants. As Bryant concludes, "creatures of all variety are inextricably involved in many of our behavioral activities and play important interactive roles in society."[46]

Combined, these four articles provide rich fodder for historians who want to understand the relationship bonds between humans and animals. These bonds are a basis through which some people oppose wild horse slaughter. People form relationships, and not solely with other humans. Sometimes the human-animal bond is just as strong. This type of connection can compel people to oppose slaughter based on emotion. The subject is a contentious one, and it is important to understand why. Examining the undercurrents surrounding the American public's outright rejection of killing horses may help formulate a better management plan for the future of wild horse herds in the United States.

Wild mustangs and domestic horses are all affected by slaughter legislation passed in the last fifty to sixty years. In January of 1959 Congress passed the Wild Horse Annie Act.[47] This was the first measure enacted to protect wild mustangs from mechanized roundups, or those involving the use of trucks and helicopters. However, this law was not strong enough to stop individuals from capturing and sending mustangs to slaughter. As a result, in 1971 Congress passed the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act, or Public Law 92-195. Part of the law stated, "It is the policy of Congress that wild free-roaming horses and burros shall be protected from capture, branding, harassment, or death."[48] The Act of 1971 also went a step further and

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[46] Bryant, 417.

[47] Heather Smith Thomas, *The Wild Horse Controversy* (New York: A.S. Barnes and Company, 1979), quoted in Andrea Mott "Friend or Foe?: Efforts to Protect the Wild Horse," paper, annual meeting of the Western Social Sciences Association, Albuquerque, NM, April 15, 2010, 7.

[48] United States Bureau of Land Management and United States Forest Service, *A Report to Congress by the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture on Administration of the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act, Public Law 92-195* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, 1974), Appendix 1:1, quoted in Andrea Mott, "Friend or Foe?: Efforts to Protect the Wild Horse," paper, annual meeting of the Western Social Sciences Association, Albuquerque, NM, April 15, 2010, 9.

"legitimized the return of mechanized vehicles in wild horse roundups because they were the most efficient means of gathering horses."[49] This detail is discussed in more detail in the piloting chapter.

After 1971 government officials had to face the wild horse issue head-on. Media reports and interviews have indicated that wild horse reproduction rates were high between 1971 and 1975, because nothing was being done to control their numbers.[50] As a result, on June 21, 1974, the *Nevada State Journal* published an article titled, "Report Urges Slaughter of Wild Horses, Burros."[51] By this time there were other management proposals being considered, particularly adoption and selective wild horse sales, but none were fully agreed upon. This article brought up a report published by the Department of the Interior, in which it was stated that "although the disposal of excess wild horses and burros by humane slaughter methods has not been undertaken . . . such disposal practices will become necessary as populations increase."[52] These so-called disposal methods did not give individuals much confidence in the BLM's handling practices. The worry was that once slaughter was brought back into the discussion, the wild horses would not stand a chance. Re-legitimizing slaughter, this time as a management method, would have cancelled out all the work that people had done just to save them.

As previously mentioned in other chapters, Velma Johnston did not support the slaughter proposal. Most of her commitment to the preservation and legacy of wild horses on the range was meant to provide a long-term plan for wild horse management, not to have them shipped off to pet food factories. In "'Slaughter': 'Wild Horse Annie' Criticizes Proposals," reporter Tod

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[49] Andrea Mott, "Friend or Foe?: Efforts to Protect the Wild Horse," paper, annual meeting of the Western Social Sciences Association, Albuquerque, NM, April 15, 2010, 10.

[50] This also damaged the range because the land could not easily support the extra animals.

[51] "Report Urges Slaughter of Wild Horses, Burros," in *Nevada State Journal*, June 21, 1974. Courtesy of the Nevada Historical Society, Reno.

[52] Ibid.

Bedrosian wrote that Johnston "charged" that "ranchers have allowed domestic horses to multiply with the wild horses on public lands so the horses could be claimed later and sold for dog food."[53] It is true that horses were purposely bred up, but not necessarily for dog food. The ranchers did not always ship the horses they caught off to canneries. Many of them, especially in the wild horse country of northwestern Colorado, utilized the animals they caught on their remote ranches.[54] Johnston's statement should not be altogether discounted. Ranchers hired men to round up wild horses and free up some of the public range so they could graze their cattle and sheep herds.[55] At the article's conclusion Johnston is quoted as saying, "'If I back off one inch now, you will see the biggest horse slaughter we have ever seen.'"[56] This prophetic statement has yet to come true, but it showed how dedicated she was to protecting the horses and their iconic western image.

Barely a month after this article was published in a local newspaper, another one appeared, focusing yet again on the same subject matter. On August 18, 1974, James Sterba of *The New York Times* wrote, "Would Law Changes Allow Slaughter? Wild Horse Controversy Resumed."[57] This article was reprinted in the *Nevada State Journal*, a place where it was guaranteed to receive some attention from those with ties to the wild horse community in different capacities. Sterba discussed how slaughter was being reexamined as a method to control the numbers of wild horses on public ranges. The problem with so many horses, he

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[53] Tod Bedrosian, "'Slaughter': 'Wild Horse Annie' Criticizes Proposals," in *Nevada State Journal*, June 30, 1974. Courtesy of the Nevada Historical Society, Reno.

[54] Dawn (Walker) Nottingham, 2013, Oral History; Tom and Elmora (Vaughn) Petersen, 2013, Oral History; Clifford Heaverne, 2011, Oral History. In each of these oral histories the narrators discussed the concept of "breeding up" ranch stock by turning out a quality stud horse to breed with wild mares. The horses bred through this method made for some quality cow ponies and working stock for these ranches.

[55] Dawn (Walker) Nottingham, 2013, Oral History.

[56] Bedrosian, "'Slaughter.'"

[57] James P. Sterba, "Would Law Changes Allow Slaughter? Wild Horse Controversy Resumed," *Nevada State Journal*, August 18, 1974.

wrote, is that it accelerates the rate of range damage.[58] When Congress passed the Act of 1971, it did not have an immediate plan for controlling the steadily increasing wild horse populations. As a result, herd numbers kept rising and the range continued to deteriorate. Public concern pushed discussions about management methods, and federally condoned roundups (still banned in 1974) began to creep up the list of preferred management options open to government officials. It was almost the only option all groups could agree on.

Government officials, particularly wild horse experts appointed by the BLM, had to consider the stocking rate on the land before any removals occurred.[59] This meant they had to account for animals that used the range simultaneously in order to balance the stocking rate with available forage.[60] If the stocking rate was excessive and could not supply the animals with adequate nutrients, then the numbers needed to be reduced. This formula does not apply solely to livestock herds on public grazing lands. Native wild animals that share the same lands must also receive an appropriate amount of food and water resources. In addition, wild horses also utilized these areas. Research on the range has shown that there is some overlap between what these animals eat, but it is not identical from animal to animal. Outside of their water needs, not all of these animals foraged on the same materials. Nevertheless, it became important that the numbers of animals using the same land be reduced to allow for ecological recovery and sustainability. Both livestock and wild horse numbers could be lowered.

Stock reduction is essential for the continued maintenance of range viability. However, when the numbers of animals on the range are lowered, they end up elsewhere. In many cases livestock are transferred to a different range or transported to feedlots or slaughterhouses. In the

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[58] Bedrosian, "'Slaughter.'" Courtesy of the Nevada Historical Society, Reno; Scientific reports also conclude that range damage is accelerated by increasingly large animal populations.

[59] Anderson, 279. Stocking rates must be developed based on the type of animals utilizing the same range.

[60] Jerry L. Holechek, Rex D. Pieper, and Carlton H. Herbel, *Range Management: Principles and Practices*, 3rd ed. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1998), 191.

case of wild horses, the removal operation is quite different. The federal government hires contractors to come into wild horse management areas (HMAs) and round them up.[61] This helped control populations while sticking to the letter of the law. The ten-state wild horse area spans a staggering amount of acreage. This meant that planning roundups was not an easy feat. The details that go into planning roundups are staggering.[62] These roundups will continue to take place until people can agree on other herd management methods. For now, the process is still complex, and increasing numbers of wild horses remain at holding facilities across the country, where taxpayers continue to fund their care.[63]

Not everyone views animals through the same working lens. Anthropologist Joel Savishinsky argues that "Western people, who are more alienated from nature by their culture than most other people, employ their pets to reestablish that connection."[64] He is essentially arguing that people in the developed western world do not spend a large amount of time in the outdoors or with animals. Part of this is a result of being a developed, post-industrial, society. Rural folk tend to have a deeper connection to the land and livestock than their urban counterparts. According to Temple Grandin, an Associate Professor at Colorado State University as well as the premier scholar on creative techniques that ease animal anxiety, "One important point to consider at the outset of the discussion of the slaughter issue is the recognition

[61] A couple of these contractors have deep roots in the world of wild horses. Clifford Heaverne was raised with horses and a father who caught and trained his own wild horses. Dave Cattoor, the man who does the majority of wild horse roundups undertaken nowadays, grew up in northwestern Colorado where the ranchers and cowboys invented their own techniques for catching and training wild horses. It is a skill linked as much to their geographical location as it is to their personal heritage and links to the West.

[62] Clifford Heaverne, 2011, Oral History. In this oral history Cliff talks in depth about the details involved in the planning of a government condoned wild horse roundup. He had to include information about the types of traps he and his workers would use, the types of vehicles and trucks they would use to haul the equipment in and the horses out, and the costs of operation. Suffice it to say, the government paid contractors well to take care of excess wild horse numbers throughout the western states.

[63] The Palomino Valley Wild Horse and Burro Center located northeast of Reno, Nevada, is a centralized regional holding facility for the animals taken off of the range. They are given adequate amounts of food and water, but the space they once enjoyed on the range is not part of their experience in the corrals.

[64] Savishinsky, 128.

of the existence of a cultural disconnect between people who live in cities and those that live in rural areas."[65] The cultural disconnect that Grandin discusses as occurring between rural and urban environments plays a role in how people continue to view the subject of slaughter. Rural folk understand the necessity, while urbanites view it as a disgusting and inhumane outlet. It is her belief that those who harbor "extreme views on slaughter" need to gain a better understanding of what happens in slaughterhouses by visiting one.[66]

Education creates a better knowledge base. Sometimes this knowledge results in good things, but not always. Slaughterhouses do not invoke or inspire images for the faint of heart. The killing of animals for meat and other goods is an appalling process.[67] In many cases it remains an essential process. Numbers that exceed range quota must be maintained somehow. Slaughter is merely one way of managing growing animal populations. Although slaughter is common for cattle, swine, sheep, and chickens, it is regarded negatively when horses (wild and domestic) are added to the list. If the public, in particular those living in urban areas, knew more about the rising number of horses in the United States, then maybe they would not oppose this outlet to such a high degree. When holding facilities, pastures, and adoption centers are full there must be some other way to combat high animal numbers and the increasing costs of caring for them. Humane slaughterhouses may be needed to control the wild horse population issue. Then again, activist groups like PETA would strongly disagree with this idea on principal. Their organization clearly states, "Animals are not ours to eat, wear, experiment on, use for

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[65] Temple Grandin, "A Perspective on Equine Slaughter from the Field," http://www.aaep.org/images/files/Grandin%20Presentation.pdf.

[66] Ibid.

[67] William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1991), 208.

entertainment, or abuse in any way."[68] It is also the organization's belief that animals themselves have rights.[69] Not all organizations take this type of extremist position.

Certain groups view animals in a more moderate way. The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) is another animal protection group, but whose purpose differs from PETA's. The HSUS began in Washington, D.C. in 1954, a mere two years after the Animal Welfare Institute began.[70] This wave of animal protection societies was just the beginning of a new focus on the humane treatment of animals in the United States. Horses, wild and domestic, became a focal point for the HSUS. Correspondence between Johnston and HSUS officials attest to this solid relationship. This group supported Johnston's efforts to protect horses. On August 28, 1968, Frank McMahon, HSUS's Director of Field Services, wrote Velma to assure her that the organization was grateful for all of her work to protect the mustangs.[71] In addition to supporting her, the HSUS backed the Tilletts and their plan to save the Pryor Mountain mustang herds from being destroyed.[72] The organization's concern regarding the Pryor horses centered around the BLM's plan to destroy them after capturing them. An August 27, 1968, press release stated, "It is charged that the BLM proposal to trap the horses by cutting off all but a single source of water would result in a number of animals dying of thirst."[73] The report continued, "It is also charged that, since there is no market value for the wild mustangs and no plan for their re-

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[68] "The Issues," *PETA: People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals*, http://www.peta.org/issues/default.aspx.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Silberman, 162.

[71] Frank J. McMahon to Velma Johnston, 28 August 1968. Box 686, FF28. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[72] Frank J. McMahon, HSUS Press Release, 27 August 1968, p. 1. Box 686, FF28. This press release was attached to the August 28, 1968 letter McMahon sent to Johnston. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[73] Ibid., p. 2. Box 686, FF28. This press release was attached to the August 28, 1968 letter McMahon sent to Johnston. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

location, they would inevitably be promptly destroyed and, if past actions are any guide, sold for dog food."[74]

The perception of wild horses being worthless was shared by some, but not all. The BLM and its officials had to consider all avenues for managing these horses, whether the public supported them or not. However, written statements like this press release made it evident how the HSUS, the Tillets, and even Johnston felt about what would happen to the mustangs after being removed from the range. Although the mustang had "no market value," it was still, to these individuals, an important piece of American history worth saving. It was their (the HSUS) hope that by filing a lawsuit against the BLM, they would gain more time to study alternate methods of managing the horses while keeping the range quality intact.[75] Scientific evidence was important.

PETA and the HSUS were not alone in their stance to protect the wild horses. Other groups shared the same perspective and voiced the issues in a more extreme way. The National Mustang Association (NMA), the same one that experienced managerial and financial difficulties in the later 1970s, was, in its early years, tied to Johnston's cause. Its ads appeared in magazines and newspapers around the country. One of these used photographs of starving horses in addition to phrasing that was guaranteed to incite emotion. It read,

> Please HELP! Millions of wild mustangs once roamed the American West. But no more . . . <u>Today only some 17,000 of these proud horses survive in 11 Western states</u>. Without your help, an early part of Americana will vanish . . .[76]

Of course, this was merely one way for the NMA to bring in extra funding, but ads like this told the public that they needed to act before these wild horses become extinct. It was forceful, but

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[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid.

[76] "Please HELP!" the National Mustang Association. Box 686, FF28. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

effective. The ad stated that "the few surviving Mustangs are being trapped and slaughtered—or are starving to death by the hundreds!"[77] With this type of wording, funding would begin flowing into this somewhat questionable organization.

Multiple media outlets and reporters stationed in the United States and abroad helped spread the news about protecting wild horses from slaughter and inhumane treatment. On July 12, 1971, *Time* magazine published an article called, "Environment: The Fight to Save Wild Horses."[78] This article recognized Johnston's efforts to save the lasting legacy of the mustang.[79] Again her mythic moniker, "Wild Horse Annie," began making the media rounds. It did not take long for people to pick up this article. John A. Hoyt, President of the HSUS, wrote Johnston in order to voice the organization's continued support of her cause. He also congratulated her on the article that appeared in *Time*.[80] Women made up another concerned interest group. They wrote letters addressed to Velma at the Double Lazy Heart Ranch, hoping that they could help in some way. Louise Huhne, a journalist from Holland working for the Universal News Organization, wrote to ask if she and her photographer, Fritz Gerritsen, could visit the ranch, interview her, and take photographs of the horses.[81] Huhne and Gerritsen wanted to compile a series of photographs and stories that they could use "for the Dutch press as well as for other

[77] Ibid.

[78] "Environment: the Fight to Save Wild Horses," *TIME* Magazine, July 12, 1971, vol. 92, no. 2, http://www.time.com/time/magazine/0,9263,7601710712,00.html.

[79] John A. Hoyt to Velma B. Johnston, 8 July 1971. Box 686, FF28. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. In the letter he mentions the current legislation being debated in Congress. He thanks her for being an avid supporter of humane causes, and not just those concerned with wild horses. John added a handwritten note to Johnston at the bottom of the typed letter, which is where the *Time* article is introduced.

[80] Ibid.; Hoyt, "The Animal Welfare Perspective," 516-518.

[81] Louise Huhne to Velma Johnston, n.d. Box 686, FF28. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. It is worth noting that after Huhne and Gerritsen visited Johnston at the Double Lazy Heart Ranch, a strong friendship began. The two women wrote one another personal letters about their lives and current happenings. Johnston often voiced personal issues regarding her health, family, and the current state of wild horses in the United States.

European countries."[82] It is evident they wanted to take up a banner for the cause in a global way. They planned out a three-month tour of the United States and hoped to visit Johnston during that time. Over time, Huhne and Johnston became friends.

People around the country sent Johnston thank you letters between 1958 and 1976. They wanted her to know that her efforts to protect wild horses from slaughter had not gone unnoticed. Soon after Gerritsen and Huhne's' visit to the Double Lazy Heart Ranch, Huhne wrote a thank you letter to Velma. In it she stated what a wonderful time they had visiting with her and Charles.[83] She also mentioned how she wanted to do the story justice so that it could "result in a strong support of the noble cause for which you fight so hard – the saving of the mustang."[84] Articles with this kind of emotional undertone also helped continue the mythic views of the American West. With so many people backing the mustang cause in the United States, it was easy to see why others joined in to help. In addition, foreign reporters promoted a very domestic American issue through their media outlets, which then brought in support from around the world. Individuals from different backgrounds, nationalities, and locations often voiced their concerns through letters. These letters became the backbone of the campaign to save wild horses from slaughterhouses and rendering works.

After the passage of legislation in 1971 other alternatives for managing wild horses became a priority since slaughter was no longer a viable option. In 1973 Velma proposed an adoption program that would help place some of the horses being pulled off of the range. In 1976 the BLM began to implement this plan. It became known as the Adopt-A-Wild-Horse and

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[82] Ibid.

[83] Louise Huhne to Velma Johnston, 23 January 1958. Box 686, FF28. Cuernavaca, Mexico to the Double Lazy Heart Ranch in Wadsworth, Nevada. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[84] Ibid.

Burro Program.[85] Statistics show that since 1971 over 200,000 wild horses have been adopted throughout the country.[86] However, as time passed, it became apparent that even with the adoption program in place the public need for horses was not high enough to efficiently control the numbers of horses still held in holding facilities and pastures.

The success of a program like this depends on a well-functioning economy. Since 1971 slaughter has not been legal for wild horses, but it is constantly discussed, and not just in terms of wild horses. This slaughter ban has since carried over and now affects the domestic horse industry. The last three horse slaughter plants in the United States closed in 2007, leaving horse owners at a loss as to how to get rid of sick, injured, or unwanted animals.[87] The increasing numbers of wild horses and domestic horses are contributing to a horse-saturated society. When an economy is saturated it is increasingly difficult to find an adequate market. One of the problems is that fewer people are able to adopt available animals because the financial burden is too high.[88] The economic downturn has resulted in nearly 40,000 horses residing in long and short-term holding facilities.[89] These facilities are discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

The BLM is contemplating other options besides slaughter and adoption. Fertility treatments are becoming a more viable solution to wild horse reproduction. This option could potentially keep down costs down in several ways. First, if fewer horses need to be captured then roundup costs could drop. Secondly, if a smaller amount of horses are being taken off the range and held in facilities then the government would not have to pay for the upkeep of those

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[85] Bureau of Land Management, "Adoption Program: A Rewarding Experience," http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/whbprogram/adoption_program.html.

[86] Ibid.

[87] Laura Jane Durfee, "Anti-Horse Slaughter Legislation: Bad for Horses, Bad for Society," in *Indiana Law Journal* 84 (2009), 354.

[88] United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, "Caring for America's Wild Horses and Burros: Fundamental Reforms—An Overview," February 2011, http://www.blm.gov/pgdata/etc/medialib/blm/wo/Communications_Directorate/public_affairs/wild_horse_and_burro/documents.Par.32058.File.dat/WHB_Fundamental_022411.pdf, p. 5.

[89] Ibid.

additional animals. Nor would they have to pay for additional long-term holding pastures. And lastly, the government might see a growing number of animals purchased in adoptions throughout the country. As these wild horses become managed at higher proportions there could be other lasting effects. Fertility control is a delicate issue. It can affect herd dynamics, birth rates, and overall herd viability.

People give animals human-like roles. According to Bryant, who wrote about how animals are surrogates and take the place of other humans in relationships, people attempt to fill voids in their lives by placing animals in human-like roles.[90] These replacement relationships can affect our social behavior as well as how we, as humans, interact with one another. It would be unwise, as Bryant explained, to underestimate the influential role that animals have on our lives on a daily basis. In regards to the wild horses, it is possible that Johnston, who was married but childless (despite wanting children and being very good with them), replaced the relationships that did not exist with those that she nurtured during her wild horse campaign. Her "wild ones" in effect became surrogates to the children she and Charlie never had. This could be a major reason why Johnston worked so hard to save them. Her efforts to protect them from slaughter lasted right up until her death in 1976.

There are many beliefs and opinions about slaughter and animals in American society. These beliefs, scientific, realistic, or otherwise, have evolved over time. There continues to be a wide berth between those who understand that animals are meant to serve as an available meat source, compared to those who stand against any type of inhumane treatment or killing. These points are argued with a purpose, yet the subject of slaughter was and continues to be a main source of contention between individuals, special interest groups, the federal government, and even the media. When literature helps push the idea of animals in anthropomorphic ways, they

[90] Bryant, "The Zoological Connection: Animal-Related Human Behavior."

lose their true image. Discussions about wild horse management are ongoing, and changes to the plans are consistently debated. Either wild horse numbers are being overly controlled or not controlled enough. The range is either recovering or being destroyed. Through it all, the biggest questions that arise center around wild horse slaughter. The condition of the economy, combined with pre-existing wild horse numbers, are factors at influence the success of adoption programs around the country.

Recent evidence has shown that the BLM is trying to manage the herds while giving consideration to new management methods. The subject of slaughter should be brought back into the discussion. Many Americans may find the subject of slaughter appalling because the American culture has depended more on the availability of beef, pork, and chicken, and as a result horsemeat has not been an essential dietary need. Other cultures around the world do not view this issue in the same way. In fact, many depend on horsemeat. Perhaps it is okay to preserve the livelihood of those who are living a natural life on the range while providing an outlet for others who have been held in holding facilities for years. The humaneness of the options should be considered more thoroughly. Stringent government requirements could assist in regulating this industry. Despite viable management options, it remains evident that in the face of mythic representation it is difficult for people to view wild horses objectively. What they are in reality and what they are imagined to be are often quite different. Understanding these perceptions is important because they provide another lens through which to view the wild horse situation in the United States.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Many children and some adults dream of owning a wild horse. Generally the dream fades, but for some it materializes. The BLM helps the lucky ones make it happen. The first half of the twentieth century saw a huge decrease in the number of wild horses living on American ranges, from approximately two million down to a few thousand. As a result, protection movements, combined with public awareness, created safe havens for these animals. Because protective legislation prohibited the animals from being sent to slaughter, the government needed to figure out how to balance numbers on the range. With congressional approval, the departments of the Interior and Agriculture pieced together a management program. In the early 1970s this led to the formation of an advisory board, along with a roundup, removal, and relocation process. With removal came the question how officials would take care of the excess animals: corrals did not make a viable long-term solution for thousands of extra horses. BLM officials, not-for-profit groups, and members of the advisory board instituted new programming that called for adoption as an outlet for wild horses removed from public ranges, hence the advent of the Adopt a Wild Horse or Burro Program. Perceptions regarding this new program vary, ranging from supportive to critical. The intent of the program is still the same, but the number of adopters has decreased, while the number of horses has not.

It is difficult to compile perceptions regarding the federal government's handling of excess wild horses without spending a great deal of time focusing on current issues. Modern technology, most of which is based on the internet, creates a pool of data from which to pull information about those who have and have not adopted a wild horse at some point in the past.[1]

[1] Nowadays information on this hot topic can be found by reading Facebook posts, Blogs, and even a regular stream of articles posted by newsgroups around the country. People are not shy about posting their opinions on wild horses, the Bureau of Land Management, and the pros and cons of a program that began with the intent to

This is worth mentioning and will be followed up on in more depth in Chapter 9. Historical data on the BLM's Adoption Program is found in the legislation passed in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Details highlighting the purposes of the entire program and its goals for the future are located in these governmental records. A few books also bring together some of this relevant data, which provides yet another lens through which to examine governmental implementation of the adoption program. Physical artifacts provide a visually compelling representation of what happens when the animals are collected at the roundup site and shipped to management facilities. These include holding centers, adoption facilities, and correctional facilities across the country. Combined, these different forms of information document the past, present, and even the future possibilities of the BLM's adoption program.

Primary documents from the 1960s and 1970s reflect the original ideas of those who strove to protect the symbolism and the reality of the wild horse. Congress passed Public Law 92-195, also known as the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act, on December 15, 1971.[2] This act gave the Secretary of the Interior control of management options, which included the right to manage them in a "manner that is designed to achieve and maintain a thriving ecological balance on the public lands."[3] This meant that the secretaries of the Interior and of Agriculture needed to consider the expertise of those who worked with animals dependent on the range as well as with those who studied the range itself. It was important to understand the dynamics between wildlife and horses that inhabited the same rangelands. Even more than that, it was necessary to know how much forage was available before the government could remove horses

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preserve, not eradicate, the thousands of wild horses that still live on ranges throughout the American West and Great Plains states.

[2] *Public Law 92-195: The Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act*, 92nd Congress, S. 1116, December 15, 1971. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[3] *Public Law 92-195: The Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act*, 92nd Congress, S. 1116, December 15, 1971, p. 1. Velma Johnston Collection, Denver Public Library.

from those public areas. One way the government received input was through a joint advisory board, which is stipulated in section 7 of Public Law 92-195.[4] This advisory board comprised up to nine individuals, none of whom could be employed by the federal government.[5] These individuals also needed to be experts in different fields, ranging from range management and biology to the protection of wild horses and burros.[6] One well-known individual already fit the description for one of the nine open seats. The government asked Velma Johnston to join the advisory board and help them manage the wild horse populations. Section 10 of the act states that the secretaries (of the Interior and of Agriculture) had the right to enact, or conduct, any research studies needed in order for them to carry out their duties as the new overseers of the Wild Horse Act of 1971.[7]

In addition to government documents about the act, other documents provide more glimpses into the workings of the Wild Horse and Burro Program. In particular, the Government Accounting Office (GAO) is a good source, because it publishes reports about the program and its costs and gives outlooks for the future. The data contained in these reports varies. Sometimes the material focuses on a specific element in the program. At other times it examines budgetary needs or the number of horses on public rangelands or in BLM facilities across the country.

Letters tell a more personal story regarding wild horse adoption and the efforts that went into getting the program started. They reveal the range of opinions about the program's effectiveness. These efforts began soon after the act's passage, essentially in 1971, and by 1972

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[4] Ibid., 2.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid., 3.

volunteers working with wild horse protection groups began vetting adoption applications.[8] The idea behind this was to prepare the public for an influx of additional horses. As the animals came off of the range, they would need a place to go. Corrals would not make a good long-term home. If dedicated volunteers pre-screened applications, then the process from roundup, then to capture, and on to adoption would be much easier. With this type of system in play, at least in theory, the entire process should have been smooth. The reality of the situation was much different than expected.

A few recent books also shed some light onto the federal government's wild horse adoption program. The first of these is the most recent, Alan Kania's *Wild Horse Annie*, where he explains some of the work Annie's organizations did to assist wild horses coming off of the range.[9] This is not a thorough analysis, but it is one of the few that exists and should be examined. The second work, de Steiguer's *Wild Horses of the West: History and Politics of America's Mustangs*, provides a more thorough analysis of the BLM's adoption program.[10] It includes an examination of the individuals, changes in the program over time, as well as a critical look at the budget. The third work is Cruise and Griffiths's *Wild Horse Annie and the Last of the Mustangs*.[11] These three books were all published between 2010 and 2012, which shows the resurgence of interest in wild horse subjects in the United States. Although these works are discussed in other chapters throughout the dissertation, in this section they deal specifically with what happens to the horses when they come off the range. This includes data about the program

[8] Charles E. Most, Public Information Officer, Bureau of Land Management, Billings, MT to Velma Johnston, January 4, 1972. Box 2, FF10. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[9] Alan J. Kania, *Wild Horse Annie: Velma Johnston and her Fight to Save the Mustang* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2012).

[10] J. Edward de Steiguer, *Wild Horses of the West: History and Politics of America's Mustangs* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2011).

[11] David Cruise and Alison Griffiths, *Wild Horse Annie and the Last of the Mustangs: The Life of Velma Johnston* (New York: Scribner, 2010).

from the time it began up until the past few years, or approximately 2010. They also provide some information regarding other, more modern, programs. Some of these programs take place at correctional facilities in different parts of the country. Others are more public and require a dedicated trainer to work with a wild horse. In addition, there is now one quite popular competition called the Extreme Mustang Makeover. In this competition, a trainer receives a mustang, and must, in a specific amount of time, train the animal and then ride it in front of a live audience.[12] This event is filmed and can be seen on sites such as YouTube.

The hard work involved in managing wild horses is shown through documentation on roundups and holding facilities.[13] Other resources include rudimentary maps of holding facilities, which provide corral, hay shed, and office layouts. One narrator, Clifford Heaverne, gave the researcher access to his personal photographs and documents on roundups. From these images we can study the types of traps used in roundups plus the various types of vehicles used to transport the animals from the roundup site to a federal holding facility. In addition to narrator images, there are also many taken on-site at the Palomino Valley Wild Horse and Burro Center. These contributions come from the author's personal research trips into Nevada and depict the mustangs in a new environment filled with corrals, haystacks, and mechanized equipment. Images that show the past as well as the current state of these facilities are valuable because they add another dimension to the overall problem: what is really happening with the federally mandated wild horse and burro adoption program?

Combined, the collection of primary documents, secondary sources, and visual artifacts provide a well-rounded array of information regarding overall management, holding facilities,

[12] More information regarding this cooperative effort between the BLM and the Mustang Heritage Foundation, a not-for-profit organization, can be found at http://extrememustangmakeover.com/more-info/.

[13] Some of these photographs come from the personal collections of narrators whom I interviewed during the course of my dissertation research phase. Others come from my personal collection, collected during different visits to holding facilities.

and issues surrounding the adoption program. Examining these sources in more detail can give us a better understanding of the current state of affairs, budget crises, public concern and involvement, and an outlook for future management problems. Perceptions regarding the program itself can be seen through those who support it (adopters) and those who do not (critics). A closer examination of the program's good and bad traits will provide a better understanding of the varying perspectives regarding those who are involved in it in some capacity or another, and will showcase its overall sustainability.

Parties to the adoption program disagree as to its management philosophy. Congress placed certain stipulations on the departments of the Interior and Agriculture when it placed these two groups in the role of, not only land and resource managers, but also wild horse managers and protectors.[14] The departments had to take several things into consideration. First, they had to figure out how to establish an ecological balance between native wildlife, wild horses, available forage, and water usage.[15] Second, they had to determine an appropriate management level for the number of horses allowed on specific ranges.[16] This required additional studies and further academic research. Third, the departments could determine, based on an animal's health, whether or not it should be humanely euthanized.[17] Fourth, the government had the right to collect wild horses that had strayed onto private land.[18] The landowners could not destroy the animal. Fifth, government officials had to consider the expert opinions of those chosen to sit on the National Advisory Board. Sixth, another stipulation, which prescribed the penalties if someone broke the law, stipulated what the government could do to

[14] *Public Law 92-195: The Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act*, 92nd Congress, S. 1116, December 15, 1971, p. 1. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.

those who did not adhere to protocol.[19] The penalties were not severe enough to deter some people.[20] The final major requirement written in the law stated that the departments could not place wild horses in areas "of the public lands where they do not currently exist."[21] This meant that they could not uproot a herd and transport it to a range that had never been used by wild horses. While Congress did provide a long list of stipulations for wild horse management, the one thing it did not provide was a budget. Forty-two years later this is still a concern.[22]

When Congress passed the 1971 Act, it made provision in the bill that allowed for the creation of an advisory board that would help government officials make decisions about the mustangs.[23] Velma Johnston voiced her support of this provision. In her testimony before the Public Lands Subcommittee of the House of Representatives on April 19, 1971, she discusses how the creation of a board would,

> provide representation of the various aspects of public interest, and to afford a wide range of expertise from which to arrive at decisions affecting the public lands in relation to wild horses and burros, we strongly support the provision calling for the appointment of such an Advisory Board.[24]

In this context, board members chosen for the committee needed to have specific knowledge of a field of study that directly related to wild horses or range management.[25] The committee would meet every year and discuss what had to be done regarding wild horse management. Many of these concerns centered on what should be done with excess animals. Because funding was not

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[19] Ibid.

[20] Lawsuits are recorded in the 1970s and beyond that provide evidence to the fact that some people tried to skirt the law to suit themselves. Sometimes the penalties' doled out by the courts were lenient enough to be laughable.

[21] *Public Law 92-195: The Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act*.

[22] Government budget cuts are slashing funding to cooperative programs like Extreme Mustang Makeover. There is not enough money to fund the many varied entities in the Wild Horse and Burro Program. As a result, some departments receive much less than others. This dissertation was compiled in 2013, which creates the forty-two year mark mentioned above.

[23] *Public Law 92-195: The Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act*.

[24] Velma Johnston, *Testimony of Mrs. Velma B. Johnston Before the Public Lands Subcommittee of the Interior and Insular Affairs Committee of the United States House of Representatives, Washington, D.C., April 19, 1971*, (Washington, 1971), p. 35. Courtesy of the Nevada Historical Society, Reno.

[25] *Public Law 92-195: The Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act*.

mandated specifically for this part of the program, during the board's third meeting in Billings, Montana, it "recommended that the Secretaries request adequate funding to do the necessary research to properly manage wild horses and burros on public lands."[26]

The BLM considered several steps before making judgments about population control. Collecting population data is a difficult task and incorporates a wide array of variables. As a result, the accuracy of population data is questionable. Counting wild horses from the air means there is a rather large margin for error, but officials still needed to know approximate population numbers because this helped identify whether or not the range was holding more animals than it could support. The government had to figure out the "number of animals on the range at the present time."[27] Another necessary piece of information centered on the range productivity compared to the amount of forage needed by the animals to maintain a consistent livelihood without stressing the land.[28] Officials also needed to take probability into account because this could help determine the "current condition of" the "range compared with its potential."[29] Identifying excess numbers meant that officials knew the range carrying capacity, or the "trend" for a specific range, compared to its usage rates.[30] Range condition was classified as being in good condition, fair condition, or poor condition. The last consideration took into account wild horse range use in addition to wildlife use and grazing allotments. Taking each of these areas into consideration helped the BLM and the National Advisory Board work together to determine range capacity, the condition of the range, and the conditions of the animals (wild and domestic) supported by it.

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[26] National Advisory Board for Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros, 1973, *National Advisory Board for Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros: July 16-17, 1973, Billings, Montana: proceedings*, [Washington]: Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, p. 9.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid., 7.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.

Counting wild horses is not an easy job. In the early 1970s, the BLM and the Forest Service began working together under the newly passed Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act. One of the first things the two federal agencies did was attempt to count the number of mustangs the ranges of the West supported. Using the methods mentioned earlier (in addition to the help provided by a pilot and a fixed-wing aircraft), a count was determined: the Forest Service had approximately 2,000 horses and 260 burros under its care, while the BLM had much higher numbers, including around 16,878 horses and 10,857 burros.[31] Reports compiled information such as approximate numbers as well as the animals' locations, land status, and specific ranges.[32] This data helped them determine the number of horses they would need to remove. Yet, despite the valid reasoning behind the roundup plan, not everyone was pleased with the government's methodology. During the January 1973 National Advisory Board meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah, public opinions became a part of the official record. A few people wanted mustang capture to remain in the hands of individuals and privately organized groups.[33] After all, landowners, ranchers, and cowboys had been managing them for more than one hundred years: Johnston's father, Heaverne's father, and even Nottingham's father are all examples of former mustangers. They thought these capture methods should continue, because they provided an outlet for western sport and pleasure.[34] In addition, if the government decided to use this type of population control, then these individuals wanted to claim ownership of the

[31] National Advisory Board for Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros, 1973, *National Advisory Board for Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros: January 12-13, 1973, Salt Lake City, Utah: proceedings*, [Washington]: Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, p. 2.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.

captured animals.[35] It seems apparent that some people wanted to return to former wild horse running techniques, despite what the law stated.[36]

A year and a half later, the sixth meeting of the National Advisory Board took place in Reno, Nevada, from September 18 through 20, in the area where wild horse protection efforts began in the mid-1950s.[37] The program needed more research to help institute a better wild horse management plan. And, as a result, Arizona State University signed a two-year contract with the BLM.[38] In 1975 the research group would study burros for approximately $35,000.[39] The following year, in 1976, the group would study wild horses, which would cost the government approximately $135,000.[40] During that same time-frame, the Forest Service is estimated to have spent about $450,000 for research on both the burros and wild horses.[41] These figures are merely from the first few years of the program.

Although the adoption program is one method of placing excess horses, it is not the only one. It is joined by an inmate and mustang rehabilitation program and an event known as Extreme Mustang Makeover. The former, an innovative program, was created in order to help both wild mustangs and troubled inmates. One program began in 1978 in Colorado under the direction of Ron Zaidlicz, a career veterinarian.[42] According to Alan Kania, Zaidlicz demonstrated a "creative use for 'excess' wild horses . . . . he worked to incorporate the need to

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[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid., 5; The Bill of 1959 and the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971, both prohibited the capture of wild horses, first on a state level and then on a national level. This did not mean that some people would stop trying to roundup horses on their own.

[37] National Advisory Board for Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros, 1974, *National Advisory Board for Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros: September 18-20, Reno, Nevada: proceedings*, [Washington]: Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management.

[38] Ibid., 7-8.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Kania, 201.

gentle the wild horses so a greater number of people could safely adopt them."[43] In time he became known as "Dr. Z" and worked with mustangs and inmates at the Cañon City-based Colorado State Penitentiary.[44] Other programs began in Carson City, Nevada, at the Warm Springs Correctional Facility as well as in Wyoming at the minimum security Wyoming State Honor Farm in Riverton.[45] Today these groups are joined by other correctional institutions across the country, including one in Hutchinson, Kansas, and another in Gunnison, Utah.[46] These correctional facilities use wild horse and inmate training programs to help both parties. This helps the inmates become more responsible. They learn how to train a wild horse from the beginning stages to the end, when it becomes a trained riding horse. The training process takes several months of hard work. This dual-purpose rehabilitation program helps the inmates and the horses. It also helps the adopters who come searching for an already trained horse. At this point the animals become more valuable and can be adopted for more money than other wild horses that are untrained. The correctional facilities play a modern role in wild horse management, but even with their help it is difficult to manage the surplus number of horses leaving public rangelands.

Since 1971, the BLM has placed over 230,000 horses with adoptive families across the country: regular adoptions, plus adoptions of trained horses thanks to programs located at correctional facilities, have helped.[47] Government documents show that during this same amount of time, the decisions concerning how many should be removed from the range constantly changed. This made it extremely difficult for government officials, volunteers in non-

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[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Cruise and Griffiths, 266.
[46] "Adoptions at Facilities," Bureau of Land Management, http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/wild_horse_and_burro/What_We_Do/wild_horse_and_burro0/facility_adoptions.html.
[47] "Adoption Program: A Rewarding Experience," Bureau of Land Management, http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/whbprogram/adoption_program.html.

profit agencies, and individuals involved in other ways to prepare for the extra animals. There are many factors involved in preparing wild horses and adopters to undergo the adoption process. The animals must be checked by a veterinarian, be of a certain age, and trainable. Once this information is collected, it becomes easier to send the animals to a relevant location, such as an adoption facility, holding pasture, or one of several correctional facilities located in the Great Plains and Western states.

Although the inmate and mustang rehabilitation program and the Extreme Mustang Makeover competition are neat placement options, the BLM's adoption program is the department's "primary tool to place these iconic animals into private care."[48] This has been its best option for placing horses since the 1971 Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act. Although some people believe that owning a wild horse is rewarding, a certain amount of horse sense, education, and patience are needed. These horses need time to adapt to humans in a new environment, plus they are often unruly and wary, which makes them unpredictable and dangerous. It is easier for some to adopt wild horses than it is for others. Before adopting a wild horse, prospective buyers and owners need to consider a few things. First, they need to consider the time it will take to train a wild horse. Second, they need to think about the financial requirements of a wild horse, including how much it may cost to hire a qualified trainer. Third, they need to determine whether or not their facilities will meet BLM requirements. Adopting a wild horse is a long-term commitment. It may begin with difficulties, but in the end the horse and the human are better, and stronger, for having had the experience. In addition, people are rewarded by creating a lifetime bond with an animal of symbolic stature. There are pros and cons to any kind of animal adoption, but considering them can make for a better all-round fit for both humans and their adopted wild horses.

[48] Ibid.

Some individuals, entranced by the possibility of owning a wild horse, went through a lot of effort in order to be adopters. Then, because of the images that greeted them, they became incensed at the so-called management program. In the late 1970s a Mrs. Brown from Orange, California, wrote to President James Carter about the deplorable sight that greeted her and her family at the Palomino Valley facilities in Reno.[49] In this two-page letter she explains how, after learning about the new wild horse adoption program, she

> submitted an application, received a letter of approval with instructions from Denver, and drove to Reno December 27th to the Palamino [sp] Valley Facility to look at the horses. The sight we saw upon arrival was ghastly beyond all belief.[50]

Her observations are detailed and filled with disgust at the way the government was treating the animals in their care. The wild horses took up space in about "10 . . . small fenced pens with absolutely no protection" from the changeable elements.[51] Because wild horses are accustomed to a wide range of conditions, this was not as big an issue as other things they encountered on their trip. The horses, regardless of age, gender, and temperament, shared the same corrals, which resulted in studs trampling young foals to death.[52]

Other major concerns included the sanitation, cleanliness, and overall conditions within the pens. According to Mrs. Brown, who was both a concerned mother and a potential adopter, the BLM "told" her "they have many more horses than for which they can find homes."[53] Coordinated efforts between the BLM, contractors, and adoption centers did not run smoothly in the program's early years. This was evident during the Browns' visit. However, in 1973 the National Advisory Board stipulated in their proceedings that "animals may be captured,

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[49] Letter from Joyce Brown to President James Carter, January 4, 1978, The White House. Box 1, 90-34. Special Collections, University of Nevada-Reno, Library.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.

corralled, and held in the most humane manner possible pending disposal . . . ."[54] These overcrowded conditions occurred in the time frame the Brown family visited Palomino Valley. She continued her description, listing details about piles of manure being trampled and mixed into the mud that the horses then had to walk through.[55] Piles of hay lay strewn about the corrals, often being mixed into the mud and manure. Altogether it was a ghastly sight, but that was not the worst part. One image left an indelible mark on her and her children. When they arrived, one of the first things they saw was a

> mare laying on her side in the manure, obviously very sick. We started to ask questions which no one cared to answer. Then without a word, approximately 5 minutes later, a man walked up right in front of us and shot the horse in the head. Then they proceeded to tie the horse, drag it out tied behind a snow plow, and lift it up into a truck with blood and his insides pouring out his mouth. What a sight for parents and their children to see who are coming to help the U.S. Government 'Save the wild horses.'[56]

The NAB says that the horses must be held humanely, as well as be under the direct "supervision of authorized personnel."[57] Although the Brown family witnessed a type of supervision, it was not at all what they expected to see. Their perceptions of the government, the BLM in particular, and the program, probably changed during that one visit. At the end of her letter she pleads with President Carter to make sure that there are homes for the horses coming off of the range. Why should they have to wait in what she emphatically describes as a "CONCENTRATION CAMP FOR WILD HORSES"?[58]

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[54] National Advisory Board for Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros, 1973, *National Advisory Board for Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros: July 16-17, 1973, Billings, Montana: proceedings*, p. 8. By referencing the "subpart" the board is referring to paragraph 4712.3-1.

[55] Joyce Brown to President Carter, January 4, 1978. Box 1, 90-34. Special Collections, University of Nevada-Reno, Library.

[56] Ibid.

[57] National Advisory Board for Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros, 1973, *National Advisory Board for Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros: July 16-17, 1973, Billings, Montana: proceedings*, p. 8.

[58] Joyce Brown to President Carter, January 4, 1978. Box 1, 90-34. Special Collections, University of Nevada, Reno, Library.

Mrs. Brown forwarded a few copies of this letter to other organizations like the Sierra Club, the National Wildlife Federation, and the United States Department of the Interior. Tina Nappe, a representative from the Sierra Club, typed a diplomatic response to address some of Mrs. Brown's concerns.[59] A mere two months before the Brown family visited the facilities, Nappe was there. As she explains, there is more to consider than is immediately apparent. "Unfortunately," she writes, "theproblem [*sic*] of overgrazing, compounded with reluctance to kill horses outright, and the disinterest of most prospective adoptees for older animals or studs, has contributed to the situation."[60] By "the situation" she is referring to overpopulated corrals and the bad weather (it was wet). In her response she explains how the majority of the horses there now are studs, with no prospective homes.[61] Furthermore, because it is "politically unpopular to kill them, they are not being killed."[62] As a result, space in the corrals fills up quickly with hundreds of unwanted horses. Limited funds hinder the creation of additional corral space, especially since the corrals already at the facility are both strong and sturdy.[63] Mrs. Brown's complaints were not unfounded, as Nappe explains, because the BLM had received many complaints concerning the conditions at Palomino Valley.[64] Because of valid public concerns the BLM and individuals with the Wild Horse Council of Delegates began discussing

[59] Tina Nappe is an important individual for anyone researching wild horses, the West, wildlife, and concerns about range and resource management. Nappe is the daughter of Gus Bundy, the famed photographer who's credited with taking the most acclaimed pictures of a wild horse roundup ever compiled. These black and white photographs helped spread information concerning the problems about wild horse roundups in the western United States. In addition, (despite the increasingly deteriorating relationship between Gus and Velma Johnston over the years) these images became central to Johnston's campaign to save the wild horses, and appeared in newspaper articles, magazine covers, and were even copied in the "Misfits," a film starring Clark Gable and Marilyn Monroe. It is impossible to discuss the subject of wild horses without mentioning his name.

[60] Tina Nappe to Joyce Brown, n.d. Box 1, 90-34. Special Collections, University of Nevada-Reno, Library.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Ibid.

how they could approve the status quo.[65] Nappe concludes her polite and informative letter by stating her sincere gratitude that

> You have made a personal expression of interest and concern by offering to take wild horse [sic] and provide a good home. We hope that others like you will also be willing to adopt a wild horse. Then the choice of destroying the unadoptable horses outright will not occur nor will they be left on the range where they would eventually destroy themselves and all wildlife with them.[66]

Understanding the complex relationship between the range, the animals it supported (wild and native), the available forage, and human involvement gave Nappe a different perspective regarding the balance of ecological interests. Her background as Gus Bundy's daughter also gave her an informed perspective in regards to wild horses on the range. As she explains, it is important to consider the problems on both sides before compromises and changes can be discussed and agreed upon.

Then, like now, the wild horse and burro program has many faults, but those listed in Mrs. Brown's letter are no longer major concerns. During two visits to the Palomino Valley Wild Horse and Burro Center, the author did not see any evidence of malnourishment or a lack of cleanliness in and around the facilities.[67] There were also many more horses than the 500 Nappe described in her letter to Mrs. Brown.[68] In 2009 the facility held a daily average of approximately 1,000 to 1,200 animals.[69] At capacity it can hold up to 1,800 horses and burros.[70] Indeed, the studs, young and old, shared similar corrals. The mares with foals occupied a long, large corral with plenty of space for them to roam.[71] They did not have to fear being trampled by

[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Andrea Mott, Field Observations at the Palomino Valley Wild Horse and Burro Center, Reno, Nevada, 2009 and 2011.
[68] Tina Nappe to Joyce Brown, n.d. Box 1, 90-34. Special Collections, University of Nevada-Reno, Library.
[69] Palomino Valley Wild Horse and Burro Center, Facility Layout Map, 2009.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Andrea Mott, "Palomino Valley Wild Horse and Burro Center: Mares and Foals," digital photograph, Reno, Nevada, 2009.

instinct-driven studs. Yes, there were many manure piles, but the hay was provided in cylindrical red bins placed well off of the ground or placed alongside the corral's rim. Instead of tromping through mud and excrement piles, the horses walked and romped on dry, rain-deprived, earth.[72] Some even basked in the pleasure of rolling in large dust mounds.[73] Bales of golden hay, stacked in large piles both outside and in hay sheds, took up a central location near the corrals, and provided evidence that the horses received plenty of food.[74]

The adoption process, though helpful, has received a lot of attention and not all of it has been good. The stipulations for taking an animal home are strict, but some, like authors Alison Griffiths and David Cruise, might argue that they are not strict enough.[75] In the program's early years it became apparent that many horses found homes, but then as soon as they left BLM control, the new owners would sell them to slaughterhouses in anticipation of the money they could receive. Horse protection groups like WHOA! and the International Society for the Protection of Mustangs and Burros (ISPMB) put extra time and effort into finding quality homes for many of these horses, yet some adopters still illegally sold some of them to slaughterhouses.[76] This was one alternative outlet for adopted wild horses, and it has received a lot of criticism.

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[72] Andrea Mott, "Palomino Valley Wild Horse and Burro Center: Corrals," digital photograph, Reno, Nevada, 2009; Andrea Mott, "Palomino Valley Wild Horse and Burro Center: Studs," digital photograph, Reno, Nevada, 2009; Mott, "Palomino Valley Wild Horse and Burro Center: Mares and Foals"; Andrea Mott, "Palomino Valley Wild Horse and Burro Center: Evidence of Dung," digital photograph, Reno, Nevada, 2009.

[73] Andrea Mott, "Palomino Valley Wild Horse and Burro Center: Rolling in the Dust," digital photograph, Reno, Nevada, 2009.

[74] Andrea Mott, "Palomino Valley Wild Horse and Burro Center: Hay," digital photograph, Reno, Nevada, 2009.

[75] Cruise and Griffiths, 265. In this section they argue how those who wanted to sidestep the BLM's authority and profit from the sale of so-called adopted wild horses, "have been remarkably resilient over the years, adroitly sidestepping the roundup and slaughter regulations and stricter enforcement."

[76] I do not mean to sound like Velma Johnston's groups are those who screened all the adoption applications. The statistics show that some of these animals found themselves at slaughterhouses rather than in a comfortable home.

The actions of certain people, called kill-buyers, forced the government to tighten adoption regulations, first in 1980 and again in 2005.[77] Since then, for one year post-adoption, the BLM retains title, or ownership of the animal. After such time has passed, adopters receive a "Title Eligibility Letter," which is a signed verification of humane treatment during the one year time-frame.[78] The BLM can transfer full ownership for the animal to the individual, but only if the animal has been well cared for during the time of "lease." The letter provides proof of proper treatment. After the letter is signed and returned to the BLM, adopters will get their "Certificate of Title."[79] Although the individual retains rights to the animal, it still cannot be sold to any slaughterhouse. At this point in the process, the animal becomes the full responsibility of the adopter.[80] As a result of people selling their adopted wild horses to various sectors of the meat market, both domestic and abroad, the BLM had to enforce tighter adoption regulations.[81]

Wild horse holding facilities and adoption facilities across the country are tapped financially and physically. This government-managed program is supported by taxes, and most people do not realize it. Reports from 2008, too recent for this study, but still relevant concerning management woes, state that thousands of wild horses in herd management areas throughout the country are "chewing through over $27 million worth of hay annually, or nearly three-quarters of the BLM's wild horse and burro budget."[82] With astronomical figures such as these, the financial problems of the entire program become more applicable to the concepts of

[77] Cruise and Griffiths, 265-266.

[78] "Adopt a Wild Horse or Burro," Wild Horse & Burro Program, U.S. Department of the Interior, BLM, p. 11.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Cruise and Griffiths, 265.

[82] "Bureau of Land Management: Effective Long-Term Options Needed to manage Unadoptable Wild Horses," Government Accountability Office, October 9, 2008, as quoted in David Cruise and Alison Griffiths, *Wild Horse Annie and the Last of the Mustangs*, p. 267.

long-term, or even short-term, sustainability. Is any management style, particularly one like this, sustainable?

Since 1971 the United States federal government has been tasked with taking care of all wild horses in the country. The BLM is the department that controls herd numbers (including how many are allocated for range use and how many must be removed), holding facilities (corrals and pastures), and even adoption facilities.[83] Despite the adoption of trained as well as untrained wild horses, thousands are left behind to spend the remainder of their lives in corrals or long-term and short-term holding pastures. These centers are concentrated in western states and are dispersed eastward, in a diffusion model. Horses come from the range, are separated at large centers into age and gender categories, and are then split into smaller groups that move east on large livestock trucks.[84] Each year thousands of horses are added to those who already made the dismal trip east, leaving the only home they knew for one that was less free and more uncertain. At this point, the uniquely colored animals are often singled out for adoption, but the more common colored ones join their like-colored friends in corrals. In addition, the ones who are too old to be adopted or easily trained join the others. Those under four years of age are adopted much faster than those over the age of four.[85] De Steiguer describes it well: "the animals that ended up in long-term facilities were largely the unadoptable; for a variety of reasons, because they were too small, too large, too old, too mean, too ordinary, and so forth."[86] The system is not fault-free, but it is approved and that keeps excess horses from becoming slaughtered and ending up as fodder for zoo animals, food markets, and pet food companies.

[83] The Bureau of Land Management's official website provides an introduction to current wild horse management efforts. Data about roundups undertaken in the past few years, Herd Management Areas (HMAs), Adoption Centers, Holding Facilities, population control methods (including PZP—a contraceptive vaccine for mares), and even training centers are provided. It can be accessed at http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/whbprogram.html.

[84] Andrea Mott, Field Notes on the PVWHBC, Reno, Nevada, 2009.

[85] Ibid.

[86] De Steiguer, 197.

The largest preparatory holding facility is located northeast of the Reno-Sparks area of Nevada. This horse center is surrounded by corrals of varying shapes and sizes, seemingly jutting out at weird angles from the facilities' main office.[87] In these oddly sized corrals, horses and burros mill around, bored, yet watchful of newcomers and intruders.[88] Many of them are bunched up with their fellow equines, finding safety in numbers, while standing as far from the corral fence as they can get.[89] Hay piles lie strewn about providing evidence to show that the animals are being cared for by someone.[90] The animals, depending on their gender, are placed in separate corrals to keep the herd instinct or protective instincts from taking over. Mares and their foals enjoy more space in a larger corral.[91] The foals lie about, play, or nurse while their mothers eat. Most of them are in a variety of brownish tones. Many of these animals may end up with an adoptive family in another part of the country, particularly the mares and foals. Across the facility, in another large corral, studs roam around, rolling in dust piles, eating hay, or stand with watchful eyes and ears pointed towards the gates.[92] Just because they are off their home ranges does not mean they have forgotten a lifetime of skills enhanced by years of living in remote mountain and desert regions. The Palomino Valley Wild Horse and Burro Center

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[87] Andrea Mott, "View from the Air," digital photograph, Reno, Nevada, 2009. On my flight into Reno the airplane happened to pass directly over Pyramid Lake, and as a result, it was fairly easy to see the PVWHBC from the airplane window. Fortunately, this gave me a birds-eye view of the corral setup, the facilities, its location, and surrounding topography. This information is also contained in the PVWHBC, Facility Layout Map, 2009. See Appendix A for a view of the layout.

[88] Andrea Mott, "PVWHBC: Horses," digital photograph, Reno, Nevada, 2009; Andrea Mott, "PVWHBC: Burros," digital photography, Reno, Nevada, 2009; Andrea Mott, "PVWHBC: Horses," digital photograph, Reno, Nevada, 2011; Andrea Mott, "PVWHBC: Burros," digital photograph, Reno, Nevada, 2011.

[89] Andrea Mott, "PVWHBC: Corrals," digital photograph, Reno, Nevada, 2009; Andrea Mott, "PVWHBC: Corrals," digital photograph, Reno, Nevada, 2011. The author has many photographs in her possession that depict the scenes described in the above narrative.

[90] Cruise and Griffiths, 267.

[91] Mott, "PVWHBC: Mares and Foals." This photograph was taken during my first field excursion into the PVWHBC. The corrals seemed rather full of horses milling about. Mares and foals were kept separate from the others in a large corral. Foals are classified as horses still less than one year of age. Plenty of hay bales and water were available. Most of these horses, mares and foals, were in various shades of browns and bays. This information is also contained in the PVWHBC, Facility Layout Map, 2009.

[92] Andrea Mott, "PVWHBC: Studs in Corral," digital photograph, Reno, Nevada, 2009.

separates and holds thousands of wild horses every year, a tough job by any standard. It is here that all horses removed from the range by BLM contractors come to be cared for until they are moved to another facility or holding pasture in the East. As evidenced by the Brown family's experience, a few may end up being adopted from the center itself. They send some to holding centers in the Midwest, while adoptable horses go towards the East Coast, Oklahoma, or prison camps.[93] Horses of all sizes and shapes, from small to draft, and colors from palominos, roans, paints, bays, and grays, await their turn on the long transition to another place, calmly chewing hay or staring off into the distant mountains. Their journey has barely begun.

Figure 6. Wild horses mill about the PVWHBC corrals on a warm spring day. Andrea Mott, "PVWHBC: Corrals," digital photograph, (April 2009).

[93] Mott, Field Notes, 2009.

Two separate trips to the Palomino Valley Wild Horse and Burro Center revealed the fascination people, particularly small children, have with wild horses. When they see a horse behind the corral fences, they immediately want it, wild or not. Once these animals are placed with adopters, the question then centers on their wild appearance. With proper training these animals can become domestic, but left with their wild tendencies they are not good animals for families with small children who do not understand the full difference between a domestic or wild horse. People debate the so-called wildness of a wild horse.[94] The author's visits, one in April of 2009 and again in August of 2011, provided time for an on-site analysis of the facilities and the animals it housed.[95] They also put the researcher near some curious onlookers who held their own opinions regarding wild horses.[96] It is easy to understand the draw the horses have to people who do not really comprehend the underlying complexities in a government-managed program like this one. These details often play a role in the controversy. Perhaps a better understanding of the situation will help improve how the broader public sees what is happening on public rangeland throughout the country. No matter what, people (horse enthusiasts or not) still want to own a piece of the history of what they call American West. Onlookers at the Palomino Valley Wild Horse and Burro Center seemed intrigued when staring into a corral of wild horses, or in other terms, a corral full of living history. Perhaps entranced is a better term than intrigued. The onlookers did seem somewhat mystified.

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[94] Velma Johnston, *Testimony of Mrs. Velma B. Johnston Before the Public Lands Subcommittee of the Interior and Insular Affairs Committee of the United States House of Representatives, Washington, D.C., April 19, 1971*, p. 33. Courtesy of the Nevada Historical Society, Reno. In this section of her testimony Velma discusses several terms related to wild horses, including: feral, wild, wildlife, and domestic. This needed to be done in order to define what a "wild horse" was for legislative purposes.

[95] The first trip took place in early April of 2009, the same trip in which I met Clifford Heaverne, one of the few helicopter pilots with the skills to roundup horses. The next trip took place at the end of August in 2011, when I returned to the Reno area to collect Clifford's oral history. The different seasons provided an additional glimpse into operations at the PVWHBC.

[96] While collecting field research at the PVWHBC I overheard many small children (all of whom stood by the corral fence) exclaiming about how cool the wild horses were. It is interesting to note how this fascination with horses begins at a young age, at the age when children cannot easily distinguish a wild horse from one that has been domesticated. After all, they do have identical physical characteristics.

Millions of dollars are allocated each year to support the wild horse programs controlled by the BLM.[97] It takes a lot of money (government funded) to maintain and run a large facility like this one. Taxpayers are funding millions of dollars into this program every year. The funding helps sustain multiple holding facilities, adoption centers, and long-term holding pastures across the country.[98] The animals are provided with food, shelter when needed, and veterinary care.[99] Thousands of animals are transported through these places each year, and most of them began their journey at the Palomino Valley Wild Horse and Burro Center. It is hard to narrow down the percentages of horses that end up being adopted and compared to those who are not. It is difficult to know how many were placed in holding facilities and how many died (either because a veterinarian recommended it or died from natural causes or those incurred from roundups). Even some surplus horses arriving at correctional facilities may turn out to be extremely difficult to train. Researching this kind of data makes it easier to determine the percentage of success in placing horses in adoptive care out of the total number of animals taken off the range since 1971. Numbers from the past forty-two years need to be accounted for, and calculated using available evidence. What makes it worse is that there is no way to know how many adopted horses actually ended up at rendering plants or slaughterhouses. The BLM already manages thousands, but these numbers grow as more animals come off of the range.[100]

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[97] Cruise and Griffiths, 267.

[98] National Research Council, "Using Science to Improve the BLM Wild Horse and Burro Program: A Way Forward" (Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press, 2012), http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=13511, p. 14.

[99] De Steiguer, 192. In this book the author details the process of animals entering the holding facilities, undergoing veterinary care, and receiving a BLM freeze mark for identification purposes. This is done for each horse and burro; National Research Council, "Using Science to Improve the BLM Wild Horse and Burro Program: A Way Forward," 265. This report concludes that in 2012 the program spent 60 percent of its allotted budget, or $40 million, on caring for the animals already contained in holding facilities around the country.

[100] Cruise and Griffiths, 265. The concept of population and herd control becomes more relevant as fewer adopters take on mustangs. Population management is an issue that Velma Johnston, BLM officials, scholars, and congressmen debated for years between the late 1950s and the early 1970s. It remains a pertinent subject in the twenty-first century. And yet, at the same time the program is still difficult to maintain.

Many adopted animals become work, show, or pleasure horses. Sometimes, these horses show better than highly bred ones; it depends on the dedication, experience, and knowledge of their new owners. Their toughness is bred on the range, as is their hardiness. Their looks are also luck of the draw. Clifford Heaverne's father Pat trained wild horses he gathered from the public range. Velma Johnston's father did the same thing, rounding up horses he could use for his cargo shipping business. Many other western individuals grew up with this same thought process: if the horse is there, find a way to round it up and bring it in to serve a useful purpose. Their use was limited, but every horse coming off of the range found a place in society, whether as a work animal or a pleasure animal. One of Pat's horses became reknowned on the show circuit, a champion in his own right who became revered for his looks (he was a Kiger mustang), conformation, and well-adapted trainability.[101] Of course, one cannot discount the amount of work Pat put into a horse like this in order for it to turn out so well. Someone who has the knowledge and time to train a mustang can end up with a quality animal. Nowadays trainers can compete on a national scale with the Extreme Mustang Makeover Competition, or find a trained horse at correctional facilities throughout Wyoming, Kansas, Utah, Nevada, and Colorado. Trained mustangs like these can be sold for thousands of dollars, much more than the minimum $125 BLM adoption fee.[102]

Occasionally someone would speak up about the pros and cons of the adoption program. Pearl Twyne, an outspoken advocate for wild horses, spoke at the 1976 National Advisory Board meeting in John Day, Oregon. She discussed the current state of disposal for wild horses coming off of rangelands, concluding that the animals have been made available to members of the

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[101] Clifford Heaverne, 2011, Oral History, interviewed by Andrea Mott, digital audio recording, Fallon, Nevada, August 29.

[102] "Adopt a Wild Horse or Burro," p. 7.

public who want them.[103] However, she continued, without proper management of the livestock using those same ranges, then the land will still be severely damaged.[104] Horse reductions need to coincide with livestock reduction, otherwise one effort will countermand the other and nothing good will come of it. Adoption is a good outlet for excess horses, but once the horses are removed, will the range improve or become worse? That depended on the continuance of livestock grazing permits.

The BLM's Adopt a Wild Horse or Burro Program has had many ups and downs in the past several decades. While some people stand strong in their belief that the program is doing a great job, others do not maintain the same positivity. As more and more horses are removed from public rangelands throughout the West, it becomes more imperative to find a solution to population control. Without these means in place, there will be a surplus of wild horses in the future. There will possibly be a shortage of funding available to run the program. There is no reason why thousands of horses should be held in what Mrs. Brown called concentration camps if another viable solution to population control can be found. Although some methods are being experimented with, there is yet to be a good determination on what is to be done. In just 2009, the government spent approximately $50 million of taxpayer money to fund a program that keeps compounding the main issue: population control.[105] If this is taken care of, then perhaps fewer animals will have to rely on the mercy of the BLM's Wild Horse and Burro Program. Maybe then they will be able to retain some of their wildness, just not all. In the meantime, the public, supporters, and critics wait on the sidelines for solutions to these problems.

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[103] Pearl Twyne, 1976, in *National Advisory Board for Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros: June 3-4, John Day, Oregon: proceedings,* [Washington]: Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Appendix 12, p. 1-2.

[104] Ibid., Appendix 12, p. 2.

[105] Bureau of Land Management, "Wild Horse and Burro Management Fact Sheet," January 2010, http://www.azgfd.gov/inside_azgfd/documents/WHBBLMFactSheets.pdf.

WHEN THE DUST SETTLES

They are referred to as broomtails, nuisances, pests, symbols, and icons. They are epitomized in historical and modern literature, films, historical monographs, scientific journals, and twenty-first century social media. Perceptions and beliefs regarding wild horses in the United States are swayed with writings and visual images like these, particularly if they are meant to be persuasive. Humans may learn from them in an objective way, or be influenced by them in a subjective manner. Groups, organizations, and individuals often perceive these elements through different lenses, which are shaped by belief systems, personal history, and experiences.[1] Perhaps understanding these lenses in more depth can bring society closer to knowing whether or not there is a chance of resolving wild horse issues in the future. Is it possible to have a completely rational view of wild horses in their adopted habitat? The obvious answer is no, mostly because this is one of the most emotional subjects the United States government, along with individual state governments, has taken on in recent history. It is essential to redefine the perspectives held by each group and examine them in terms of their historical significance. How can these concerns be addressed in a way that would account for the pivotal role the horse has had on these various groups? Will the future of the United States include a permanent place for these animals without being them being chased, captured, or killed? When the dust settles what will ultimately become of wild horses in the United States?

The ways of the wild horse were transformed between 1934 and 1984, but the story did not end there. Controversy, misconceptions, and perceptions about them have continued to

[1] Ted Barber, *The Barnstorming Mustanger: His Life and Times* (Orovado, NV: Barber Industries, Inc., 1987), 278. Barber is quite vocal regarding his opinions about the BLM Wild Horse and Burro Program. This self-published work blasts the federal program and its management methods. As he explains, "there are plenty of mustangers around who could and would gather the surplus horses—just as humanely as government is doing it and at no cost to the taxpayer—provided they be permitted to make a buck or two on commercial sale of the animals." His views about the romanticized nature of wild horses, the Wild Horse Act (of 1971), and resource management come through loud and clear in this piece.

change and be debated well into the twenty-first century. Studying relevant written works, groups, and individual narratives may help bring about a more conclusive and accepting grasp of how perceptions about wild horses have changed in the past century. Management problems, long-lived conflicts between government representatives and civilians, and the outlook for wild horses and their contested freedom in the continental United States are serious topics.

Written and visual works provide outlets for their audiences. Sometimes it gives them a temporary place to forget reality and become lost in a story, whether it is based on fact or fiction. Some works take readers on journeys, such as Marguerite Henry's *Mustang, Wild Spirit of the West* and *Misty of Chincoteague*, J. Frank Dobie's *The Mustangs*, and Will James' *Smoky the Cowhorse*.[2] In the twenty-first century there is a resurgence of interest in these animals, along with the political intrigue surrounding them, as shown through works like Deanne Stillman's *Mustang: The Saga of the Wild Horse in the American West*, J. Edward de Steiguer's *Wild Horses of the West: History and Politics of America's Mustangs*, Cruise and Griffiths's work *Wild Horse Annie and the Last of the Mustangs*, and Alan Kania's *Wild Horse Annie*.[3] In addition, wild horses are portrayed in films like *The Misfits*, *Hidalgo*, and even the 1961 classic

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[2] Marguerite Henry, *Mustang: Wild Spirit of the West* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1966); Marguerite Henry, *Misty of Chincoteague* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1947); J. Frank Dobie, *The Mustangs: Valiant, Wild and Free They Roved the Western Plains*, 4th ed. (New York: Bantam Books, 1952); Will James, *Smoky, the Cowhorse* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926). Another work in literature geared towards a youthful audience and focused on wild horses is: Mel Ellis, *The Wild Horse Killers* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1976). This book is actually dedicated to Wild Horse Annie and the schoolchildren around the country who began the long-lived campaign to save the wild horse. In this book the heroine, Sandra, witnesses the brutality of wild horse catchers and makes a mission out of rescuing the captured herds. She ends up rescuing her own stallion "Red" along with a multitude of wild horses. This perception of a heroine coming in and saving the horses is rather parallel to Velma Johnston's own rescue mission. This book is geared towards a young audience, but Ellis gives the horses an identity that equates to strength in the face of adversity. Sandra pushes the horses onward to a brighter, secure future on a wild horse reservation where they will be safe from the wild horse killers.

[3] Deanne Stillman, *Mustang: The Saga of the Wild Horse in the American West* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2008); David Cruise and Alison Griffiths, *Wild Horse Annie and the Last of the Mustangs: The Life of Velma Johnston* (New York: Scribner, 2010); Alan Kania, *Wild Horse Annie: Velma Johnston and Her Fight to Save the Mustang* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2012).

Misty (of Chincoteague).[4] In addition to popular literature and film appearances, they are also discussed in academic works like those of historians Walter P. Webb, Elliott West, and Pekka Hämäläinen.[5] Conservationists, biologists, ecologists, range scientists, and equine specialists have also discussed these equines in detail.[6] Now, as a new century unfolds, the public is resorting to social media platforms, organizational websites, and blogs to follow current events, issues, and updates on wild horses in the United States.[7]

Literature can sway perception, and popular media create imagined experiences rather than physical ones. These imagined perceptions about the way horses live west of the Mississippi are created through the skills of talented storytellers. They hold more gravitas when the narratives are based on factual events rather than fictional ones. One such story involved the

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[4] *The Misfits*, DVD, directed by John Huston (1961; Santa Monica, CA: Seven Arts Productions, 2001); *Hidalgo*, DVD, directed by Joe Johnston (2004; Los Angeles, CA: Touchstone Pictures); *Misty*, DVD, directed by James B. Clark (1961; United States: Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation). *The Misfits* weaves a story with the likes of Clark Gable and Marilyn Monroe as central characters. They become involved in a wild horse roundup on the Nevada ranges (a subject that Velma Johnston discusses in her personal and professional correspondence). The scenes take into account the photographs that Gus Bundy famously (and secretly) took. The movie scenes and photographs (all black and white) are eerily similar. *Hidalgo*, a more modern film but one based on historical events, tells the story of a late-nineteenth century cowboy, and the grandson of a Native American chief. The plot revolves around this man and his mustang stallion Hidalgo. He pits the endurance of his wild, range-bred and range-hardened horse, up against the most well-bred Arabian horses of the time period. It is a story of strength, endurance, and courage despite the odds being stacked against him. In the classic 1961 film *Misty*, one of Marguerite Henry's stories comes to life in the form of a wild Assateague Island pony. As a foal it ends up being adopted and trained by an island family. The wild ponies of Assateague Island are still culled in roundups.

[5] Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Plains* (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1931); Elliott West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, & the Rush to Colorado* (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 1998); Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

[6] Joel Berger, *Wild Horses of the Great Basin: Social Competition and Population Size*, Wildlife Behavior and Ecology Series, edited by George B. Schaller (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1986); Jerry Holechek, Rex Piper, and Carlton Herbel, *Range Management: Principles and Practices,* 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1998). Multiple veterinary sources and DVM's discuss the "unwanted horse" epidemic in America and how it is connected to the BLM Wild Horse and Burro Program.

[7] In the past several years, namely from around 2008 through 2014, social outlets like Facebook and Twitter have become venues for individuals to voice their support for and against different issues. One of these issues has become the controversy surrounding wild horses, range problems, and slaughter. It is evident from the thousands of posts people have contributed that there is still a strong stance against the reduction of wild horse numbers through slaughter. That being said, there is also a strong stance from biologists, ecologists, and equine specialists to reduce numbers through humane slaughter within the United States. This is merely one solution for the "unwanted horse" problem currently being debated and discussed. Organizational websites like those from *WHOA!*, the Humane Society of the United States, and the *Cloud Foundation* also publish information about wild horse conditions on the range, roundups, adoptions, and even volunteer opportunities. There are many other websites dedicated to organizations, but in terms of wild horses, these are among the most commonly sought after.

illustrated tale *Mustang: Wild Spirit of the West*, in which the well-known author Marguerite Henry struck up a working friendship with Velma Johnston and wrote the story based on her life.[8] It was published in 1966, during a time when animals were given human-like characteristics in other media formats, particularly in television. These human-like characteristics, including talking, are referred to as anthropomorphic.[9] One such television series, known as "Mister Ed," ran from 1958 through 1966 and featured a talking horse that always got his owner in trouble.[10] This anthropomorphic treatment continued in other programs. In 2002 the animated film *Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron* also featured a talking horse, this time in the form of a buckskin stallion born and raised on western ranges, and it appealed to younger audiences.[11] Even the story of *Black Beauty*, first produced in 1971, takes on these anthropomorphic characteristics, with Beauty narrating his own battle with life in England during the 1870s.[12] These three talking horses, though just epitomized in film and television, still created a cinematic bond with those who viewed them on screen.[13]

In some cases films that are based on so-called real experiences provide another outlet to help transform or influence perception. In *The Misfits* and *Hidalgo*, two different viewpoints are given regarding wild horses. In the former the audience sees the actors put together a roundup conducted on the desolate Nevada desert, not far from Reno.[14] Although this is not the film's feature story, it is one that combines personalized internal struggles with external ones. The

[8] Many letters denoting continued correspondence between these two women can be found in the Velma Johnston Collection at the Denver Public Library.

[9] The actual definition of "anthropomorphic" is "ascribing human form or attributes to a being or thing not human." *Dictionary.com*, s.v. "Anthropomorphic," http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/anthropomorphic?s=t.

[10] *Mister Ed*, created by Walter Brooks, (1961; Hollywood, CA: Filmways Television).

[11] *Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron*, DVD, directed by Kelly Asbury and Lorna Cook (2002; United States: DreamWorks Animation).

[12] *Black Beauty*, DVD, directed by Caroline Thompson (1971; United States: Warner Bros., 1994).

[13] Paul G. Irwin, "Overview: The State of the Animals," (HSUS, 2001), 8. Other shows such as "My Friend Flicka," "The Roy Rogers Show," and "Fury" also focused on the human and horse relationship. These shows portray the horses as family member rather than as a working animal.

[14] *The Misfits*.

human relationship is the main internal struggle, while the physical one involves the wild horses. These filmed images are direct representations of Gus Bundy's black and white photographs.[15] In *Hidalgo*, the second film, the main character Frank Hopkins also struggles with mental and physical challenges. Hopkins struggles with accepting his heritage, finally calling upon his Native American roots towards the end of a multi-thousand mile race across the Arabian Desert on his mustang stallion Hidalgo.[16] Hidalgo represents the West, as he is fast, courageous, tough, strong, and spirited. Together these two conquer the desert, the dismal odds stacked against them, their internal fears, and convince other people not to judge a book by its rugged cover. This is a story that many people believe is factual, yet Edward de Steiguer calls it a complete fabrication.[17] Despite that, it is still one that emotionally captures its audience.

Perceptions regarding wild horses in the United States are varied, ranging from supportive and emotional to rational and scientific. Most of the rational works come from scholarly research, whether it is based on historic or scientific research. Outside of the well-known works by Webb, West, and Hämäläinen, there are more recent publications. One of these, James R. Skillen's *The Nation's Largest Landlord: The Bureau of Land Management in the American West*, examines how federal land policies shape perspectives. In it he clarifies that decisions about public land policy and the BLM signify a greater "struggle to redraw the physical and discursive boundaries of the public lands in order to reshape them as a comprehensive and cohesive *system of national lands* that is managed in service of the *national*

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[15] *The Misfits*; "Dragging Horses into truck-delete," photograph by Gus Bundy, http://contentdm.library.unr.edu/u?/spphotos,6238. Gus Bundy Collection, Special Collections Department, University of Nevada, Reno Libraries; "Five men grouped by plane and two trucks," photograph by Gus Bundy, http://contentdm.library.unr.edu/u?/spphotos,6225. Gus Bundy Collection, Special Collections Department, University of Nevada, Reno Libraries; "Horse with rope around neck," photograph by Gus Bundy, http://contentdm.library.unr.edu/u?/spphotos,6222. Gus Bundy Collection, University of Nevada, Reno Libraries.

[16] *Hidalgo*.

[17] J. Edward de Steiguer, *Wild Horses of the West: History and Politics of America's Mustangs* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2011), 95.

interest."[18] The implication here is that federal lands are not truly being managed according to national interest. Rather, they are being managed in individual plots, rather than as a cohesive whole. Another work focuses on the more recent controversy surrounding wild horses and the land. This 2011 piece by J. Edward de Steiguer suggests that horses are not the only creatures trying to maintain, indeed preserve, their way of life on the range.[19] Ranchers and cattlemen are trying to do the same thing, which is, he concludes, something that the public has a difficult time understanding.[20] The histories of both groups are inextricably bound together by decades of co-habitation on the same rangelands.[21] These humans' way of life is shaped by the horse, much like the Native American groups who came before them. Without them life would not be the same.

Scientific reports are also used to show what changes can be made to the BLM's Wild Horse and Burro Program. In 2012 the National Academy of the Sciences published a report titled "Using Science to Improve the BLM Wild Horse and Burro Program: A Way Forward."[22] In this report professionals from dozens of universities, government offices, and zoos come together in order to formulate a plan about the future management of wild horses on public land. The work acknowledges the wide-ranging public perception about wild horse management

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[18] James R. Skillen, *The Nation's Largest Landlord: The Bureau of Land Management in the American West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009), 191.

[19] De Steiguer, 212.

[20] Ibid.

[21] If cowboys, ranchers, and others did not try to capture, train, or sell wild horses then the West would have lost some of its culture. Rodeos, wild horse races (at fairs), and other important elements of western society would not carry the same meaning. Wild horses are as much a part of the West as the people. Other resources, such as oral histories, showcase this mutual history: Wanda (Ramsey) Walker and Dawn (Walker) Nottingham, 2011, Oral History, interviewed by Paul and Ellen Bonnifield, Douglas Mountain, Colorado, June 1; Clifford Heaverne, 2011, Oral History, interviewed by Andrea Mott, digital audio recording, Fallon, Nevada, July 29; Dawn (Walker) Nottingham, 2013, Oral History, interviewed by Andrea Mott, digital audio recording, Craig, Colorado, July 26; Tom and Elmora (Vaughan) Peterson, Oral History, interviewed by Andrea Mott, digital audio recording, Rock Springs, Wyoming, July 27.

[22] National Research Council, "Using Science to Improve the BLM Wild Horse and Burro Program: A Way Forward" (Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press, 2012), http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=13511.

currently held in the United States. Guy Hughes Palmer, the Committee Chair, suggests that "there is also common ground as to the goal of sustaining healthy equid populations managed on healthy rangeland."[23] The current management plan consists of continual horse removal through roundups. It is not only expensive and controversial, but also unsustainable. In recent decades individuals who have grown up near the wild horse regions have noticed the inbred quality of the animals, which is a direct result of culling the most genetically viable herds and leaving those with poor physical traits on the land.[24] The best way to move forward, the report concludes, is by focusing on the data. Findings in the report also suggest that the BLM should encourage a better transference of information with the public. "The public should be able to understand the methods used and how they are implemented and should be able to access the data used to make decisions."[25] Transparency could increase trust between the various groups.[26] A new plan needs to be implemented for the continued viability of wild herds, the health of the rangelands, and the availability of necessary resources used by other animals. Studies like this one reiterate the importance of initiating changes in the BLM Wild Horse and Burro Program.

Opinions about this controversial subject are shaped by popular media in addition to heritage, individual backgrounds, ages, and life experiences.[27] Many Native American tribes relied heavily upon horses for many things, including transportation, warfare, hunting, trade, and

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[23] Guy Hughes Palmer, quoted in National Research Council, "Using Science to Improve the BLM Wild Horse and Burro Program: A Way Forward" (Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press, 2012), http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=13511 (Accessed April 6, 2013), vii.

[24] Heaverne, Oral History. Heaverne has noticed this trend for a long time. The horses do not have the same physical traits as they had fifty years ago when his father gathered and trained them; National Research Council, "Using Science to Improve the BLM Wild Horse and Burro Program: A Way Forward," 145. The report discusses how the removal of animals can limit genetic diversity among herds, which may result in inbreeding.

[25] National Research Council, "Using Science to Improve the BLM Wild Horse and Burro Program: A Way Forward," 11.

[26] Ibid., 11.

[27] The variances of opinion and perception are rather broad. The schoolchildren who supported Velma by sending her letters during the 1960s and 1970s were swayed by the ongoing issue. Older individuals who relied on a healthy range usually had a different opinion. For some, this meant that they enjoyed seeing the horses, but knew that they could also damage the range if their numbers grew uncontrollably.

status within their societies. For them the wild horse is a symbol of life and wealth. Their adaptation to life on horseback shaped many Native American cultures from the seventeenth century through the nineteenth century, a period of time that Dobie named the "Age of Horse Culture."[28] This horse culture intimidated outsiders, because "the mounted Indian constituted a formidable light calvary."[29] It was also a valid reason for the late arrival of settlers on the Great Plains. Even though the horse was a symbol of culture, it was also the reliance on the horse that contributed to Native Americans' downfall.[30] Resource competition and limited range availability further exacerbated the situation.[31] For centuries their cultural identity was shaped by the existence of the horse in their societies. Even now, images of wild horses and Native Americans still play in the minds of the public.[32] Today some tribes still try to protect the role of the horse in their society.

In the nineteenth century settlers headed westward and encountered a rough and inhospitable landscape, Native Americans who opposed their presence, and a plethora of native and non-native animals. The native buffalo became a source of food for the settlers. However, it had long been a source of food, weaponry, shelter, and even culture for the Native Americans who relied upon them for survival. Like the adept horsemen of the Comanche and Sioux tribes

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[28] Dobie, 33; Robert M. Denhardt, *The Horse of the Americas* (Norman, OK : University of Oklahoma Press, 1947), vii; De Steiguer, 101; West, 49-50. West examines how incorporating the horse into human culture on the plains started new ways of life.

[29] De Steiguer, 100; Denhardt, 111-12. Denhardt examines how the Indians learned to ride horses in a way that left their hands free to handle weapons. This adaptation turned them into formidable warriors.

[30] West, 84. "The need *for* horses and the needs *of* horses put a practical limit on the size of nomadic groups"; West, 191.

[31] West, 53. The advantages of having horses (strength, speed, wealth) outweighed its disadvantages which included meeting challenging resource needs, such as plenty of grassland and the availability of water in areas where it was scarce; West, 70. Hunting became a faster process on horseback.

[32] Old American westerns tend to show the perceived wildness of Native Americans.

of the Great Plains, new settlers also had to learn the skills necessary to trap horses for use on ranches, farms, and in trade.[33] By 1890,

> The land that only a few decades earlier had been the domain of the Comanches and the Sioux, as well as pasturage for millions of head of roaming bison, antelope, and wild horses, was now firmly in the grasp of white Americans and destined to be forever altered.[34]

From this point on the open land was controlled by the United States federal government. Land policies, animal management policies, and the interaction between humans and their environments would take a different turn.

From the late 1800s well into the 1900s humans, the only true predator of the wild horse herds, controlled population numbers with roundups, culls, and trade.[35] In many cases it was a way to earn money and support a family, but in others it was merely one method of reducing wild herd numbers so the land, and its limited resources, could be shared amongst other groups, including livestock and native wildlife.[36] Later on, well into the twentieth century, horses (many of whom could no longer be considered domesticated) became exploited as a source of food for zoo animals and domesticated pets. Oftentimes referred to as "chicken feed" in news reports, wild horses were considered a resource to some and a nuisance to others. It usually depended on one's connection to the surrounding range. Greed propelled some individuals to round up as

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[33] Heaverne, Oral History; Cecil Connors, 1981, Oral History, interviewed by Paul Bonnifield, Phippsburg, Colorado, October 26; Dawn (Walker) Nottingham, Oral History; Tom and Elmora (Vaughan) Peterson, Oral History; Multiple letters and personal reminiscences of Velma Johnston also examine these elements. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[34] De Steiguer, 115.

[35] Cecil Connors, Oral History; Clifford Heaverne, Oral History; Dawn (Walker) Nottingham, Oral History; Tom and Elmora Peterson, Oral History. Each of these individuals has spent a considerable amount of time working with wild horses. Sometimes this meant they rounded them up and loaded them on trains. Others helped cull wild herds to earn a little money. And still others worked for the government itself, culling animals using a variety of techniques learned on and off the range. These skills and experiences have helped shape western culture and the lives of those who have lived in close proximity to these wild herds; National Research Council, "Using Science to Improve the BLM Wild Horse and Burro Program: A Way Forward," 74. This report suggests that the only true animal predators of wild equids in the United States consist of mountain lions; Berger, *Wild Horses of the Great Basin*, 17-18, 43. Studies do not rule out the possibility of wolves and bears as potential predators; Berger, 17-18.

[36] Cecil Connors, Oral History; Clifford Heaverne, Oral History; Dawn (Walker) Nottingham, Oral History; Tom and Elmora Peterson, Oral History.

many animals as they could to then sell to rendering works and slaughterhouses around the country. These actions, and the resulting reduction of wild horses on the range, pushed forward a new conservation movement.

The shifting tide of awareness took place later, during the 1950s and 1960s, as animal rights groups, environmental groups, and resource and wildlife conservation and preservation groups gained a foothold in American society.[37] These groups wrote bulletins addressing certain issues that might induce more people to support their various causes, whether it was protection for animals (wild and domestic) or the environment. At the same time something else was happening, especially concerning wild horses and the range. The plight of the horse entered the bigger picture and gained attention in newspapers, magazines (at home and abroad), and on the news.[38] Photographs, films, stories, and letters focused on efforts to protect the wild horses' historic image in the United States.[39] Some citizens wrote their state representatives about the problems in the hope that something humane could be done.[40] To this day many individuals

[37] Paul G. Irwin, "Overview: The State of the Animals" (HSUS, 2001). The Humane Society of the United States began in 1954; Marian Graboski to "Mustang Annie," 5 February 1972. Box 686, FF26. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. Graboski, from Pennsylvania, wrote to inform Johnston that she belongs "to several societies to protect animals."

[38] During the early years of the movement, the 1950s, TRUE Magazine ran articles that focused on the plight of the wild horses in the western United States. They included photographs (the legality of which is debated in letters), stories, and information contributed by Velma Johnston. Carol Griffith to Velma Johnston, 22 May 1958. Box 686, FF26. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. Griffith wrote how "I was deeply disturbed to learn of the hunting of wild horses written up in the June issue" of the magazine. She concluded her letter about the article confessing how "it is hard to believe in the human race after reading such things."

[39] See the Gus Bundy Collection in the Special Collections, University of Nevada-Reno, Library; films include *Hidalgo*, *Misty*, *The Misfits, Spirit*; for stories see *Smokey: The Cowhorse*, *Mustang: Wild Spirit of the West*, *The Mustangs: Valiant, Wild and Free They Roved the Western Plains*, *Wild Horse Killers*; for letters see the Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. A couple of these letters include: Tommy Burke to Johnson, 6 June 1973. Box 686, FF5. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. Irene Bolta to Velma, 6 March 1973. Box 686, FF4. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

[40] Nevada Lariettes to Honorable Walter S. Baring, 14 April 1958. Box 686, FF23. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; Beula Edminston to Attorney General Honorable John Mitchell, 20 August 1969. Box 686, FF23. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; Beula Edminston to Secretary of the

believe that Wild Horse Annie did a wonderful thing by pushing legislation to protect America's wild horses, while others disagree and say she has done more harm than good.[41] It is impossible to know for sure how events might have transpired without her involvement, but she has become a legendary, or iconic, figure in the wild horse world. To those on the other side of the fence, she was viewed as a nuisance.

Oral histories and regional case studies are essential elements in better understanding widespread perspectives concerning wild horses in the United States. These personal narratives shape what is known about these horses, the range, as well as the involvement of advocate and activist groups, the federal government, and other closely related issues. Pulling these insightful narratives into the overall history of wild horses in the United States is an important, and often overlooked, piece of the puzzle. The episodes "From Resource to Nuisance," "No Home on the Range," and "Piloting the Herd," are incorporated in the attempt to try and analyze how these narratives fit into the overall historical piece. They provide detailed situational glances into a world that is often hidden. Narrators' emotions range from happiness and sadness to anger-filled and regretful. Oftentimes these depended on the story that was shared about a family member, a

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Interior, Honorable Walter J. Hickel, 6 November 1969. Box 686, FF23. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; Victor Erben to WHOA!, April 1973. Box 686, FF23. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library; Dorothy Florin to Velma Johnston, 3 March 1973. Box 686, FF24. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. In this letter Florin says she has written to Governor Reagan as Johnston had suggested; Noel to Velma Johnston, March 1973. Box 686, FF24. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. Noel is a young person interested in the wild horses. He said he "wrote to all the governors that" were "named" and included Easter related drawings at the bottom of the page; Elethea Goodkin to Wild Horse Annie, 26 April 1973. Box 686, FF26. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. Goodkin attached letters she wrote to her representatives; Velma Johnston to Verne Wood, 4 February 1958. Box 685, FF2. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. Velma Johnston to W. H. Ringe, 10 August 1959. Box 685, FF6. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. Velma Johnston Collection, Denver Public Library.

[41] Several organizations focus on Velma Johnston's crusade, using her work as an example of why it is important to protect the horses. In some ways they preserve the heritage of the wild horse conservation and protection movement through voicing their own modern issues.

fellow mustanger, or even a horse that was once encountered on the range. Cecil Connors once discussed a horse with an emotion much like regret in his voice, explaining that what they did was not always the right thing to do.[42] Clifford Heaverne, whose background was shaped by horses and the range, was a compassionate war veteran with a heart for animals.[43] He was willing to fly his helicopter back out over desolate country to pick up an orphan foal and bring it home, only to hear about its death several days later.[44] These men might have lived hard and worked hard, but they still cared about the horses they captured. This is a perception that media outlets often overlook, particularly in the case of Heaverne, because he was a contractor for the BLM. Personal history and heritage play major roles in the way individuals like Connors and Heaverne interacted with their surroundings. Perceptions are influenced by personal experience.

Other people of the Sand Wash Basin in Colorado, the Great Basin in Nevada, and even the Red Desert in southern Wyoming could also relate to the wild horse gathering experiences of Connors and Heaverne. They rounded up horses based on the possibility of earning a few bucks, but occasionally they received more bumps and bruises than coins. Dawn (Walker) Nottingham's history revolves around the Douglas Mountain region of northwestern Colorado, where the dirt and the pavement are spread out far and wide, and rarely meet.[45] Her father Boyd, an experienced horseman and mustanger, assisted Cecil Connors and Charles Minford Vaughan in gathering excess horses.[46] Some of these stories carried over to those that Elmora (Vaughan) Peterson told about her father Minford. Like her father, Elmora was viewed as an excellent cowhand and horsewoman.[47] Her husband Tom rode with the Minford gang and can relate some

[42] Connors, Oral History.
[43] Heaverne, Oral History.
[44] Ibid.; Photograph of rescued foal, courtesy CSH, Personal Collection.
[45] Dawn (Walker) Nottingham, Oral History; Andrea Mott, Field Notes, July 2013.
[46] Dawn (Walker) Nottingham, Oral History; Tom and Elmora (Vaughan) Peterson, Oral History.
[47] Tom and Elmora Peterson, Oral History. Tom complimented his wife Elmora when he said that she was the best cowhand he ever had.

of his own tales about Boyd and his father-in-law.[48] To this day these families are still involved in the care and husbandry of horses. These narratives are additional angles into understanding the world of wild horses on the range. After all, how much can the public truly understand if historical narratives like these remain unknown?

In addition to oral histories and area case studies, historical records also provide a multitude of perspectives on wild horse history in the United States. Understanding this evolving history in more detail requires the development of other characters. The developmental sections in this work are incorporated with the underlying effort to draw out the important movements, legislation, and controversy surrounding the subject of wild horses and their place in the American experience. "The Pledge to Protect" introduced the initial, and not entirely successful, efforts to protect free-ranging horses living in Nevada. The Wild Horse Annie Act of 1959 was merely a stepping-stone to another piece of legislation that would come in 1971 with the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act. This is further analyzed in the chapter, "What Else Can We Do?" Another aspect of the unfolding drama between humans and wild horses incorporates the decreased usage of slaughterhouses in the United States where horses could go to be rendered into chicken feed, glue, or other commonly used items. The subject of slaughter brings out rational and emotional perspectives. These are examined in "Off to the Cannery." The final developmental chapter, "Where Do We Go From Here," focuses on the more recent effects of the 1971 Act including adoption programs and holding facilities, two places where the horses could potentially be sent after being removed from the range. Combined, these chapters present a clear picture about how the wild horse protection movement evolved. This transformation of perspectives about animals included protection groups, animal rights groups,

[48] Tom and Elmora (Vaughan) Peterson, Oral History.

humane groups, and others who voice their views about what should or should not happen to wild horses. Some provide valid arguments to support their causes, while others do not.

Symbolism, at least in reference to wild horses, carries quite a bit of weight, but can humans continue to manage them and still refer to them as wild? Can wild horses continue to be treated as historical subjects, as icons of a different era, or is it time to find a better model and approach to dealing with them in the twenty-first century? Over time these animals are becoming more and more managed, almost overly so. The BLM and the Forest Service share the management responsibility of looking after these herds. Government management methods involve veterinarian care, a continual cycle of roundups on ranges around the West, food and shelter at multiple locations (at the taxpayers' expense), and leased pastureland for the unwanted and unadoptable horses. In addition to the buildup of expenses, there are also other things to consider, such as the sustainability of a program like this over time. How can these populations be managed for the future in a way that would reduce human handling? One of the proposals takes into account the reproductive cycle, including success and failure rates, of these animals on the range. If reproductive cycles can be limited using fertility treatments, is that a viable option for the management program? Is it financially feasible? Many groups of people debate this subject partly because they understand that if stallions are gelded and mares are given fertility treatments, then something could happen to herd social dynamics and resilience.[49] Can the government manage these mustangs with new techniques that have the possibility of infringing

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[49] National Research Council, *Methods and Effects of Fertility Management* in "Using Science to Improve the BLM Wild Horse and Burro Program: A Way Forward" 93-142 (Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press, 2012), http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=13511. The report states that at the time of the report, in 2012, there were "no fertility-control methods that were highly effective, easily delivered, and affordable," and available "for use across all BLM Herd Management Areas (HMAs). In addition, there were no fertility-control methods that did not alter the behavior or physiology of free-ranging horses and burros in some way. Any method that prevents reproduction can do so only by affecting some aspect of the reproductive system," 96.

or even destroying, the social behavior and social hierarchy of these herds? At what point can they be considered domestic and not wild?

In order to overcome some of these issues, one prominent topic needs to be confronted: slaughter. This is an emotional subject, one that seems even more so when it involves an animal of historic and symbolic stature in the United States. In the 1960s and early 1970s children from across the country wrote to Velma Johnston in an uproar at the possibility of wild horses being killed.[50] They were not alone in their letter writing campaign. Older citizens also wrote to her, voicing their opinions on slaughter, but the children showed more passion and youthful energy in their descriptive letters. Part of this stems from how people view horses in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In 2011 the Government Accountability Office published a report called "Horse Welfare: Action Needed to Address Unintended Consequences from Cessation of Domestic Slaughter."[51] The writers of this publication give some reasonable explanations for the public viewpoints on slaughter. They state how "the slaughter of horses for any purpose . . . is

[50] Susan Daubman and Debbie Petus to Velma Johnston, 10 March 1973. Box 686, FF22. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. These two fourteen year old girls wrote from New York because they wanted Johnston to know that all their "lives" they "have loved all horses"; George Diaz to Velma Johnston, 10 June 1973. Box 686, FF22. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. George, a resident of Miami, Florida, was vehement in his letter, stating how "I think that the ranchers should be taken to prison for a few years and then taken out and get metal rings on there [sic] nose's." He continued his rant against these injustices and concluded with "I wish that the horses could fight back"; Bryan Enright to Velma Johnson, 10 June 1973. Box 686, FF23. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. Bryan, a sixth grader from Miami, Florida, told Johnston that he "read the article you wrote about the killing of the wild Mustang. I feel, and many I have talked to, that these ranchers should have their minds checked. Anyone who would do something like that can't be all there"; Luis Garces to Velma Johnston, 10 June 1973. Box 686, FF25. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. Luis, also from Miami, Florida, was "writing to stop the slaughter of the wild mustangs"; Kim Gregory to Velma Johnston, March 1973. Box 686, FF26. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. Kim, a twelve year old from Washington, wrote Johnston a wonderfully scripted letter. In it she refers to slaughter and questions "What can a twelve year-old do?" Her letter continues: "I am a great lover of horses, and it pains me to hear about them treated this way . . . . I might be a little girl, but I have a big heart when it comes to horses"; Lisa Heinz to Velma Johnston, March 1973. Box 686, FF27. Velma Johnston (Wild Horse Annie) Papers, 1949-1977. Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library. Lisa, a young girl from Long Beach, California, wrote "I love horses, especially mustangs . . . . I admire there [sic] courage, speed, and stamina and I hope we can keep it." By "it" Lisa is referring to keeping wild horses on the open rangelands.

[51] "Horse Welfare: Action Needed to Address Unintended Consequences from Cessation of Domestic Slaughter," *Government Accountability Office*, GAO-11-228, June 22, 2011, http://www.gao.gov/assets/320/319926.pdf.

now a very controversial issue in the United States" partly because of how they are perceived.[52] The report continues, stating that some individuals,

> including animal rights advocates, horse enthusiasts, and some state governments, oppose horse slaughter, citing the horse's iconic role in helping to settle the American West; its former importance as a work and transportation animal on farms and in rural communities; and its continued value as a show, racing, and recreation animal. Moreover . . . horses are companion animals, similar to . . . other domestic pets. In contrast, others, including the livestock and meatpacking industries and other state governments, support horse slaughter, noting a strong export market for horsemeat; the economic and employment benefits to local communities of horse slaughtering facilities; and limited alternative options for dealing with unwanted horses. Moreover, for many proponents of slaughter, horses are livestock, similar to cattle, sheep, swine, and other farm animals raised to produce commodities for human consumption.[53]

Since 2007 horses have not been (legally) slaughtered within the borders of the United States. As evidenced here, there are pros and cons to both sides of the slaughter debate. However, sentimentalism and emotion rarely make room for rational arguments regarding a subject such as this one.

Slaughter, at least in reference to wild horses, has been outlawed (for wild horses) since the passage of the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971. Although it has been banned, wild horses still showed up at slaughterhouses, whether in the United States, Canada, or Mexico.[54] Since the BLM and FS took over wild horse management, it has been argued that the funding needed to care for these herds has taken on some astronomical figures. Millions and millions of taxpayer dollars are poured into this program every year, and every year they need

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[52] Ibid.

[53] "Ibid., 1; James W. Gidley, "American Wild Horses," in *The Scientific Monthly* 25, no. 3 (1927): 265-71. In this work Gidley examine how the domestic role of horses, in transportation and work, has given people a more amenable view towards the country's wild horse population. They bonded with these animals more than other livestock animals such as cattle, sheep, or swine.

[54] Chad Mendell, "AAEP Convention 2005: Horseman's Day, Unwanted Horse," February 17, 2006. In this article, Nat Messer, a DVM, describes the unwanted horse issue, stating how the problem is rooted in slaughter. In 2004, approximately 60,000 unwanted horses ended up in slaughterhouses in the United States, Canada, and Mexico. The number slaughtered in Canada was estimated at 20,000 while the number for Mexico was about 4,000. Messer continued, stating how "the slaughter industry has been highly criticized by welfare groups and individuals as an inhumane way of dealing with these unwanted horses."

even more. In 2009 the funding was estimated to be around $50 million, with it turning into an estimated $85 million three years later.[55] A $35 million increase in a mere three years puts a lot of strain on resources provided to these animals, including food, water, and shelter. The Government Accountability Office has published more than one report on the many improvements needed in the federally funded wild horse and burro program.[56] Evidence shows that additional options are needed in order for the BLM Wild Horse Program to continue. It is not sustainable, especially the way it is currently being managed. The subject of slaughter has arisen once more, but this time in reference to domestic animals.[57] Its list of variables continues to grow with no end in sight.

The unwanted horse debate is another issue stemming from the ban on domestic equine slaughter, in addition to the illegal nature of wild horse slaughter, in the United States.[58] As evidence shows, one of the largest hurdles for wild horse (or even domestic horse) enthusiasts to

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[55] Matthew Daly, "Salazar wants to move West's wild horses east," in *The Miami Herald*, October 7, 2009, http://www.miamiherald.com/news/politics/AP/story/1271241.html; James T. Smith, "The Soap Box: Wild horses and BLM management issues: what to do with 30,000 symbols of the American West," in *Human—Wildlife Interactions* 4(1):7-11, Spring 2010, p. 7, http://www.wildlifeconflicts.org/journal/Spring2010/HWC_4.1%20sp2010.pdf#page=11. Both of these articles focus on the economic burden wild horses place on the federal government and taxpayers.

[56] Bureau of Land Management, "Effective Long-Term Options Needed to Manage Wild Horses," in *Report to the Chairman, Committee on Natural Resources, House of Representatives*, GAO-09-77, October 2008; Horse Welfare, "Action Needed to Address Unintended Consequences from Cessation of Domestic Slaughter."

[57] Sharon Saare, "What Every Horse Owner Should Know About the Wild Horse Situation," in *Rangelands* 6(1), February 1984, p. 39, https://journals.uair.arizona.edu/index.php/rangelands/article/viewfile/11861/11134. As Saare states, there is almost a "hysterical reaction to the possibility that some horses sold will go to slaughter . . . approximately 1/3 million domestic horses a year are now going into the human consumption slaughter market." This became discussed more and more as the decades passed. In the HSUS "Overview: The State of the Animals in 2001," author Paul G. Irwin examined how, by the year 2000, more than seventy rescue groups focused on horses (domestic and wild) and rescuing them from the possibility of ending up in a slaughterhouse. This is merely one example of many regarding the changed perception of the American public in regards to the status of horses in American society.

[58] Chad Mendell, "AAEP Convention 2005: Horseman's Day, Unwanted Horse," February 17, 2006; Tom R. Lenz, "The Unwanted Horse in the United States: An Overview of the Issue," in *Journal of Equine Veterinary Science* 29, no. 5 (2009), 253-58; Nat T. Messer, "The Historical Perspectives of the Unwanted Horse," in *The Unwanted Horse Issue: What Now?, Forum, Revised Proceedings of the United States Department of Agriculture*, edited by Camie Heleski, Karen Waite, and Richard Reynnells, 2008; K. E. Holcomb, C. L. Stull, and P. H. Kass, "Unwanted Horses: The Role of Nonprofit Equine Rescue and Sanctuary Organizations," in *Journal of Animal Science*, 88 no. 12 (December 2010): 4142-4150; Holcomb, Kathryn E., Carolyn L. Stull, and Philip H. Kass, "Characteristics of Relinquishing and Adoptive Owners of Horses Associated with U.S. Nonprofit Equine Rescue Organizations," in *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science*, 15 no. 1 (2012): 21-31.

overcome in the United States is the subject of slaughter, particularly equine slaughter. Because horses are treated as pets, working alongside humans as sport, companion, or work animals, they are viewed differently than other animals defined as livestock.[59] A result of the overall ban on equine slaughter is the "unwanted horse" problem. If people are abandoning animals because of financial reasons, then it seems reasonable to assume they would not be able to adopt another one in need. More unwanted horses means that there are now abandoned domesticated horses, along with captured wild ones, that need adoptive homes. With the economic recession of 2008, many people lost their homes and their jobs. When this happens, people are unable to continue feeding their companion animals, in which horses are included. Because of the ban on slaughter, they have no recourse for disposing of these animals. In addition, thousands of wild horses are now being added to the unwanted horse debate because, if they are unadoptable, no one wants them. There are reasons for this: age, health, trainability, appearance, and size. Are there enough homes for the excessive numbers of horses now resting in pastures throughout the Great Plains and West? What about the thousands in adoption centers or in humane society rescue programs? Add to that list the number of horses in training programs at corrections facilities. Is there truly space for all of these animals?

Do wild horses have a future in the United States? Historical evidence points to their resilience and adaptability in the face of change. In terms of their overall importance in shaping the experience of thousands of Americans, they are unparalleled. Humans have utilized them in many ways, in historical and modern eras. The horse's only true predator, the human, is also its primary advocate for continued survival on western ranges. However, humans could also be the

[59] Stephen Budiansky, *The Nature of Horses: Exploring Equine Evolution, Intelligence, and Behavior* (New York: The Free Press, 1997), 263. In this work Budiansky explains how the horse and human relationship has lasted more than 6,000 years. At the root of this is the knowledge that humans have given them a somewhat anthropomorphic and romanticized image. In essence, this has helped transition horses from their former roles as work animals into their new role as pets.

source of their downfall. Without the Act of 1971 in place what would happen to animals that played a major role in the transformation of the Great Plains and the West? This legislation defines the future of wild horses, ecological balance, and land management on the Great Plains and the vast ranges throughout the West.

The outlook for wild horses can be either positive or negative. It began in a positive manner with efforts to protect them in their natural habitat. The passage of the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971 helped bring in a new era of wild horse management. As a result, the days of regional and local herd management had come to an end. Even so, management methods enacted by the government are in a cycle of change. Combating population growth, rising costs, the unwanted horse problem, and a skeptical public has taken its toll. These present a negative side of the wild horse narrative. There continues to be a need to reform and adapt under the Act of 1971. Conflict still erupts over the nature of roundups, budgetary needs, and management methodology. Even with considerations such as these, as big as they are, there remains an aesthetic value attached to the figure of the wild horse.

The argument for wild horse preservation is a continuous one. If citizens recognize the contributions these horses have given society (as a whole) then perhaps it is possible to help them understand why it is important that they are preserved. Humans have been bonding with horses for centuries, and it is apparent that this human-horse relationship has shaped personal identity, regional identity, and even our shared historical and national identity within the past 100 years. These wild horses are symbolic, not just in regards to the American way of life, but of the transformative history shared between them and humans. American identity is entwined with that of the wild horse. Their role in the transformative history of the United States is a

fundamentally important one. Whether wild or domestic, horses are an integral piece of national identity in the minds, hearts, and the perceptions of people who live in the United States.

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Victor Erben to WHOA! April 1973. Box 686, FF23.

Walter Baring to Velma Johnston. 18 December 1957. Box 685, FF1.

Walter Baring to Velma Johnston. 30 April 1958. Box 686, FF2.

Walter Baring to Velma Johnston. 14 May 1958. Box 686, FF2.

Walter Baring to Velma Johnston. 24 January 1959. Box 686, FF2.

Walter Baring to Velma Johnston. 22 April 1959. Box 685, FF4.

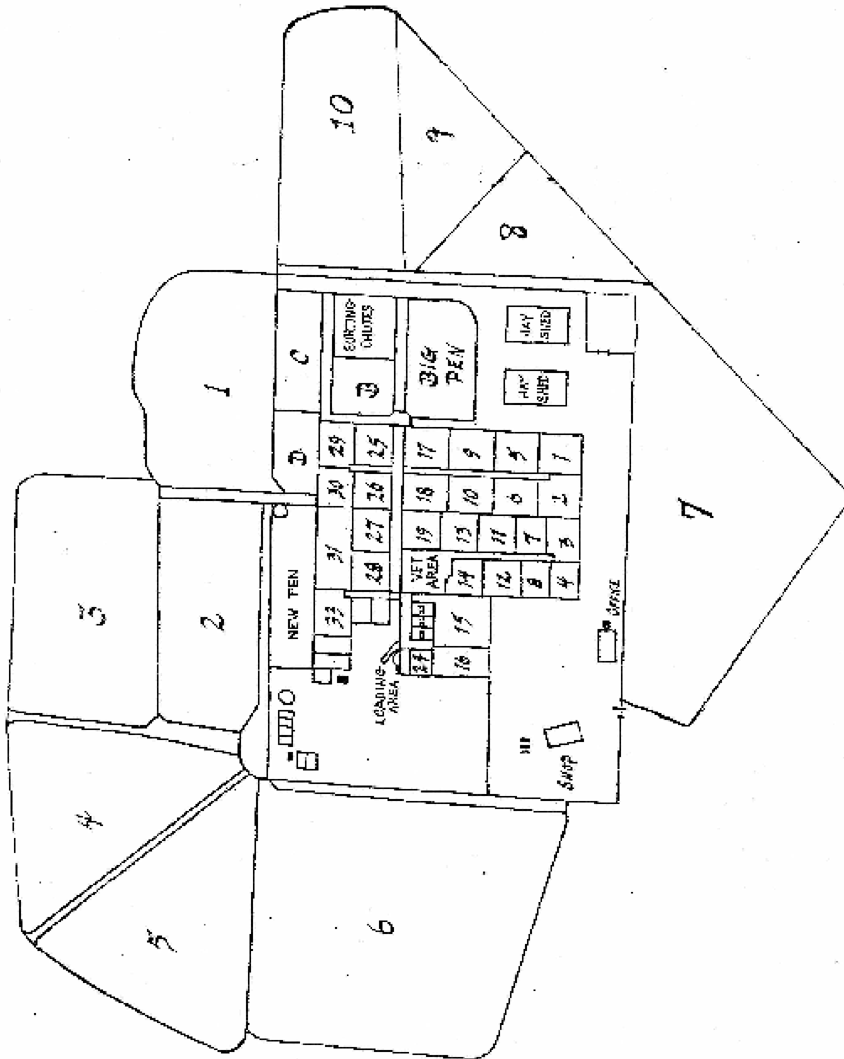
Walter Baring to Velma Johnston. 22 May 1959. Box 685, FF4.

Walter Baring to Velma Johnston. 19 June 1959. Box 686, FF2.

Walter Baring to Velma Johnston. 30 June 1959. Box 686, FF2.

Walter Baring to Velma Johnston. 24 July 1959. Box 686, FF2.

APPENDIX A: PALOMINO VALLEY WILD HORSE AND BURRO CENTER, LAYOUT MAP



APPENDIX B: LOCATOR MAP

These locations are mentioned throughout the dissertation. This map is meant to give readers an idea of where these main points are located in relation to one another.

Key:

A. Reno, NV
B. Palomino Valley Wild Horse and Burro Center, NV
C. Wadsworth, NV- location of Johnston's Lazy Heart Ranch
D. Burns, OR
E. Owyhee River, OR
F. Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range, WY and MT
G. Sand Wash Basin, CO
H. Craig, CO
I. Rock Springs, WY
J. Rawlins, WY

Between G and H – Maybell, CO
Between H and J – Savery, WY

Figure B.1. Locations and details.