Western North Dakota Horses, 1900-1947

Several national and international events affected horse types in western North Dakota during the early twentieth century: the influx of European homesteaders who practiced farming, the development of mechanization, World War I and other conflicts, and the Depression. Thus work horses came into vogue alongside the rancher's cow pony, the market for both fluctuated in concert with national economic trends, and many horses were abandoned during the drought- and depression-riddled decade of the 1930s. Based largely on information provided by ranchers and horsemen who lived through the early twentieth century in western North Dakota, this section examines horses of that era, both wild and domestic. A list of informants who provided information is provided in the Acknowledgements that precede the text of this study. For further information about twentieth-century ranchers in the study area, see Johnston, Harry V., 1942; Johnston, Andrew, 1956; Noyce, 1959; and Shafer, 1963.

Domestic Horses

With the influx of German, Russian, Bohemian, and other European farmers around the turn of the century, the draft horse came into prominence in western North Dakota. Many ranchers and horsemen began breeding horses for the work-horse market. Raymond Carson (Grassy Butte) states:

A lot of studs were shipped in--everyone tried to upgrade their stock to sell to farmers. Percheron, Belgian, and some Shire studs were brought in. Percherons were the favorite horse in this country--they
had enough action to use as a saddle horse, especially when crossed.

According to informants, Red Murphy raised Percherons on the open range and sold them halter broke; Sam Wilson’s family at Sentinel Butte raised Percheron and Morgan teams, as did William Connolly. Pete Northrup raised cross-bred Belgians; George Porter near Crosby Creek and M. C. Tescher near Sentinel Butte raised Percherons.

Harry Roberts (son of HT foreman Frank Roberts) said that circa 1910-1920, "A fellow came down once or twice a year from Canada and bought horses and ponies all the time for the Canadian wheat farms." Matched teams sold for a premium, but even cross-bred draft types and some captured feral animals sold well as work and saddlstock to early homesteaders. Somewhat later, the Hendersons and Fettigs near Killdeer ran large numbers of draft and cross-bred draft horses on Ft. Berthold Reservation prior to the building of the Garrison dam. These horses were sold to draying operations and fire departments; crossed with Indian and "common" stock, they also became the nucleus of rodeo bucking strings throughout western North Dakota and eastern Montana. Hanbletonian trotters were a popular light team type during the early twentieth century. Mules were also fairly widespread.

During the 1920s and 1930s many ranchers in southwestern North Dakota participated in the Cavalry Remount Service. This was a U.S. Army program created in the aftermath of a huge demand for horses during World War I (Wyman, 1945: 125). Under this system the government issued stallions, usually Thoroughbreds or
Morgans, to remount stations and individuals to breed on their mares. The government then retained the right to purchase the offspring. However, army standards regarding size, color, and conformation were rather rigorous, and comparatively few horses were selected; participants viewed the program as a way to improve their saddle stock. According to informants, remount stallions were often crossed on Indian or "common" mares to produce saddle horses. Men who had remount stallions in the area included Connolly, Murphy, Tutley, Neuens, Lillibrige, and Mosser.

Ranch and saddle horses of the early twentieth century seem to have remained very similar to their nineteenth-century predecessors: Indian or "common" horses of indeterminate breeding, sometimes cross-bred to "better" stallions. This type of horse was raised (sometimes caught) and used not because people admired their looks, but because they were tough enough to withstand hard riding and minimal care in a rugged environment. Most informants expressed a strong preference for the modern Quarter Horse, but all admired the fortitude of the early stock.

In his memoirs, Medora-area rancher Harry Johnston recalled:

At seven I owned my first colt and at nine I traded the colt to my Dad for a two year old Indian pony which I called Daisy. Daisy was the first real horse I owned that I could ride, and I'll never forget the little sure-footed strawberry roan mare (Johnston, 1942:73).

Johnston also recalled that early in the twentieth century his family raised saddle horses by acquiring a band of Indian mares from the Crow reservation in Montana and crossing them with an 1800-pound black Percheron stallion (Johnston, 1942:306).
Christ Lee arrived in North Dakota in 1892 and ranched near Killdeer throughout the early twentieth century. His mount was "a good roan saddle horse I got from an Indian" (Shafer, 1963: 21).

Rancher and veterinarian John Robinson came to the badlands in 1883 and initially raised range (common) horses for the saddle horse market. When the demand for draft stock peaked in the 1890s, Robinson switched his breeding program accordingly but lamented,

It was not long following this change that we realized the contrast between the range type and the barn-yard raised horse. With the range herd we were free from lameness, or any form of unsoundness, while the draft horse seemed to be subject to sidebones, spavins, stifle trouble (gonitis), some of which may have been due to nasal illness, developed at time of foaling around the barnyard or corral. Then foaling presented a problem that never gave us much concern with the range mare... (Shafer, 1963:82).

In Plate 19, Bill McCarty is shown at a horse sale in Dickinson around the turn of the century. McCarty's mount is a small, fine-boned animal with a large head along the mustang order. The saddle horses being sold in the arena are mature, solid-colored animals with large heads and are somewhat small in stature. The sorrel horse in the foreground, while having a large, "common" head, displays the conformation of an early Quarter Horse type. The origin of the horses is unknown; it is possible that they were horses McCarty brought up from Texas, as he frequently drove southwestern horses into North Dakota to sell as a young man.

Plate No. 34 is a photograph of horses at a Dickinson sales facility circa 1907. No draft animals appear in the photograph. The horses are again light-weight, solid-colored saddle horse
types, many somewhat small, but most are well-bred in appearance. The photographer and the event are unknown.

In *The Mustangs*, Dobie states that the ranchers of western North Dakota used horses descended from the Sioux-Thoroughbred crosses bred by DeMores and Huidekoper:

When, after four years of exile in Canada, Sitting Bull of the Sioux finally, in 1881, surrendered at Fort Buford, North Dakota, his war ponies were sold at auction and bought for a song by post traders. The mares went to that fantastic character, the Marquis de Mores of Medora. Then the Little Missouri Horse Company topped these mares and bred them to a Kentucky Thoroughbred stallion. Among them were grullos and buckskins with black stripe down the back. Some showed scars from the bullets of Custer’s troopers. In the terrible winter of ‘86–87, which killed a great majority of cattle on all northern ranges, these little Sioux mares survived. Their clean-boned, strong, fast, long-winded offspring are still a tradition among Dakota ranch people (Dobie, 1952 [orig. pub. 1934]: 90).

Harry Roberts described the HT ranch horses, and those used in the first half of the present century:

The HT had Percherons, especially grey, 1,800 pounds and up, with lots of hair on their feet. They had one Thoroughbred stallion, one Arabian type, some Quarter Horse type, some with Indian blood, and good common horses. My father had a thoroughbred pacer. Those that could bought their saddle horses from the ranch. It was very common to breed Indian mares to Thoroughbred studs in the early days; they got good results, tough horses. The HT had a Thoroughbred stud which was bred to common mares—two of the colts had plumb white heads. There were a lot of bald-faced horses in the old days; they reminded people of Herefords, they didn’t like that.

Those common horses, Indian horses, were good travelers and a good, sensible horse. I had an Indian horse—I didn’t catch him, I got him from another rancher. He could go 5 miles without letting up; he wasn’t the fastest horse, but he would out-do the rest. The HT horses ranged all over; south and west. We used to ride 30-50 miles a day; probably an average of 20 miles in a work day. I had a horse that trotted 50 miles in 5 hours and a team of blacks—they were small,
but good—who went 50 miles in 7 hours. We used to go to Dickinson and back in 3 days from near Amidon.

Mr. Roberts stated that he felt that the THRO horses are representative of the early Indian-based ranch horse. When shown photographs of THRO horses, he said, "Oh yes, those are the old-time horses. They sure do look different from other horses." When asked if he thought that the park horses could still have some of the early Indian horse blood, perhaps even be partially descended from the Sioux mares his father managed at the HT, he answered, "I'm sure of that." No other informants mentioned the HT horses.

John Pusenchenko, whose parents homesteaded near Grassy Butte in 1912, is a former saddle bronc rider now living essentially as a recluse in the same area. A lifelong horseman, Mr. Pusenchenko was known for his herds of paint horses, which grew so large that they were forceably removed from his property 15 years ago. Pusenchenko trapped beaver at age 14 to raise enough money to buy his first horse, a multi-colored paint colt "out of a white Indian mare." He bought "Old Paint" from Charley Armstrong, one of the first settlers of Grassy Butte and an old man in the 1930s. Armstrong claimed to have been raised by Indians and told Pusenchenko that he got his horses "in South Dakota when the government took away the Sioux ponies." (Informants remembered Armstrong as having had "Indian-type" horses, but not many. He was evidently a small-time trader who mainly kept horses for his own use.) Pusenchenko was asked to comment on local saddle stock in the period 1920-1940:
The first horses around here were bound to have Indian blood. There were wild horses in the badlands and Killdeer mountains. There were a lot of paints and Indian horses early on. There were quite a few roans, especially strawberry roans--Indian horses. The blooded horses didn't come until later. I had a roan horse, "Skid"; he was just a horse. There were some bald-faced roans; they were considered "throwbacks." They also had a few Morgan horses in this country, but most were common horses. A "Montana horse" is a common horse. The common horses were in early on. They made the best damn saddle horses--they're a special kind of horse--Indian horses--they're tough. They were better than the bred-up Quarter Horses--rugged--you couldn't kill them. . . . They had some good saddle horses around here: Quarter Horses, American Saddlebreds, but most were the common horse. The Thoroughbred is a good horse when crossed with common mares. But the studs mainly came from somewhere else.

Bruce Northrup's family settled in Grassy Butte in 1910; his father crossed Belgians with "common" horses and used "grade mares" for saddle horses. At one time they bred these mares to a paint stallion owned by Walt Ray, which looked "like a Quarter Horse; he was chunky." They sold some paint horses to a midwestern buyer in the 1940s. Their neighbors had remount stallions (Thoroughbreds) that were bred to Morgan mares; the colts were sold to the Army. Northrup described the type of horse ranchers rode when he was young as "Big headed and rangy. Maybe a bald face and one or two socks."

Sid Connell, who ranches south of Medora, remembered horses being abandoned in the 1920s and 1930s "because they were switching to machinery. Before that draft horses were worth a lot of money, also saddle stock. One man had Morgans. . . . The Tutleys and the Neuens had Morgan-type remount studs. Most of the early horses were rangy, many were baldfaced, and roans."
Jim Connolly's (Dunn Center) father William rode with Theodore Roosevelt. Connolly stated that many people crossed Thoroughbred stallions (especially the government horses) on Indian mares and that the average ranch horse was a "common horse":

They were tough, and good saddle horses. Common horses couldn't stand prosperity. They didn't need oats, hay, or to live in a barn. No horse today could take that much abuse.

Jack Murphy (Killeder, son of Red Murphy) stated that his father raised Percherons and bought his saddle-stock, Thoroughbreds, and Thoroughbred crosses from Fort Keogh, Montana. He also participated in the Remount Program. The Murphys branded as many as 450 colts every year. Jack Murphy much prefers a modern Quarter Horse-Thoroughbred cross but also liked the old common saddle horses. The older type was tough. They weren't fast, but they could go all day and the next, they were good horses. Now horses can't go like that. . . . Fifty years ago a guy had a flea-bitten grey gelding, his tail dragged the ground. He beat everyone roping—a common horse.

Murphy believes the THRO horses to be a remnant group of early ranch-type horses, "the same horses everyone rode."

Rancher Raymond Carson (Grassy Butte) also prefers a modern Quarter Horse to the old Indian-type or "common" horse but said,

The best horse I ever had was an absolute Indian pony. We called him Pluto; my Dad got him from Chaloner when he [the horse] was 20 years old. He was the ugliest, and also the best, horse I ever threw a leg over. He was the fastest walking horse I ever seen; also the most nondescript. He was only about 900 pounds—a linebacked buckskin, slim, with a roman nose and a "tom cat" rear end. He could run, cut cattle, do anything, he was so smart. He had an ugly head and was always thin—all he ever had was abuse. I'd give any amount
of money for a horse like that, I've never seen a horse like him.

On early horses in general Carson said:

Well, a lot of them might have been Indian horses because native Indian mares may have been just running around. . . . At one time they were a lot more valuable.

One old guy about a mile north of Grassy Butte raised polo ponies; he trained them and shipped them back east. It was the last nineteenth-century ranch, owned by a New York outfit, I think. The mares were just unknown and he imported studs.

The old stock were hardy horses—they could go without much grass. The wild ones were the ruination of cattlemen, they ate out everything and could go so far from water.

There used to be a lot of linebacked buckskins. The park horses are just old-time ranch horses; you couldn't get anything for them now.

Ed Newcomb (Grassy Butte) believes the park horses are the last of the turn-of-the-century ranch and wild horses (the types being the same early on; see "Wild Horses"). He said of the early type:

People bragged about the badlands horses—called them "broncos," they were so tough. You knew they were mustangs. A lot went down south—they were shipped there, especially the bigger work horses.

Newcomb and others described the horses of early Grassy Butte ranchers:

Bill Chaloner had a ranch near the present North Unit, and ran a ferry across the Little Missouri River during the period 1924-1928. He homesteaded on Dry Creek. In the 1930s his son was killed after being trapped beneath a fallen horse at the bottom of a wash; this story was published several years ago using fictional names. Newcomb called him "quite a horseman" and said he had "Indian type ponies; paints. He also had some Morgan saddlestock.
Horse thieves were his main concern—he was always watching for them even after there weren't any anymore." Pusenchenko remembers him as having had a paint stallion called "Old Baldy" with a white head and white feet, a white streak on one side, and two glass (blue) eyes, and also a black and white stallion. Pusenchenko called them the "Indian type."

L. M. Barnhart had "mustang Indian pony types; not a lot. He got most of his horses by catching wild ones" (Newcomb). Northrup said the Barnhart horses were "the Indian pony type; pintos and baldfaced horses."

Lillibridge. Dry Creek country. Had Quarter Horses, also common horses. "He bred common mares—the Indian blood always showed. Sam Rhodes ran horses out there too; the Quarter Horse type. Rhodes used to buy Lillibridge horses to buck" (Newcomb).

Sackett. Bennett-Creek/Sheep Creek divide; Stone Hills to the park. In 1927, while gathering horses, Newcomb ran into the Sacketts driving a large bunch of horses to the Dickinson railroad. They had "common horses; mustangs." When they moved out, the horses were left to run free; Newcomb helped gather them for Jack Steel, a relative of the Sacketts. "Someone finally canned them, I suppose."

Stevensons. Had lots of horses in the 1920s, "common horses, mustangs—there was some Welsh in some of them." They ran the range near Red Wing Creek and Bollen Creek. "There was a beautiful one now and then." They were "sold out and canned" (Newcomb).

Phil Christensen. Most informants from the Grassy Butte-Killdeer area commented on the number of horses Christensen had and his
cruel treatment of them. Newcomb called him "the meanest man that ever walked, to a horse." Northrup, Carson, Pusenchenko, and Murphy made similar remarks. Newcomb said he "built a horse trap in the hills and branded sicks. He had a trap around a bend on a horse trail--a wide, flat draw with a fence on both sides."

Pusenchenko thought he had about 300 head; Newcomb said he had "more than the land could carry." His horses were "the old type, plain mustangs." Pusenchenko remembered them as "mainly greys and browns." Informants state that Christensen cut the eyelids on mares that he couldn't catch to make them blind and chained their feet until "they swelled up and died." When Christensen died, the U.S. Forest Service gathered and sold them in one big bunch--"they also just shot them."

**John Pusenchenko.** Newcomb says that Pusenchenko's horses were "not the real old-type horses. Casey Tibbs always said his goal was to have a Cadillac; Pusenchenko wanted a herd of paints, and both got them." Pusenchenko said he cross-bred his paints to American Saddlebreds, Morgan, and Thoroughbred stallions. He "just liked to look out and see my horses--between 100 and 200 head."

**Sam Rhodes.** Mr. Rhodes came to North Dakota on a cattle drive from Texas with 3500 steers for the Long X ranch in the late nineteenth century. For a time he had a ranch near Grassy Butte; later he ranched in the Killdeer Mountains and served as the local sheriff. He built the rodeo arena in Killdeer and produced the first rodeos in that area. Rhodes Township and Rhodes School are named after him; he was one of the most respected ranchers and
horsemen in western North Dakota. Informants were asked to com-
ment on the horse that appears with Rhodes in Plate 20 and that
bears a strong resemblance to Leo Kuntz's park horse "Bad Toe":

Newcomb:

He [Rhodes] rode common horses, the same type that
everyone else had here. Those horses were caught,
canned, and shot; now they are very seldom seen. He
also had some Quarter Horse types. The horse in the
photo was called "Baldy" (there were about 10 million
"Baldys" in this country). I seen him ride that horse
many times; it was his favorite. He died underneath
him of a heart attack. Rhodes was good to horses, he
didn't overwork them. I think Baldy came out of
Littlebridge's string. There might have been a little
Percheron in there, way back...

Carson:

He must have been a heck of a horse. What old Sam
rode, everyone rode. Usually his horses had a short
tendon bone and big feet--his last horse was a big bay
built like that. He was always considered the best
mounted man in the country--others wanted to hide when
he rode up.

Puschenkenko:

The horse was "Baldy," an old-time horse. The picture
was taken northeast of the rodeo grounds.

Connolly (didn't see photo):

Rhodes had hammerheads--great buckers. Once they
stopped bucking, everyone wanted them for saddle
horses. He also had some Quarter Horses.

Alvin Tescher remembered that Louis Pelissier, a respected
Medora cowboy in the early twentieth century (see Plates No. 21
and 22), had "a lot of bald faced horses; maybe 50 out of 200."

Tom Tescher stated that "except for draft horses, the common horse
was pretty much what everyone had early on."

Since the 1940s the Quarter Horse has been the horse of
choice for North Dakota ranchers, as elsewhere (see Figure 7).
Because they are bred and built for short bursts of speed, Quarter Horses excel at arena events such as roping (e.g. Denhardt, 1967). To the modern cowboy, the appearance of a horse is an important attribute. While virtually all informants mentioned that the modern ranch horse lacks the stamina and hardiness of the old "common" or Indian type, these qualities are unnecessary for contemporary ranch work. Horses of the earlier type are occasionally used today on large, isolated ranches in rugged country or as rodeo bucking stock. None of the ranchers interviewed for this study use them; they are considered relics of an earlier era.

Wild Horses

Wild horses occurred throughout the Northern Plains well into the twentieth century. Such horses were often estrays from ranch stock. As in the Southwest, the rounding up and handling of these animals became an integral aspect of ranching culture.

Robert Eigell worked for the CBC Ranch of eastern Montana, which specialized in both raising and capturing horses for the slaughter market during the 1930s. In his first-hand account of Montana ranch life, Eigell says of the northern herds:

While there may be direct descendants of the original Spanish mustangs in the southwestern U.S., the wild horses found on the northern ranges were the descendants of range horses that went feral in areas and under conditions conducive to such reversion to the wild state. In many cases, the range stock from which these wild horses descended was common knowledge. This does not in any way detract from, or greatly change, the ancestry of the northern wild horse from that of the southwestern wild horse. The range horses brought north were also direct descendants from the early Spanish horses first introduced into North America (Eigell, 1987:161).
Wyman (1965:286-89) states that estrays from northern ranches mingled with extant wild herds to produce a "superior" strain of feral horses that clearly showed their dual heritage.

The wild horses found in the Little Missouri Badlands when THRO was created in 1947 were evidently an enclave population—the last of several feral groups that once occurred throughout the western half of the state. The horses were descended from ranch stock that had become feral throughout the period 1900-1947, possibly mixed with wild horses already extant during the Roosevelt era. By 1947 their range had become constricted to the inaccessible badlands surrounding Medora.

A former rancher described the range of feral horses in southwestern North Dakota in this way:

There were some in Beisigel Creek and Magpie Creek that were troublesome for a few years. Then there were some on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation that ran in the river breaks from Bear Den Creek to the breaks east of Boggy Creek and it took quite a few years in getting those cleaned up.

The largest band of them was on the bank of the west side of the Little Missouri River in the Beaver Creek and Dry Creek Country. I think those were strung up and down the river breaks for twenty miles or more. They were great sport for the person interested that liked to run wild horses for a large number of years (Johnston, 1965:484).

Most people interviewed for this study believed that wild horses have been present in the badlands continuously since the nineteenth century, although few were old enough to have observed them prior to circa 1920. Brothers Jim, Alvin, and Tom Tescher (see Figure 12) have been more intimately associated with area wild horses than anyone and learned about chasing and handling these animals from men such as Hugh Armstrong, Louis Pelissier,
and "Badlands Bill" McCarty. Alvin Tescher began observing and chasing horses in the late 1930s and says, "I know they were there way before my time, because I heard the older men talk about them when I was young." A Bismarck Tribune article chronicling the 1954 THRO horse round-up dated 4 May 1954 notes that older participants in that event reminisced about a wild horse round-up they had staged circa 1915. Tom Tescher told the Brainard Daily Dispatch (2 November 1981) that he had become interested in wild horses because of an experience he had as a first-grader:

We drove by car over to the Petrified Forest (area that is now within the boundaries of the national park) and as we came over the hill there was this wild stallion with his band of mares looking right at us... It just did something to me.

Wyman (1936: 144) states, "The whole history of the wild horse is tied up with the range and the price of horses." Medora area ranchers and cowboys have always interacted with wild horses because they captured them for sale and, to a lesser extent, for use. The Boer War, the Spanish invasion of the Phillipines in 1898, and World War I created enormous demand for horses; millions were exported from the U.S., and a significant number of those were captured wild (Dobie, 1952; Ryden, 1970; Wyman, 1963). Harry Roberts, son of HT foreman Frank Roberts, remembers Medora-area horses being purchased for the wars: "During the Boer War they took a lot of saddle horses. They bought a truckload at a time from the HT, unbroken."

Prior to World War I the domestic saddle horse market was strong, and many horses were shipped from western ranges to the east and south (Wyman, 1963); many informants remembered North
Dakota exporting both saddle and work stock. However, the horse market collapsed during the post-war years. Crawford (1931: 509) noted that

Since 1917, when America entered the World War, there has been no demand for horses at any price. Mixed bands of good horses had been previous to this time worth $75 to $85 a round. After the close of the war a similar band would not sell for $10. Many cars of horses, five and six years old, halter broke, have been shipped to central and eastern states within recent years, where they did not bring enough to pay the freight. Many horses have been killed and fed to hogs or used for fox food, just to get them off the range. This is one of the best horse countries in the world, but the auto, the truck and the tractor have deprived the horse grower of an outlet for his product.

Saddle horses dropped to as low as $2.50 a head during the economically depressed decade of the 1930s; the mechanization of farming destroyed the work horse market (Wyman, 1963; Ryden, 1970). In 1934 42% of the people in Billings County were on relief, and the "the drought reduced the grazing potential of the land to the point where the ranchers were almost out of business."¹⁴ Many farmers and ranchers abandoned their property in western North Dakota, including livestock. In 1931 Crawford wrote:

The taxes and interest on the investment in lands have been too high to make ranching profitable. The range counties are bare of cattle and county commissions are acquiring much land by tax title. In the meantime, grass is going to waste or is eaten by straggling bands of horses that no one is anxious to claim (Crawford, 1931: 513).

It was the pet food industry (first chicken feed, then cat and dog food) that provided a market for unwanted horses beginning in the 1920s. This market created an incentive for clearing the

western ranges of free-roaming horses, a process that succeeded so well that by 1970 such animals were nearly gone (Wyman, 1963; Ryden, 1970). This industry continues to serve the necessary function of absorbing unwanted equines, both domestic and wild. In southwestern North Dakota, people have been capturing feral horses for slaughter sale since the 1930s.

Lola Lindbo's parents homesteaded north of the South Unit of THRO in 1908; she was born there in 1911. She stated that when her family settled in the badlands there were "lots" of wild horses; when they arrived there were two cowboys living within a mile of the Lindbo ranch who had built wild horse traps inside the present park boundary and made their living capturing and selling them:

They had hired men to work for them--single men--to round-up and break the horses to sell at the railroad. They worked in crews of 8, and shipped them from Belfield for eastern markets.

Mrs. Lindbo (and other informants) also remembers Fred Gorham (who arrived in the area circa 1898) as having made money catching and selling wild horses: "He built 8 big cottonwood corrals in a long valley and would halter break them and lead them to Belfield."

Henry Fritz was another wild horse catcher she remembers.

According to Mrs. Lindbo, in the early days homesteaders would keep two of their horses near the house to haul water, wood, mail, etc., and turn the mares into the badlands to winter and breed with the wild studs, recatching them in March or April. "Ranchers wanted this, they could sell the colts for $25.00." For example, a B.J. Ditterman had a diversified (dry goods) store, and he would take horses in trade.
The first wild horses Mrs. Lindbo remembers her parents discussing were "line-backed buckskins; the rest were browns; the greys came later." In a short book titled *Origin of the Park Horses* (1988), Lindbo provides her personal opinion of that matter and of management issues regarding the horses. She claims that wild horses have been in the badlands since before her family arrived in the area and provides a brief account of the Gorham and Fritz operations. She suggests that grey park horses descended from a draft stallion that her family released in the area circa 1930. Lindbo is critical of THRO round-ups and of the park's policy of introducing outside stallions. She is particularly critical of the introduction of Tiger Tu, a purebred Arabian, claiming that the horse cannot compete with the other stallions and seeks the companionship of humans and domestic horses.

Sid Connell, who ranches south of Medora, said that in the 1910s and 1920s "people did not let their horses go; they were too valuable," but "there were always a few wild horses, especially to the west." During that time a man from Montana who lived 10 miles south of Connell's bought wild and Indian horses, broke them, and shipped them off for sale. Ed Titus and Bill McCarty also caught and sold feral horses; both were horse traders. Early on these horses were broke for saddle or work stock. In the 1930s some homesteaders left, abandoning their horses, and the horse market collapsed. Then free-roaming horses were sold for slaughter: "It wasn't worth the time to break them."

Sam Wilson, lifelong rancher at Sentinel Butte (000 Ranch) remembers wild horses from his childhood. He saw wild horses in
the badlands and in the 1920s found a wild blue roan mare 10 miles east of Sentinel Butte that had died foaling. Mr. Wilson recalled a group of 30-35 wild line-backed buckskins near Terry, Montana, north of Miles City, that no one could catch (other informants also mentioned these horses). He stated that there were "lots" of wild horses throughout the badlands in the 1920s and "even more" in the 1930s, when farm and ranch stock were abandoned. He remembers several men who chased and sold wild horses during that time: "Everyone did to some extent." Bill McCarty had "buckskins and mustangs"; he once sold 40 head of broke horses for $100. Charlie Bahm chased wild horses and once caught a "black mustang stud whose mane and tail drug the ground" near Mandan. John "Nigger" Tyler (from Texas) caught and sold horses; his own was a linebacked chestnut (red dun) with a black mane and tail. Bill Follis (also from Texas; aka "Bill Jones") rounded up feral horses in both North and South Dakota (some branded) during the Depression era and sold the colts. During the 1930s, Mr. Wilson saw feral horses branded "FSB"--property of the First State Bank!

Lifelong area rancher and horseman John Griggs (Medora) said, "There were always wild horses in the badlands; they are the most important thing in the park." He rode through the park for the first time in 1935 and remembers seeing roans and greys: "Any number of them looked like Bad Toe" (see Photo No. 124). They were "not draft types." "People caught them with shod saddle horses towards spring, when it was icy." In the winter of 1935 he worked for Bohemian farmers in South Heart who had two horses that had been captured near Medora. One was a "high headed grey about
16 hands high; a high-withered horse, sort of a Thoroughbred type." The other was a blue roan, 15 hands high: "Not a real long or a real short bodied horse . . . not as tall, but just about as heavy as the grey."

Another area rancher, George Schwint (Medora), avowed that there have been wild horses throughout the area since his childhood, "from south of Medora to up north; all through the hills; I used to see them when I rode horseback." He estimated there were 150-200 head in this area and remembers people chasing them frequently. They were "all different colors: grey, white, some roans; red roans—many bald-faced, and a few paints, not many . . . some were spotted." But he remembers most vividly "mouse colored horses with a black stripe an inch or an inch and a half wide all the way down their backs—a greyish-blue." He believes the THRO horses are "the same type as the early days, but there are more blue roans from confinement. It is the same stock, the blood goes back to at least around 1900."

Virtually all informants stated that until the 1940s there were wild horses in the badlands and river breaks south of Medora, northeast to Grassy Butte and the Killdeer Mountains, and throughout the western half of Fort Berthold Reservation. Most of these were feral animals, i.e., recently escaped. Jim Connolly (Dunn Center) stated that "the whole damn country was full of wild horses, especially after the drought and depression. In the 1930s horses brought $2.25 a head at Killdeer. In 1938 900 horses were taken off the reservation and canned." Mr. Connolly remembered
"linebacked buckskins and stout blues" running wild in eastern Montana.

As a boy during 1922, Connolly helped drive a band of roan mares from the Figure 4 Ranch just west of the Fort Berthold Reservation boundary to the Eatons' Custer Trail Ranch south of Medora. At that time the Eatons had cross-bred roan stallions that Connolly described as "drafty, but they could really move." Connolly noticed feral horses in the Little Missouri Badlands, and he later asked Don Short, a rancher west of the South Unit, where the horses had originated. Mr. Short told Connolly that the animals had probably escaped from horse thieves who had been intermittently active in the area circa 1890-1910 and had driven horses back and forth across the Canadian and Wyoming borders: "They [the horses] got away at night and naturally fell into that wild country." Connolly explained that it was commonly believed that HT range horses constituted the chief source for the thieves, but "nothing was ever proven."

Harry Roberts remembered wild horses in the Medora area during the early twentieth century. He said that the early ranchers caught some wild horses that were "mighty good--they had more go'ins than any other horse. A man named Laraby caught horses for other people." He added: "One thing about the old wild horses--once ranch stock runs with them they're hard to separate--it's hard to get those ranch mares out."

Prior to construction of the Garrison Dam, Indian horses belonging to members of the Three Affiliated Tribes and wild, unclaimed animals ran in the thousands in the rugged western half
of Fort Berthold Reservation. Throughout the years during which the Indian people lived along the fertile Missouri River bottoms, the grassy uplands and rugged breaks in the western part of the reservation were called "Wild Horse Country." Bands of wild, unclaimed horses grazed there and were periodically chased by teams of relay riders. Some of the horses were descended from stock owned for generations, but, as in Medora, people avow that there were two distinct categories of feral horse—"wild" and owned (or recently owned). Over time the latter group became predominant. Some of the horses belonged to white ranchers such as Angus Kennedy, the Hendersons, and the Fettigs, who leased reservation land. The last of the large-scale wild horse round-ups at Ft. Berthold occurred circa 1948. The Fort Berthold horses are mentioned here because they were the largest group of free-roaming horses in the area and because of the importance of the round-ups there to the cultural history of western North Dakota. Many ranchers and cowboys from the Grassy Butte and Killdeer areas participated in the gatherings, and horses from the reservation were a significant source of bucking stock throughout southwestern North Dakota and eastern Montana. Tom Tescher never participated in the round-ups, but he observed captured animals in the Henderson Horse Camp corrals and recalled, "That was the most horses I've ever seen in one place."

Horse round-ups on the reservation were large-scale, important social events. Tribal member Catherine Fredericks (Twin Buttes) said that in the days before the dam, The round-ups lasted for five days. They built big corrals; people pitched tents and built arbors, and the
women cooked. They would be bringing horses in and working the horses for days.

Mrs. Fredericks and her husband John always had large numbers of horses. In the early days she said she had little Indian ponies. I had a little grey freckled mare, a blue and white pinto, and a mouse-colored one, but the government took them away. Later some of the horses got inbred and deformed. My husband had stallions that everyone used. He had one Clydesdale.

Bruce Northrup (THRO) worked on reservation round-ups in the 1950s when, he said, it was "a big country, no roads between the Lost Bridge and Watford City." Fall cattle round-ups lasted 25 days and took 40 riders; horse round-ups would bring in as many as 700-800 horses. Northrup stated that "we would cut (geld) 150 studs in 2 days." The horses were worked in big, solid ash and oak corrals at the Henderson Horse Camp just north of the Spotted Horn Store north of the Lost Bridge. Most were sold for slaughter, but some were used for bucking stock. Ray and Nick Fettig of Killdeer were stock contractors and horse traders who leased reservation land and ran large numbers of horses. During the round-ups horses were tested for their bucking ability:

We used a bareback rigging with weights. If they bucked hard enough that the straps made an "X" over their back they were kept; if not, they were canned.

Northrup remembered the reservation horses as "some good and some poor horses. A lot were the Indian type, some looked like the parkies. Some were heavier, more the draft type, big and coarse. They kept the breedier type separate, like the Henderson's Thoroughbreds." Tom Tescher remembered them as "heavy, solid-colored horses, lots of bays."
Fort Berthold Tribal Chairman Ed Lone Fight (New Town) remembered that

They ran them in relays into brush blinds, several times a year; there would be 40-50 riders. They were mostly roans and greys, blue roans. They used them or canned them. Fettig caught one big bay or sorrel they called "Figure Four" that was the bucking horse of the year.

Lone Fight remembered that in his childhood, people would catch unclaimed horses and break them for saddle and work horses; he remembered several captured greys that were used for farming.

There were also wild horses in the Grassy Butte area and in the badlands of what is now the North Unit of THRO. Bruce Northrup remembered that

Most wild horses around Grassy Butte were solid colored in the early days, but there were a lot of red roans. Nothing very breezy--there were a lot of slicks. Everyone there ran them, like on Forest Service land until they got stricter. The Forest Service rounded them up and sold them; they flew over and shot the last ones in the 1940s.

Vernon and Harris Goldsberry, whose family has ranched north of the Elkhorn Ranch site since 1911, were well-known "wild horse chasers" in the Little Missouri Badlands during the 1930s and 1940s. Harris Goldsberry stated that feral horses ran throughout the badlands: "They was all through this country about the same, probably, it was full of 'em... As far back as I can remem-ber, there were wild horses." Goldsberry expressed the belief that feral horses originated after World War I, when "people quit branding them; they weren't worth nothing, they just kind of multi-plied." Goldsberry was familiar with feral herds in the vicin-itvity of Magpie Creek, Cinnamon Creek, and Buckhorn Creek east of
the Little Missouri River and west of Grassy Butte (but did not chase horses in the Medora area). He stated that the origin of most feral bands was known (i.e., different groups were strays from particular ranches) and that the bands differed in appearance and type. Many feral horse bands remained wild for several generations. Once wild, the horses were known as "broomtails."

During the drought and depression of the 1930s, the Goldsberys earned their income by catching wild horses for sale as saddle, bucking, or slaughter stock. Broke riding horses sold for around $20.00 and slaughter animals for 2-2 1/2 cents per pound at a time "when you couldn't get a job; if you did you'd be lucky to get $1.00 a day--we used to catch them and do better than if we'd been working--we tried to rope two or three a week."

When capturing horses for use or for the saddle horse market, the Goldsberry brothers would target young stallions rather than mares, colts, or aged animals. Harris Goldsberry described four methods of capture used in the area during the 1930s and 1940s: relaying a herd with several riders and then roping the animals individually; driving a herd into a concealed trap; snaring individual animals around the neck or one foot by means of a concealed rope; and "creasing" the base of a horse's neck with a rifle shot to momentarily immobilize the animal. Although some people organized large groups of riders to chase wild horses, the Goldsberys preferred to work in small groups of two to four men. They seldom caught more than two horses at one time. With the creation of USFS grazing districts after World War
II, Goldsberry said that the last of the feral horses were shot from aircraft to remove them from the range.

Raymond Carson (Grassy Butte) estimates that at one time there were 300 head of feral horses north of Grassy Butte, "mostly branded and/or locally owned." Ed Newcomb (Grassy Butte; raised in Killdeer) says that

It was unbelievable in the old days—there were no fences, it was just open country until they moved the Indians out and built it up. When horses were cheap we didn't bother to catch them. There were horses everywhere when I was a kid. We trailed 200-300 at a time to Killdeer; Nick Fettig trailed 175 head to Sanish and sold them for $5 a piece. At one time he had world class bucking horses. It's completely changed now since they moved the Indians out of Elbowoods and flooded the country—it ruined the Indians and country both; it was tough on the stock and the people.

Newcomb and others feel that the wild horses near Grassy Butte were probably from ranch stock that escaped early in the century but that there was little if any difference between wild and domestic horses at that time: "They were just plain old mustangs, just like everyone else had here" (see preceding section). When shown photographs of the THRO horses, Newcomb said:

I haven't seen horses like that for years—used to see quite a few of them like that, they're typical of the horses everybody used to ride. I used to catch and break that type once in a while when I was young. Then are typical mustangs—just the same kind we used to have out here. There used to be acres of those kind—I’ve rode hundreds of them—you couldn't kill them, they were tough. In the '30s, by God, who knows what they made it on, but they made it—there was no grass, no water... Sam Rhodes seen 17 dead ones when he was out riding.

These are just plain old mustangs, we used to run our saddle horses to death trying to catch them. They are sure-footed no matter how they're built—they'll run all day and miss the holes. No breed could take that much punishment now.

Once in awhile one of those wild ones came out just beautiful, the Bad Toe or Baldy type [see Photo #124]
and Plate 20]. Bill Chanoler had a lot of them--little Indian paints. They threwed back, too. There was a bunch of them running out where the North Unit is. There was a black mare with a white strip, she came in for 22 years, year after year with no color in her colts. Then one year she had a colt spotted like that horse [Bad Toe]--splitchy with a spot on her side. And they never had a pinto stud out there! [at that time]

Also, Russell Stevens had a white crooked necked mare that had ran in the Stone Hills--a typical mustang mare. One year she had the prettiest paint colt ever--she had colts for years and years and all of a sudden there's this paint colt. . . .

No, I haven't seen horses like that for years. The only bunch of that kind left is in the park--no one has them now--I haven't seen them in 50 years. Someone should put them in the North Unit. . . . People still come back that used to live here a long time ago and ask if there are any wild horses left.

Rancher Jack Murphy (Killdeer) said that

In the 1930s the horse market was down. There were feral horses all over; many unbranded--they looked like the park horses. It took 7 days and 6-7 saddle horses to gather ours on Crosby Creek. . . . They sold for $5 a head. They were called "ridgerunners" and the stallions were shot. A lot they never did get in--that's where the park horses came from. A group made a living catching and selling wild horses, but sometimes they weren't worth stealing.

The park horses are just real old-type ranch horses. They used to be all over. The horses in the park are better looking than most wild horses, but some look like Meyers [BLM horses]. Some horses on the reservation look like the park horses, but the quality varies. The horses in the park are wild like other wild horses. They look like the same horses everyone rode.

Jack Murphy claims to be the only man left who personally knew all of the famous old-time cowboys pictured on the wall of the Buckskin Bar in Killdeer. He tells stories of these men, who were old when Murphy was young--people like Sam Rhodes, who came up from Texas in the late nineteenth century and ranched in western North Dakota (see Plate 20). Rhodes lived in Grassy Butte and was later sheriff of Killdeer. He "always carried a gun."
Rhodes was a famous horseman (see preceding section) and produced the earliest rodeos in the Killdeer area. "The Lillibridges supplied the stock—200 head of big, powerful animals. The first rodeo was very dangerous—it was in a downhill arena. Twenty-seven men were seriously hurt or killed, but it was also fun."

Murphy knew Bill Follis (a.k.a. "Bill Jones"), foreman of the 777, John Goodall, "Badlands Bill" McCarty, and the rest of the men who forged early history in southwestern North Dakota; their stories justify a separate history (e.g., see Shafer, 1963). Murphy named the following famous bucking horses owned by the Fettigs, some of which were caught wild: Figure Four, Cotton, Kangaroo, High Dollar, Brown Bomber, Tangerine, and Spur Dodger ("a real Indian-type horse").

Oliver Lang (Grassy Butte) stated that the wild horses near Grassy Butte were "just horses" and "broomtails" but said he had enjoyed chasing them and added,

People still come back here all the time and ask if there's any wild horses left. People would rather see a wild horse than a buffalo or any other animal—there's something different about a horse.

Gerald Barnhart (Dickinson) moved with his family from Grassy Butte to Medora in 1942. His father was a rodeo stock contractor, and at one time he kept a Belgian stallion to produce bucking stock. Barnhart said his family had "Indian horses" in the 1930s: "small, stout, and colored... An Indian horse is a common horse." For a time his father bought and broke horses for the Army, but, Gerald claims, "My father never owned a well-bred horse." Barnhart commented:
There were a lot of horses in this country on the open range until the early 1950s, when they were pressured into the park; it was the only place left to go. The majority were branded horses and ranch escapees. Everyone lost horses into the park. We ran bucking stock in the park and rounded up in the spring. . . .

Barnhart recalled that as late as the early 1950s there were free-roaming horses "all the way to Williston" and that he used to chase them west of Grassy Butte. Ranchers chased the horses in the park and kept the colts that were caught:

The park round-ups took out the owned horses. Bay was the ideal; people didn't try to catch the Indian type or colored horses. But the park never got them all--no one, I mean the cowboys, wanted to. The park wanted them out, but the locals didn't. They were fantastic to watch, as smart as they were. The mares were easier to catch than the studs. There was a heavy blue roan stud in the late 1940s and early 1950s that was a hell of a horse--no one could catch him. One time near Peaceful Valley he jumped an 8-foot corral and went straight up the side of a cliff.

Barnhart remembered the horses from the 1940s and 1950s as "blues, greys and red roans." He recalled a white stallion that people called "paint" because he had "light ginger or sorrel splotches" and was "small" and "not the best built," as well as a "white mare that always threw blue colts." He believes there were blue roans in the park prior to the 1954 round-up (see "Genealogy") and mentioned that his family lost a part-Arabian blue roan stallion into the park during the 1940s. He believes that much of the paint and roan coloration remaining in the park herd can be credited to the red roan and black and white mares of his father, which the Teschers removed in 1965 (see "Notable Lineages"). He is critical of the park's introduction of outside stock, saying, "They aren't wild and tough like the blues."
Bruce Northrup (Medora) has worked at the South Unit of THRO as a utilities systems operator since 1960 and first participated in horse round-ups there in 1962:

Other guys used to run them a lot. Walt Cooper had a lot of horses in there. He had a Quarter Horse stud he leased from Texas that ran in the park, "Dick Thomas," and a lot of mares. All the Dick Thomas horses (offspring) were mean and had a lot of buck and kick. That's the ones people were really after most of the time.

Whizz Bang came out of the park. He bucked me off 3 times, also Tom Tescher and Casey Tibbs. Tibbs bought him from Barnhart at the Home on the Range (he bought all of Barnhart's bucking string). He was not a big horse; pretty tall but not real heavy. They got him in the 1954 round-up.

When the park was trying to clean them out, no one (local ranchers) wanted to see them all go.

Two of the wilder studs stick in my mind from early on: a black and a grey. They were the main studs and about 18 years old then. One (the black?) jumped in Mossers and was caught. The grey ran real stiff at first, then he limbered up; he would outsmart you. We had to ride from Peaceful Valley; the only thing you got was if one played out. We built one trap and never got anything in it. Once we jumped a bunch at Halliday Wells--the grey stud was with them. We got them almost up to the trap and he turned off--the guys weren't there for the gate. I remember them telling that before they had that trap they built one along the park fence with a bank for the fence on one side. They got the grey in there and he got out; they never got him again.

There aren't as many roans as there used to be. There were always blacks with spots and lots of greys; there used to be more. Blacks and greys predominated, but they had a spot on their side and bald faces. Some blue roans from around Pleasant Flats were sure good looking. There was a bald-faced roan horse down there for years; they got him roped round-up before last. There were good colts out of him. I think Doug Tescher bought a 3-year-old and a 2-year-old by him and out of a brown mare.\(^{15}\)

At one time (in the 1960s), there were a lot of colts with crooked legs, but I don't think they ever survived. I can remember one or two hump-backed ones;

\(^{15}\) The horses purchased by Doug Tescher were sold to Leo Kuntz and are now known as "Bad Toe" and "Pollicky" (see Photo No. 123).
one could hardly travel. They were pretty pronounced inbred. You don't see that anymore.

The Tescher brothers--Tom, Alvin, and, to a lesser extent, Jim--have been observing and chasing horses in the badlands for 40 years (see Figure 12). When they were young, they chased the horses to make money selling them, because they "liked to watch them," and because they enjoyed the challenge. During the 1950s and 1960s, THRO relied on the Tschers to help eliminate horses from the park; subsequently, Tom Tescher has assisted in the planning and execution of each round-up. Simply put, the Tschers have more knowledge of and have had more impact on the THRO horses than anyone. Tom in particular knows the horses' genealogy, the behavior and territory of each band and their individual members, and how to chase, catch, and handle the animals. Tom has kept written records on the horses' genealogy since the 1960s, and when questioned about a particular animal, remembers its "family history" several generations back (see Photo No. 30). He has helped to select horses for both removal and introduction and has donated several horses to the park. With contributions from approximately 15 area ranchers, Tescher selected and donated the so-called "Brookman stud" (A-1) in 1981 and has also donated three Quarter Horses (one extant).

Both Tom and Alvin Tescher acknowledge that horses have been running free in the badlands since before their youth. They knew cowboys of the previous generation who chased them (e.g. "Badlands Bill" McCarty, Louis Felissier, etc.) and have seen people catch badlands horses since their childhood.
Alvin notes that most local ranchers grazed their livestock in the area of the present park between 1935-1954 and that at one time feral horses there numbered "400-500 head; 350 east of the river." While the majority of the horses during that time belonged to ranchers, there were also some that were considered wild: "You could always tell the type apart, but some of the branded or owned horses were pretty wild also." Alvin estimates that of the 125 horses caught in the 1954 round-up, only five or six were "wild horses." The "wild" horses were predominantly grey and were very difficult to catch: "A lot of the old studs were never caught before they had the new traps; we didn't even try for them." Alvin remembers in particular a "sharp headed, sharp looking, pink-nosed grey stud" from the late 1940s that was "the wildest I ever seen." This horse would always get his own mares back after a round-up had separated the groups (see "Notable Lineages"), and when a rancher shot this horse outside the park, Alvin "hated to see him go."

Alvin Tescher believes the blood of the park horses "could well go back to the early days; it goes back to at least around 1900, there were lots of horses early on, they took over the range. They were there long before my time, because I remember the old guys talking about them." He described the park horses as "more mustangy than wild horses elsewhere" and said, "We probably harmed them by taking the mustang out" (by catching them and introducing new types). But he thinks that the culling they did was good, shooting those that were inbred or crippled; some horses had crooked legs in front or back "after the herd had been thinned
down" in the 1960s. Alvin prefers the blue roans and attributes them to the influence of the blue Binon mare, which he says was turned into the park after the 1954 round-up to upgrade the herd (see "Notable Lineages").

Aside from his family and L.M. Barnhart, Alvin remembered the following ranchers as having caught and sold horses from the park: Gorham, Neuens, and Osterhout. He stated that most people preferred to catch "solid colored" and "better built" horses rather than the "mustang type." In the early days he and his brothers did take out some of the "better" horses; they also took out "mustangy" animals to "improve" the herd, and "we always tried to leave in some good mares." He remembered a few linebacked buckskins from the 1940s but says the last of that color were removed in the 1954 round-up (see Plate 24).

Tom Tescher does not like to speculate about the ultimate origin of the horses and will say only that they "could be old blood." He remembers the wilder greys from the mid-1940s and believes that some of the remaining horses trace to that breeding via the grey stallions that were in the park during the 1950s and 1960s (see "Notable Lineages"). He remembers the grey stallion described by Alvin as having had "very long foretops" and ranging near Frank's Creek and Government Creek, as well as a red roan stallion. When Tom first began observing horses in the badlands, "There were lots of grey studs; not 'drafty' and not branded. Also some branded mares: greys, blacks, and bays."

The first band of horses Tom corralled at Peaceful Valley included an old freckled grey mare and her family--also a grey
mare with no brand and a grey yearling. When the freckled grey mare shed her winter hair, Tom noticed that she carried a blotched brand; her ownership was never determined. Tom once caught an old chestnut mare branded "YE"; her owner, Frank Kessel, had been gone from the area for twenty years. Tom recalled many branded horses in the park during the 1940s and 1950s, many belonging to Walt Ray (see list of early branded horses observed by Tescher in "Notable Lineages"). At one time Mr. Ray had a Thoroughbred remount stallion, and Tom trapped two Thoroughbred-type mares at Jules Creek. Also, Cliff Rue moved and left two mares in the park, a black and a bay. Tom says that throughout the 1950s, "Most of the good saddle horses were taken in and out." Of the horses caught in the 1954 round-up he says, "99% were branded."

Tom was away on the rodeo circuit between 1956 and 1962 and did not observe or interact with the horses during that time. During his absence, L. M. Barnhart used a horse trap Tom had built on the north fork of Jules Creek and continued to chase them, sometimes using aircraft. This aggravated the Teschers. Tom says that Mr. Barnhart "thought he got them all" but that he had missed a grey stallion, a black stallion, and some of the mares, including two of Barnhart's own, a black paint and a red roan. The black stallion was caught and sold for slaughter by a Mr. Kreuger. The grey stallion (b. circa 1948) ran with the Barnhart mares and repeatedly eluded capture until Tom caught the mares and stallion at Mossers in 1965 (see "Notable Lineages").

When Tom rode through the park in 1962, he observed the following horses: two grey stallions, a small blue roan stallion, two
young black-and-white paint stallions, two or three "wild" grey mares, a blue mare (which later became the "Old Blue Mare") with a young filly, and a young blue bald-faced stallion. (There were also others.) Tom assumed that the blue mare was the daughter of the blue "Nunn" mare (purchased from Binon) and that the blue roan stallions were also her offspring (see "Notable Lineages"). The small blue roan stallion was later roped at Lindbos; the bald-faced blue roan stallion was extant for many years. Since that day Tom has kept careful and extensive genealogical records on the park horses.

Following the death of L. M. Barnhart in 1961, Tom purchased the two Barnhart mares from his widow. When the park moved to legalize the herd in the early 1970s, Tom signed an affidavit donating their unbranded increase to TERO; at times the park gave him horses he caught "to pay off my interest."

Tom's favorite horse was a bald-faced blue roan stallion (b. 1960; later grey; see "Notable Lineages" and above); he admired him because "you couldn't catch him—we didn't even really try," and because he had "good conformation." He also favors red roan stallions, paint fillies, and "the Painted Canyon bunch—the black bald-faced mare and her family."

Both Alvin and Tom Tescher expressed the desire that the "older type" of park horses remain in the park; these horses are viewed as a link with the past and are admired for their wildness and strength. At the same time, the Teschers have supported the park policy of introducing some new stallions, although they dis-
agree with the strategy of removing a specified number of horses, rather than the removal of selected individuals.¹⁶

Frank and Leo Kuntz, Jr., horse breeders from Linton, North Dakota, have purchased approximately 100 horses removed from the park since 1978. Leo Kuntz, Jr., explains that he became interested in the horses because he "couldn't figure out the breeding of the parkies—they looked different from other horses." Leo purchased a reddish-blue, bald-faced park gelding from Doug Tescher in 1978 (Tescher had purchased the horse at auction). Kuntz had the horse in Medora, where his family operates a buggy ride concession during the summers. One day some men saw the horse ("Bad Toe") and asked Kuntz, "Where did you get the Montana?" They then said that a "Montana" was an old-time horse type and that they hadn't seen such a horse for a long time. The Kuntz brothers began researching historic horse types in the area and felt that written descriptions of the Sitting Bull horses purchased by De Mores matched the appearance of the park horses. Leo believes that Sitting Bull's horses are "the key" to the origins of the park horses. De Mores purchased 250 head; Huidkoper bought 60 mares from De Mores the following year. The Kuntzes reason that because both breeders ran their horses on the open range and because some of the De Mores horses are unaccounted for, some of this stock could have escaped into the badlands and remained feral.

The Kuntz brothers have used some of their captured park horses to successfully compete in the Great American Horse Race

¹⁶ The Teschers also question the introduction of the Arabian stallion, Tiger Tu.
circuit, a series of cross-country races run throughout the Upper
Midwest each year. Their chief goal, however, has been preserva-
tion of the park strain, which they call "Nokota horses." The
Kuntzes believe that whatever their origin, the park horses are a
unique and historic type. In their view, the horses have "earned
the right" to exist by surviving extreme pressures in the bad-
lands, both natural and human. The Kuntz family and other con-
cerned horsemen from central North Dakota have established the
"Nokota Horse Association" (formerly called the "American Horse
Association"), which promotes the preservation and use of the park
horses.

The Kuntz family has attempted to develop a systematic
breeding program for the park horses on their Linton ranch. Lack-
ing genealogical information, they have been cautious about breed-
ing park horses to one another. Park stallions have been crossed
on Thoroughbred, Quarter Horse, pony, and grade mares. An inter-
esting result of this breeding has been the tendency for offspring
to display overo paint coloration patterns typical of the park
horses: side spots, bald faces, blue eyes, etc., even when the
domestic dams have no such traits in their background (see Photo
No. 134). An outstanding example of this tendency is seen in the
offspring of the grey park stallion "Jumping Mouse," purchased by
Kuntz in 1981. According to Tom Tescher, this stallion has no
known paint horses in his genealogical history. However, when
bred to Kuntz mares, which are the result of forty years of breed-
ing and which also lack such genetic traits, Jumping Mouse has
produced several colored offspring. A 1987 colt by Jumping Mouse
and out of a black Kuntz mare is a blue-eyed sorrel and white paint (see Photos No. 116 and 117). 17

When bred to park-born stallions, park-born mares at the Kuntz ranch have experienced relatively low fertility. There have been several stillborn births; generally these foals lack pigmentation. Dr. Phillip Spoonberg, D.V.M., has identified "lethal" genes in some roan, white, and overo paint horses that induce precisely this type of reproductive failure (article included as Appendix B). Dr. Spoonberg states: "Roan is a dominant genetic trait that will be expressed if just one parent contributes the gene; every foal born to a homozygous, or double-roan-gened horse would have to be roan no matter whether his other parent were roan or nonroan" (Appendix D, p. 40). He also states that the overo coat pattern is generally occurring in Paints or Spanish mustangs; overo-patterned horses can range from the minimum markings of a bald face and a small, frequently butterfly-shaped spot on one side of an otherwise colored body to almost total white with spots of color on the topline, particularly the ears, or peripherally on the feet. Most overos fall somewhere between the two patterning extremes, exhibiting jagged-edged spots or splashes of white most anywhere on the body, but particularly on the middle of the sides and neck (ibid., p. 4).

Since the park horses are predominately either roan or overo, it would appear that the mating of two horses dominant for either color trait (i.e., two roans or two overos) might result in either embryonic or stillborn deaths, as described by Spoonberg (see Appendix B, p. 39). A possible example of this occurred in

17 Horses displaying such overo paint characteristics occasionally result from breeding solid-colored American Quarter Horses. Such "crop-outs" are not allowed and must be registered with the American Paint Horse Association.
the park in 1987. A grey "Giggs" mare (A-7) produced a white stillborn foal. She and the dead foal are shown in Photo No. 58.

Bill Phillips, wild horse expert and Range Conservationist with the BLM, states that because the breeding of two horses dominant for the blue roan gene is likely to produce a "lethal" embryo, it would be important to keep black (the base color for blue roan) horses in the THRO herd. According to Phillips' research on the genetic factors of horse coloration, a blue roan is a black horse that carries a genetic factor for roan (Rr). As Spoonberg states above, the roan factor is always dominant. The mating of two blue roan horses four times will produce two blue roans (Rr), one black (rr), and one "lethal" foal (RR), as described by Dr. Spoonberg. The mating of a black (rr) and a blue roan (Rr) will produce two roan (Rr) and two black (rr) foals; no lethal (RR) combination is possible. (Personal correspondence; Appendix C).

Bill Valentine, co-founder of the Spanish Mustang Registry and former inspector for the breed, visited the Kuntz Ranch in the fall of 1987 to examine the park horses for evidence of mustang characteristics. Valentine searched for both phenotypic and genetic traits associated with the Spanish Mustang by examining extant park horses and the skeletal remains of deceased animals (see Photos No. 127-129). Valentine directed Kuntz to measure a black park stallion named "Houdini" to see whether the horse fell within the range stipulated by the Spanish Mustang Registry for a number of indices, including width of cannon bone, length of back, distance between the poll and withers, and height. (For a summary
of mustang characteristics, see Appendix A.) The horse did fall within the Spanish Mustang range. Upon examining the remains of a dead park horse, Mr. Valentine discovered a possible fusion of the fifth and sixth lumbar vertebrae, an Andalusian mustang characteristic (e.g., Ryden, 1970). Mr. Valentine's opinion was that the park horses did display some mustang characteristics, but that admixture with other breeds was evident. For instance, most of the park horses are much larger than the Spanish Mustang, which rarely exceeds 14.2 hh (cf. Denhardt, 1947; Dobie, 1952).

Photographs of park horses (Photos No. 100-106 and 122) were sent to Bill Phillips of the BLM. Mr. Phillips believes that these horses exhibit some mustang characteristics (especially the mare and foal in Photo No. 122, owned by Leo Kuntz). He referred to the bald-faced park type as "Russell Specials," an allusion to the horses painted by Charles Russell in nineteenth-century Montana.

The Kuntzes' continuous efforts to preserve the park horses have attracted some publicity in the form of newspaper articles, television news features, and a possible cinema production.

Ranchers and cowboys interviewed for this study expressed diverse opinions regarding the origin and merit of wild horses in the Little Missouri Badlands. However, they all communicated an appreciation for the wild nature of the horses, and many spoke nostalgically of their own experiences attempting to capture and subdue the animals in the years before federal jurisdiction over the badlands and surrounding grasslands. Floyd Oyhus, a Medora area rancher who was not interviewed for this study, addressed the
relationship between local cowboys and wild horses in a recently
published poem:

Chasin Broomtails

We jumped the bunch on Ash Coulee,
   And they headed for Mike's Creek Divide.
We couldn't catch them on top,
   So they dropped down the other side.

The going was rough and rugged,
   They were getting real hard to follow:
But we bent them down by the river,
   And they headed for Cedar Hollow.

We chased them thru cedars and canyons,
   To cross Ash Coulee, our goal;
Where we turned them up a side wash,
   Towards Dawson's Water Hole.

We got them along a fence line,
   And past a couple of wells;
And penned the whole bunch of broomies,
   At the ranch headquarters corrals.

This was just another day in our ranch work,
   A routine roundup, and yet,;
A thrill that lasts a lifetime,
   And one you will never forget!

For there's something about chasing broomies,
   That always gets in your blood;
That keeps you ridin' and sweatin',
   Through the rain, the snow and the mud!

You can ride till you are bone weary,
   And hungry and dying of thirst;
But the chase goes on unabated,
   For success of the roundup comes first.

And when you finally get old,
   And no longer take part in the chase;
Your thoughts drift back to your boyhood,
   And the days you were part of the race.
For it's really a part of our history,
A part that we lived in the past;
A part that is gone forever,
But in our memory will always last!\(^{18}\)

(Oyhus, 1989: 52-53)

\(^{18}\) The creeks mentioned in this poem are located north of the park environs; Oyhus ranched near Frank's Creek.