

The **Burnett Horses**

The following Vintage Article on the famous Burnett horses (6666 Ranch & Triangle Ranch), is reprinted in part from the February 1957 issue of 'The Quarter Horse Journal'.

An interesting aside when reading this article is the understanding it imparts as to the difficulty in researching pedigrees before AQHA began keeping records in 1940. Before that time the pedigrees on many horses, especially mares, simply did not exist. And, when there was a pedigree on a horse it was often hotly contested as to accuracy.

By Franklin Reynolds



Hollywood Gold at three years of age and about a year after he was received at the Triangle at Paducah before being sent to the 6666's

One of the great mysteries of the science of horses breeding (if it is a science and not a hodgepodge mixture of good luck and bad luck) is the inexplicable capability or genius of a few horsemen to look at a wobbly foal when neither knees nor pasterns nor hocks look right, and say, with authority and conviction, the sort of horse the foal will be years hence.

Especially is this past all common understanding when the breeding of either the sire or dam is unknown, even though that 'one in a million' horseman may have seen that sire or dam as an individual.

But once in a blue moon there is such a man!

In his own way he is a person with an inborn mental endowment that could be worth millions of dollars. Nobody has an explanation for him, and neither can he explain himself. And if his hidden and mysterious qualification to judge foals is closely followed year after year, over more than half a century, and found sound all the way through, then, whatever it is, it isn't just luck, because no horseman ever has had, or ever will have, that much luck of the better sort.

One of the greatest breeders of Thoroughbreds the world has ever known was the late Major Foxhall Daingerfield of Kentucky, who, for many years, had charge of the breeding program on Castleton Farm, near Lexington, for the late James R Keene, the man from whom the Keeneland race course derived its name.

It is one of the legends of the Blue Grass, how Major Daingerfield would go into the pastures with the matrons and foals, spend countless hours there studying these mares, and their colts and fillies, planning the future of those foals on the track and in the

stud, and estimating the potentials of those mares to produce other foals from the particular sires he had in mind. Rarely ever was he wrong.

Things as he saw them through the mind's eye worked out exactly as he thought they would. How he did it was past understanding - his own perception, as well as the comprehension of other horsemen, who said Major Daingerfield was blessed with a 'gift'. In his breeding program Major Daingerfield didn't need a pedigree for a compass or hope for inspiring stimulation. He studied possible sires and he knew where to go to get what he wanted from a particular mare. Other horsemen said he would as soon have sent a good mare to a Spanish Jack as to a stallion whose conformation he had not studied.

Texas Has Such A Man

Living in Texas today is another man who has shown such an unfathomable understanding of horse breeding. He has that keen sense of predicting, with undeviating accuracy, the future of a foal as was possessed by that great Kentucky horseman of other years.

This is the story of three of the Lone Star state's biggest ranches, the horses on those ranches and an important part of it must be the story of that man.

In the Spring of 1940 a wobbly legged dun colt was foaled on the Burnett Triangle Ranch, west of Iowa Park, Texas. He was just one of more than 40 foals to have been born in that pasture that Spring, just another colt to everybody - except one man. That man was Lige Reed, ranch foreman, and one of the greatest natural born horsemen Texas has ever known.

This foal's sire was known and his dam was known to Reed only when he saw her. She was a red dun or claybank mare he could identify, but that was about all. She had Thoroughbred characteristics of the Quarter Horse type and all her foals were good cow horses. Nothing of her breeding was in any record. Registered in Volume One, Number One, of the Stud Book of the American Quarter Horse Association, she carries the name, Triangle Lady 17 and nothing more. Her breeder was, and remains, unknown; her sire was unknown; her dam was unknown. One of the pioneer dams in Quarter Horse registration, she was accepted on inspection and conformation alone. Because of this one foal she is known to have produced, and because of her descendants through him, her acceptance into that earliest registry certainly was not an error.

There is cause to believe that she was unusually well bred, because while Reed wasn't certain, he thinks she came from the Mike Beach Ranch at Lawton, Oklahoma. He does know that she was in a bunch of mares brought to the Triangle from Oklahoma. She was thought to be six years old when this colt was foaled in 1940.

In the cases of these named horses this is due to the fact that with the organization of the American Quarter Horse Association many mares, like Triangle Lady 17, had to be admitted to the Stud Book on conformation alone since their breeding was completely unknown.

Dams Receiving More Attention

More and more, with the passing of time, Quarter Horse breeders appear to be paying more attention to the pedigrees of the dams, but probably not enough attention yet. The Arabs brought their horses to a high state of breed perfection by tracing heritage through the dams, and not so much through the sires. In the pedigrees of Arabian horses, the ancestral line of the dam is on the top side, the reversal of the order used in pedigrees of horses of English descent.

Edgar's Stud Book, published in 1833, which listed Quarter Horses, Arabians, Barbs, Turks, and the earlier-day English and American Thoroughbreds, gives far more information on the dams of outstanding American and English blood horses listed than on their sires.



A group of Burnett mares with their 1956 foals.

Mare In Gold Rush's Band

Triangle Lady 17 was one of the band of mares headed by the four year old palomino stallion, Gold Rush by Caliente by Del Rey, said to have been a Thoroughbred. Gold Rush had been bred by C B Lowry, and was foaled in California in 1936. He had been brought to the Burnett Ranch as a two year old. Neither his sire, Caliente, nor his grandsire, Del Rey, has been found listed in the American Stud Book of The Jockey Club. Of the breeding of Gold Rush's dam nothing is known beyond the fact that she is a sorrel saddle mare.

The dearth of information concerning the ancestries of Triangle Lady 17 and the dam of Gold Rush gives great emphasis to an interesting predicament in which a student of Quarter Horse bloodlines frequently finds himself mired down.

This interesting feature of modern Quarter Horse history is how little is known of the dams of some of the great Quarter Horse sires. A few of these are mentioned in this review. They include, not only Gold Rush, and the foal of Triangle Lady 17, but such other as Joe Hancock, Joe Tom, Roan Hancock and Red Man.

The morning after Triangle Lady 17 foaled, Lige Reed rode out in the pasture. He saw something, a potential, that everybody else overlooked. What he saw was not just another colt, not just another saddle horse for the wagon three years hence. What he saw was that a sire had been born. He saw Hollywood Gold! From that minute there was never any doubt in Lige Reed's mind about that colt.

Other men watch foals grow up and develop into good two year olds and then decide to use them for stallions. They then say, "I knew all along."

But how many of these commit themselves much earlier?

That noon when Lige Reed returned to the ranch headquarters he was heard to say: "Watch that Triangle 17's colt. Take good care of him. We've got a stud horse there!"

That Spring of 1940, the Summer following and until the stallions, mares and colts had been brought up in the Fall it did seem to the other members of the Reed household that the horses, particularly those in Gold Rush's pasture, were requiring a lot of looking after. It got to be something of a favorite household

subject for joking. Lige Reed just smiled and went his way.

Sees Colt's Potential

The foreman would put his saddle horse in his pickup and take off at every opportunity. There is no telling how many hours he spent sitting in that pickup, or in his saddle in the shade of a mesquite, looking at that colt and seeing years ahead. The practiced eye of an experienced horseman was looking right through those years and seeing clearly. He was envisioning days, that have come to pass as he predicted, when he would be riding horses sired by that little fellow following his mammy around.

Ask Lige Reed how he could be so certain of that foal, and he has but one answer: "I just liked him. That's all."

The foreman has been with Burnett's since 1933. Before that he was a horseman with the Waggoners for 30 years. Born in Wilbarger County, Texas, he was raised among good horses. He has studied them intimately all his life. He is a man who didn't get pitched off a single time during the first 10 years he broke horses. He has never had but two jobs in his life.

"When I changed jobs, " he remarked, "all I had to do was climb over a barb wire fence from a Waggoner pasture to a Burnett pasture."

He likes to show visitors the bits with which he started riding the two-year-old Hollywood Gold and many another horse. These bits were made by Sam Attaway, a Waggoner Ranch blacksmith, in 1917 from the crank off an old Model T Ford. Reed says they are the best bits he has ever owned. In time he has had to have four sets of rings welded on to them for the reins, and two sets of rings where bits fasten on to the headstall. He needs some new rings now, but the shanks and bar show no wear at all and have never rusted. He has used them continuously. He can't remember how many headstalls and sets of reins he has worn out with these bits, and wouldn't even attempt to guess the number of different horses, hundreds of them, that have had these bits in their mouths.

"These are the first bits Hollywood Gold ever had in his mouth," Reed says proudly. He can't recall too many other horses by name that he has ridden with them.

Hollywood Gold is his book, chapter and verse all rolled into one. He confesses that from the morning he found Hollywood Gold in the pasture he "had a feeling" that the colt was destined to become a great stallion. His faith has been vindicated.

Just Liked Hollywood Gold

"I reckon I just happened to like Hollywood Gold," is the only explanation he makes. "I liked him from the time he was foaled.

I watched him pretty close. I liked his conformation that first day and then I got to liking him better and better when I saw the way he handled himself. I liked his mother and I liked Gold Rush as a sire. When we took the colts up and halter broke them it was just like I thought it was going to be. We found Hollywood Gold had a wonderful disposition. He was a smart colt. He seemed to understand just exactly what we wanted him to do and he tried to help us get the job done. I was right glad I hadn't been disappointed in him."

It was Reed's nod that marked the Burnett colts to be gelded for saddle horses when they were coming two year olds. There wasn't any question in his mind about Hollywood Gold then, just as there never had been. The morning of the knife, Lige Reed put this colt in a distant pen where he could keep an eye on him. He

wanted to make sure nobody made a mistake. When he was a full two years old Reed saddled him for light riding. He used the colt to bring up the milk cows. "He was easy to break," Reed says, "and he went right into cow work just like he had been at it for years."

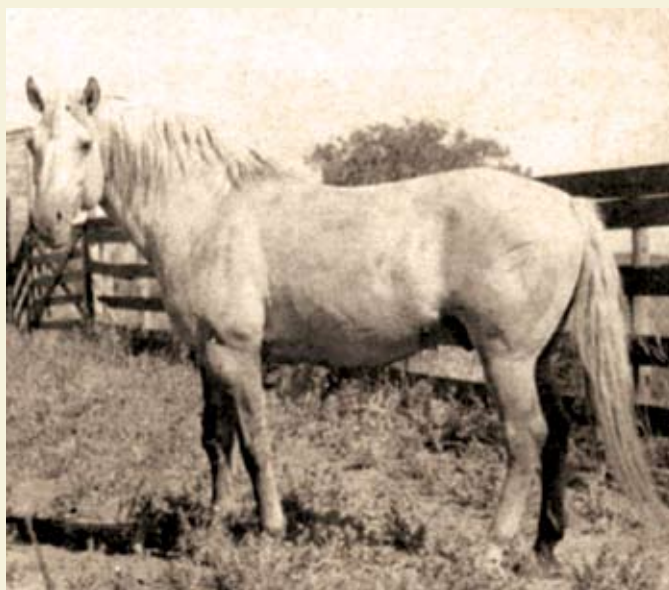
Reed delights in talking about Gold Rush and Hollywood Gold. At times he speaks as if they were one horse.

"These two are the best horses I have ever known," he insists. "I have handled lots of studs in my time. These horses get their best colts, I think, from part Quarter Horse-type Thoroughbred mares, and they both sire real cow horses. And I've never known two horses that can do a better job of handling their mares. Old Gold Rush could round up his mares

in less time than six good cowboys could do the job. When he decided to take them to the tank for a drink, or to another part of the pasture to graze, he could do it easier than any other stallion I have ever known, unless it is Hollywood Gold. He can handle his mares as well as Gold Rush ever did."

The Triangle Ranch near Iowa Park, of which Lige Reed is the foreman, is one of a trio of extensive Texas cattle and horse operations that are a part of the holdings of the Burnett Estate. The others are the Triangle Ranch of Paducah, TX, and the Four Sixes (6666's) at Guthrie. In all they include more than half a million acres of range, and are owned by Mrs Anne Windfohr, daughter of Tom Burnett, and granddaughter of the colorful Burk Burnett, on whose Wichita County lands the sensational oil strike of 1919 was made.

In his great biography of Colonel Charles Goodnight (reprinted by the University of Oklahoma Press in 1949), J Evetts Haley tells: "How Burk Burnett pressed Dan Waggoner to stay for dinner



Hollywood Gold at 16 years

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by promising him something he had never before eaten. Upon staying and seeing nothing unusual, Waggoner reminded the host that he was to furnish something he had never tasted before: 'I am,' said Burnett, picking up a platter, "taste a piece of your own beef!"

Burk Burnett Moves To Texas

The fabulous Burk Burnett was born in Missouri in 1849, the year of the great "gold rush" to California. Seven years later the family moved to Texas and settled on a creek in Denton County. In 1866 he made his first trip up the new cattle trail to Kansas, as a cowpuncher, and the following year, as the trail boss, took a herd of his father's cattle to the railroad there. In 1870 he went into business for himself on the 6666's. He was one of the first Texas cowmen to lease Indian grazing rights in the Indian Nations, in what is now Oklahoma, and was host to President Teddy Roosevelt when the cowpuncher-President hunted wolves in Oklahoma.

Burk Burnett died in Fort Worth in 1922 and his son, the late Tom Burnett, father of Mrs Lindfohr, took over the management of the Burnett interests. The father had been greatly interested in good horses. The son was interested in them to an even greater degree. This explains, in part, the interest of the daughter in even better horses. Old cowpunchers say Mrs Windfohr is one of the best judges of horses they have ever known. And the records tend to prove that they are right.

Mrs Windfohr, with a keen and sensitive talent for appraising the value of horses, and with the inherited and cultivated appreciation for the better ones, was in California when she first saw the two year old Gold Rush. She asked some questions and decided he was needed on the trio of Texas ranches. She bought him.

Anne Windfohr can now take credit for discovering the foundation sire of a new family of ranch horses that are described by cowpunchers who have used them, and by old-timers who have watched them work, as some of the very best to be found anywhere.

Burnetts Sell Gold Rush

Gold Rush was used on the Burnett ranches for 16 years, and his blood had almost reached the saturation point. He was sold to the Herring Estate of Vernon, TX, in April of 1955. - (note: *Gold Rush* was recently sold to Bob Corley and Harry Guffee of Franklin, TN.)

Much of the success of Both Gold Rush and Hollywood Gold as sires can be attributed to the fact that the Triangle Ranch at Iowa Park and the Triangle Ranch at Paducah were the last homes of the famous Joe Hancock. The breeding of most of the mares on the three ranches has been predominately Hancock for many years.

During Hollywood Gold's first two years Lige Reed never let an opportunity pass to declaim the colt's great potential as a cow horse and as a future sire. Quite naturally, the foreman's evaluation of the colt was known to Mrs Windfohr, who was probably well pleased since Reed's estimate of Hollywood Gold confirmed the judgement she exercised the day she signed a check for Gold Rush.

Then came the day, as Hollywood Gold was going into his third Spring, that in the living room at the headquarters of the Iowa

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Park Triangle the foreman raised his arm.

"Miss Anne," he pleaded, forcing a smile of acquiescence through the shock of disappointment, "please get a knife and take my right arm but leave me the colt."

Mrs Windfroh had just told him of her decision that Hollywood Gold should go to the 6666's at Guthrie to head a band of mares there.

Lige Reed now figures he had talked too much, that he had bragged too much on the colt. He says that no matter how good he had said Hollywood Gold was then, or how much better he had prophesied the horse would become in time, the dun stallion, now 16 years old, has more than fulfilled every prediction the ranch foreman then made.

"He has turned out to be an even greater horse than I ever thought he would be." Reed says. "And I knew he would be one of the best."

The truth is that Lige Reed, now not far from his 70th birthday, and a cowpuncher since he went to work for Waggoners at the age of 15, is happy that Hollywood Gold went to the 6666's from the Triangle where he was foaled. Reed is glad that the stallion got his chance with a band of good mares on the ranch established by Burk Burnett more than 85 years ago, and that has been noted as the home of finer horses from that day to this.

For a number of years the 6666's has been managed by George Humphreys, one of the best of Texas horsemen and cowmen. He is also one of the finest of gentlemen. He has been on the ranch for more than 40 years.

"It's no trouble at all to sell every Hollywood Gold colt as fast as they are weaned," says Humphreys, "and the buyers are willing to pay good prices for them. There are far more people wanting Hollywood Gold foals than we have, either fillies or colts."

Most men who have worked with horses as long as Lige Reed and George Humphreys can recall some horse, long since dead, that was greater than any sire living today. But not these two. They believe that today's horses are much better than the horses of the yesterdays and that of all the sires they have known (which will number into hundreds) there has never been one better than the big dun horse that every spring leads a band of carefully selected mares of Hancock and Grey Badger II breeding into his pasture.

Hollywood Gold Fame Spreads

The fame of the Hollywood Golds as ranch horses has spread over the Texas cow country like the drouth - it's everywhere.

A rancher living quite a distance from the 6666's was heard to remark: "Anybody needing a stud horse won't make a mistake in taking any colt he can get sired by Hollywood Gold."

.....To be continued from 'Hollywood Gold Fame Spreads' in the next issue.

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