

ICONIC

Ranch Horse Bloodlines

BY WESTERN HORSEMAN STAFF

Western Horseman lists the top bloodlines used in today's working ranch remudas.

BELOW: The Tongue River Ranch broodmare band carries the blood of top stallions such as Doc O'Lena, Peppy San Badger, Playgun, Peptoboonsmal and Tanquery Gin.



WESTERN HORSEMAN



RANCHERS HAVE BRED FOR THE IDEAL working ranch horse for more than a hundred years. In the early days, cowboys favored Steeldust descendants. Around the turn of the 20th century, Thoroughbred stallions in the U.S. government's Remount program improved bloodlines of ranch remudas throughout the West. And in the heyday of match racing, famous stallions known for their quick

bursts of speed and athleticism began influencing the breeding programs of many working cattle ranches.

The time period from the late 1800s to the early 1900s produced legendary stallions such as Peter McCue, Midnight, Joe Hancock, Oklahoma Star, Joe Reed and My Texas Dandy. These horses became the foundation sires for the Quarter Horse breed and for today's working ranch horses.

In the mid-1900s, horses such

as Driftwood, Bert, Hollywood Gold, Grey Badger III, Sugar Bars, King, Poco Bueno and Leo added another layer to the foundation of the breed.

Within the past 20 years, ranches throughout the country have begun using popular cutting horse bloodlines to enhance their horses' athleticism and cow sense. And, while they identify their horses by contemporary names such as Little Peppy or Freckles Playboy, those horses trace to the founda-

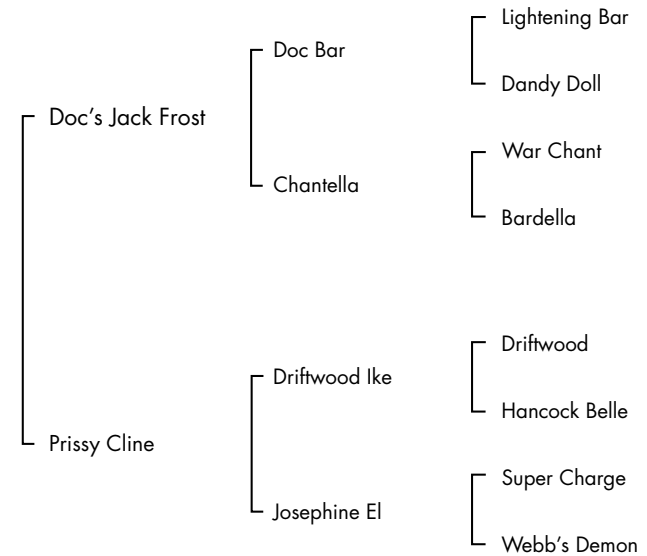
tion sires of the Quarter Horse breed. At the same time, the names of a few old-time bloodlines, such as Hancock and Driftwood, endure to this day.

After interviewing top ranchers and leading horsemen, and analyzing registration statistics and production sale records, *Western Horseman* editors and staff members cast their votes for the ranch-horse bloodlines that have had the most influence on today's working strings.

Sun Frost



**Sun Frost
1979-2007**



FOALED IN A NORTHERN PLAINS RANCHING ENVIRONMENT, THIS RACE- AND PERFORMANCE-BRED STALLION FOUNDED A UNIQUE FAMILY OF "DOERS."

— WESTERN HORSEMAN BOOKS, "LEGENDS: VOLUME 8"

IN BARREL RACING CIRCLES, Sun Frost's name is synonymous with Dash For Cash, Fire Water Flit and Jet Deck as a sire of running blood. The 1979 palomino stallion has sired progeny who have won or produced winners of more than \$2 million. His notable son Frenchmans Guy, who sired Kristie Peterson's great horse French Flash Hawk (Bozo), has sired get with earnings in excess of \$1.4 million.

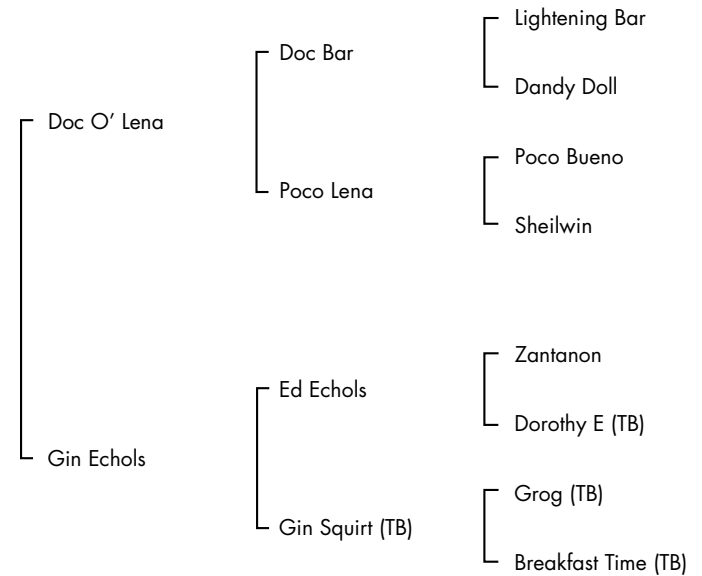
While Sun Frost's legacy is obviously rooted in racing, he's also known throughout the Northern Plains as a sire of roping, cutting and ranch horses.

Bred by Stanley Johnston in Miller, South Dakota, the stallion was purchased by Cowan Cattle Co. of Highmore, South Dakota, as a yearling. His distinctive blend of foundation blood, including Doc Bar, Driftwood and Hancock, made him a prepotent sire of stout, quick, athletic horses with willing dispositions and unforgettable color.

Tanquery Gin



**Tanquery Gin
1975-2001**



TANQUERY GIN IS AMONG THE ALL-TIME LEADING CUTTING-HORSE SIRES, AS WELL AS THE ALL-TIME LEADING MATERNAL GRANDSIRE FOR BOTH THE NATIONAL CUTTING HORSE ASSOCIATION AND THE NATIONAL REINED COW HORSE ASSOCIATION.

— WESTERN HORSEMAN BOOKS, “LEGENDS: VOLUME 9”

BRED AND RAISED by iconic Texas horseman B.F. Phillips, Tanquery Gin was trained by legendary cutting horse trainer Shorty Freeman. Although his show career in cutting was hampered by injuries, the 1975 stallion displayed enough talent in front of a cow to attract mare owners. Two foals from his first foal crop combined to win more than \$450,000 in cutting competition.

The sorrel continued to sire impressive foals under the ownership of Georgia breeder William S. Morris III. His impact as a ranch horse sire no doubt grew after he was purchased by the Four Sixes Ranch in Guthrie, Texas, in 1996.

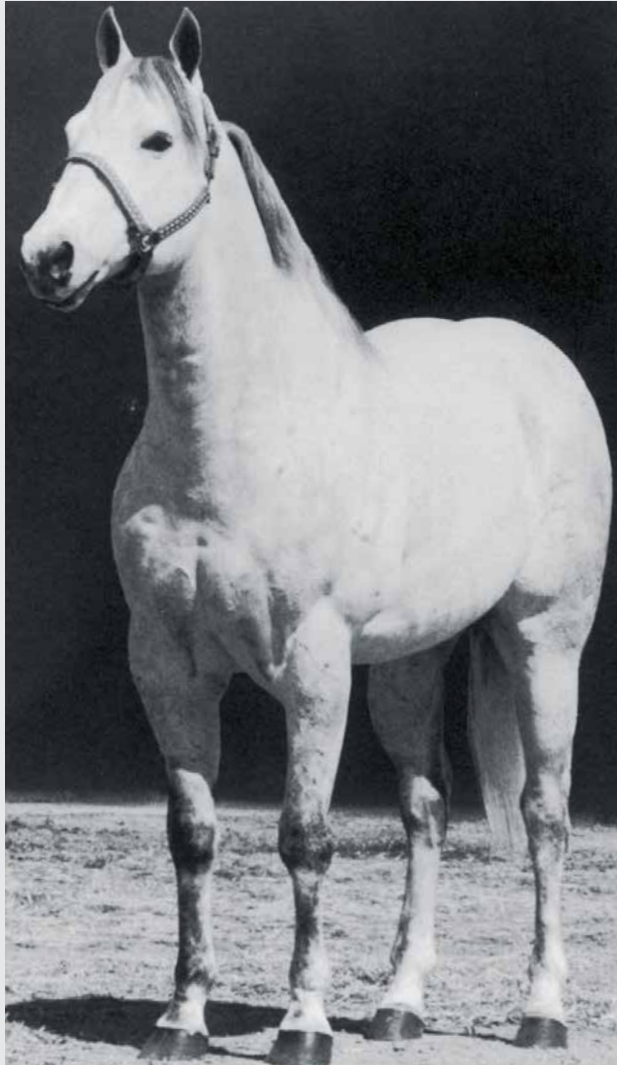
Tanquery Gin sired earners of more than \$2.3 million, but may be better known as a great broodmare sire. His daughters have produced 266 performers with earnings of more than \$3 million.

Glenn Blodgett, DVM, the Four Sixes horse division manager, says that Tanquery Gin also sired many top-notch ranch geldings.

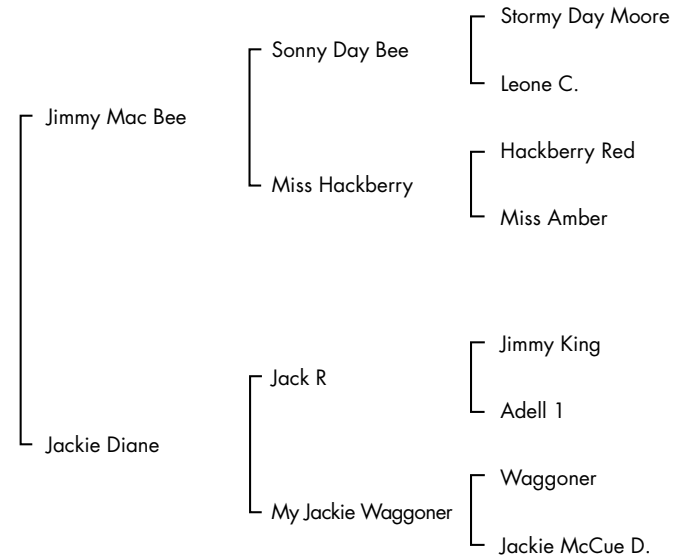
“They had all the traits you would want in a ranch horse,” Blodgett says. “They had stamina and athletic ability, they stayed sound, and everyone got along with them. When you look at the influence Tanquery Gin had on the Sixes program, he was really a dominant horse.”



Jackie Bee



**Jackie Bee
1962-1990**



FROM THE MOMENT KANSAS QUARTER HORSE BREEDER Duane Walker set eyes on newborn foal Jackie Bee, he knew he wanted to add him to his breeding program. It took five years of negotiations before he could call the horse his own. In the meantime, he'd bred some mares to the young stallion and raised some of his foals.

An easygoing horse with substantial frame and muscle, Jackie Bee stamped his offspring with size. In the 1970s, people sought Jackie Bee's progeny for their halter potential. When the look of halter horses changed in the 1980s, Walker focused on breeding Jackie Bee to get versatile performance horses. Respected rancher and horseman Bill Smith, of Thermopolis, Wyoming, recognized how quickly and efficiently Jackie Bee horses worked cattle and began incorporating the stallion's bloodlines into his breeding program.

Jackie Bee never had the chance to be a ranch horse himself because he spent most of his time running with the mares, but his offspring became known as premier ranch and cow horses.

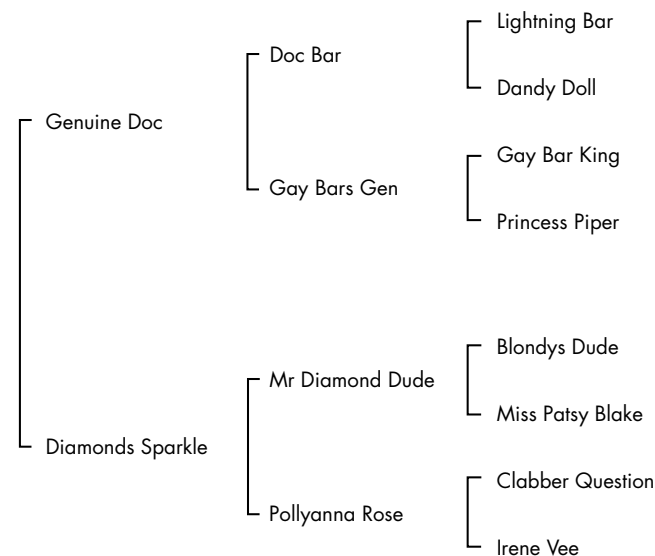
"He came along when people were wanting bigger horses than they were riding," Walker says. "He was made like a ranch horse—stout with big withers—and he had a great mind. He was pleasant to be around. He did whatever it took to get along."

"IF JACKIE BEE HAD BEEN A MAN INSTEAD OF A HORSE, HE'D HAVE BEEN THE KIND OF MAN YOU'D LIKE TO PARTNER UP WITH; THE KIND OF MAN YOU'D BE PROUD TO CALL A FRIEND."

— DUANE WALKER, *WESTERN HORSEMAN* BOOKS, "LEGENDS: VOLUME 5"

Shining Spark

**Shining Spark
1989-2021**



A NATIONAL REINING HORSE Association (NRHA) Derby champion, an American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA) junior reining world champion, sire of multiple champions in reining, working cow horse and roping, the son of AQHA Superhorse Diamonds Sparkle, and a stunning palomino to boot: That is Shining Spark.

Breeder and owner Carol Rose, of Gainesville, Texas, once said it was impossible to promote Shining Spark as a stallion sire or broodmare sire, because he sired both. Looking at his Equi-Stat offspring records, 32 of his leading 35 offspring also have produced money-earners. He has consistently ranked at or near the top among sires of reining horses and reined cow horses.

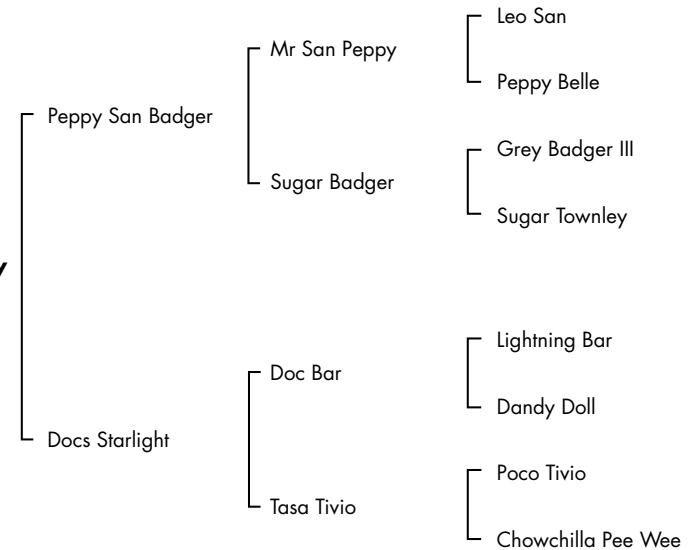
Even more than their accomplishments in the arena, their trainability, athletic ability and good bone endear them to ranchers. Tom Moorhouse utilized a son of Shining Spark on his Texas ranch for nearly 20 years. Seven S Shining Gold, or “Waurika,” was known for siring intelligent foals with plenty of stamina.

“He and his foals had a good bit of bottom,” Moorhouse says. “And they had good cow sense, were gentle, and had plenty of speed for roping cattle.”

Paddys Irish Whiskey



**Paddys Irish Whiskey
1991-**



PADDYS IRISH WHISKEY’S ranching roots run deep. While owned by John Scott, he earned \$12,000 in cutting competition before retiring to stud at Scott’s S Ranch in Montana.

After siring dozens of ranch horses, the 1991 bay made headlines in 2000 when he sold for \$560,000 at Scott’s dispersal sale in Billings, Montana. The Four Sixes Ranch purchased him and promptly syndicated him. Paddys Irish Whiskey has sired the winners of nearly \$1.5 million, and his top five earners have succeeded in cutting, ranch versatility, reining, reined cow horse and roping events. The stallion also was part of a famous trio of brothers that included Gallo Del Cielo (“Rooster”) and Grays Starlight.

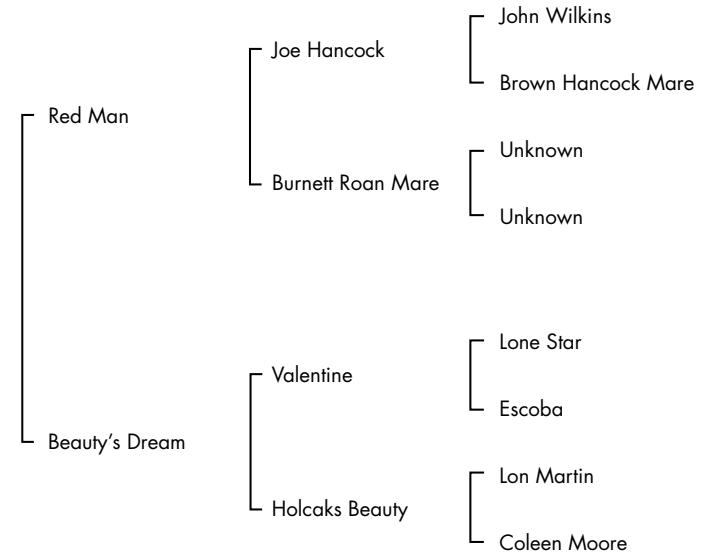
His offspring were also more than capable handling ranch work, recalls Scott’s son, Jim.

“They would just watch a cow so well that they were easy to train,” he says. “And they were tough; they could take riding long distances on the ranch and weren’t weak-hearted. I’d love to have [Paddys Irish Whiskey] back. I’ll put it that way.”

Blue Valentine



**Blue Valentine
1956-1980**



JUST LIKE HIS GRANDSIRE, JOE HANCOCK, Blue Valentine was known for his abilities on the ranch and in the rodeo arena. His blood can be found in remudas from Arizona to Montana.

Blue Valentine's sire, Red Man, was himself a prolific sire of quick-starting racehorses and top ranch mounts. He was a well-built horse, with a long hip, deep heart girth, ample bone and muscle, and prominent withers. As a sire, he passed his size, athletic ability and roan color to Blue Valentine.

Bred by Kenny Gunter, with subsequent owners who included Del Haverty, Buster Hayes and Hyde Merritt, Blue Valentine was frequently used for ranch work, but the horse's main claim to fame was as a steer-roping horse.

Chip Merritt, Hyde's son, grew up with Blue Valentine and occasionally competed on him.

"He was really quick out of the box," Chip recalls. "You had to really be holding on."

As for Blue Valentine's offspring, Chip says they're just as athletic, attentive, sure-footed and smart as their sire. Many are still sold as ranch and rodeo horses, while an equal number are purchased for recreational riding.

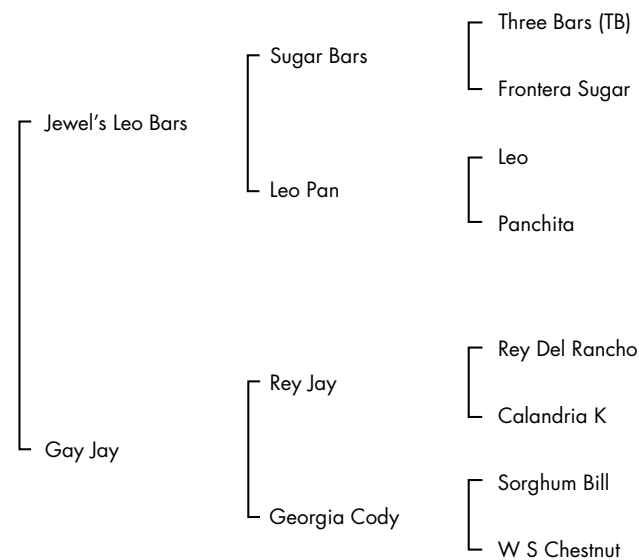
Freckles Playboy



FRECKLES PLAYBOY, A 1973 STALLION, WAS TIRED AT THE RACETRACK AN IN THE HALTER ARENA BEFORE HE FOUND HIS NICHE AS A CUTTING HORSE AS CO-RESERVE CHAMPION OF THE 1976 NCHA OPEN CUTTING FUTURITY.

— WESTERN HORSEMAN BOOKS, "LEGENDS: VOLUME 6"

Freckles Playboy 1973-2003



FRECKLES PLAYBOY WAS BRED AND RAISED BY MARION FLYNT of Midland, Texas. The 1973 sorrel stallion began an illustrious show career with a reserve championship at the National Cutting Horse Association (NCHA) Futurity in 1976. Later, he was purchased by Kay Floyd, of Stephenville, Texas, who owned the horse during most of his breeding career. Freckles Playboy's offspring won more than \$27 million in competition, particularly in the cutting arena. In addition, his grandget have earned more than \$58 million.

While Freckles Playboy has greatly influenced the cutting and reined cow horse arenas, his descendants have proven to be great ranch horses.

"That doesn't surprise me a bit," says Terry Riddle, who trained and showed Freckles Playboy. "He was out of a Rey Jay mare, and Rey Jay mares were some of the best producing mares at that time. He was super-athletic, smart and had a lot of cow. You could do anything on his colts. They had that killing stop."

The Jewel's Leo Bars-Rey Jay cross has produced another great sire of both show performers and ranch horses. Colonel Freckles, by Jewel's Leo Bars and out of Christy Jay, by Rey Jay, won the NCHA Futurity the same year in which his half-brother, Freckles Playboy, was reserve. Along with being recognized as a leading sire of Western performance horses, Colonel Freckles can be found in the pedigrees of many ranch remudas throughout the United States.



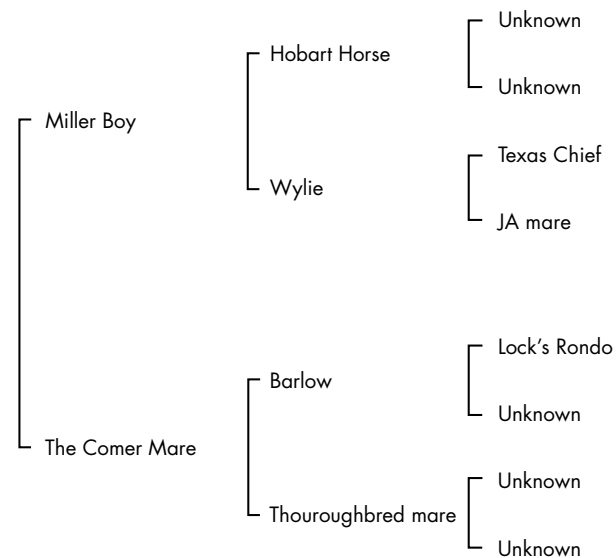
Driftwood



KNOWN AS “SPEEDY” DURING HIS RODEOING DAYS, DRIFTWOOD LEFT AN INDELIBLE MARK ON THE USING HORSE WORLD OF THE SOUTHWEST AND WEST COAST.

— WESTERN HORSEMAN BOOKS, “LEGENDS: VOLUME 2”

**Driftwood
1932-1960**



BRED BY “OLD MAN” CHILDRESS, OF SILVERTON, Texas, and foaled in 1932, Driftwood emerged from a relatively unknown pedigree. Nevertheless, he quickly became a top match racehorse in West Texas.

Later, Ross Brinson brought him to Arizona, where he dominated in the rodeo arena. Under Asbury Schell, one of several of the horse’s owners and a top rodeo hand, “Speedy” became a famous rope horse and later was well-known throughout Arizona and California as a top sire of rodeo mounts.

At age 11, Driftwood was purchased by Channing and Catherine Peake, of Lompoc, California. The Peakes used Driftwood to establish one of the most respected bloodlines of rodeo and ranch horses, known for their speed, intelligence and ability to cross well on other bloodlines. Mel Potter, of Marana, Arizona, is largely responsible for keeping the Driftwood line alive.

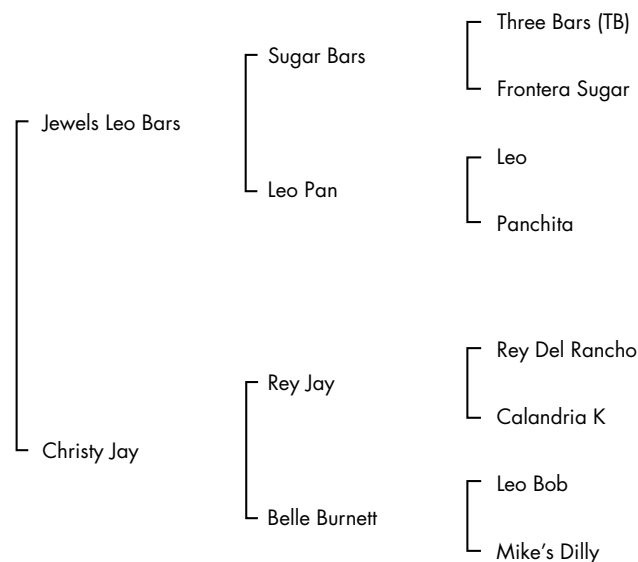
Colonel Freckles



IN THE 1970'S, WHO WOULD HAVE EVER THOUGHT THAT A QUARTER HORSE STALLION WOULD CREATE MILLIONS OF DOLLARS? AND YET, COLONEL FRECKLES DID JUST THAT.

— WESTERN HORSEMAN BOOKS, "LEGENDS: VOLUME 6"

**Colonel Freckles
1973-1986**



LIKE SEVERAL OTHER HORSES on this list, Colonel Freckles first made his mark at the National Cutting Horse Association (NCHA) Futurity, where in 1976 he won the open championship with Olan Hightower riding. A mare out of his first foal crop, Colonel Lil, went on to win the 1981 NCHA Futurity. It was a telltale sign that the stallion, owned by Lou and Wanda Waters of Texas during the latter part of his life, was going to be an outstanding sire.

His son Nu Cash, shown by Ted Robinson, won the National Reined Cow Horse Association (NRCHA) Snaffle Bit Futurity, and then sired three winners of the event's open division. A grandson, Colonels Smoking Gun, was a reining champion who sired two National Reining Horse Association (NRHA) Futurity open winners. An American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA) Hall of Fame inductee, Colonel Freckles is the grandsire or great-grandsire of AQHA champions in roping, versatility ranch horse and all-around competition.

That versatility — a horse's ability to work a cow, run a reining pattern or work a rope — continues to make Colonel Freckles a sought-after name in a pedigree.

"Versatility is the first word that comes to mind," says Joni Hunt, whose family's Open Box Rafter Ranch in South Dakota once stood a son of Colonel Freckles. "Sugar Bars crossed on Leo is such a successful and strong nick. It seems like those Colonel Freckles bloodlines show up in every discipline. They're pretty horses, and it doesn't take long to train them. They're smart, willing and have a lot of natural cow sense."



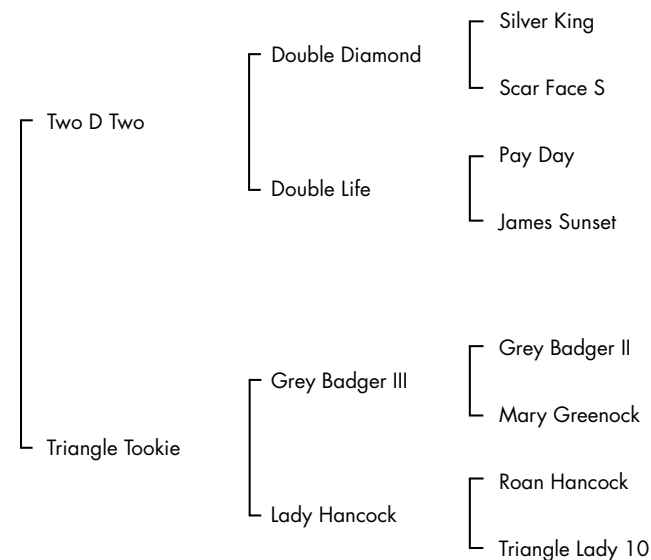
Two Eyed Jack



THE WORD “VERSATILE” TRULY APPLIED TO TWO EYED JACK AND ALL HIS GET, WHO AMASSED MORE THAN 15,000 HALTER POINTS AND MORE THAN 21,000 PERFORMANCE POINTS. THEY RODE AS GOOD AS THEY LOOKED.

— WESTERN HORSEMAN BOOKS, “LEGENDS: VOLUME 3”

**Two Eyed Jack
1961-1991**



JIM BRINKMAN, THE GRANDSON of legendary breeder Howard Pitzer, rode Two Eyed Jack as a boy and has ridden the stallion’s descendants all his life. He’s done everything on them, from working cattle to roping to showing them in halter. Their versatility and disposition have made them ideal ranch horses, particularly in Nebraska, where the Pitzer Ranch is located, and throughout the Midwest.

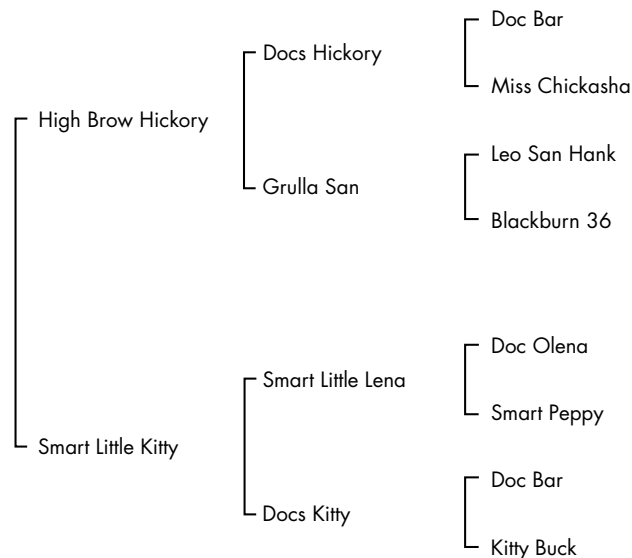
“Whenever someone came to look at [Two Eyed Jack], Howard threw me on him bare-back with just a halter on him,” Brinkman recalls. “You didn’t worry about him being broncy or anything. His foals were all gentle horses, on the verge of being a little lazy. But at the same time, they had a lot of bottom.”

Two Eyed Jack was bred by Herman Mass, of McHenry, Illinois. Pitzer acquired the stallion in 1964 as a 3-year-old. The 1961 sorrel earned a Superior in halter and American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA) points in a wide variety of events, including reining, working cow horse and Western riding. He sired 1,416 foals and 149 AQHA Champions.

High Brow Cat



**High Brow Cat
1988-2019**



ALTHOUGH HE WON MORE than \$100,000 in the cutting pen — a great accomplishment in itself — High Brow Cat always will be thought of as a prolific sire. His get have primarily won in cutting, but he has sired money earners in a variety of disciplines, including reining, working cow horse, barrel racing and ranch horse classes.

Owned for much of his life by Jack Waggoner, High Brow Cat was purchased in 2013 by Colt Ventures. In March 2019, Colt Ventures entered into a partnership with Beechfork Ranch for the ownership of High Brow Cat, known as BDB Breeders, LLC.. The stallion has consistently been at the top of the leading cutting sires list since his first foal crop began winning, and he has earners of more than \$91 million to his credit.

He also turned out to be an asset for ranchers, who discovered he passes along not only athletic ability but willing minds.

Horseman and rancher Ken McNabb, of Lovell, Wyoming, owns a son of High Brow Cat, DM High Brow Prince, and says the stallion is proving himself quickly.

“He is out of a money-earning daughter of Peppy San Badger and was born on the place,” he says. “When I started him, he was phenomenal. We determined we’d let him produce a couple of foal crops and we got exactly the same thing. His colts are super kind, gentle, sensible, trainable and cowy.”



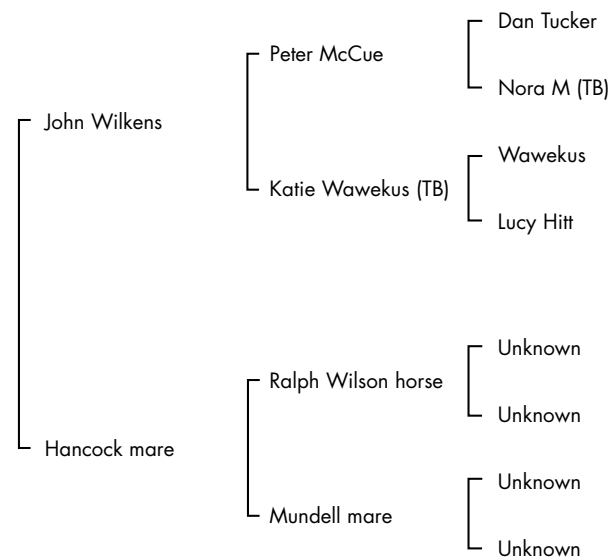
Joe Hancock

**Joe Hancock
1923-1943**



JOE HANCOCK IS CONSIDERED TO BE ONE THE ALL-TIME GREAT SIRES OF ROPE HORSES, APPRECIATED BY MANY RANCHERS FOR PASSING ON HIS GRITTIENESS AND COW SENSE TO HIS OFFSPRING.

— WESTERN HORSEMAN BOOKS, "LEGENDS: VOLUME 1"



JOE HANCOCK'S HISTORY IS FILLED with approximation and uncertainty. Bred by John Jackson Hancock, Joe Hancock was foaled sometime between 1923 and 1925. His sire was the great foundation stallion Peter McCue, and his dam was a grade mare by a Percheron stallion and out of a Thoroughbred-type mare. This unusual cross gave Joe Hancock his stout conformation, calm yet tough disposition, speed and cow sense.

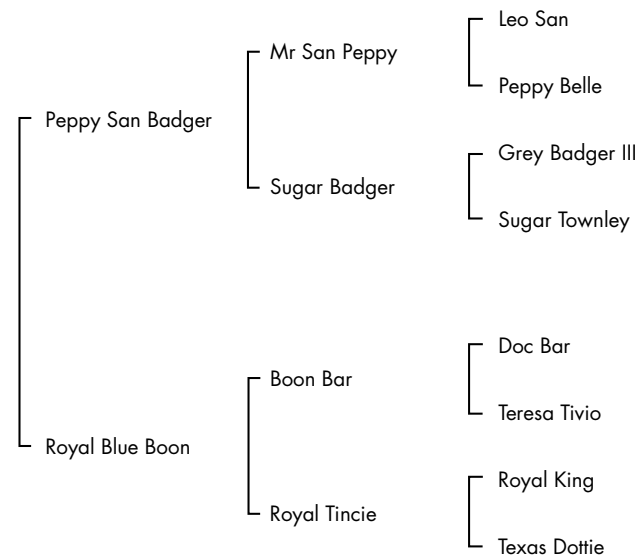
After a colorful match-race career, during which he stood open to race any horse for three-eighths of a mile, Joe Hancock retired virtually undefeated. Tom Burnett paid \$2,000 for the horse, and retired him to stud on the Four Sixes/Triangle Ranches.

Today, rodeo competitors, ropers and ranchers appreciate Hancock-bred horses for their big, stout conformations, grittiness and cow sense. Some Hancocks are known for their buck, big feet and plain heads, but staunch supporters say few foundation bloodlines produce such hardworking horses.

Peptoboonsmal



Peptoboonsmal
1992-



WITH A LEGEND FOR A SIRE, and a dam who has become an all-time leading producer of cutting horses with earners of \$2.6 million, Peptoboonsmal was destined to become a great cutting horse. By Peppy San Badger and out of Royal Blue Boon, the 1992 red roan stallion won the National Cutting Horse Association (NCHA) Futurity in 1995 and soon became a leading sire in cutting and reined cow horse competition, with 922 earners of more than \$28 million. Bred and owned for most of his life by Larry and Elaine Hall, Peptoboonsmal is now owned by the Aaron Ranch, of Commerce, Texas.

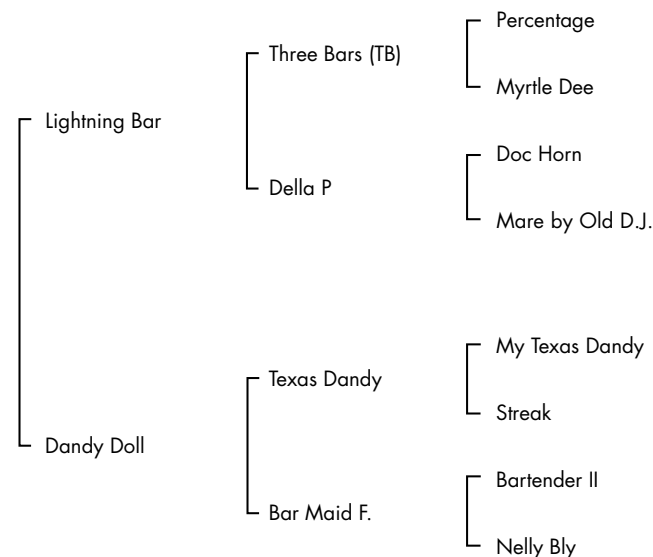
Although he was raised in Texas, his influence has reached all regions of the United States. Many working cattle outfits, such as the King Ranch, Spade Ranches and Tongue River Ranch, own sons of Peptoboonsmal because they like crossing the stout, thick-boned stallions on their broodmares.

“We see a lot of Peptoboonsmals in our area,” says Nevada rancher and breeder Jymme Dominguez. “They are also our favorites because they are bigger, hardier, tougher horses, but still have the athletic abilities and cow sense it takes to make a good ranch horse.”

Doc Bar



Doc Bar
1956-1992



DOC BAR WILL FOREVER BE REMEMBERED AS THE HORSE WHO REVOLUTIONIZED THE CUTTING HORSE INDUSTRY, BUT, HE WAS NOT BRED TO BE A COW HORSE. INTERESTINGLY ENOUGH, HE WAS INITIALLY BRED FOR SPEED.

— WESTERN HORSEMAN BOOKS, "LEGENDS: VOLUME 1"

WHEN TOM AND JACK FINLEY, of Gilbert, Arizona, bred AA running horse Dandy Doll to AAA racehorse Lightning Bar, they hoped to produce a sleek speedster. Instead, they got Doc Bar. The 14.3-hand, 1,000-pound chestnut stallion won only \$95 in lifetime racing earnings; however, he went on to excel in halter competition and sire a cutting-horse dynasty from 1960 to 1978. His get dominated cutting competition with their cow sense, athleticism and graceful, sweepy moves. These qualities make Doc Bar's blood popular with today's working ranch-horse breeders.

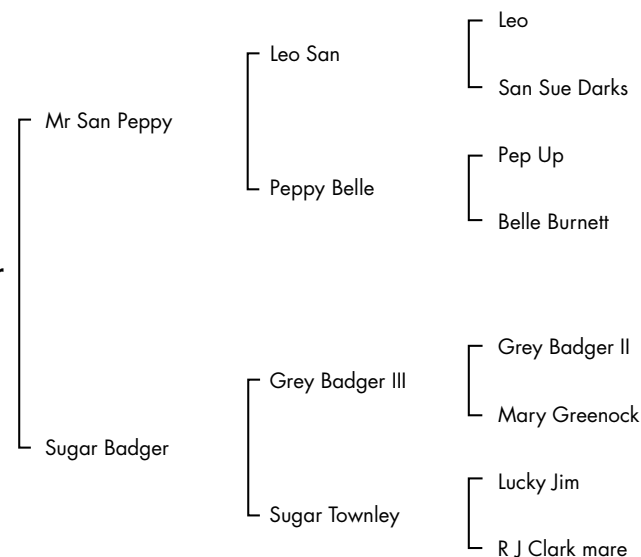
John Lacey, owner of Lacey Livestock in Paso Robles, California, stands two stallions and runs several mares that carry the Doc Bar bloodline. He considers Doc Bar to be the product of a perfect nick between Lightning Bar and Dandy Doll.

"I don't think there's any question that Doc Bar, through his Three Bars influence, is one of the greatest cow-horse sires there ever was or will be," Lacey says. "He was a prolific sire, and he was very prepotent; he passed on his cow sense and athletic ability to his offspring."

Peppy San Badger



**Peppy San Badger
1974-2005**



COMBINE THE BACKING OF ONE OF THE COUNTRY'S GREATEST RANCHES WITH THE FAITH OF A GREAT HORSEMAN IN A GREAT HORSE AND THE RESULT IS ONE OF THE MOST ENDURING LEGENDS OF THE QUARTER HORSE AND CUTTING HORSE WORLDS.

— WESTERN HORSEMAN BOOKS, "LEGENDS: VOLUME 7"

THIS 1974 STALLION was not only a National Cutting Horse Association (NCHA) Futurity champion, but also a solid ranch horse who spent plenty of time working cattle in the South Texas pastures of the famed King Ranch.

Shown by the late Buster Welch, "Little Peppy" attracted attention in the show pen for his flashy looks and cow sense. His impact on the cutting industry was undeniable, as his offspring earned a combined \$25.4 million.

Through his sons and daughters, grandsons and granddaughters, and even beyond, the stallion remains popular. Although he's been gone since 2005, Little Peppy's blood still runs through many of today's cutting horses, cow horses, stock horse competitors and ranch versatility winners. In fact, from 2008 through 2018, every American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA) Versatility Ranch Horse Open World Champion's pedigree includes his name.

Today's ranchers and breeders often still look for Peppy San Badger on a horse's registration papers.

"If I were to breed to anything other than to my studs, I'd want it to have some Peppy San Badger influence. You can't go wrong with Peppy San Badger horses," says John Anderson of Muleshoe Ranch in Gail, Texas. "They've got bone, they've got muscle, they've got feet. They don't break down and they're cowy. They're just catty and can get around. They're all-around ranch horses."



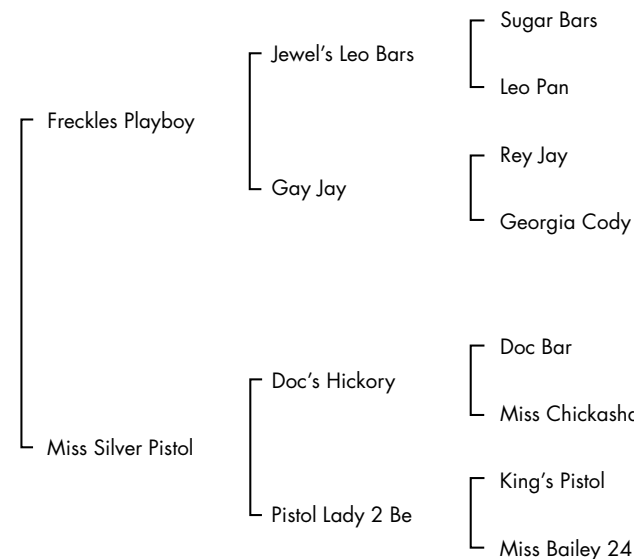
Playgun



THE PIEPERS BELIEVED THAT PLAYGUN'S CONFORMATION WAS IDEAL FOR AN EQUINE ATHLETE. SUCH A FORM FUNCTIONED WELL, PLUS THE HORSE DISPLAYED NOT ONLY COW SENSE BUT ALSO A PEOPLE-PLEASING PERSONALITY.

— WESTERN HORSEMAN BOOKS, "LEGENDS: VOLUME 9"

**Playgun
1992-2015**



FOALED IN 1992, Playgun was purchased as a yearling by Dick and Brenda Pieper, of Marietta, Oklahoma. He won more than \$185,000 in cutting competition and sired the earners of more than \$9.7 million in cutting, reining, reined cow horse, roping and ranch versatility competition.

Ranchers throughout the United States recognized the stallion not only for his cow sense, ability, and prepotency as a sire; they also appreciated that his foals possessed the conformation, size and structural soundness to handle everyday ranch work. By the mid-2000s, prominent ranches such as the Four Sixes Ranch, Haythorn Land & Cattle Co. and the Stuart Ranch were using sons of Playgun as their herd sires.

Although the gray stallion died in 2015, he continues to influence ranching bloodlines.

“There are a lot of great sons of Playgun that are used on the ranches,” says Nebraska rancher Craig Haythorn. “They have a little more bone, size and substance [compared to other cutting horses], and they still have all the cow and ability you need. In the last 10 years, I’d say that Playgun has supported ranch horse programs in several places.” 🐾