



Hook Marks On Our Hearts

Well-Known Horses in TV,  
Movies, and History

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## Introduction

Growing up with horses was my dream. On my pony I'd ride the range and either just enjoy the outdoors or pretend I was solving a mystery and closing in on the outlaws like on the shows I watched on TV. I did a lot of daydreaming as I sat in front of the screen.

Animals in many forms have become famous for their acting. Old Yeller, the big blond colored dog in the movie of that name and other dogs have made their way to stardom. Even the bear cub Grizzly Adams found and raised leaves a paw print on the screen. When the horse actor raced across the TV picture it was quite thrilling to watch. I'd lose my breath as they made those quick turns around rocks and through trees and brush chasing the bad guys.

Horses, for the most part were the quiet, unassuming actors. Behind every horse there was a trainer who worked with him so he can gallop through his scenes. The cowboy or cowgirl who rides him needs to know what they are doing too.

I owned a little black pony with the obvious name of Blackie. He was my first equine friend. After him I owned a couple of mares and a gelding. I loved them all and rode to my hearts content. But that's not what this book is about. I want to talk about the famous horses, the ones who made a mark on the small screen and the big one too. This is not to say my personal horses didn't leave a mark on me or that I didn't love them or they didn't mean as much. Just because they weren't famous doesn't mean they weren't famous in my eyes. Because they were. But this is a book about those well-known equine that probably every watcher of the old westerns remember and would like to learn more about. Hence this book.

I find it fun and interesting to learn about horses that have left a hoof print on my life as well as the lives of many others. Not only the actors and the real people in history who were privileged to own and ride these beautiful creatures, but for all of us who watched shows and movies and

galloped along with the horse who gallantly carried the hero.

Did the bad guys, the outlaws have feelings for their equine counterpart? I don't have a clue, but would like to think they had some empathy for the reliable mount who at times got them out and away from the law that was after them.

The first horse I fell in love with on the TV was Fury. He was a big black horse who was always on his hooves for his boy, Joey. I galloped through all the Saturday morning episodes and then saddled Blackie and made up my own adventures as we roamed over the farm we lived on.

My next favorite famous horse was Mr. Ed, of course. Mr. Ed always outsmarted his owner Wilbur and had a handle on everything around him. While in my mind, I knew horses couldn't talk, in my heart I wished my horse would talk to me like Ed did to Wilbur.

It's only been in recent years that I've become more interested in learning about the horse actors and other famous horses. I find it fun and interesting to learn the little tidbits that have left a hoof mark on the lives of so many.

I've mentioned only two horses so far and will go into more detail on both later in this book. I'm writing about famous horses and their riders that have meant a lot to me. Each has a story. Some of them I couldn't find a lot of information. I am sharing what I've been able to discover. It's been a search from love of these old westerns, the cowboys and in some cases, cowgirls, and especially the horse.

I hope you enjoy reading the discoveries I've made.

I'll begin this journey with the horses I remember and are most familiar with, the ones I grew up watching on the TV shows and movies.

## **Fury**

Fury in real life went by the name Highland Dale. He portrayed several horses during his career.

He and the boy Joey, being the only one who could ride him, took care of the Broken Wheel Ranch with his dad Jim and ranch hand Pete. They had countless adventures of thwarting the bad guys and making things right again.

Highland Dale also played Black Beauty in one of these movies. Elizabeth Taylor had the honor of riding him in the movie Giant. Other roles attributed to him were Gypsy Colt, Wild is the Wind, Brave Stallion, and the Return of Wildfire.

Highland Dale won several PATSY Awards during his career. A PATSY Award stands for Picture Animal Top Star of the Year and later was called Performing Animal Television Star of the Year.

The PATSY was started by the Hollywood office of the American Humane Association in 1939 to honor outstanding animal actors. A horse had died in an accident during the filming of Jesse James starring Tyrone Powers. The association felt the need to honor this horse and others through the years.

## **Mr. Ed**



The beautiful golden palomino who played Mr. Ed and kept his owner Wilbur guessing is another favorite. His real name was Bamboo Harvester.

Did you wonder how the trainers got Ed to look like he was talking? I never thought about it till I started researching and reading. I almost like to keep the imagination going. So if you don't want to know skip to the next horse in the list.

There are more than one story of how those in charge got Ed to look like he was talking. One was putting peanut butter on his lip. Another was using a nylon string attached to his lip. My favorite is the one where his trainer simply tapped his hoof as a cue to move his mouth. I think this is the best one because horses learn by using cues.

My favorite episode with Mr. Ed was when he and Clint Eastwood had a difference of opinion. Mr. Ed didn't want to be ridden by Clint so he laid down every time Clint tried to mount. It was funny and quite a different role for Mr. Eastwood I'm sure. I'd like to know his thoughts on the episode.

### **Trigger 1, 2, & 3**

Yes, there were three Triggers, an interesting fact that surprised me. The first Trigger was dubbed the “smartest horse in Hollywood” (10 Most Famous Movie Horses by Jackie Barlow) He carried Roy Rogers and others through some 80 films. Before Roy purchased the horse, Olivia De Haviland rode the golden horse when she played Maid Marion in the Adventures of Robin Hood in 1938.

The other two Triggers were well-trained horses and did tricks and carried the Trigger legend to the end. Two of them were mounted, preserved for later generations to see the great horse.

## **Buttermilk**

Alongside Roy Rogers, pretty Dale Evans rode the just as pretty Buttermilk. I didn't know, but before Buttermilk belonged to Dale, he had been abused and was on his way to the slaughterhouse. His story proves that even when a horse is mistreated, with the right kind of treatment and training and above all, love, a horse can become a good horse as did Buttermilk.

## **Silver 1 & 2**

It's amazing when researching horses you've grown up knowing about and watching them every week on TV that it wasn't always the same horse. I never thought there were two or more horses that played a role, but just as there are doubles for famous actors there are at times more than one horse used for a show.

As in the case of there being three Triggers, there were two Silver's, the horse that carried the Lone Ranger through many adventures. One of the Silver's was an easygoing guy used for scenes where Lone Ranger needed a quiet horse. The other Silver had a more fiery personality and Clayton Moore, who played Lone Ranger used this one to go on tours and other events to show off in public.

The Lone Ranger's sidekick, Tonto, portrayed by Jay Silverheels rode his faithful mount, Scout throughout the series.

## **Champion Times 7**

The singer/actor Gene Autry had seven horses all named Champion. These horses performed a lot of tricks throughout their careers. They even danced such dances as hula and the Charleston. I don't recall seeing any of this hoof stomping, but wished I had. Thanks to YouTube anyone can watch horses dance. It's rather exciting to watch these beautifully well-trained equine strutting their stuff.

## **Topper**

A beautiful white Arabian stallion named Topper was rode by Hopalong Cassidy, another old west cowboy television icon.

There were two Topper's also, for a short time. The first one was known as King Nappy and the second Topper was his double in the show. When King Nappy was hurt, the stand in, Topper two took over the role for the rest of the series.

## **Flicka**

Mary O'Hara wrote the book My Friend Flicka. The name is Swedish for little girl. This mare was the star of the book as well as a movie in which Roddy McDowell played the young boy who loved her.

My Friend Flicka was a television series in 1955 to 1958. The young boy star was Johnny Washbrook. The horse who played Flicka was Wahana, but from the beginning she was always known as Flicka.

## **The Black Stallion**

The Black Stallion was a series of books written by Walter Farley. I read those books over and over. I thrilled when the movies came out, but somehow they weren't as good as the books as sometimes happens.

Cass Ole was the horse who portrayed the Black. The boy Alec befriended him and the story goes on from there.

## **Black Beauty**

Black Beauty was a fiction work by Anna Sewell who wanted to show the cruelty of horses in her day and time. I enjoyed reading the book. I did a lot of crying over the hardships these magnificent animals endured for the sake of the human. Being told from the horse's point of view brought it all closer to the heart. This was a different way of writing and in my

opinion was effective.

In a later movie of *Black Beauty*, the horse that played the role was Docs Keepin Time. As I mentioned above Highland Dale also played *Black Beauty* in a movie version of the book.

## **The Virginian**



The Appaloosa that carried the *Virginian*, played by James Drury through many episodes in the television series *The Virginian* was named Joe D. The most updated information I could find on this beautiful horse was that James Drury would call him Jody. Kind of confusing. Apparently, the main horse *The Virginian* rode was Jody and the horse who doubled for Jody was Joe. Hmm. Whatever the case, the horse was a beauty and knew his job and did it well.

The buckskin that carried *Trampas* in the same show, *The Virginian*, rode the horse named Buck. There were actually four different Buck's used

in the long-running show. Both Doug McClure, who played Trampas and James Drury grew up with horses and knew how to ride and handle a horse before the show aired. This experience made for a lot of realism.

I couldn't find information on deputy Emmett Ryker's horse. He was a flashy horse with the light mane and tail and broad blazed face.

## **Bonanza**

Another horse with the same name, Buck, carried Ben Cartwright of the Ponderosa in Bonanza. I have read that this is the same horse Marshall Dillon rode in Gunsmoke.

The hard-riding cowboys in Bonanza were mainly Adam, Hoss, and Little Joe.

Chub was the one chosen for Hoss to ride. Dan Blocker who played Hoss needed a big horse. Chub, at 15.3 hands and weighing in at 1,250 pounds turned out to be the horse. He was half quarter horse and half thoroughbred. His dark color showed off the white blaze down his face.

Adam, the eldest brother, played by Pernell Roberts rode a pretty horse called Sport. This horse was a chestnut color with white socks on three of his legs. Sport had 7/8 thoroughbred in him.



Little Joe had the flashy black and white pinto with the name Cochise. There were actually thirteen different horses that played the part of the horse Cochise. There were pinto's who played the rougher scenes while others played the parts of a quieter riding scene.

Michael Landon who portrayed Little Joe personally chose his horse.

He named him Cochise. The first pinto was murdered one night in his stable along with a some others for unknown reasons. The killer was never found. What a sad awful time. Several horses were involved in the incident. Some were saved and others, like Cochise didn't make it.

Ben's horse Buck was a buckskin colored horse and was 12 years old at the time. After the show ended Lorne Green, who played Ben bought Buck and then donated him to a therapeutic riding facility. The kids there loved Buck. He lived out the rest of his life bringing joy to many mentally and physically handicapped kids.

## **Gunsmoke**

Marshall Dillon of Gunsmoke rode a buckskin horse named Buck. Must have been a popular name for buckskin colored horses in that day.

In reading about the horses in the show, Matt Dillon apparently had a herd of horses he rode. Another one was named Marshall.

I received a comment from one of my readers stating her family boarded horses used for television shows and one for Gunsmoke and that Matt Dillon rode was a buckskin named Dallas. So there are always these little stories that are fun to find out and read about.

I recently watched a movie called Gun the Man Down starring James Arness. He was riding a familiar looking buckskin horse. He was not Matt in this movie, but played an outlaw that went good. In the final scene he is riding away on the buckskin horse. I had the thought that he's riding into a new life and a new name, Matt Dillon and becomes the Marshall of Dodge City. Well that's not really how it happened in the movie, it was just a thought. I did find out the reason the horse looked familiar was because it was Buck, one of the horses that he would ride in Gunsmoke. So that was a neat bit of trivia.

## **Maverick**

James Garner rode a horse named El Loaner in many of his Maverick episodes.

I couldn't find any other information on the horses in this show.

### **The Rifleman**

I happen to think the name Razor is a clever name for a horse, it's different. Lucas McCain the Rifleman portrayed by Chuck Connors galloped over his range on the big horse with that name. He was sixteen hands, so a pretty good size horse.



Lucas had a son, Mark who rode a horse named Blueboy, who's real name was Bosco. Mark, who was played by Johnny Crawford has said that

he felt small beside Chuck Connors and Razor.

Another western that Chuck Connors starred in was Branded. He rode a flashy black and white pinto named Domino.

## **Cheyenne**

Brandy was a big horse who had a large cowboy to carry through the rough terrain of the open country they traveled through. He was up to the job and he and Clint Walker as Cheyenne roamed the hills helping out where they could.

Clint has said he couldn't have had a better horse to ride than Brandy. They got along great. Brandy was a quarter horse and at sixteen hands was a big horse that carried a big cowboy.

## **Wagon Train**

Robert Horton of Wagon Train fame rode the horse Stormy Night. Robert Horton portrayed the real-life person Flint McCullough, a scout for the wagon train. He actually owned his horse Stormy Night, an Appaloosa he bought on a windy, raining night, thus the name. The Appy had my favorite markings for an Appaloosa, the dark coloring than the white blanket and dark spots on the rear of the horse.

I couldn't find horse information about any of the other actors in Wagon Train except Robert Fuller. He owned his horse and was named Hoot. Another source says the horse Mr. Fuller rode in Wagon Train was called Gambler. I like both names and maybe this was two different horses he rode at different times.

## **Annie Oakley, the TV Series**

I'd like to include a cowgirl in this list of old western television series. Actress Gail Davis portrayed sharpshooter Annie Oakley in the TV serial from 1954 to 1957. She rode a pretty Palomino who had a white blaze

down his nose. His name was Target. Sure sounds like an appropriate name for a sharpshooter's horse.

## **Laredo & Lawman**

One of my readers had mentioned Peter Brown and his role in Laredo and wondered the name of his horse. I recalled seeing Mr. Brown in different westerns so I looked around and found out he played a Texas Ranger Chad Cooper and rode his own horse, Amigo. I've watched several episodes of Laredo and they are fun to watch. There is a lot of humor in these shows.

Neville Brand portrayed Reese Bennett in Laredo and rode a horse named Cactus. I like this name too thinking it's pretty creative.

Peter Brown played a character Deputy Johnny McKay in a show called Lawman. He rode a horse named Houdini. I don't remember this show as much as others. I think I need to look it up on YouTube and see if I can watch an episode or two.

## **High Chaparral**

John Cannon started the series riding a dapple gray horse which I couldn't find the name. He later rode a dark bay horse named Billy.

Blue Boy, John's son galloped around the Arizona desert on a Palomino named Soapy.



Uncle Buck Cannon, John's brother rode a horse named Rebel. They did their rebelling together as they helped run the Chaparral ranch in Tucson, Arizona.

Manolito rode a black horse named Diablo in early episodes. Later he rode that gorgeous dark Palomino horse named Makadoo.

## **Big Valley**

The Barkley's of Stockton, California were a prominent family in their day. Victoria Barkley is the mother of Jarrod, Nick, Heath, and Audra.

Nick rode a horse named Coco, a beautiful horse with light mane and tail. When Coco retired it was shown in an episode where Nick was devastated to have to put this horse out to pasture. After that he rode a horse I couldn't find the name of.

Jarrod, the lawyer rode a horse named Jingo when he wasn't in his office or court room.

I found a picture of Heath in Pintrest. He rode a horse named Charger.

## **Have Gun Will Travel**

I liked this show of Richard Boone as the man Paladin. He was privileged to ride several horses during the filming of this western. He

rode Curly first. Then there were Frisco, Rudy, and Mexico. In later episodes Mr. Boone rode a horse called Rafter which he had named himself.

## **Rawhide**

One source I found said Rowdy Yates rode a horse named Midnight. But looking at the picture shown this was a black horse. Rowdy's horse was a what looks like a sorrel (hard to tell in black and white). I kept looking and found that this black horse, Midnight is actually the one Eric Fleming rode as the trail boss Gil Favor. Rowdy rode the sorrel, Jouster. Seems kind of an appropriate name for a rider named Rowdy.

## **Horses In the Movies**

John Wayne, one of the biggest western actors rode several horses in his movie career. It's reported he rode a horse named Dollar in True Grit, The Shootist, and also Stagecoach.

Riding through the Arizona desert in El Dorado, John Wayne sat tall in the saddle on a beautiful Appaloosa called Zip Cochise.

In other westerns, the Duke rode a muscular sorrel named Banner.

Jimmy Stewart, another of my favorite western stars made many westerns. In at least seventeen of them Mr. Stewart rode one of his most cherished horses, Pie. He wanted to buy Pie, but the owner wouldn't part with him.

I also read where Elizabeth Taylor rode Pie in National Velvet.

I can't write about movie horses and actors and leave my favorite off the list, Clint Eastwood. He rode two different of the prettiest dapple grays in at least two movies I remember; High Plains Drifter and Pale Rider. I couldn't find out much about these beauties. Apparently they weren't the same horse and Clint bought one of them after the movies were done

filming.

The horse Clint Eastwood rode in Bronco Billy was named Buster.

One other movie that I liked, but is hard to watch is Dances With Wolves. I liked the movie and Kevin Costner who portrayed the soldier. I didn't like the ending, too sad for me. Mr. Costner rode Cisco who's real name is Plain Justin Bar, a quarter horse with a light dun or buckskin coloring. I had a buckskin once so am a little partial to the color.

I can't leave out Denny, the mountain horse that made that wondrous run at the "jump" in the Man From Snowy River. He has that buckskin coloring as well. This movie is my all time favorite. A lot of horses were used in the making of the film. All of them beauties and athletic with all that galloping they did through the Australian mountains.

## **Race Horses**

There have been plenty of famous race horses through the years. I'm not much into the race horses. When I thought of well-known horses my thoughts went to Trigger, Mr. Ed, and Silver. Is this the difference between a cowgirl and everyone else? Hmm.

But to name a few, there is Secretariat, a Triple Crown winner in 1973. I remember hearing about the win and I recall American Pharaoh who won the same race in 2015. One of my horsey friends was intrigued with this horse's athletic abilities and she was of course right. He was quite the athlete. Another Triple Crown winner is Seattle Slew in 1977.

Growing up I bought the book Old Bones through my schools book buying catalog. I loved reading about Old Bones and the heart he had for winning. He raced till he was nine years old which is old for a race horse.

Man O' War who won 20 of his 21 races is said to be America's greatest race horse.

Phar Lap was Australia's most famous race horse. He won 37 of the 51 races he ran in.



## **Military Horses**

In the list of military horses I found several were mentioned. Let's start with Bucephalus. I can't even pronounce the name. He belonged to Alexander the Great. When this horse died Alexander found and named the city of Bucephala right where his beloved horse fell.

Ulysses S. Grant rode his horse Cincinnati to battles during the Civil War. On the other side of the of the line Robert E. Lee was riding Traveler.

Other military horses and their riders include General Philip Sheridan on Winchester and Rienzi. General George Armstrong Custer had at least two horses. One he rode was named Dandy. I had a horse with that name. I'm sure Custer's Dandy was a real dandy of a horse just like mine. The other horse he rode was Vic and was the one who died with him at Little Big Horn.

Andrew Jackson rode a horse named Truxton. George Washington rode Nelson. Thomas Stonewall Jackson had a horse named Little Sorrel.

Colonel Sherman Potter from the TV show M. A. S. H. had Sophie.

The Duke of Wellington rode Copenhagen. Napoleon Bonaparte rode a horse with the name of Marengo.

## Comanche



The one most well-known battle horse may have been Comanche, the lone survivor of The Battle of Little Big Horn.

A horse is out on the battle field because his rider rode him there. They are still a horse, prone to run in fright when things get scary in his world.

A Calvary horse is trained to go into a fight and stay with their soldier, some of them to the last. Comanche did likewise. In his case he survived his many wounds and apparently overcame the stress of being in a scrimmage. He was found in the Little Big Horn River a while after the battle was over.

Soldiers were preparing the astronomical job of burying the dead on June 27, 1876. Everything was quiet, the aftermath had to be an awful sight. In this deathly quiet they heard a pitiful whinny and were led to Comanche trying to get out of the water where he had fallen. He had at

least seven wounds from arrows and bullets.

His rider was Captain Myles Keogh. Comanche had been his favorite horse. When the Captain was found surrounded by dead troopers, it was seen his knee was shot to pieces and the bullet went through his chest and was one of the bullets that found its mark in Comanche's flank. It told the story they had fallen together, but Comanche had survived.

Comanche was loaded on a train with other wounded soldiers from other parts of the battle. They were transported to a safe place to recuperate and heal.

It took Comanche about a year. He lived for the next 15 years as the 7th Calvary mascot. He would be in parades, but not ridden. His was an honorary position. Orders were given and carried out for the great horse to be well cared for for the rest of his life. The farrier, Gustave Korn was Comanche's soul care giver. They were together most of the time.

Comanche had the run of the fort. He would roam from stable to officer's quarters and anyplace in between picking up treats along the way.

Comanche's military career began when he was bought for \$90. After training he was among the chosen to be part of the 7th Calvary. This was May 19, 1868. It's thought this was when Captain Keogh first saw him and wanted him for his mount. They were together until that awful day at Little Big Horn.

There are a couple of stories of how Comanche came by his name. Neither can be said to be true. It was either when Captain Keogh was riding him during a fight with the Comanche Indians and the horse was injured by an arrow. A soldier said the horse sounded like a Comanche screaming. Hence they gave him the name. The other story says Keogh's horse had been killed and a soldier gave him his horse who was named Comanche. This second story doesn't hold a lot of credibility and the first one seems to be the most accepted version.

Comanche stood 15 hands and was a dark buckskin color. He and Gustave Korn became close and were hardly out of each others sight. Korn was killed at Wounded Knee. It is said Comanche's heart was broken when his soldier didn't come home. His health went down hill after that and he died on November 7, 1891.

Those who loved the great horse could still not let him go and he was mounted and preserved. He is on display at Dyche Natural History Museum located on the University of Kansas campus in Lawrence, Kansas. I would like to visit Comanche in his air tight glass box and pay him honor.

I know I have left out a lot of horses. It's been a fun journey researching and learning about famous horses in history and horse actors. May they all continue to gallop through our lives for years to come.

All pictures courtesy of Pixabay except Comanche who is the real horse preserved in his glass case. I give credit and thanks to the KU Biodiversity Institute of Natural History Museum for the use of the image of Comanche.

To see the real pictures of horses mentioned in this book visit my Pinterest boards at <https://www.pinterest.com/bjudy5467/>