

The Farrier's Corner: by Ray and Michelle Smith

Banker Ponies

Most people are familiar with the mustangs of the American west. Fewer folks are aware of the ancient ponies inhabiting the barrier islands of the east coast. Yet, those tiny islands are home to some of the last remaining descendants of horses brought to coastal colonies by 16th century explorers. Today, they live in small bands from Assateague Island, Maryland to Ocracoke Island, North Carolina.

Local lore relates that the ponies swam ashore as survivors of 17th century shipwrecks. Evidence for this exists in the ships' logs of English explorer Sir Richard Greenville. Records from his 1584 - 1590 voyages to the islands mention taking on, "Mares and male horses" and "Male horses and mares with saddles and bridles." These were purchased from Spanish settlements in the Caribbean.

One of Greenville's ships, the Tyger, ran aground along a shallow bar near Ocracoke Island. Unable to be freed, she and her cargo were lost. It was recorded that livestock on board either drowned or swam ashore.

Spanish explorers also recorded bringing Spanish Barb and Arabian horses to the east coast. Livestock, presumably including these horses, was abandoned by the failed Spanish d'Allyon colony near Cape Fear, North Carolina.

Livestock may also have been hidden on the islands by 17th and 18th century English colonists wishing to avoid taxation. Some livestock, including horses, may have gone feral.

In the early 1700s, English historian John

Lawson described the island ponies, "The horses are well-shaped and swift. The best of them would sell for ten or twelve pounds in England. They prove excellent drudges, and will travel incredible journeys. They are troubled with few distempers, neither do the cloudy-faced grey horses go blind here as in Europe. As for sprains, splints and ringbones, they are here never met withal, as I can learn...we generally find that the colts exceed in beauty and strength."

Today, the ponies of Chincoteague and Assateague are arguably the best known of the island ponies. They rose to fame largely due to Marguerite Henry's book, "Misty of Chincoteague." Technically, these ponies reside on Assateague Island. Assateague is owned by Maryland to the North and Virginia to the South. About 150 head of ponies live on each end of the island. Those in Maryland are managed by the National Park Service overseeing Assateague Island National Seashore. The Virginia band is officially owned and managed by the Chincoteague Volunteer Fire Department.

Ponies have been rounded up and auctioned on Chincoteague since the 1800s. However, in 1922 two fires devastated the island. In order to raise money for much needed equipment, the firemen held a pony auction. A tradition was started and now the annual pony swim and charity auction is a major local festival attracting visitors from around the country. There is an official Chincoteague pony registry and many Chincoteague foals have become versatile and accomplished show and trail ponies.

Approximately 400 Banker ponies, also known as Banker Colonial Spanish Barbs,

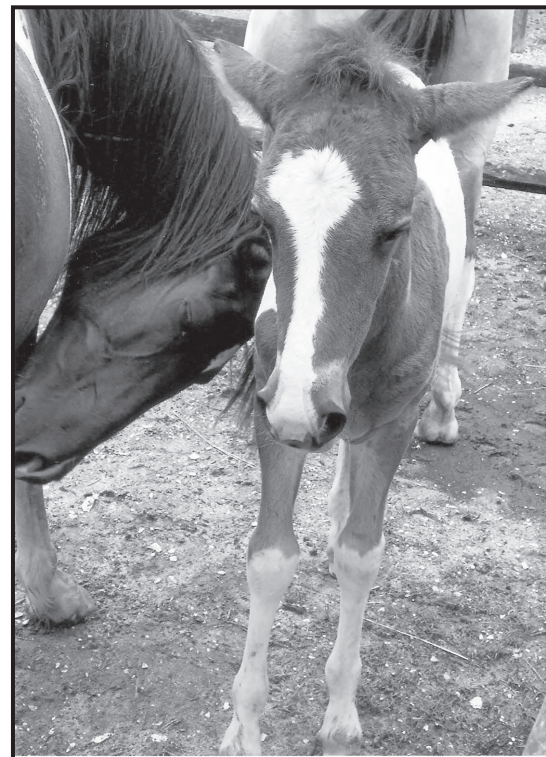
live further south along the Outer Banks of North Carolina. In the 1930s, these ponies were nearly exterminated due to bounties placed on the islands' few remaining feral horses. The horses, along with other feral livestock, were being removed under strict new stock laws designed to protect federal sand fixation program grass plantings. Small groups of ponies escaped to remote island areas in the north and south.

In 1982, members of the Spanish Mustang registry visited and were able to observe the last remaining Banker ponies "living in a natural state as they have for the last 500 years." They agreed that the ponies, particularly those living near Corolla on the northern end of the islands, "were as lineally pure to the 16th century Spanish importations as can be found in North America today." The ponies of Corolla and Ocracoke Island also have fewer ribs and vertebrae than normal. This particular physical feature is held in common with modern Arabian horses and hints at Arabian bloodlines said to have been introduced by 16th century Spaniards.

As tourism and growth increased on the Outer Banks during the 1980s, the ponies came into increasing contact with people. By 1989, 11 had been killed by cars. The Corolla Wild Horse Fund was created to protect the remaining ponies near Corolla. Through their efforts, the ponies were moved northward on the island to 1,800 acres of combined federal and donated private lands. Protective fences and cattle guards were installed. In the spring of 2017, The Corolla Wild Horses Protection Act (H.R. 2032) was referred to the House Subcommittee on Federal Lands.

Farther south is Ocracoke Island, only

accessible via ferry or small plane. During World War II, the Ocracoke Banker ponies were used by mounted coastal patrols watching for German U-boats. In the 1950s, Ocracoke was home to the only mounted Boy Scout troop in the United States. The boys captured and trained the ponies as scout projects. Some were also owned by island fishermen. In 1959, following construction of a new island road and increased tourism, the feral ponies were permanently rounded up and penned. Legislation required the penning to prevent overgrazing and reduce the incidence of car strikes. Today, 17 Ocracoke ponies remain and are managed by the National Park Service.



Chincoteague Pony mare (left) and foal.

The Archive Zone: by Hillary Mohr from the Illinois Valley News archives

This week, take a casual stroll back to the fall of 1987, Oct. 15 to be more exact. The weather was perfect for the fall harvest, for both farmers and the JOINT task force. It will take more than scarecrows to hold off the '87 Team in this week's Archive Zone.

Four, indoor marijuana gardens seized.

Four, indoor marijuana gardens with more than 600 plants valued in excess of \$600,000 were seized at four Illinois Valley locations

Monday, Oct. 12. The largest and most sophisticated garden was discovered in a 24-by-36-foot building on Reeves Creek Road, between Kerby and Selma. Twenty Joint '87 Team members, 10 from the Josephine County Sheriff's Office and Oregon State Police, also arrested five persons. The five arrested were taken to Josephine County Jail. They were arrested without incident beginning at approximately 8 a.m., as officers served search warrants at the

four addresses. Besides growing marijuana plants, a large quantity of dried and packaged marijuana was seized, the sheriff's office said. The four sites had similarities in operations; the Joint Team actively is checking the similarities to determine if there was an act of conspiracy, the sheriff's office said. The indoor gardens featured electric timers for lighting and watering, exhaust systems and other aspects for indoor growing.

*A very intoxicated man

entered a woman's house on West Stevenson Street and was on the floor, refusing to leave. She phoned for a deputy. He left.

*There was an upside-down car in a ditch at Bridgeview and Takilma roads. The lights were on, but nobody was there.

*Three street lights valued at \$75 were reported by the city of Cave Junction as stolen.

*Possible counterfeit money in Selma was referred to the Secret Service.

*After a woman on Thompson Creek Road reported that someone knocked her down outside her residence, it turned out that a skunk did it.

*Twenty marijuana plants were uprooted on Takilma Road.

*Forty marijuana plants were uprooted on Naue Way in O'Brien.

*Explosive booby traps were thought to be at property on Thompson Creek Road.



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