

Equine Evolution: Part 1

By Janice M. Ladendorf

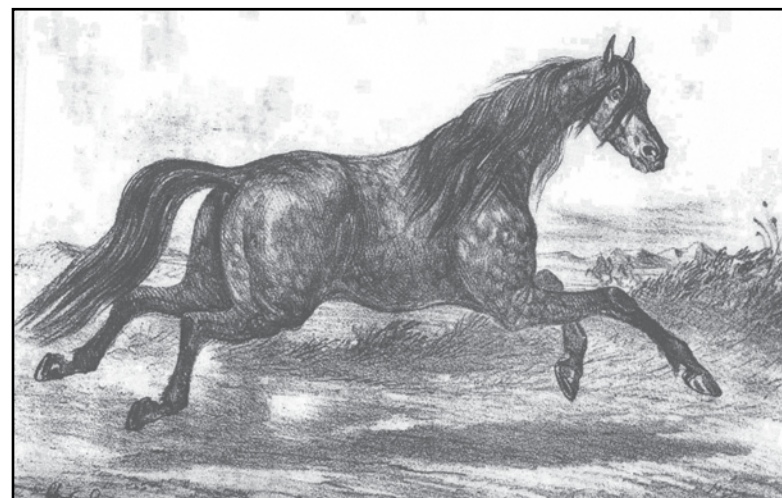
would have been much more standardized. For example, the vaqueros of Mexico and the gauchos of Argentina started from the same source, but are far apart geographically. The vaqueros developed Western saddles and lassos (lariats) while the gauchos used treeless saddles and "boleadores."

Archeological evidence also

lations. War and commerce explain most of them. For example, horses were redistributed all through the Roman Empire. Starting about 200 B.C., the Silk Roads linked China to the Mediterranean and for centuries horses moved along these roads. The prime example of human-induced migrations is what happened when the conquistadors brought horses back to North Amer-

but the most likely explanation is some type of climate change.

Horses were probably first domesticated between 6000 and 4000 B.C. Extensive research has established this had happened on the grasslands of the Ukraine, southwest Russian, and Kazakhstan. Arid Turkmenistan lies south of Kazakhstan and by 2000 B.C., a special breed of horse had been established in this area. Other domestication sites do exist, such as Iberia. By 2000 B.C., the Iberian breed had been established there.



Drawing of Turkmenia or Turkoman horse, 1848.

suggests other sites did exist. Iberia is one of them. Domestication had probably occurred there between 6000 and 4000 B.C., though some experts believe horses were domesticated there well before this time. By 2000 B.C., the Andalusian had been established as a breed. When Arabia was not yet a desert, the al-Magar civilization thrived near northern Yemen. Some of the artifacts from this site suggest horses may have been domesticated by 6000 B.C.

Various attempts have been made to link modern breeds to types of wild horses. The standard classification is of two pony types and two horse types. Authors tend to claim different breeds are descended from these types. Other classifications of three to seven types also exist. In my opinion, those who invented these classifications overlooked the extent to which human migrations have redistributed equine popu-

ica and introduced them to South America.

Conclusion:

When horses evolved on the prairies of North America, a land bridge often linked Alaska and Siberia. They used this bridge to migrate to Eurasia where they found many variations in climate, elevation, and food supply. As they adapted to these variations, four basic types of wild horses emerged. They are the heavy forest horse, Przewalski's horse, the tundra horse, and the tarpan. Only Przewalski's horse is not extinct. Three attempts to recreate the tarpan have been made. They are the konik, the Heck horse, and the Hegardt or Stroebel horse.

About 12,000 B.C., the horse disappeared from North America, but so did other large herbivores and the predators who preyed on them. Explanations vary from disease to over-hunting by humans,

Domestic horses no longer had the freedom to migrate with their own herds, but they traveled far with their owners. When the Silk Roads ran from China to the Near East, they could spread along this road from east to west and from west to east. When the conquistadors brought horses with them to the New World, they were once

could spread along this road from east to west and from west to east. When the conquistadors brought horses with them to the New World, they were once

again returned to their original home.

Acknowledgements: All photographs courtesy of Wikipedia.

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The Puts Spirit in Spirit Horse Center

By Kari Hagstrom

Located in the beautiful pine forests of north central Minnesota, Spirit Horse Center, Inc., www.spirithorsecenterinc.com, near Brainerd, is a unique kind of facility. It has a holistic and spiritual orientation like few other barns. It isn't your average equine facility.

Founded in 2008 by Staci Grattan-Fornshell, Spirit Horse Center is the result of Grattan-Fornshell seeing "a fork in the road of my life. I was just compelled to do something different." A lifelong horsewoman, Grattan-Fornshell had spent plenty of time at other barns, and could see the need for a different kind of barn.

A successful business woman already, with Grattan HealthCare, Inc., Grattan-Fornshell really didn't need more work to do. She was pregnant at the time, having had a challenging time conceiving; so her pregnancy was regarded as a treasured gift. Yet she still felt compelled to start an equine facility.

Pregnant when they broke ground in July 2008, Grattan-Fornshell gave birth in August. She and her husband and business partner, Brion Fornshell, opened the facility in November.

She says, "I knew I had to do something. I'm a very logical person, with a head for business, and starting a boarding and training facility wasn't the most logical decision, but I was just compelled to do it, to offer something different."

Named in honor of spirit, the spiritual path, and the spirit of the horse, Spirit Horse Center was among the first equine facilities in central Minnesota to begin offering courses on healing modalities, essential oils, energy healing and the like. "People were intrigued,"

says Grattan-Fornshell. "It became a chance to educate people about horses." People just started showing up for the courses. "It was and is a time to understand the gifts that horses offer to human-kind."

The courses were well-received. Spirit Horse Center has also hosted holistic

horsemanship approaches, including trust-based leadership and clear compassionate communication, handling and training, training through proper body mechanics and relaxation, energy and visualization, supplements and much more. She's also proficient in many horse health, soundness and well being areas, as well as Reiki, reflexology and energy work" [from the website].

The essential spirit of Spirit Horse Center is about education and holism. There is a real emphasis on educating the rider in trust-based leadership, partnership and relationship with the horse. The horse isn't just taken for granted as a moving piece of the puzzle: the horse is treated as a partner, both in the barn and in the arena.

"If [people] aren't taught to look at horses in an empathetic and compassionate way, and get 20 steps down the road before they realize they are doing stuff they don't even know is cruel, they're invested in it. And it's really hard to change when you have emotional and egotistical investments in what you're doing," says Grattan-Fornshell.

Grattan-Fornshell is an accomplished rider, who

studies rigorously with her instructors in dressage and holistic horsemanship, often flying out to California or Colorado to attend trainings. She passes on this knowledge to her students, and shares the experience with others by hosting clinics.

She has become accomplished and knowledgeable in "multi-pronged

horsemanship approaches, including trust-based leadership and clear compassionate communication, handling and training, training through proper body mechanics and relaxation, energy and visualization, supplements and much more. She's also proficient in many horse health, soundness and well being areas, as well as Reiki, reflexology and energy work" [from the website].

She feels that a good



instructor should empower the student. She sees many people who have worked with a clinician, riding coach or instructor who do not seem willing to make their own decisions, who have been disempowered into relying on the judgment, opinion or view of the instructor, coach or clinician. "One of my core beliefs is that people own their horsemanship, that they know why

and they know what they are doing. After ten years of horsemanship, you have to ask your trainer something you should know already? As a trainer and instructor, I find that reprehensible. An instructor should empower you."

Raised in challenging environment, Grattan-Fornshell says she wasn't taught to walk in integrity; but she's learned. The horses have helped. "I've always liked animals better than humans, and I've since learned about integrity from them. Staying the course is very challenging. As a business owner, I have to walk the walk of knowing the right people will show up. Using the Law of Attraction has been helpful in attracting the people that resonate with our intentions and energy here. There's no abuse in my barn on my watch. In staying the course, I have to focus on 'what do I want, what do I want' at my barn. I want to show people the magic of horses. I love to

Therapeutic Horsemanship for Persons with Disabilities and offers volunteer and mentoring opportunities. They frequently host equine Special Olympics.

Spirit Horse Center's "state-of-the-art facilities were designed and built to ensure that the horses boarded here are comfortable, to give riders easy access to their horse and tack, and to provide a spacious and safe environment in which our guests can either ride or learn about horses" [from the website].

Spirit Horse Center offers a 160' x 80' heated indoor arena, and a 180' x 70' outdoor riding arena. There is classroom space, a viewing space on the second floor mezzanine, and a small classroom also on the second floor. Outdoor boarding space is available with outdoor shelters, automatic waterers and safe Electrobraided fencing. Indoor stalling is also available in the climate-controlled barn, and horses receive daily turn out. Boarders may be long or short-term, and medical stays are welcome. Private outdoor paddocks are available, and care can be customized based on need or medical requirements.

always trying to help us, even when we don't know it," says Grattan-Fornshell.

In addition to hosting stellar international clinicians and interesting clinics/workshops, Spirit Horse Center hosts Mounted Eagles



are welcome at lessons, and Spirit Horse Center has school horses available for use. Horse training sessions center around "solid basics, dressage and natural horsemanship methods," and are available on a limited basis.

It's all about the horse for Staci Grattan-Fornshell. She's a passionate horsewoman, learner and educator, who passes on her knowledge to others to improve horse-human relationship dynamics. She helps others to realize the gifts horses bring to our lives. And she has developed a fabulous state-of-the-art facility in Spirit Horse Center in which to do so. The energy of the place is welcoming and progressive. It's a unique place where the spirit of the person and the horse are honored.

For more information or to follow events and upcoming clinics, please go to www.spirithorsecenterinc.com.

Staci Grattan-Fornshell and her Lusitano gelding, Zombado. Photo by Keron Psilas.

Spirit Horse Center riders on Shawkia, Titan and Sophia. Below: The Spirit Horse Center barn. Photos by Bourn Photography.

Wooded trails are available for customer use on the 17-acre property, which has been in Grattan-Fornshell's family for generations. They also offer free aerated compost and manure.

It's all about the horse at Spirit Horse Center, where the focus is on the care and well-being of the horse, and how riders are instructed. Horsemanship lessons are available for groups or individuals, and people are welcome to trailer-in their horses for lessons or clinics. All ages and riding abilities

are welcome at lessons, and Spirit Horse Center has school horses available for use. Horse training sessions center around "solid basics, dressage and natural horsemanship methods," and are available on a limited basis.

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