



Volume 27 #4 *FALL 2024 *Celebrating 30 years! 1994-2024

WILD TEXAS BRONCOS

Captured & Taken to the

US REVOLUTION

-How Spanish Mission Ruins Became a Feral Horse Trap for Washington's Cavalry

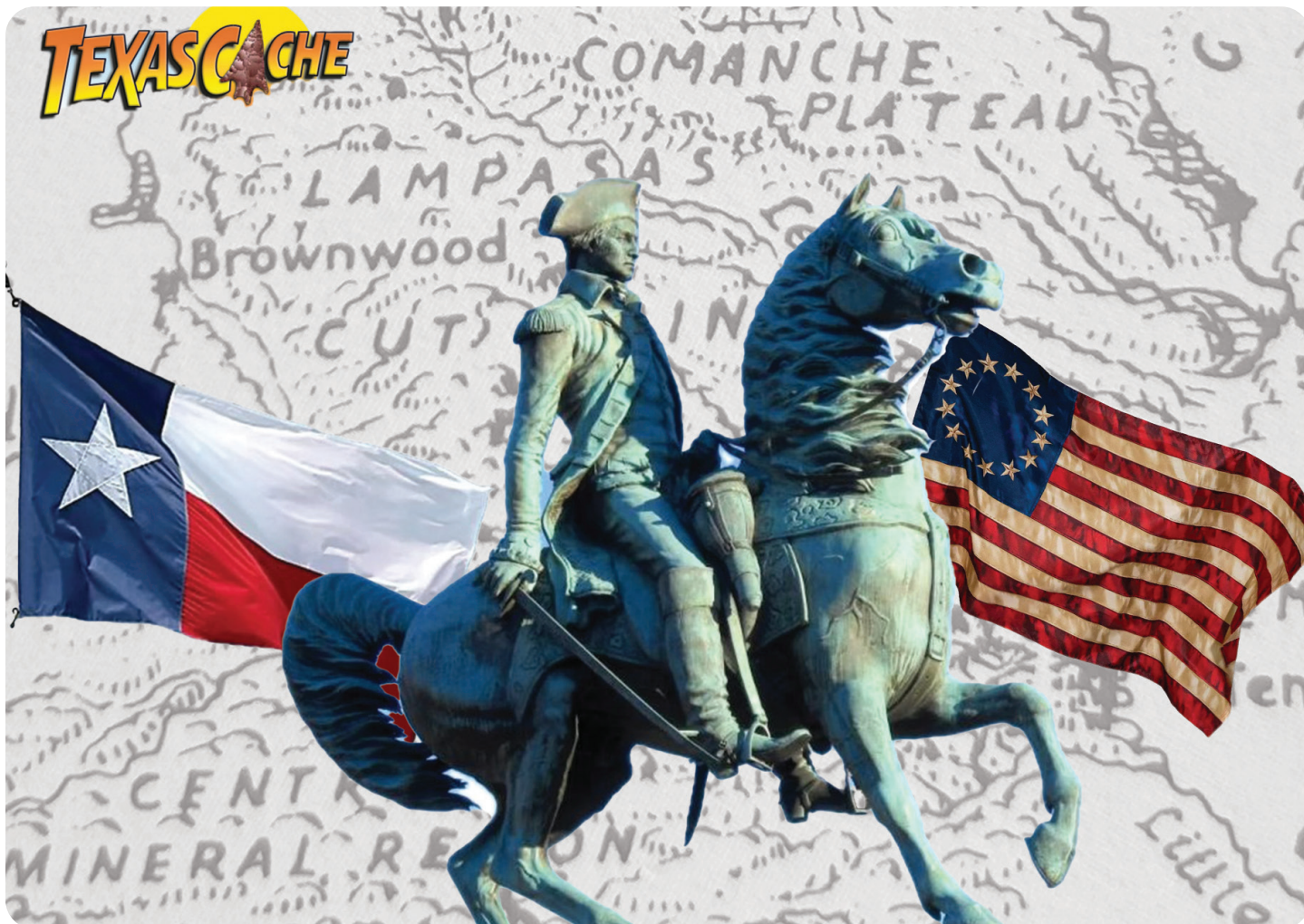


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LOST LAMPASAS MISSION, PART II: WILD TEXAS BRONCOS IN THE US REVOLUTION




How abandoned Spanish ruins were resurrected into a feral horse trap for the Continental Army in The War for Independence

The last issue of Texas Cache (Vol.27 #3 Summer 2024) featured the cover story “**Terrerros Mission, Part I: Exploring the Ruins and Legends of an Abandoned Spanish Mission Complex**”, describing the written history and crumbled stone ruins of two sites in **Lampasas County**: Mission Terreros, a mission/college/ranching complex on Lucy Creek, and a site about seven miles away that bears many hallmarks of the foundations of an associated hilltop presidio fort. (ref.11)

The mission was likely started around 1756 at the direction of the Terreros cousins, one a Franciscan Friar, the other a wealthy mine-owning financier from **New Spain**, then abandoned before completion after repeated attacks by the natives. The Terreros cousins also established the well-known Mission de San Saba 100 miles to the west in present-day **Menard**, which was famously destroyed by a mixed group of about 2,000 Indians in 1758, thus decimating hopes for the establishment of a Spanish presence in the region at that time. Father Alonso de Terreros and seven others lost their lives in the attack.

**See back cover for what has been interpreted to be a pictograph rock art depiction of the massacre made by the Comanche at Paint Rock on the Concho River.*



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The mission/presidio complex in Lampasas County could be considered an attempted “sister mission” to San Saba, built on a bend in Delucia (now called Lucy) Creek alongside a small box canyon washout named **Arroyo Caballo** (Spanish for “Horse Ditch”). Its stone ruins contain a spectacularly Texan and American odyssey that reverberated long after its desertion in the 1750s. The saga begins with an enlisted officer in the US Revolutionary War who returned to the ruins decades later to capture wild horses from Texas (then New Spain) and deliver them to George Washington and the Continental Army on the battlefield of the war for Independence.

A YOUNG PENNSYLVANIAN MERCENARY IN THE SPANISH RANKS

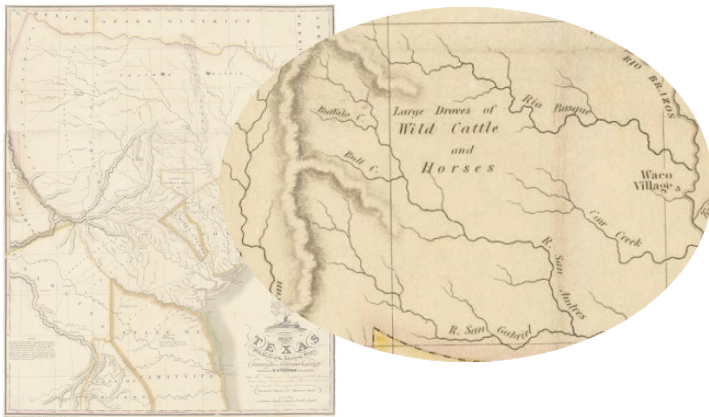
In the 1750s the army of New Spain sent a detachment to the springs of Lampasas to begin planting a mission in the vicinity after the sulfuric and salty springs of the Lampasas and Salado rivers were noted by Marques de Aguayo on his expedition 35 years prior. Amongst the military ranks in that undertaking was a young adventurer and soldier of fortune known as **Tomas de la Cocques** who had joined the army of New Spain in New Orleans at the age of 16. Born in Pennsylvania in 1733, the mercenary's birth name was **Thomas Isaac Cox**—Spanishized while in their service in Tejas and Coahuila. Cox aided in development of the mission while on duty in the Spanish military. His obligations included scouting, construction, escorting the clergymen through the wilderness, defending against hostile natives, and capturing and breaking feral horses which were abundant in the vicinity. The latter was accomplished by baiting the broncos into Arroyo Caballo with a corral downstream. (ref. 7)

The span of use of the Arroyo Caballo canyon as a mustang trap is unclear-- It could have been in use by the Indians before this brief Spanish micro-occupation. By the time Cox and the missionaries arrived at Lucy Creek, feral broncos had inhabited much of the North American plains, including this transitional area between the regions of Cross Timbers, the Edwards Plateau, and Blackland Prairie for around two and a half centuries with no serious predators and had multiplied every year since.

Indeed, Stephen F. Austin’s maps of Texas from 1830 and 1840 show the area between the Upper Brazos and North San Gabriel Rivers with the simple label “*Large Drovers of Wild Cattle and Horses.*” Their numbers were so great that J. W. Moses wrote in *A Mustanger of 1850* that sometimes as many as 10,000 mustangs from many different herds would join in a stampede when pursued by wolves, panthers, or men. (Ref. 17). According to *Lamplights of Lampasas County*, author Johnie Elzner wrote that stampedes in the valleys could be heard at a distance of five miles. (ref.3)



Arroyo Caballo on July 1, 2024 with a clear stream. 244 years prior, hundreds of feral broncos were baited here and led downstream into a corral erected from the Terreros Mission ruins where they were "broke" and herded to Philadelphia for the war against the British.



Cox recorded in his journal how his company all marveled at the sheer number of roaming mustangs near the mission. Although species of horses existed in North America and had gone extinct about 12,000 years prior, this equine presence was descended from the Spanish stock that had been introduced in the 1500s, particularly after Coronado brought 1,500 horses on his foray into the interior, then later when Aguayo passed through Lampasas with 500 men and 4000 horses. Their reintroduction to the continent renders the proper term for the animal “feral” rather than “wild” but who wants to tell Mick Jagger, Garth Brooks, or any American that they can’t call them wild horses?



Little is known about the mission and attached ranching complex, but all indications suggest it was abandoned early in its construction. It was likely the Comanche who forced them to flee the area, leaving behind little more than limestone slabs and cobblestone walls and wooden stakes and posts to sink into the field for the next quarter-century.

After being discharged from the Spanish military, Cox spent much of the 1760s and 70s in New Orleans, during which time he made acquaintance with several powerful financial and political figures of the time, including Bernardo de Galvez who later became Governor of Louisiana (and for whom Galveston was named). Hard goods were entering and leaving New Orleans via many channels including the gulf, the Mississippi River, and the Immigrant Trail (sometimes referred to as Emigrant Trail) which went all the way to Santa Fe. A self-replenishing

commodity was the feral horse—a natural resource available to those determined to wrangle them. Cox obtained permission from Galvez to continue trapping horses in Texas and drove them to merchants in New Orleans during the period leading up to the Revolution.

Along with freight, information was coming up and down the Mississippi with correspondence often hidden in cargo. This proved to be the medium of communication in which word arrived of the impending war for US independence. Occurring contemporaneously with the American Revolutionary period was a war between Spain and England-- and Spanish-born Governor Galvez was eager to aid the colonial forces in their shared enemy.

Cox held a personal hatred for the British-- his father had deserted the Royal Navy to marry a Dutch girl named Heineken, who eventually became Thomas’s mother. His father was hanged when found a few years later. Thomas, driven by a vengeance he still held, jumped at the chance to go back to the Colonies and fight the Crown for the American cause, eventually playing an incalculable role in the war with his experience, ambition, and ability to tame the wild broncos of Texas and drive them to the battlegrounds more than **1,600 miles** to the northeast.

After having served in skirmishes of the Revolution, Cox saw the need for more mounted cavalry. By then in his mid-40s and thinking back to his days as a young mercenary, he knew exactly where there were feral mustangs by the thousands, had the proper political connections, and devised a plan. He was able to convince his superiors to back his idea of returning to Lampasas to bring back broncos for the Continental Army. With personally obtained permission from Galvez to dispatch to Lucy Creek, soon plans were in place to procure horses for the war at a price of 25 cents per animal.

TEXAS FILLIES GO TO PHILLY

“On the 96th day the party broke camp and prepared to return to Pennsylvania with 330 horses and 68 colts. The horses were tied together with horsehair ropes and were led out in single file. Each man could lead 100 horses in this manner.” (ref. 7)

What a sight it must have been when “Uncle Thomas” and his five audacious nephews rode into Colonial Philadelphia with all of those mustangs! Their trip home with the tethered horses from Lampasas to Pennsylvania took 81 days through much of Appalachia in the springtime. Their route is unknown, and how they crossed the Mississippi is for now lost from record.

Away for months, they had no idea what had transpired in the war effort during their foray into Texas. Their delivery was met with great approval from the army and a return trip was immediately organized with the addition of two men. They brought more animals back, this time 366 horses and 109 colts. Cox certainly made good on his promise of making himself and his nephews rich men with the delivery of a **total of 873 horses** sold to the army for \$35 each.



Stone remnants of the horse trap and corral in background; wire and post fence in foreground is recent and not part of the ruins.

“Cox was able to persuade five young nephews to accompany him upon his promise to make them 'rich men.' On September 16, 1780, the six men and 18 horses began the trek to Texas. They were delayed by fall rains, high water, poor grazing, Indians and other problems. In present-day Oklahoma they encountered unfriendly Kiowas. They were attacked December 19, 1780, and were forced to flee in a running battle north of the Red River, finally hiding in a ravine. In the flight they lost their 'notching stick' and had to devise another calendar... Shortly after crossing the Red River they spent two days in a 'blue norther' facing sleet and snow. Their journal recorded that two days later they arrived at the Brazos River, eastern extremity of their 'horse preserve'.”

--from The Hussey Manuscript, taken from Cox's journals, compiled by historian Arlee Gowen. (ref. 7)



The wrangler party, upon returning to the Terreros Mission site, spent 46 days rebuilding the crumbled rock wall remains into a trap and corral at Arroyo Caballo. When it was finally ready, they baited the ditch with salt and grain. (Ref. 2) **“The first night a stallion led 40 mares and colts into the trap... The next few days were devoted to 'green breaking' the horses and getting them gentle enough to lead. Once this was accomplished another batch of horses was led into the trap and the process repeated.”**

HISTORIC HiCo HALL

EXPERIENCE INDUSTRIAL ELEGANCE AND A SEAMLESS RENTAL PROCESS AT HICO HALL

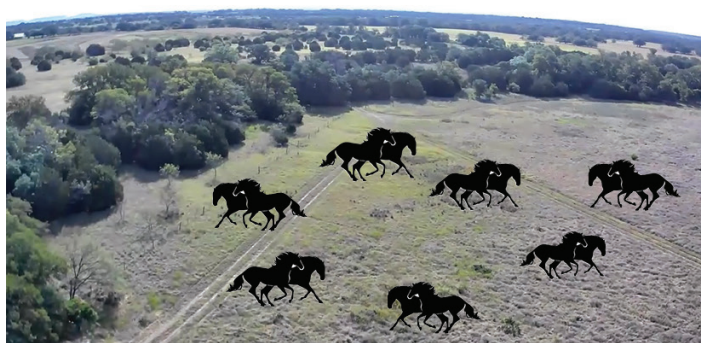
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The United States won the war for independence shortly thereafter. Now free Americans, Cox and his descendants returned many times over the next 90 years before eventually settling on the property and helping to establish the town of Lampasas. The broader area is called **Long Meadows**, and over the years it has been the site of grange musters, rodeos, family reunions, and is the site of the **Long Meadows, Cox, and**

Terreros Presidio Cemetery with marked and unmarked graves. The first recorded burial there was a teenager named Bybee, Cox's nephew--born July 4, 1776, killed in a Comanche attack on the trapping party. He was shot through the chest with an arrow and expired the following morning on the 17th birthday of both himself and his new country; his lonely tomb was covered with a limestone slab from the ruins.



Clockwise from left: A quarter-mile or so stretch of the Arroyo Caballo horse trap in Lampasas County. Thomas Issac Cox and his nephews drove 873 warhorses from this spot 1600 miles to New England in 1780-81. Thousands of feral mustangs were wrangled over the decades in the area pictured.



LONG MEADOWS, COX AND TERREROS PRESIDIO CEMETERY

LONG MEADOWS CEMETERY
 PLEASANT C. COX, WHO PATENTED THIS LAND, FIRST VISITED THE AREA IN THE 1830s. HE AND HIS WIFE, MARTHA JANE (BYBEE), CAME TO TEXAS BY WAGON TRAIN FROM MISSOURI IN 1851. ONE OF THE PETITIONERS TO CREATE LAMPASAS COUNTY IN 1856, PLEASANT COX WAS AMONG THE DOZENS OF DOZENS OF THE DOZENS OF BURLIERS HERE, MOST OF THE DOZENS OF BURLIERS HERE, ARE UNMARKED, WITH SOME PRECEDING THE EARLIEST MARKED BURIAL OF JOSEPH COX (1867-1872). THE LAST BURIAL WAS FOR MARTHA JANE COX, WHO DIED IN 1912. AFTER THE FAMILY SOLD THE PROPERTY IN 1912, THE CEMETERY FELL INTO DISREPAIR. DESCENDANTS BEGAN TO PRESERVE AND RESTORE THE SITE IN THE 1980s. THE CEMETERY, WHICH FEATURES LIMESTONE AND FIELDSTONES AND INTERIOR FENCING, REMAINS A VALUABLE RECORD OF PIONEER LIFE IN LAMPASAS COUNTY.
 HISTORIC TEXAS CEMETERY - 2007
 MARKER IS PROPERTY OF THE STATE OF TEXAS

KNOWN BURIALS

WM. CHARLES BYBEE, B. 7-4-1776, D. 7-4-1793	S	JOSEPH COX, B. 8-6-1867, D. 11-28-1872	U.S.
THOMAS CLARK BENTON, D. 5-17-1806	S	ELIZABETH JOHNSTON COX BYBEE, D. 1873	U.S.
TREY HARDIN-DODD, D. 10-22-1822	M	CHARLIE BOYD, D. 12-22-1874	U.S.
NATHAN OWENS BROWN, D. 10-30-1823	M	STUMPY WATSON, D. 12-23-1874	U.S.
W. BLUFORD COX, D. 4-15-1842	ROT	ELANDER HIX, B. 7-13-1835, D. 3-8-1877	U.S.
JAMES COX, D. 5-6-1842	ROT	MATTIE COX HICKS, D. 1877	U.S.
BOB HUFFMAN, D. 12-16-1846	U.S.	JAMES MYRES, D. 1886	U.S.
SOLOMON SAMUEL COX, D. 2-14-1855	U.S.	AMY BEAN, D. 1891, B. IRON ENCLOSURE	U.S.
LUCINDA WRIGHT COX, D. 1857	U.S.	NOAH ERVIN CLARK, D. 1896	U.S.
J.W. OWENS, D. 1-12-1861	U.S.	LUCINDA COX, B. 8-1-1862, D. 2-1-1889	U.S.
VAN DOBBINS, D. 7-12-1862	C	MARTHA JANE BYBEE COX, B. 11-9-1827, D. 2-22-1912	U.S.
COLE HUFFMAN, D. 12-23-1862	C		

OTHER BURIALS

YOUNG MAN DRAGGED BY WILD HORSES, EARLY DATE
 LUCIFER, NEGRO MAN BURIED ON PROPERTY
 THREE GRAVES WLST. OF CEMETERY, ONE OPENED 1890

TWO COWBOYS WHO RODE FOR PRINT OLIVE, 1870'S-80'S
 INFANT GRAVES
 7 OTHER UNKNOWN GRAVES

Marked and unmarked graves that are known to rest at the spot, shown by this monument erected in 2014 by the Brandywine Crucible, Inc. It has been noted that the intervals of interments in this cemetery between 1793 and 1912 fall under the time span of all six flags of Texas.



(Above): "Battle of The Cowpens" painted in 1781 by Don Troiani, depicts a winter battle in South Carolina that took place around the time Cox and his nephews were pursued by Kiowa in a running battle on the Red River. The Texan horses could have been in a number of conflicts in the last year of the war when the Colonists secured their independence. (ref.7)

The tale of the fallen Terreros Mission and Presidio of Lampasas, with its direct ties to the formation of the United States, and the many characters involved in this wild yarn is starting to materialize beyond faded letters and lingering family lore into a story emerging from the stones—one that might make a new page in the history of our state and country and give a deeper reason to marvel at the bravery of our revolutionary countrymen and revere the horse and its role in our hard-fought independence. The story is told in greater detail in [Peggy Smith Wolfe's upcoming book **Spanish in Colonial Times in the Lampasas Area.**](#)

TEXAS *GO*

Concluded
 on page 30

ARROYO CABALLO (Continued from page 21)

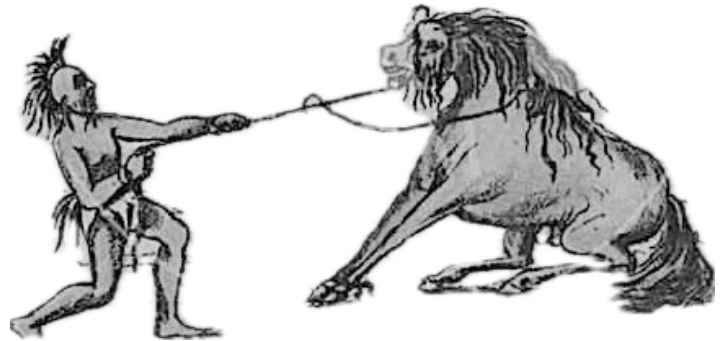
VAQUERO AND INDIAN MUSTANGING

Young Thomas Cox would have been in the company of *vaqueros*, who imported their skills and knowledge of horsemanship into the New World from Old Spain. On *The Savage West Podcast "Port at the Edge of The World"* series about the establishment of San Francisco by the Spanish, host **Langdon Moss** explains how the term "buckaroo" is a directly Anglicized word from the Mexican Spanish term "Vaquero". Moss goes on to explain that much of the wrangling methods of American and Mexican cowboys and mounted Indian tribes were learned from the *vaqueros* on the vast Spanish ranches which covered huge expanses of land, quoting from frontiersman Jedediah Smith's journal about the *Vaqueros Californios*: **"When on a horse they catch a wild steer or horse with the greatest ease. They are seldom seen on foot but mount a horse to go even 200 yards and always carry with them a strong rope made from pieces of ox hide braided, which is called the larse (lasso)... The Spaniard mounted on a swift horse with his larse in hand, holding it so as to form a noose about 4 feet in diameter and swinging it around his head to keep it connected... throws his noose with such precision as to generally succeed and fasten it to the animal in the intended place... In this manner they can take almost any animal in the country without excepting even the elk."**

"Their essential tools were Spanish spurs, bits, stirrups, and saddles," writes Wells Teague in his book *Calling Texas Home*. **"They all had smaller tools made from leather, horn, or wood, such as the rebenque, a flat lash; and the quirt, a short, usually round-plaited whip used in Texas and the rest of the U.S."** (Ref. 13)

George Catlin wrote in *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians* (1841) of watching Comanche wranglers catch mustangs by the lasso and hobble the horse with rope; they would then

dig their heels into the ground and advance hand over hand on the tether as the animal fought and thrashed, until **"finally he is able to place his hand on the animal's nose, and over its eyes; and at length to breathe in its nostrils, when it soon becomes docile and conquered."** Thomas James in *Three Years Among the Indians and Mexicans* claims he witnessed a party of about 100 Comanche mustangers capture as many horses and tame them within 24 hours. (Ref. 17)



Catlin sketched "Catching the Wild Horse" after riding with Plains Indian mustangers in the 1830s.

The French, American, Spanish, Apache, and Comanche movement into Tejas in this short span of years wasn't just a clash of cultures, but a junction of species which led Amerindians, particularly the Apache and Comanche, to merge their existence with the horse. When looking through a longer timeline, one may speculate that horsemanship was ingrained in their DNA by their equestrian ancestors from the other side of the Bering Strait land bridge from whence they came in the oldest times.

Asiatic-descendant Plains Indians reconnected with their ancient equine companions, after man and horse left Eurasia from opposite directions and met again on the other side of the world centuries later. With their latent instincts to tame and master the horse brought back to the forefront, having learned much from the large rancheros and missions of the *vaqueros*, the Comanche quickly took to the animal, thus vastly improving their wealth, ability to survive, and fight. James K. Greer wrote in his 1936 memoir *Bois d'Arc to Barb'd Wire* that **"Some Tonkawas had told my father that the Comanches thought the Great Spirit had created horses especially for them."** (Ref. 17)

Surprisingly detailed documentation exists from Cox family historians archived by a nonprofit heritage foundation called the Brandywine Crucible, formerly headed by Joe B. Cox of San Marcos (retired), a descendant of Thomas Cox. Much of it was compiled in *The Hussey Manuscript* by historian Arlee Gowen, also related. Additionally, Lampasas County historian and author Peggy Smith Wolfe has spent 15 years studying Spanish presence in the area and is releasing a book this Fall, *Spanish Colonial Times in the Lampasas Area*. All of their efforts were cross-referenced to put this story together. Gratitude is owed to Joe B. Cox for personally sharing his family letters and memories, and to Peggy Smith Wolfe for her research and introduction to landowners who kindly shared access to these sites for this article.



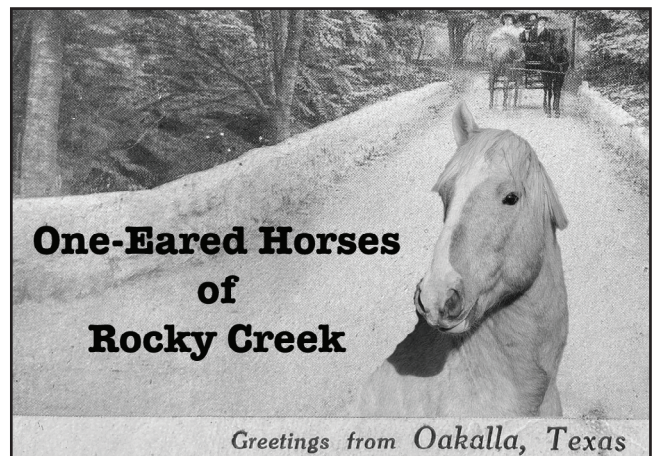
(Above) Historical author Peggy Smith-Wolfe and landowner Daniel Hodges at the site where part of the horse corral still lies in ruins, as seen in the background. Sadly, as this issue was going to press the news of the passing of Mr. Hodges arrived. He was a gracious host to the editor and serves as a fine example of someone who recognized something special on his property and cared about preserving its history.

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A little less than 100 years after Thomas Isaac Cox and the wranglers caught the horses for the Revolution, another entrepreneur amassed a fortune catching feral horses a few miles south of Arroyo Caballo on **Rocky Creek**, a tributary of the Lampasas River. **Oakalla** pioneer Jim Smith had at one time an inventory of 5,000 mustangs bearing his TO brand. He sold horses to both sides of the civil war, bartered in equine and gold, and employed many freed slaves, leaving great tales of the black cowboys' ability to "bust broncs." (Ref. 15)

Author Mary Angeline Smith wrote about her great-grandfather in *The Saga of Jim Smith*, "In those days, Indians would steal horses and slip away... They wanted horses that could run long distances. If they got a horse that couldn't run a good way without getting, as the cowboys called it, "wind broke," or if they overworked a horse until he reached this condition, the Indians would turn the animal loose and cut off one of his ears to protect themselves from stealing the same horse in another raid. At first the settlers were quite puzzled when more and more one-eared horses kept appearing... After a while however, they discovered that every horse with one ear was wind broke and they began to figure things out."

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This pictograph at Paint Rock in Concho County has been attributed to the Comanche and interpreted as a depiction of the 1758 massacre of the Mission San Saba in present-day Menard about 40 miles north. Visible in the panel are dogs, two figures believed to be the two Franciscan martyrs, a church with a bell tower, and circles, which possibly depict loud noises or cosmological significance of the attack. It bears many similar themes to the 1765 painting of "The Destruction of Mission San Saba" mural depicting the same event.



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