





Appaloosa Horse Club

The International Breed Registry for Appaloosa Horses

ApHC History Sheet

The Appaloosa's colorful ancestry can be traced back to earliest recorded time, but it is in the American melting pot that the spotted horse established itself as a true breed. The Nez Perce of the inland Northwest deserve much of the credit for the Appaloosa horses we have today. Unlike other tribes, the Nez Perce were the only Native Americans known to selectively breed their horses. The Nez Perce desired only the strongest, fastest and most sure-footed of mounts, using only the best animals to build their herds. Within their numbers, arose a population of horses so distinctive as to inspire early American explorer Meriwether Lewis to describe them in his journal entry dated Feb. 15, 1806: *"Their horses appear to be of an excellent race; they are lofty, elegantly formed, active and durable...Some of those horses are pied with large spots of white irregularly scattered and intermixed with black, brown, bay or some other dark color..."*

However, the influx of settlers to the Northwest changed the Nez Perce's destiny and nearly destroyed the legacy of their horse-breeding efforts. When the Nez Perce rebelled against the treaties being imposed upon them, war ensued. The Appaloosa helped the non-treaty Nez Perce elude the U.S. Calvary for several months as they traversed over 1,300 miles of rugged, mountainous terrain. When Chief Joseph finally surrendered in Montana, the Nez Perce were forced to relinquish their horses. The Army quickly disbanded them. Soon, the characteristics so prized by the Natives were being lost or severely diluted due to indiscriminate breeding. The Appaloosa nearly disappeared following the Nez Perce War of 1877.

It was Claude Thompson, a wheat farmer from Moro, Oregon, who realized the importance of preserving the spotted horse breed. He established the Appaloosa Horse Club in 1938

to promote and restore the Appaloosa's position in the horse world. In so doing, the colorful breed began its return from the brink of obscurity.

Although the Nez Perce never called their spotted horses "Appaloosas," the breed's name comes from "The Palouse," the region of eastern Washington and northern Idaho where the horses were known to be plentiful. Settlers first described the colorful native mounts as "a Palouse horse," which was soon became "Appalousey." Appaloosa was the name officially adopted when the Appaloosa Horse Club was formed in 1938.

In 1947, Claude Thompson appointed George Hatley as Executive Secretary. Hatley took the shoebox containing the Appaloosa Horse Club's records to Moscow, Idaho. At that time there were 200 registered horses and 100 ApHC members.

Today the Appaloosa Horse Club has over 700,000 registered horses, 14,000 members, 118 regional clubs and 22 international affiliates. Today's Appaloosas compete in the upper echelons of virtually every sport imaginable – from cutting to combined training, reining to racing. No other breed can duplicate the qualities and characteristics that make the Appaloosa unique. The Appaloosa is the horse Nature destined to be different.

"The Appaloosa would not have such a place of significance in today's world had it not been for the Appaloosa Horse Club. The ApHC identified horses that were acceptable for registry and made it possible for people who were interested in Appaloosa to feel as though they were part of an organization that was beneficial to their horses."

George Hatley, Founding member of the ApHC a.k.a. "Mr. Appaloosa"