

THE MORGANS BEHIND THE AQHA LEGENDS, PART II

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WWF: The Sidekick, December 2002, pp. 17-18; reformatted August 2020

DRIFTWOOD P-2833 Miller Boy x Comer Mare 1932 - 1960

The great rope horse and rope horse sire, Driftwood, was foaled in the Texas Panhandle near Silverton in 1932. The bay stallion was bred by “old man” Childress. He was sired by Miller Boy and out of the Comer mare, she by Barlow, said to be by Texas Chief or Locks Rondo, and out of a nameless Kentucky Thoroughbred mare. It is through Miller Boy that Driftwood can be traced to Morgan roots. His dam was by Texas Chief and his sire was the Hobart Horse. The breeding of the Hobart Horse is not given in the AQHA Studbook, but in the article on Driftwood in the Western Horseman book Legends II it says “Little is known about the Hobart Horse other than he was thought to have been brought to the JA Ranch, outside Clarendon, Tex., around 1920 by T. D. Hobart, who was then general manager of the JA. The Hobart Horse was remembered as an outstanding individual.” The article does speculate that his sire may have been John Wilkins or Peter McCue.

The fact is that Hobart brought two stallions to the JA Ranch in 1920 and both were registered Morgans. Transfer records in Vol. 5 of the Morgan Horse Register show that Dan 7095 and Dixie Dan 7096 were sold to Mrs. C. Adair of Clarendon, Texas by Richard Sellman in March of 1920. Mrs. Adair was the elderly owner of the JA Ranch. Dan was a sorrel stallion with a blaze, bred by Richard Sellman and foaled in 1916. He was by Headlight Morgan and out of Kate B by The Admiral. Dixie Dan was a brown stallion with a small star, which was also born in 1916 and bred by Sellman. He was by Headlight Morgan and out of Mollie A by Major Antoine. Both stallions stood at the JA until they were sold in 1927 to W. P. Thornhill or Miami, Texas. One of these studs must have been the paternal grandsire of Driftwood.

According to Harley T. Burton in his book, A History of the JA Ranch, T. D. Hobart was a native Vermonter who came to the Texas Panhandle in 1886. He had been educated as a civil engineer and surveyor and worked for many years for various



Driftwood P-2833

land development companies. In 1915 he was hired by Mrs. Adair to manage the JA. As a Vermonter, Mr. Hobart was undoubtedly aware of the excellent using qualities of Morgan horses and it surely was he who decided to buy two Morgan stallions to upgrade the ranch stock. Although Mrs. Adair died in 1921, Mr. Hobart was one of her executors and was still in charge of the ranch in 1927 when Mr. Burton published his book. By 1932, Beale Queen, who later became a successful breeder of running Quarter Horses, was the manager of the JA Ranch. He must have been pleased with the Morgan blood in the herd because he soon purchased another Morgan stallion, Pluto 7331. Foaled at the US Government Farm in Vermont in 1922, Pluto (Troubadour of Willowmoor x Folly x Bennington) was sold as a two-year-old to the Sellman Ranch. When Richard Sellman died in 1925, he passed with a select group of brood stock to Sellman’s son-in-law Robert Dean. When Dean died suddenly in 1927, Pluto was sold to the Matador Ranch where he stood until sold to the JA. Mr. Beal also purchased the short horse stallion Yellow Boy by Yellow Jacket for the JA. Crossed on the daughters of the Morgans, he produced many of the JA Ranch horses, which were recorded in the AQHA Studbook when it was begun in 1941.

Silverton, Texas, the birthplace of Driftwood, is about 10 miles south of the boundary of the JA Ranch. As a young horse Driftwood showed a turn of speed. Soon he was winning match races of from 220 yards to 3/8 of a mile all over the Panhandle. After changing hands several times, Driftwood ended up on the Ab Nichols ranch in Arizona. There he added to

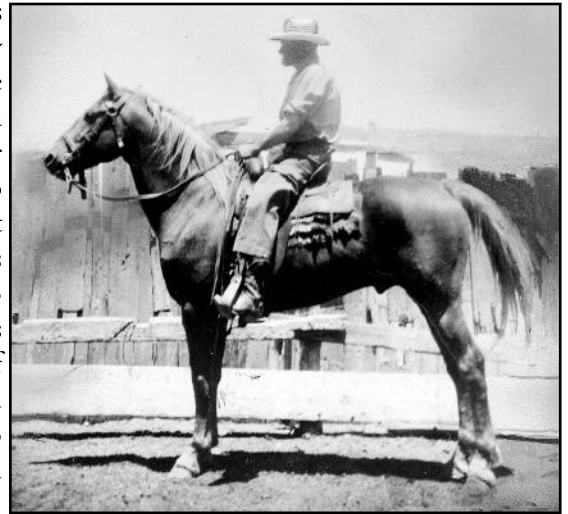


Headlight Morgan 4683, f. October 7, 1893
(Sire: Ethan Allen 2nd 406)

Hobart's home in Pampa. Both stallions bred on and produced an intensely inbred family that can still be found in Morgan pedigrees today. Mr. Thornhill had only one Morgan mare to breed to the half-brothers. Nellie Skinner (Kansas Ranger x Lady Skinner x Headlight Morgan) was a dark bay with a star and was foaled in Oklahoma in 1912. She produced three fillies by Dan, Betty Skinner (1928), Cavey (1929) and Dan's Bess (1934) and one colt by Dixie Dan named Dixie (1931). This colt sired nine foals for Thornhill between 1934 and 1936, all out of his near relatives. Dixie Dan had only one other Morgan get, the filly Bess' Ann (1932) out of Cavey. Dan continued to produce until 1935. Besides the three fillies out of Nellie Skinner, he got three out of his own daughter Betty Skinner. They were the fillies Dan's Baby (1932) and Dan's Betty (1943) and his only Morgan colt Pacheco (1935). Mr. Thornhill acquired Silver Ranger (Querido x Angelina x Texas Allen) as a three-year-old from Roland Hill in 1935. He sired 18 foals out of the inbred (to Headlight Morgan) mares. By 1944 Mr. Thornhill had dispersed most of his herd and moved to Arkansas. The horses went on to Roland Hill in California, George Hineman and R S Sentney in Kansas and the Pine Ridge Indian School and Rosebud Indian Agency in South Dakota. Most were prolific producers who contributed greatly to the Western Working family. Whether the Hobart Horse was Dan or Dixie Dan, he left a shining legacy in both the Quarter Horse and Morgan breeds.

his racing laurels by beating the ranch's other stallion, Clabber, the 1940-41 Champion Quarter Running Horse. When he was 6 or 7, Driftwood was broke as a ranch and rope horse. He was not only athletic, but had smooth gaits and a pleasant disposition. He was not a big horse, but the blood bay stallion was fast, catty, smart and tough. In 1941, when he was a 9-year-old, he was sold to a professional rodeo cowboy, Asbury Schell, who specialized in calf and team roping. For two years, Driftwood was a top rope horse on the national rodeo circuit. Then he was sold to the Peake family in California and retired to stud. He was bred to good Quarter Horse mares with the goal of producing top ranch and rodeo horses. He sired 153 Quarter Horses and more than lived up to expectations. Ropers stood in line to buy his foals and they were not disappointed. Some of Driftwood's best-known rope horse get were Poker Chip Peake, Speedy Peake, Mescal Brownie, Red Button, Cowboy Schell, Mac McCue W and Driftwood Ike. He also sired many good cutting and stock horses, like Henny Penny Peake. When he died at age 28, Driftwood was as famous for his gentleness as for his abilities on the track, in the arena and in the breeding shed. He was a true Quarter Horse legend who surely owed some of his success to his Morgan grand sire, the Hobart Horse.

What became of the Hobart Horse? Well, we don't know if he was Dan or Dixie Dan, but both were sold to W. P. Thornhill of Miami, Texas in 1927. Miami is just north of the JA Ranch and only about 20 miles from



Silver Ranger 7813 (Querido x Tab)
Photo courtesy of NMMH.