"THE SPANISH CONQUEST AND THE FOUNDING OF THE BREED"

The first horses were transported by Christopher Columbus in 1493 on his second voyage to the Americas. The King of Spain demanded that Columbus take 20 fighting horses, or stallions, which were customary for the men of arms to ride, along with 5 mares from Granada. In case the first group of horses went down, another one of the 17 ships on this voyage carried 24 horses, of which 10 were mares. Even more horses were accounted for belonging to the passengers.

"In the wake of the "discovery" of the Western Hemisphere by Christopher Columbus in 1492, Spanish and Portuguese explorers continued the quest for riches in the New World. In April 1519, a fleet of 11 Spanish galleons sailing along the eastern gulf coast dropped anchor just off the wind-swept beach on the island of San Juan de Ulúa. Under the command of the wily, daring Hernán Cortés, the vessels bore 550 Spanish soldiers and sailors, as well as 16 Spanish horses, the first of the species to tread the American continent." [The Spanish Conquest (1519-1521), Dale Hoyt Palfrey] As the Spanish conquest for gold and riches continued, the multitude of Spaniards increased and so did the number of their horses. Soon after their victory over the Aztec empire in 1521, they began to search farther north. The conquistadors consequently overtook the land and named it New Spain. We know the territory now as Mexico.



As various explorers moved further north from Mexico they introduced horses to Indian tribes such as the Apaches and Navajos who were famous for learning to fight and hunt on horseback. Indians became acquainted with the trade value of the animals as well, but began to see a different value of the horse as the animal greatly increased their life proficiency. The horses gave the Indians great advantages. Therefore, the Comanche Indians began harsh horse stealing raids on the Spanish rancheros and missions that had been settled.

In 1676, Fray Ayala, a priest from Spain, brought in several hundred more horses into the region directly from New Spain. Four years later, the Pueblo Rebellion occurred and drove all of the Spaniards out of the region and many hundreds of horses were abandoned onto the Plains. By the early 1700's, most of the Indian tribes had their own string of horses while thousands of these Spanish horses still roamed freely.

In another region of the North American Continent in 1587, the first English settlement consisting of 117 people was set up at Roanoke Island off the coast of North Carolina. Within three years the settlement perished with no survivors. However, in 1606, another settlement survived near the Chesapeake Bay, known as Jamestown, Virginia. Along with these English settlers came their English bred horses, later deemed Thoroughbreds. Rapid growth occurred and colonies began to spring up all along the coastline and further inland.

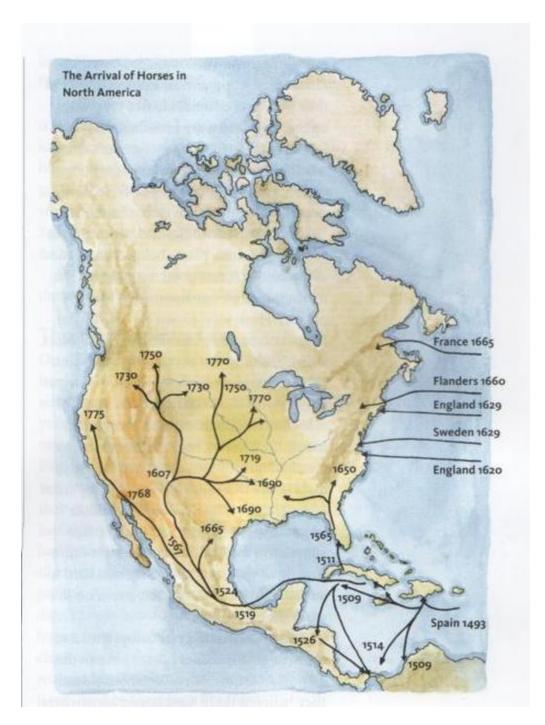


As the use of horses grew in settlements and small colonies to meet everyday tasks and ways of life, so did the sport of horse racing. Racing horses was often a popular event in the main streets of the villages, but was a dangerous sport if anyone stood in the way of raging hooves. Therefore, in 1674, Plymouth, Massachusetts actually forbade horse racing in the

streets. But none-the-less, the sport of horse racing was racing out of control. Wealthy men began to demand higher quality horses to meet speed expectations while others demanded higher quality for size, strength, and endurance. Thus, the breeding of such horses began.

But little did we know that while the wealthy Englishmen and settlers were busy breeding their own mix of stock, the wild Spanish horses of the Plains were mingling with various horses lost or left astray from settlers moving west. The horse population was growing at rapid rates and the blood mingling of Spanish Barbs, also known as mustangs, Morgans, and Thoroughbreds had created a horse like no one had ever encountered before. He was a horse of pronounced muscle and unprecedented speed over short distances. His jawline was prominent and chiseled and the versatility for performance unmatched. The American Quarter Horse had been born.





The map above is from Storey's Illustrated Guide to 96 Horse Breeds of North America by Judith Dutson. It shows the places and dates of the arrival of European horses into the "New World."