

# Roland Hill

## DEAN OF MORGAN HORSE BREEDERS

*Few early Morgan breeders have been as widely recognized and respected as California rancher Roland G. Hill. Picking up almost seamlessly where Richard Sellman left off, he became the largest breeder of Morgans in the world, as well as a strong and influential leader.*

By Brenda L. Tippin

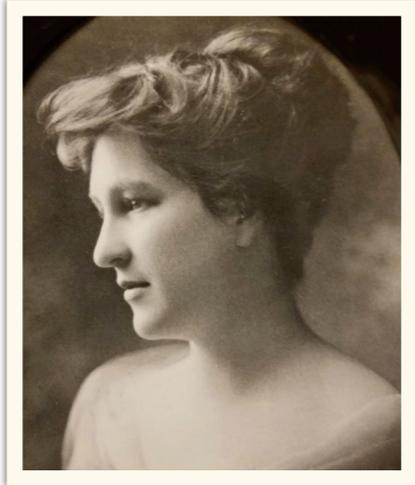


### HISTORY OF THE HILL FAMILY

The Hill family traced to English roots. Roland's grandfather, Joseph Hill was born in Henbury, England in December 1832 to Peter and Elizabeth Hill. He arrived in New York on October 25, 1848, with his parents and sister Sarah aboard the British Bark, "Elizabeth." The Hills moved to Cross Plains in Dane County,

Wisconsin where Peter began farming. In 1856, Joseph married Emma Arland who had also been born in England. They were married in Madison, Wisconsin and also took up farming. Ross George, the fourth of their ten children was born in 1864. Joseph and Emma then moved with their young children to Chehalis, Washington, farming there until the early 1870s. The family moved

**ABOVE:** Roland Hill (courtesy David Ladd); Roland with Querido (courtesy David Ladd); Roland George Hill as a young man (*History of Kern County*).



**TOP TO BOTTOM:** Ross George Hill and Lottie Gridley, parents of Roland Hill (FamilySearch); Russell Hill, brother of Roland (FamilySearch); Bonnie Margaret Brite, wife of Russell Hill.

to Los Angeles County, California by 1875, where they continued farming.

Los Angeles at that time had barely more than 5,000 people living in the city, and just over 15,000 in all of Los Angeles County. These numbers would double over the next decade. One of the 27 original counties, Los Angeles County included all of Orange County and at one time, stretched south as far as San Clemente, and eastward to the Colorado River, over 34,000 square miles in all. As of 2018, the county covers 4,571 square miles with just over 10 million residents, a little over 4 million of which reside in the City of Los Angeles.

Following Mexico's independence from Spain in 1821, the region saw a great expansion in agriculture and cattle ranching with more than 800 land grants issued. The Mexican-American war, 1846–1848, ended with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, ceding California to the United States. During the Gold Rush years which immediately followed, the cattle herds of Los Angeles had grown to the largest in the state, keeping the hungry miners supplied with beef, as well as farm fresh produce. In 1850, there were more than half a million Spanish longhorn cattle in southwestern California, descended from those brought by Father Serra and the Portola expedition of 1769. These were gradually phased out as other English strains of cattle were brought west. The great flood of 1862 followed by several years of severe drought resulted in losses of more than 70 percent of the cattle in this area.

Ross Hill, who suffered from severe asthma, felt that according to the advice of medical authorities, moving inland would improve his health. Hearing that others had found relief in the Tehachapi region, he settled in the Cummings Valley of Kern County, about 125 miles north of Los Angeles in 1882 when he was 20 years old. There he purchased 334 acres and began stock ranching on a small scale, gradually working his way up to take his place among the prosperous ranchers of the region. In 1884, he married Lottie Gridley of Los Angeles. Lottie was the youngest of eight children born to Daniel Gridley and Catherine McGhan. The Gridleys were direct descendants of Thomas Gridley,

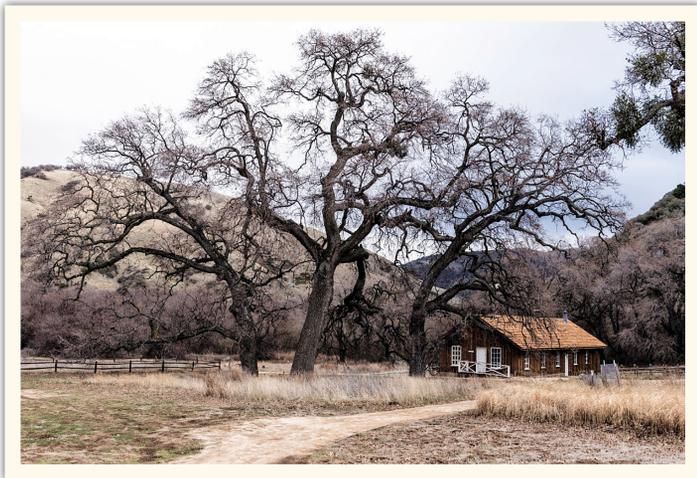
one of the original founders of Hartford, Connecticut in 1635, as well as several other Hartford founders. Thomas Gridley's son Samuel married Esther Thompson, daughter of Thomas Thompson, and Anne Welles. Thomas Thompson was another of Hartford's founders. Anne was the daughter of Thomas Welles, the Fourth Colonial Governor of Connecticut, and also one of the founders of Hartford. Thomas Welles served as Treasurer, Secretary, and Deputy Governor as well as Governor, and was the only man to have ever held all four offices of the Executive Branch of Connecticut's government. He was a member of the Court which issued the Fundamental Orders of 1639 (Connecticut's constitution), which is in his handwriting. The Gridley line also married into other families tracing to original Hartford founders William Lewis and Deacon Thomas Judd.

Roland George Hill was the first of four children of Ross and Lottie and was born on July 10, 1886, at the ranch in Cummings Valley. His sister Ruby was born in 1889, followed by Russell in 1892, and Emma in 1894. Ross had great respect for the ways of vaquero horsemanship and saw this as essential to his ranching success. Accordingly, he sent his sons at an early age to learn from the vaqueros of the Tejon Ranch. Antonio Leiva, one of the greatest of the old vaqueros, worked for the Hills when he first came to the Cummings Valley and then became cattle boss of the Tejon Ranch, a position he held for more than 30 years. All of his sons worked for the Tejon as well, and both the Tejon Ranch and the Leiva family would remain closely involved with the Hills.

### TEJON RANCH

Originally established as a Mexican land grant in 1843, the neighboring Tejon Ranch was to have a huge impact on young Roland and his brother. The rugged frontier of the Tejon was explored by early pioneers including Jedediah Smith, John Fremont, and Kit Carson. The ranch was later founded by General Edward Fitzgerald Beale over a period of several years when he purchased and joined four Mexican land grants that would make up the Tejon.

Born in Washington D.C. on February 4, 1822, Beale was the son and grandson of



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** As young boys, Roland and Russell Hill rode with vaqueros from the Tejon Ranch (courtesy of Tehachapi Heritage League); Tejon Ranch Blacksmith shop and bunkhouse, where Hill and Leiva brothers learned vaquero horsemanship (courtesy of Tehachapi Heritage League); Officer's Quarters at Fort Tejon (Library of Congress); Quartermaster's shop building, Ft. Tejon (Library of Congress).

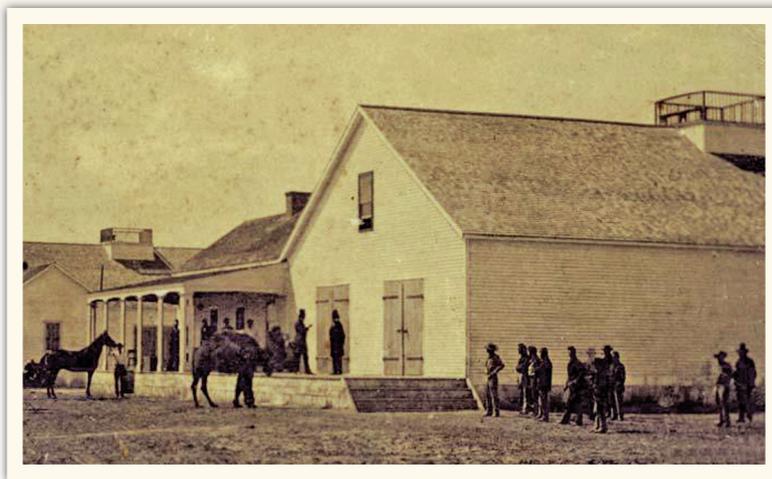
distinguished naval officers and was determined to follow in their footsteps. In those days, it was common for boys to engage in hot disputes concerning their political beliefs, even coming to blows to defend their cause. General Andrew Jackson was then in the White House and young Beale was a staunch “Jacksonian.”

It happened one winter day that Beale and his friends became embroiled in a fight with the “Adams” supporters near the southern entrance of the White House. As spectators shouted encouragement, a tall figure appeared, seizing young Beale by the collar and demanded to know what he was fighting for. Beale declared he was fighting for Jackson and his opponent had discounted Jackson’s politics and personality. The tall man then identified himself as President Jackson, saying he never forgot men and boys who would fight for him, but instructed the boys to put on their coats and go home. Beale attended Georgetown College at a young age and, when 14, became determined to enter the Navy. His mother, now a widow, took him to the White House to call on General Jackson and apply for a midshipman’s warrant. Jackson listened politely to the mother’s account of her son’s achievements and the military accomplishments of his father and grandfather but still seemed uncertain about acting upon her request. At that

point young Beale interrupted and approached the President to speak on his own behalf, reminding him of the fight years before, and his promise to remember the boy who fought for him. The President immediately wrote a note to the Secretary of the Navy, instructing him to give the boy a warrant at once, and handed it to his mother, and soon he was on his way to being a cadet in the Naval school.

Later, Beale sailed to California under Commodore Robert Stockton. With the Mexican-American War in progress, he was ordered to join the land forces and support General Kearney. Just before the Battle of San Pasqual in 1846, Beale, his Delaware Native American servant, and Kit Carson managed to slip through the lines when the Mexican Army had surrounded them and made their way to San Diego for reinforcements, thus saving Kearney’s soldiers.

In 1848, Beale was required to bring the first gold samples east to prove California’s discovery to the federal government. He married Mary E. Edwards in 1849 and then was appointed Superintendent of Indian Affairs for California in 1852. Fort Tejon was established by the US Army’s First Dragoons at his urging in 1854 to protect both local natives and white settlers from raids by



**LEFT TO RIGHT:** General Beale residence, Tejon Ranch (© Carleton Watkins, 1888, Library of Congress); General Beale's US Camel Corp 1, with army Morgan horse, Drum Barracks, San Pedro, CA (public domain).

other tribes, and the First Dragoons were garrisoned there. The fort housed 225 troops in 15 buildings at a cost of over half a million dollars. Organized by Congress in 1833, the Dragoons were the only mounted forces the army had at the time, all others having been disbanded after the War of 1812. Many of these soldiers were mounted on Morgan horses.

Rancho La Liebre, or “Ranch of the Jack-Rabbit,” was deeded to Mary Edwards Beale by William C. Walker in 1855 and was the first of four Mexican land grants that would make up the Tejon Ranch. Later that year, Congress appropriated \$30,000 for an experiment to use camels for the army in the southwest. The first camels arrived in 1857. General Beale was awarded a contract to survey and build 1,000 miles of wagon road from Fort Defiance, New Mexico to the Colorado River, and was not informed at first that he was expected to take 25 camels with him. Beale was thus commander of the first and only US Army Camel Brigade. He felt the camels performed well, but they tended to scare the horses and mules, so the army did not continue the experiment. Fort Tejon was abandoned in September of 1864. The next year, General Beale purchased Rancho El Tejon, “Ranch of the Badger,” and Rancho Los Alamos y Agua Caliente, “Ranch of the Cottonwoods and Hot Water,” the next two land grants that would make up the Tejon Ranch. The final grant, Rancho de Castac, “Ranch of the Lake” was purchased in 1866.

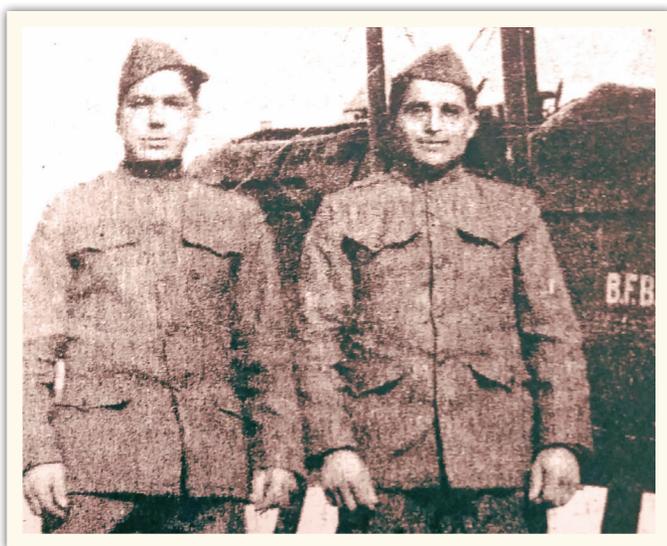
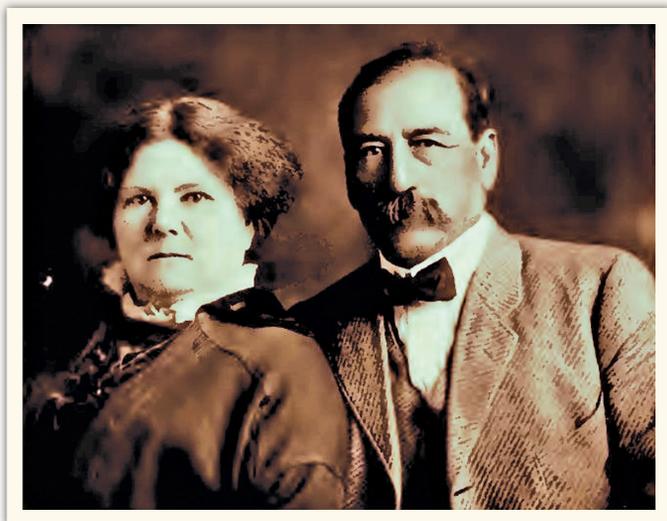
Over the next few decades, General Beale built up his ranch, adding another 81,000 acres to the original 195,000 acres, over 276,000 acres in all, and spanning 422 square miles. He also bought the camels from the War Department and kept them on his ranch. He hired José Jesús López (often known as J. J. López) to take charge of his sheep operations which at one time included more than 95,000 sheep. By 1885, he had replaced most of the sheep with cattle and J. J. López was made *mayordomo* (*mayordomo* being the Spanish word, *majordomo* the English word, meaning the head manager of the ranch), and Antonio Leiva was hired as cattle boss. Under these men, the Tejon became legendary for its vaquero horsemanship, and it was here that Ross Hill determined his sons should learn.

Though Roland barely remembered General Beale as the tall, kindly white-haired man with military bearing who ran the vast Tejon empire, he remembered the colorful stories which would stir the imagination of any boy. He admired the vaquero horsemen and looked forward to the days when he too would become a vaquero horseman. General Beale died in 1893 when Roland was only seven, however, the Tejon traditions were carried on by his son, Truxtun Beale, as well as J. J. Lopez and Antonio Leiva, who would remain an integral part of the ranch even after Truxtun sold it to a group of investors in 1912.

### J. J. LÓPEZ

José Jesús López was born in 1853 as the oldest child of Jerónimo and Maria Catalina Lopez. The López family was a fine old and wealthy Castilian family, one of the oldest in California, tracing to J. J.'s great-great-grandfather José Ygnacio Maria de Jesús López. Ygnacio and two of his sons were among the first *soldados de cuera*, or “leather-jacket soldiers” who had come with the 1769 expedition led by Gaspar de Portolá and Father Junípero Serra. Ygnacio's father was Captain Andrés López who had come from Spain. José Maria Claudio López, son of Ygnacio and great-grandfather of J. J. was *mayordomo* of San Gabriel Mission for more than 40 years. For his service, he was granted the use of Rancho Santa Anita which he named in honor of his fiancée, the beautiful Anita Cota. Unfortunately, Anita died before they could be married; he later married her cousin, Maria Luisa Cota. In 1826, he became *alcalde* (mayor) of Los Angeles. J. J.'s mother, Maria Catalina, was a daughter of Pedro López, whose father Juan was one of the sons of Ygnacio who came in the Portolá expedition. Pedro followed his father Juan in serving as *mayordomo* of the San Fernando Mission.

J. J. was well educated, having attended a private school, *Escuela Normal de Los Angeles*, which taught French, Spanish, English, Italian, mathematics, and bookkeeping. After overseeing the sheep flocks of the Tejon for more than ten years, he became the *mayordomo*. He was particular about his vaqueros, considering them all as sons, and seemed to know just the horses to assign to



**TOP TO BOTTOM:** Mr and Mrs J. J. Lopez, Tejon Ranch (*History of Kern County*); Joe and Jack Leiva, France, during WWI. The brothers remained close to the Hill brothers and became involved with Morgans (courtesy Tehachapi Heritage League); Jack Leiva of Kern County Rangers with his champion Morgan stallion Smookey, circa 1943 (© Helen Lantz, direct descendant of Antonio Leiva).

develop the skills of each. He was as patient with the young Hill boys as with any of his men, and they paid close attention, both learning to be fluent in the pure Castilian Spanish he used with all his vaqueros. J. J. attempted to retire in 1909, building a house in Bakersfield, but after Truxtun Beale sold the ranch in 1912, he was called back and continued as *mayordomo* and consulting *mayordomo* until his death in 1939, having served for more than 60 years. The house he built has been restored and is now part of the display at the Kern County Museum.

### THE ANTONIO LEIVA FAMILY

Antonio Maria Leiva was born in 1846 at Santa Barbara Mission to Francisco Antonio Leiva and Vincente Cordero and traced to Mexican and Native American ancestry. The family came to be known with the spelling of “Leiva,” though like many names, numerous variations in spelling occur in the old records including Leyva, Leyba, and Liva. His great-grandfather Agustin Leiva was one of the *soldados de cuera* who arrived in the 4<sup>th</sup> expedition to Alta California with Captain Fernando Rivera. He left home at a young age and sought work as a vaquero in Marin County, California, near Olema. He was married about 1865, but his wife died. Antonio later came to the San Fernando area, where on November 29, 1876, he married 15-year-old Piedad Inocencia de Leon with the consent of her father, Jose Leon, who was from Spain. Piedad’s mother was Petra Lopez, a daughter José Francisco Mauricio “Chico” Lopez, who was present and a witness for Antonio and Piedad’s wedding. Piedad’s grandfather, Chico Lopez, was another well-known vaquero and cattleman who had ranched in the area. He was an uncle of J. J. Lopez of the Tejon Ranch, being a brother of J. J.’s father, and Piedad’s mother was J. J.’s first cousin.

Antonio had recently driven a herd of horses through the Tehachapis to deliver to the US Army, and the area impressed him. He and Piedad came to Kern County soon after their marriage, and settled initially near the Chanac Ranch, but found it was a railroad section. Antonio then chose a 40-acre site in the hills northwest of Cummings Mountain with plenty of water, where he built a cabin and found work for different ranches. When Ross Hill settled in Cummings Valley, the Leivas were neighbors, and Antonio rode a few years for the Hills, and eventually for the Tejon Ranch where he became cattle boss, a position he held for more than 30 years. Of the Leiva children, four sons and three daughters survived. All the Leiva boys rode for the Tejon ranch, as well as for the Hills at times. Roque, or “Rockie,” the oldest, was born in 1878. Armand, known as “Jack,” was born in 1888 and was two years younger than Roland. Theodore, or “Doro” was born in 1889, and Joe, the youngest, born in 1894 was two years younger than Russell. J. J. Lopez was Joe’s godfather. The Leiva brothers and the Hill brothers were well-known and recognized as being among the top vaqueros in the county.

### UNSETTLING CHANGES

Meanwhile, Roland’s grandfather Joseph also purchased 160 acres in the mountains north of Water Canyon in Kern County in 1892, which added to the cattle range for the Hills. In 1898, Lottie’s father,



**TOP TO BOTTOM:** Greenfield Ranch, Bakersfield, California. This ranch was purchased by Roland Hill for the Tehachapi Land and Cattle Company (photo by Carleton Watkins, circa 1890, Library of Congress); Hill Ranch House, circa 1930 (© Helen Lantz); and the Hill Ranch House in Keene today (© David Ladd).

Daniel Gridley, suffered a series of strokes and died. Joseph Hill then died of a cerebral hemorrhage in 1899. The next year, 1900, Piedad, the wife of Antonio Leiva suddenly became ill and died, leaving several of the younger children at home. Lottie stepped in, helping Ernestine, known as “Ernie,” the oldest daughter who was trying to care for her young siblings. In October 1904, Ross Hill died suddenly, at just 42 years of age, leaving Roland to take over management of the ranch.

Joe Leiva recalled those difficult years. He was barely six years old when his mother died, but remembered how Mrs. Hill “saved our lives,” as he put it, stepping in to take care of the younger children until Ernie was able to do it. He and his younger sisters Rowena and Clara would catch the burro to ride to school if they could or walk down to the Hill’s land, as they had a cart and white horse and would always give them a ride. Ernie kept the younger children at the Leiva homestead for about three years after her mother died, and they moved into town about 1903. Rockie, Jack, and Doro worked at the Tejon ranch with their dad.

### THE TEHACHAPI LAND AND CATTLE COMPANY

Roland, meanwhile, had left school when he was about 16 to take up ranching, and when his father died two years later in 1904, he went to work, focusing on raising horses, cattle, and hogs, and increasing the ranch lands. During the next eight years, he managed to increase the size of the Hill ranch from 2,000 acres to 14,000 acres. Roland was a man who paid close attention to small details and figured out ways to make things work better.

In 1912, he organized the Tehachapi Land and Cattle Company with the help of a few interested partners. He had noticed the success with which Midwest farmers fed and fattened their cattle and believed they could adopt a similar system in the Kern County area. Though he was only 26, his many hours of long hard experience on the range, learning from top cattlemen and skilled vaqueros since his earliest childhood had already taught him a lifetime of experience. Roland believed the old system of cattle raising in California did not yield the best returns, and in years of scant rainfall, several years of breeding were often wiped out at once. Moreover, these losses affected the profits for several years afterward. During these years, outsiders were collecting the largest share of the profits by fattening the stock from the range and getting them into prime condition for trade. Roland felt the thing to do would be to fatten his own range cattle and accordingly made a trip east to inspect ranches where the most progressive methods of feeding were in use. He found the best results were obtained with silage and corn.

Silage was made by compacting fresh cut alfalfa and storing in airtight silos without drying it to use for winter feed. As none of the ranch lands in the mountains was suited to alfalfa, he and his partners purchased the 2,400-acre Greenfield Ranch near Bakersfield. On April 3, 1913, in Los Angeles, Roland married Edith Baker, who was born in Colorado Springs, August 4, 1892.

They made their home at the new ranch, and a son, Elmor Ross was born in 1914, followed by Mary Margaret in 1915 and Edith Jean in 1919. Russell took over as foreman of the Hill ranch, which had been incorporated into the Tehachapi Land and Cattle Company, and on April 4, 1917, married Bonnie Margaret Brite.

Additional lands were added until the Tehachapi Land and Cattle Company owned 25,000 acres by 1914, and Roland continued to add partners and acreage over the next several years. Roland served as Advisor to the Board of Directors for the Kern County Farm Bureau in 1915.

During the first year of Roland's experiment, six 500-ton concrete silos were constructed, feedlots were built, 2,500 tons of silage were grown and fed to a thousand head of steers fattened and marketed at a profit, and several hundred additional acres of alfalfa land was leveled and seeded. Most of the stock was two-year-old Arizona bred, with a scattering of native cattle.

Since the young alfalfa didn't produce enough the first year for that many stock, they had to buy additional hay which was not always the best quality and supplemented with cottonseed meal, ground barley, and kaffir corn. Steers on average weighed about 950 pounds when feeding was begun in November and gained about 300 pounds. Roland also discovered that more losses occurred with horned cattle which required much more room to handle in the muddy corrals than dehorned stock and did not gain as well. Roland believed well-bred steers would fare better and purchased 60 Hereford bulls for the next season to turn out with the range cows. Plans were also made for better drainage for the corrals, and to winter the breeding stock at the valley ranch and drive them back to the mountains in the spring to feed on the rich grasses. The goal was to plant half the valley ranch in alfalfa and the other half in corn, which would require building more silos, enough to allow finishing 1,500 to 2,000 steers per year. Hogs were also added which could be started on wild feed in the mountains and brought down to the valley ranch with the cattle in the fall.

### THE FIRST MORGANS

During these years, the Tehachapi Land and Cattle Company prospered, and Roland continued to make steady improvements, gradually upgrading his operation to purebred cattle. He began to feel the need for better quality horses as well. He had noticed that most of the ranches had a lot of variation in the quality of horses and better horses saved both time and work. All three of the largest ranches, which were the Kern County Land Company, Miller & Lux, and the Tejon Ranch always had some good horses which caught his eye. These were compact, muscular horses which seemed tireless and eager for more work no matter how long the day and they made excellent bridle horses. He found a common theme in that most of these horses were of Morgan blood. However, at that time, none of the ranches were breeding them and they were unregistered animals, mostly geldings. Then, in 1921, he noticed a few registered Morgans being exhibited at a number of fairs up and down the California coast and winning many prizes. These were owned by Reginald Parsons of Mountcrest Ranch in Hill,

California (see *The Morgan Horse*, March 2018 for Brenda Tippin's history of the nearly forgotten Mountcrest Ranch). Roland liked what he saw and learned that Parsons bought his Morgans from Texas rancher Richard Sellman, who had a huge outfit and was now advertising and selling select Morgan breeding stock by the train carload. Roland wasted little time in investigating the matter and, in 1922, purchased the first of four carloads of Sellman's registered ranch Morgans which he had been diligently breeding since the 1880s.

This first purchase included the brown stallion Redwood Morgan (Headlight Morgan x Bonnie A by Major Antoine) and a boxcar load of about 16 carefully selected mares:

1. Texanita (Texas Allen x Anita B, tracing to Octoroon) black mare 1918, sold to Hill in 1922, in foal to Joe Bailey (Headlight Morgan x Polly B by The Admiral). Produced eight foals for Hill.
2. Melissa, (Morgan Chief x Black Star Gordon tracing to Octoroon) black mare 1917, sold to Hill in 1922. Produced seven foals, six for Hill. No 1923 foal listed.
3. Addy (Texas Allen x Pauline B by The Admiral, tracing to Octoroon) chestnut mare, 1918 sold to Hill in 1922, in foal to Joe Bailey. Produced 14 foals for Hill. No foal 1932, 1934-35, and 1939.
4. Kitty C. (Sunny South x Kitty B by The Admiral, tracing to Octoroon) black mare, 1915 sold to Hill in 1922. Produced 12 foals for Hill. No 1923 foal and none in 1933, '34, '35.
5. Angelina (Texas Allen x Mollie B by The Admiral tracing to Octoroon) brown mare, 1918 sold to Hill in 1922, in foal to Joe Bailey. Produced 13 foals for Hill. 1923 foal missing, also 1926 and 1933.
6. Jenavive K. (Headlight Morgan x Nellie Antoine by Major Antoine, tracing to Octoroon) bay mare 1916, sold to Hill in 1922. Produced three foals, one for Hill in 1924 and after that disappeared and was not transferred.
7. Madcap (Woodrow Wilson x Sallie D by The Admiral, tracing to Octoroon) chestnut mare 1919. Sold to Hill in 1922, in foal to Joe Bailey, producing a total of two foals, both black, and disappeared after her 1924 foal and was not transferred. Night Cap, the 1924 black filly by Pat Allen disappeared as well.
8. Camille (Alkadaza x Nannie L by The Admiral) chestnut mare 1918 sold to Hill in 1922, 14 foals total, 13 for Hill. Missing 1925, '32, and '33 foals.
9. Tab (Texas Allen x Birdie by Major Antoine) black mare 1918 sold to Hill in 1922, produced 19 foals for Hill, missing 1925 and 1940.
10. Nancy G (Golden x Nancy Gordon by Major Gordon) bay mare 1910, sold to Hill in 1922. Produced nine foals, seven for Hill. 1926, '27, '28 missing, also '31, '32, '33, and '35.
11. Joeb (Joe Bailey x Birdie) bay mare 1921, sold to Hill in 1922 produced five foals, three for Hill, sold in 1928. Missing 1925 and 1927.
12. Alkali (Alkadaza x Red Mollie) chestnut mare 1919 sold to Hill in 1922, missing foals 1923-26, '32 and '34. Produced total of ten foals for Hill.

13. Lucca (Bald Eagle x Bonnie B tracing to Octoroon) chestnut mare 1919 sold to Hill in 1922 with brown filly Lucca Bailey at side. Neither she nor the filly were ever heard of again, not transferred and produced no other foals.
14. Lucia (Woodrow Wilson x Lulu Girl tracing to Octoroon) black mare 1919, sold to Hill in 1922 with chestnut filly Katrina by Joe Bailey at side. Katrina went on to produce 11 foals but Lucia was not transferred or heard of again.
15. Lulu G (Sunny South x Lulu Girl traced to Octoroon) black mare 1915 sold to Hill in 1922, produced one chestnut colt, Red Hornett in 1923 by Redwood Morgan. Maybe colt was gelded, but he was not transferred, and neither this mare nor the colt was heard of again.
16. 22) Sophomore (Headlight Morgan x Bossie A) brown mare 1919, sold to Hill in 1922. Disappeared, no offspring or transfer recorded.

Sellman had chosen the stallion, Redwood Morgan, to go with the carload of mares. Roland was concerned the breeding might be too close and bred only four foals from Redwood Morgan for the 1923 crop, then sold the horse. None of the first four Redwood Morgan offspring had any progeny, but his later offspring turned out so well, Roland regretted selling him. It took a few years of experimentation to fully understand Sellman's breeding choices and find a similar breeding pattern of his own. The Tehachapi Land and Cattle Company continued to grow under Roland's management. From 1923 to 1925, Roland purchased seventeen more mares. Two were daughters of Headlight Morgan, three by sons of Headlight Morgan, and the remaining twelve mares were sired by the government-bred stallion Red Oak (General Gates x Marguerite).

In October of 1925, Roland was grand marshal of the Kern County Fair's "grand livestock parade" at Bakersfield. Here he had a chance to show off his fine Morgans. The parade was led by the high school band in white uniforms, followed by the Morgans representing the Tehachapi Land and Cattle Company. The Morgans arched their necks, proudly prancing in time to the music to the great delight of the crowd.

Meanwhile, Roland had maintained close connections with his friends, the Leiva family. Antonio Leiva died in 1922, just about the time Roland was getting started with Morgans, but the Leiva brothers were definitely interested. Jack and his brother Doro started a Richfield filling station in Tehachapi that year, which they operated for more than 50 years, and it became the longest continuously operating gas station in the state of California at the time. All four brothers bought ranches in the same area, and Jack Leiva bought the mare Adalina Allen (Pat Allen x Angelina by Texas Allen) from Roland in 1928 and began to raise Morgans.

That same year, Roland purchased one more Sellman-bred mare, from neighbor Fred Fickert, who had bought a train carload of Morgans shortly after he did in 1922. This mare was Headstar (Headlight Morgan x Evening Star by The Jew), a bay foaled in 1918. Headstar represented a rare line that was slightly different from the usual Sellman pattern. Her dam's sire, The Jew, was a

son of Major Antoine, but his dam, The Jewess, was a daughter of Smiley's Ethan Allen 3d #4406, another son of Peter's Ethan Allen 2d which is rarely found. Through his dam, this horse brought in two additional close crosses to Hale's Green Mountain Morgan, including one through the highly regarded Massachusetts Morgan (Hale's Green Mountain x mare by Howard Morgan), sire of his second dam. A number of descendants of Headstar tracing to Hill breeding still survive today.

The very next year, the stock market crash of 1929 brought an end to the Tehachapi Land and Cattle Company. Roland lost nearly everything but managed to hold onto his prized Morgans and slowly began to rebuild. Roland became involved in The Morgan Horse Club, and so did Jack Leiva. Roland began serving on the national Board of Directors in 1931, a position he would hold for 18 years. He then began adding more mares including several bred by W. P. Thornhill. Among these were Betty Skinner (Dan x Nellie Skinner) and her daughter Dan's Betty, the result of being bred back to her own sire. Roland had modified his ideas of close breeding, at least when it came to the Sellman gene pool. Dan was bred by Sellman, and was a son of Headlight Morgan out of Kate B. by The Admiral, second dam Kate by Major Antoine. Lady Skinner, the second dam of Betty Skinner, was also a daughter of Headlight Morgan. Dan's Betty went on to produce ten foals, nine of which were for the Horseshoe Cattle Company.

### THE HORSESHOE CATTLE COMPANY

Roland rented 40,000 acres near Chowchilla, California in 1933, and formed another partnership to establish the Horseshoe Cattle Company in 1935 with about 5,000 head of cattle. Jack Leiva bred his mare Adalina Allen to Master Billie, a son of Querido which Roland had kept, and she foaled a handsome black colt he called Smookey in 1936. Meanwhile, many of the Hill Morgans came down with sleeping sickness at the Chowchilla ranch. Roland moved the family to a larger rented ranch at Gustine about 1938 and sold his lead sire Querido to Hawaii. This property was soon sold, however, so Roland moved his operation again, to Gilroy. He experimented with several stallions to replace Querido, settling on the government bred Sonfield, a son of Mansfield, Querido's full brother. Roland also continued to add a few more mares, purchasing the high-priced Miga (Winterset x Cola) and her daughter Kathleen McCavlin (x Barney Hudson) at the estate sale of C. G. Stevenson, and later adding the Hearst bred mare Rosella. Rosella was a daughter of Reginald Parsons's prized stallion Mountcrest Sellman (Joe Bailey x Kitty E), whose dam he had purchased in foal from Sellman in 1920. Mountcrest Sellman and Mountcrest Bailey (Joe Bailey x Berta) were foaled at Parsons's Mountcrest Ranch in Hilt, California on April 20, 1921, and were the first Morgans to be born in California and registered by their owner. Mountcrest Sellman was the first Morgan stallion foaled and registered in California to become a notable sire. Rosella's dam was Rose Bud Rose, a Querido daughter (x Hemala by Headlight Morgan) which Roland had bred and sold to Hearst in 1931. Among Rosella's produce for Hill was the mare Rosella A. (x Sonfield) who was used by Clarence Shaw for his Shawalla Morgans program in Walla Walla, Washington. She was the dam

of ten foals. Rosella has a number of descendants today, including LH Richmond (Casual Sir Jackson x Quaker Acre Windsong), sire for Tom Simmons's sport Morgan training stable in Roxboro, North Carolina.

Jack Leiva continued to win many prizes with his beautiful black, champion Morgan stallion Smookey, which he bred from Hill stock, including many Champion Stallion titles at the Kern County Fair. Jack was also a member of the Kern County Rangers of the state forestry division and, in 1943, organized a grueling three-day endurance ride in the Tehachapi Mountains to test the abilities of horses and riders in resolving scouting problems in the timber company. Jack and Smookey led the ride which 41 rangers took part in. All the Leiva brothers were involved with the Morgans, and Joe Leiva, the youngest brother, who passed away in 1991 just a month short of his 96<sup>th</sup> birthday, told many stories about them to his family members.

Meanwhile, Roland and his partner purchased the 195,000-acre TS Ranch in Battle Mountain, Nevada, to offer more security than having leased ranches sold out from under them. The Battle Mountain property supported 8,000 head of cattle, and he also bought a smaller ranch near Rocklin, California, which supported 500 head of cattle. Most of the geldings bred by the Horseshoe Cattle Company were trained and finished as bridle horses, as Roland was very particular about this work. He would often personally select the bits he wanted his vaqueros to use on individual horses and would take the time to ride with a new vaquero for the day to ensure his horses were being handled properly. According to Ray Ordway, Roland used bits made by Sterns in San Jose, and kept about a hundred of them locked in his trunk and would say, "if you ride my horse, you use my bit." (see Dean of the Living Vaqueros, *The Morgan Horse*, March 2010). Ray plans to celebrate his 94th birthday at the Vaquero Heritage Days event in San Juan Bautista, California, August 17–19, 2018. This event will once again feature the role of the Morgan horse in California vaquero history, with demonstrations by vaquero horsewoman Jo Johnson and her Morgans tracing directly to Roland Hill breeding.

The late Ray Hunt, 1929–2009, noted horse trainer who was Western Horseman of the Year in 2004, recalled riding for Roland at the TS Ranch in Battle Mountain, and how Roland took the time to mentor him. Roland used only Morgans on this ranch, and insisted on the true vaquero traditions, using only slick fork saddles, and depending on the stage of the horse's training, they were ridden with snaffle bit, hackamore, two-rein, or bridle.

Arnold Rojas, 1896–1988, was another vaquero who rode for the Hills. He went on to become famous for his books and articles on the California vaquero lifestyle and is recognized as one of the most important Latino writers of the last century. Rojas had great admiration for the Morgan breed, and was so impressed by the similarity of the Morgans to the old Andalusian and Lusitano breeds used by the earliest Spanish vaqueros; he was convinced they shared a common ancestry. In fact, these breeds were very closely related to the Barb, Turk, and Arabian horses found in the pedigree of Justin Morgan, so he was not far wrong. Rojas noted he could always spot one of Hill's vaqueros from a far distance, by the singular silhouette of the deep-bodied

muscular Morgan and the characteristic outfit Hill's riders always used.

Roland was also very active in judging horse shows and was widely recognized and respected as one of the most knowledgeable horsemen and cattlemen in the country. He was one of the judges for California's biggest endurance ride at Merced, held May 30–31 1941, 80 miles over rough terrain ranging from a mere 70 feet above sea level to over 2600' elevation. In August 1947, Roland was elected Chairman of the Board of what was then known as the Morgan Horse Club (now AMHA), continuing in this position until 1949. He had led the breed in the largest number of registrations per year for more than two decades.

Over the years, more than 600 registered Morgans were bred by Roland, the Horseshoe Cattle Company, and other family members. It was his wife Edith's job to think up names for all of these horses and fill out the registration paperwork. While coming home from judging the National Morgan Horse Show in 1947, Roland suffered the first of a series of mild strokes. These continued until he had a major stroke in 1950 which completely incapacitated him. On September 6, 1955, he passed away after a long illness and is buried in Roseville, California. Members of the Hill family continued to breed Morgans for a number of years, but on a much smaller scale. One of the greatest eras in Morgan history had drawn to a close.

### STALLIONS USED BY HILL

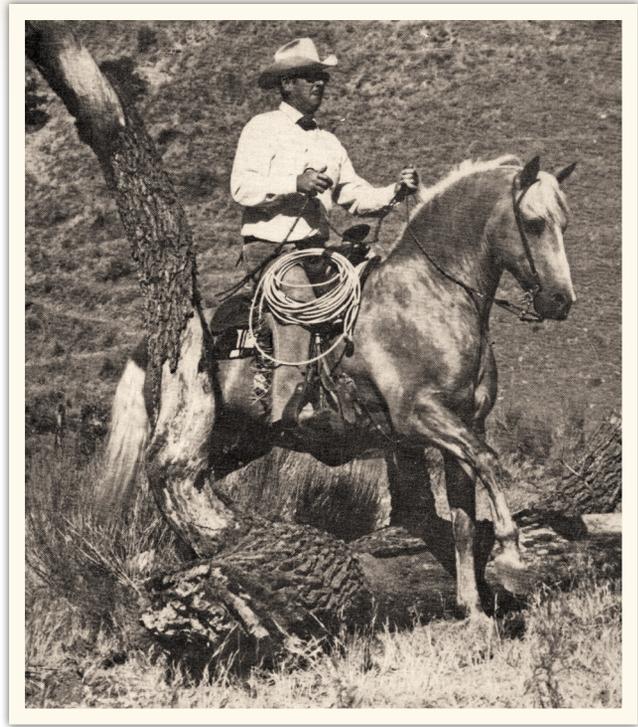
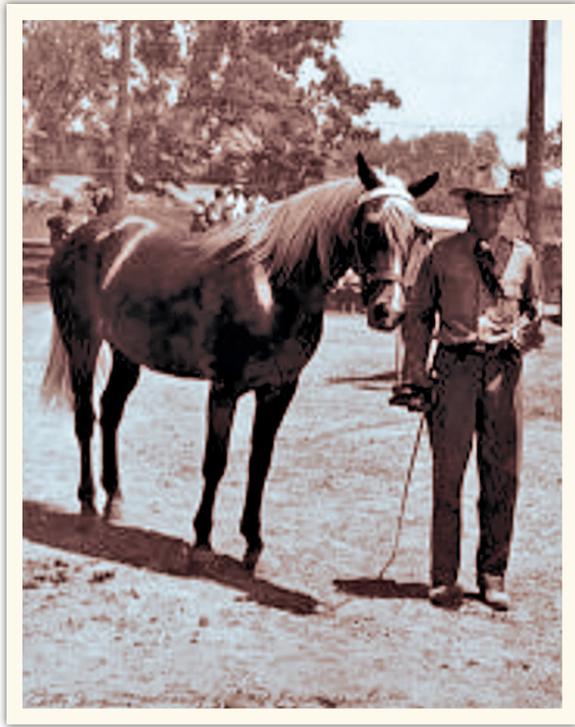
Altogether Roland used about 21 stallions between 1922–1950. A few important ones are briefly covered here. Some others included four stallions bred by Elmer Brown, Joaquin Morgan (Romanesque x Margett L by Linsley), El Cortez (Romanesque x Viola Linsley by Linsley), Sparbeau (Linsley x Sparbelle by Sparhawk), and Brown Knox (Senator Knox x Myrabelle RM by Romanesque).

### PAT ALLEN

(Allen King x Patrona by Senator Reade)

Bred by J. C. Brunk and foaled in 1920, Pat Allen was Roland's next choice for a stallion to replace Redwood Morgan, and he sired three foal crops from 1924–1926 producing a total of 50 foals, all of which were black or brown. His last registered crop was sired when he was just five years old, and there was no record of sale or transfer, so what became of him is unclear. Pat Allen's sire, Allen King, was a full brother of the famous Jubilee King (Penrod x Daisette), as well as the sire of Flyhawk's dam (Go Hawk x Florette) and several others that were an important part of the Brunk breeding program. His dam, Patrona, was a daughter of Senator Reade, he a son of Strawn Reade and Brunk's famous show mare Senata (Senator x Daisy by Billy Bodette). Strawn Reade was by Charles Reade, who was registered in both the Saddlebred and Standardbred, as well as the Morgan horse registers and had a record of 2:24. His sire was Woodward's Ethan Allen, full brother of Daniel Lambert, and out of a daughter of Daniel Lambert, and second dam a daughter of Ethan Allen.

The second dam of Pat Allen was again Black Bess (Jubilee De Jarnette x mare by Tom Corwin), dam of his sire, Allen King. Altogether Pat Allen had four crosses to Daniel Lambert, and one



**LEFT TO RIGHT:** Betty Joaquin (Joaquin Morgan x Dan's Betty), silver mare bred by Roland Hill; Tio Lalo and Dick Nelson. Tio's 3d dam, his sire, and sire's dam were bred by Roland Hill.

to Woodward's Ethan in five generations, and one more cross to Daniel Lambert in six generations. The only surviving remnant of this rare sire line is believed to exist in the "Lost Morgans of the Tehachapi Mountains" herd, the wild horses of Oak Creek Canyon. This herd is unique in that it is a closed herd which has survived in this canyon for nearly a hundred years, and particularly in that it consists entirely of black or brown horses. Russell Hill recalled these horses and believed they were descended from a few strays lost from his brother's original herd. These included several of the original Sellman mares and some of their foals which were unaccounted for, probably including some foals by Redwood Morgan as well.

Pat Allen did produce several daughters which would become important in numerous Western working and sport Morgan pedigrees. These included Hilda (x Jenavive K), Luaia (x Hemala), and Jocho Brownie (x Joeb) to mention just a few. Luaia was 3<sup>rd</sup> dam of noted California sire Kings River Morgan (Gold Dollar x Iva Sonfield); 4<sup>th</sup> dam of Ramul Dvarishkis' great Western stallion Beckridge Como (Montey Vermont x Milholm Coronation); 3<sup>rd</sup> dam of the Hunewell bred stallion Lee Spar (Dude Spar x Iva Lee Field), who sired the great cutting champion Sparfield (x Kitty Sparfield), and 5<sup>th</sup> dam of RDK's Shiloh (Marvelous Ideal x Windswept Carla). Jocho Brownie was dam of Duval Williams's famous Western stallion Cuyamo (x Redwood Morgan), and Hilda was the second dam of Palomesa (Midnite Sun x Baby O by Will Rogers), the dam of famous palomino sire Tio Lalo (x Mahan Field).

#### **PONGEE MORGAN**

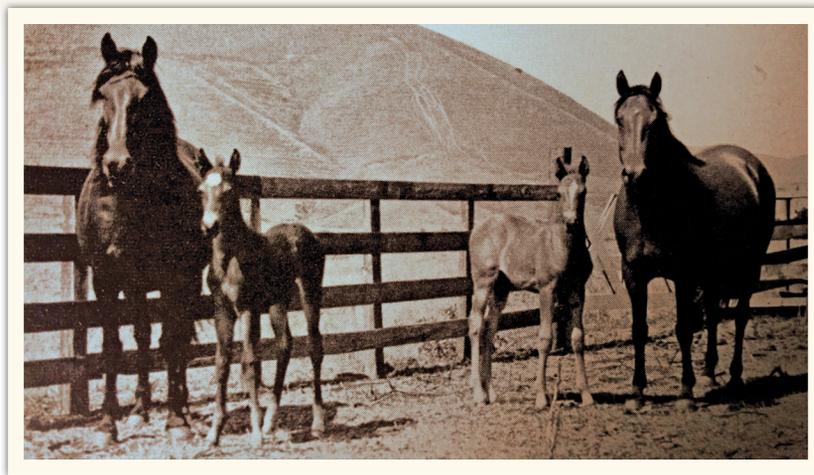
(Allen King x Galva by Billy Herod)

Whatever became of Pat Allen, Roland liked him enough to seek more of the same bloodlines and chose another Brunk bred son of Allen King in Pongee Morgan, foaled in 1922. Pongee Morgan's dam Galva was by Billy Herod, a son of Herod, and second dam by Chetco, a son of Ben Franklin by Daniel Lambert. Pongee Morgan was used by Hill 1926–1929 and sired a total of 36 foals, of which 33 were bred by Roland Hill. Many of his daughters played an important role in the breeding program of William Randolph Hearst, including Red Dot (x Rodota), dam of Redman (x Mountcrest Sellman). An untimely injury brought an abrupt end to Pongee Morgan's career and Roland had to put him down.

#### **QUERIDO**

(Bennington x Artemisia)

Meanwhile, Roland purchased the government bred stallion Querido as a yearling in 1924. Querido was valued especially for his kind and sweet temperament, and perhaps this had something to do with his name, which means "beloved," or "sweetheart" in Spanish. Doubtless Roland's wife Edith named this horse, as Spanish names were chosen for many of the Hill horses. Few photos of this horse were ever taken, and those that were simply reflected a casual snapshot of a hard-working range horse "in the rough," which some have glanced over too quickly, failing to recognize the stallion's real quality. The compact beauty of his more famous brother Mansfield was never captured in these photos, but Querido was by no means coarse. Rather, his more rugged appearance reflected his life on the range. Careful study of Querido's pictures shows a wonderful quality of bone and muscle; a strong short back with powerful shoulder and hindquarters; good length of neck



LEFT TO RIGHT: Querido (Bennington x Artemisia) (Tehachapi Heritage League); Daughters of Querido at Roland Hill's California Ranch (AMHA Registry Vol 6).

with exceptionally clean throatlatch, and a fine straight head with a gentle and wise eye.

Querido's first crop appeared in 1927. Pictures of Querido daughters show a remarkably uniform group of mares of great Morgan type and beauty. After Querido had sired 151 foals, and his daughters made up the bulk of the broodmare band used by the Hill family and the Horseshoe Cattle Company, he was sold at 14 years of age to Andrew Carter of Kamuela, Hawaii in 1938. His new owners did not register any offspring, and further lines to Querido were lost to the breed. However, the impact of the Querido offspring Hill registered was tremendous. Querido was best known for his daughters, of which Roland retained a great many and later found a golden cross in breeding them to Sonfield.

A few Querido sons were an important influence. Silver Ranger (x Angelina by Texas Allen) was a flaxen chestnut foaled at Bakersfield in 1932. He was highly regarded by Quarter Horse breeders and sired at least one registered Quarter Horse foal and is listed in the American Quarter Horse Association Registry as AQHA Silver Ranger 1, U0140196. Among his daughters was the silver mare, Mae Morgan (x Betty Dean) who produced the silver mare, Silver Mae (x Roscoe Sentney). Among Silver Mae's foals were two full sisters, the silver mare, Bonanya, and brown mare, Brown Mae, both by Raymond S. Sentney (Chocolate x Skinner). Bonanya produced ten foals, including the stallion Broadwall Brigadier (x Parade), sire of 110. Brown Mae was the dam of 18 foals including Wawayanda Bay Maebel (x Broadwall Patrician). Maebel was also a prolific mare, producing 15 foals, including the stallion Carlyle Command (x Waseeka's In Command). Bred by Maxine Snow and owned by Katie Black, Carlyle Command held multiple world champion titles and was the sire of 177 foals. His son, Holiday Compadre (x Holiday Temptress) became famous for the new sport of Cowboy Dressage created by his owner Eitan Beth-Halachmy. Compadre also earned multiple world champion titles and performed at Equitana, Equine Affaire, and clinics across the country as well as appearing in numerous instructional videos. "Carlyle" also sired Futurity French Command (x Nobelle) who, many years after his death, remains the number

two stallion on the leading sire list (January/February 2018, *The Morgan Horse*).

Silver Mae's sire, Roscoe Sentney (John Allen x Boney L) was a grandson of Tehachapi Allan (x Tab), who was probably the most influential son of Querido. He was a US Remount stallion at Hillsboro, Kansas and a key sire in Elmer Brown's breeding program, siring a total of 87 registered offspring. Tejon Chief, a full brother of Tehachapi Allan, foaled at Bakersfield in 1932 was owned and used as a sire by the Tejon Ranch, as was Tejon Prince (x Addy), foaled at Chowchilla in 1933.

Master Billie, a chestnut son of Querido foaled at Chowchilla in 1933 was an example of one Roland bred and used occasionally, siring a total of eighteen foals from 1936–46. He was also the sire of the champion stallion Smookey, bred and owned by Jack Leiva.

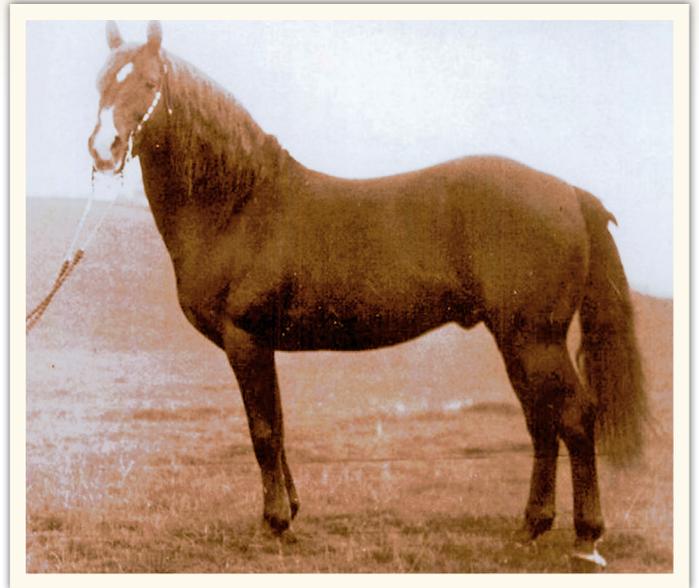
### SONFIELD

(Mansfield x Quietude)

After Roland sold Querido, he purchased Sonfield (Mansfield x Quietude) in New England in 1939. Sonfield was a chestnut marked with a star and distinctive strip that spread over the end of his nose in a triangular fashion. He was a typey, compact, muscular Morgan, whose bright eyes peering out from under his long thick wavy foretop gave him a lively, cheerful countenance, reminding one distinctly of his great ancestor Sherman Morgan, the best-known son of old Justin, from whom Sonfield descended in direct male line.

Sonfield was the kind of horse that filled the eye of the best-known horsemen and cattle ranchers throughout the country and was often featured in the pages of *Western Horseman* and the *Western Livestock Journal*—including being on the cover of the May 1940 *Western Horseman* in full color, just one year after Roland Hill bought him. This was quite an honor for any horse and would never have been accomplished had he not quickly proven his ability as a using cow horse and passed the judgment of knowledgeable horsemen who fully understood and appreciated this horse's quality and conformation.

Sonfield's sire was a full brother to Querido, while his dam,



LEFT TO RIGHT: Tehachapi Allan (Querido x Tab by Texas Allen) (AMHA Archives); Sonfield (courtesy of the National Museum of the Morgan Horse).

Quietude (Troubadour Of Willowmoor x Ruth), was a valuable producing mare with the Lambert through Jubilee De Jarnette sireline, as well as solid high percentage old New England breeding on the side of her dam as well as her sire's dam. The legacy of Sonfield is a remarkable one. Sonfield had New England Morgan type and beauty built into his compact muscular form along with dependable soundness, tough endurance, a pleasant, bright-eyed willingness, and natural "cow savvy," a must for any ranch horse sire. While some historians have questioned the quality of Sonfield's conformation in regard to the slope of his croup, the record is clear. Sonfield proved himself on the range—both through the traits he passed on to his descendants, as well as his own superior ability. He had to pass very tough standards of truly top-notch horsemen such as Roland Hill and others of his day who knew him.

When bred to the daughters of Querido, Sonfield produced ideal using stock horses that were in high demand throughout the country. Sonfield was kept as the primary sire for the Hill family and the Horseshoe Cattle Company for nearly 12 years, producing 210 foals before being sold to Roland's brother Russell, who kept him another four years. He was then owned for a short time by a Dr. Menefee of Los Banos, California, and was finally purchased at the age of 22 by the Leo Beckley family of Mount Vernon, Washington, where he spent the last 10 years of his life. There he continued to serve as a using stock horse on their large Oregon cattle and sheep ranch and sired another 54 foals for the Beckleys.

The late and well-respected breeder Leo Beckley, who had ample opportunity to know Sonfield as well as the Hill family or anyone else, wrote in personal correspondence to the author, "As we owned Sonfield for the last 10 of his 32 years I cringe every time I see that awful picture of him, which was first published in Volume VI of the *American Morgan Registry* in 1946. His croup did drop off more than is typical for Morgans, but not as badly as this pose shows... Shortly after we bought him we also bought a sizable

sheep and cattle ranch. I could drive cattle all day long and never touch a rein. He would see a cow or calf; cut out, head, and turn it in seconds."

The impact of Sonfield's blood on the Morgan breed has been impressive. One of his daughters, for instance, Helen May (x Helen Mala by Querido), which was bred by the Horseshoe Cattle Co., went to Margaret Gardiner in Maine and became the dam of her handsome stallion and sport horse sire, Kennebec Count (x Kennebec King).

Mahan Field, also bred by the Horseshoe Cattle Co., was a full brother of this fine mare, and when bred to the lovely palomino Bulrush line mare, Palomesa, produced the palomino Tio Lalo. Tio Lalo, in turn, sired the flashy Californio, and his full brother Cinnabarr, who were out of Sissey (Ro Mac x Berta Sonfield [Sonfield x Roberta Ro]). The dams of Ro Mac and Berta Sonfield were Hill-bred full sisters, daughters of Querido, and traced their female line all the way back to Sellman's Major Gordon daughter Snip, whose dam was by Octoroon 302.

The Sonfield sireline through Californio was continued by Roy and Patsy Foote of Treasure Morgans, Superior, Montana through their solid Western working stallion, Primavera Regalo (Juan Bravo x Belle Meade); and also by the palomino Californio son, World's Edge Goldhawk out of Funquest Ruby, who was owned by Sharlene Anderson of R-2 Morgan Ranch, Belgrade, Montana.

Another of Roy Foote's athletic stallions, was the bay Primavera Bravado, also out of Sissey. Bravado was sired by Casland Everytime, a grandson of Upwey Ben Don, out of Sonfield's dam, Quietude. In addition, Californio sired the dam of another of Margaret Gardiner's sport horse sires, the regal palomino Kennebec Golden Legacy. This is the sireline of the dam of the highly competitive reining sire, Painters Pine Ridge, who was owned by Travis and Tom Filipek of Westernesse Morgans in Oregon, Wisconsin. Tio Lalo, meanwhile, sired the

prolific little buckskin mare, Tia Margarita, dam of many fine offspring including the excellent buckskin reining champion and sire, Primavera Valdez (x Primavera Vaquero).

The chestnut Rosefield was another outstanding sire by Sonfield. Bred by the Horseshoe Cattle Company, he was out of Rose Mala, and foaled in 1941. Rosefield later went to the Jackson Ranch in Harrison, Montana, spreading the Sonfield blood from there on up into Canada, where these lines are still highly honored. Arana Field, out of Lady Margaret, was one of Sonfield's later sons bred by the Beckley family. Arana Field was owned by the late Phil Morrison and became well known on the West Coast and one of the key lines in the breeding program for Aranaway Morgans.

The Sonfield daughter Heather Angel Field (x Angel A. by Querido), when bred to Red Vermont, produced the sterling mare Bonnie Heather, dam of the late Jubilee Jazz, who was senior sire for Joanne Curtis's La Serena Morgans. From his son, Jubilee Rythm, Mary Jean Vasiloff bred Whippoorwill Maia, dam of Ina Ish's stallion, Green Bay Ragtime. Serena India Belle, a daughter of Jubilee Jazz, in turn, became the dam of Chalk Mt. Citation, sire for Gloria Barnwell's Chalk Mountain Ranch in Bridgeville, California.

In all, Sonfield produced a total of 275 recorded foals, of which 236 were registered—more than any other living Morgan sire at that time. Leo Beckley also pointed out that during his life, Sonfield gained a reputation for being an outstanding stock and reining horse, receiving national publicity, including a color picture of him with his band of broodmares in the background on the cover of *Western Horsemen* May 1940; and a full-page picture as *Western Livestock Journal's* horse of the month in September 1947. Sonfield was also among 15 Morgans listed in George Russell's *Hoofprints in Time*, a book about leading living sires of all breeds.

Also listed in this book was Rockfield, Clarence Shaw's cherished stallion for his Shawalla Morgans in Walla Walla, Washington. Rockfield was by the Lambert stallion Silver Rockwood out of Katrina Field, a Hill bred daughter of Sonfield. Mr. Shaw's beloved show mare, Shawalla Princess 011347 was also by Silver Rockwood out of the Sonfield daughter Helen Field, another full sister of Helen May, the dam of Kennebec Count, and of Mahan Field. Mr. Beckley went on to explain that his daughter Linda, when 13 years old, used to ride this stallion down the road with her friends, who were mounted on mares and geldings. Sonfield was always a perfect gentleman, and also frequently carried young visitors about on his back with the utmost care and kindness. After such enduring testimony, the quality of Sonfield's conformation, soundness and athletic ability, and his kind and gentle disposition can scarcely be questioned.

Remaining bright and active all his life, in 1967 Sonfield finally passed away at the grand old age of 32 years, one month and 15 days old. He passed very quietly, without crumpling the bedding in his stall. Many people loved this beautiful horse with the great but gentle heart, and the blood of Sonfield must certainly be treasured in any Morgan pedigree.

### INFLUENCE OF THE HILL AND SELLMAN BLOODLINES

Much of the background and bloodlines of Sellman's Morgans was

discussed in "Reginald Parsons, The Forgotten Mountcrest Ranch," *The Morgan Horse*, March 2018. In searching out the kind of horses he needed for his Texas ranch, Sellman discovered the small town of Amboy, Illinois, a precious goldmine of rich old Morgan blood, where virtually the entire community was involved in breeding Morgan horses. Among the treasures Sellman found here were the three stallions Major Antoine, Gold Medal, and The Admiral. The Admiral was used most extensively of all the Sellman sires. Then followed the typical pattern of old Sellman breeding—these Major Gordon daughters were bred to either Major Antoine or Gold Medal, a pair of 3/4 brothers tracing back to Black Hawk. The next step was a cross to The Admiral, a son of the great Jubilee de Jarnette, thus bringing in the influence of powerful Lambert blood, and of Lady De Jarnette, widely acclaimed to be the most beautiful show mare in history.

Then Sellman brought in the Woodbury stallion, Headlight Morgan, bred by the Morgan Horse Company of Carpenter, Illinois. Although orphaned as a colt which stunted his growth somewhat, Headlight still attained good size and was the widely respected sire of more than 200 foals. He was chosen by the Morgan Horse Club in 1900 as the best representative of true Morgan type.

Rosie O' Neill, who was for years a breeder of old-time Morgans in Darby, Montana, reported that Headlight Morgan was reputed to have a 22-foot stride from a flat-footed start, while the great racehorse Man O' War's stride was estimated at 25 to 28 feet in full stride. Rosie owned for many years the great stallion El Spartez who was out of the prolific Hill bred broodmare Princess Spar and sired by El Cortez formerly called Hiebert's Challenge, which Roland Hill had purchased from Kansas. Princess Spar was a very pretty dark chestnut mare, about 15 hands, and 1,000 pounds, compactly built with lots of corded muscle and excellent bone. Foaled in 1938, she lived for a remarkable 31 1/2 years, outliving Roland Hill himself by nearly 15 years, and produced 17 foals. These were among the historic Hill bloodlines chosen by Roland Hill's granddaughter Rolie Jean Graye for her breeding program at Graye-Hill Morgans which continued through 1996.

Finally, Sellman used the government stallion, Red Oak by General Gates out of the intensely bred Woodbury line mare, Marguerite (White River Morgan x mare by Crocker Horse). Although owned and by the US Government, and kept at their farm in Weybridge, Vermont, Red Oak was in fact bred by Joseph Battell. As a yearling, he was exhibited at the Middlebury County Fair with 20 other colts of the same age and won the first premium. The US Government purchased and sent him to Weybridge shortly after this, until he was sent as a five-year-old to the State Agricultural College in Amherst, Massachusetts. A good-looking bay of splendid size, Red Oak stood 15 3/4 hands and weighed nearly 1,100 lbs.

Marguerite, the dam of Red Oak, was sired by White River Morgan, a strong Woodbury line, and both she and her sire carried close crosses to Black Hawk through the dam lines. (NOTE: *White River Morgan* 482 registered on page 724 of Volume I of the Register, is the same horse as Ely's *White River Morgan* 5464 on page 394 of Volume III. The exact same information



**LEFT TO RIGHT:** Jean Hill, Roland's daughter, on one of the Hill Morgans, at a Bakersfield parade (courtesy of David Ladd); Jean Hill and Sonfield.

appears in both places, but the horse was registered twice and given two numbers as Battell apparently never caught the discrepancy. *White River Morgan's* picture appears on page 395 of Volume III). This blending of assiduously chosen lines ultimately set the stage for the pattern Roland Hill and the Horseshoe Cattle Company would follow.

Some daughters of Major Gordon out of mares by Octoroon which played an integral role in Hill breeding include Belle Gordon, whose daughter Kitty Antoine produced a whole family of Kitty mares; Black Star Gordon, dam of Pauline A. which produced the Addy mare line; Mollie Gordon who produced the Duchess mares and Puss, dam of Kitty E.; Black Bird, dam of Bonnie A. and Caroline Gordon, dam of Florie A. Among the daughters of Major Gordon x Octoroon mares which became especially significant to the Hill program, as well as later Western bred Morgans were: Snip, which produced at least eight daughters including Bossie A, dam of the good producer Roboss; and Lulu Gordon, dam of at least five foals including Lulu Antoine.

Roboss, a Red Oak daughter, produced the two full sisters Roberta Ro and Bessie Ro by Querido. Bred by Roland Hill, these two brown mares were both owned by the Horseshoe Cattle Company and used extensively for breeding. The pedigree of buckskin champion reining stallion Primavera Valdez (Primavera Vaquero x Tia Margarita), owned by the late Carol Simpson of Prima Kosta Rancho in Yuba City, California shows a most remarkable illustration of the influence of these two Hill bred mares.

Roberta Ro was the third dam of Valdez, thus representing the strength of his tail female line. Roberta Ro was also the third dam of Valdez' sire, Primavera Vaquero, thus representing his tail female line as well. Meanwhile, Bessie Ro also appears twice in this pedigree. She produced Ro Mac by Gay Mac. Primavera Vaquero was a double grandson of Ro Mac. Further Hill breeding was incorporated with Valdez's broodmare sireline going back

through the striking palomino Tio Lalo to Hill's great sire, Sonfield and the beautiful mare Helen Mala (Querido x Hemala by Headlight Morgan).

The breeding of Primavera Valdez, masterminded by Dick Nelson is an excellent example of the strength of Hill foundation breeding, which continues through his many descendants. Bessie Ro also produced two full sisters to Ro Mac: Flika, the dam of Muscle Man, and Bess Gates, the dam of Dapper Dan. These two great Western working sires were both bred by J. Clark Bromiley, and sired by Trilson, who was out of the lovely Sonfield daughter Roseta May (x Roseta Mala by Joaquin Morgan), bred by the Horseshoe Cattle Company. Muscle Man was retained as a sire by Bromiley, while Dapper Dan became the foundation sire for Fran Kellstrom's Kellfleet Morgans.

Lulu Antoine was the dam of Baby Girl, who produced Raven Chief who carried the last thread of the Bulrush sireline of Morgans which became extinct in the 1990s. She also produced the Headlight Morgan son Alkadaza, the sire of two important Hill foundation mares, Camille (x Nannie L by The Admiral), and Alkali (x Red Mollie by The Admiral. Camille produced the family of lovely Blossom mares prized by Western breeders. Alkali became the dam of the Hill bred mare Leora (x Querido). Leora produced Gold Dollar (x Blackhau by Redwood Morgan), and he, in turn, sired the noted King's River Morgan (x Iva Sonfield by Sonfield), a productive California sire.

Following Roland's death, the Hill family continued breeding a small number of Morgans under the Horseshoe Cattle Company until 1973. Easter Vermont (Red Vermont x Nona by Chestnut Chief) and his son Stormy E. (x Nancy's Charm by Sonfield) were the last sires used. Easter Vermont was an attractive chestnut with a large star, bred by Jack Davis of Arcadia, California. He was sired by the showy Jubilee King son, Red Vermont (x Daisy Knox by Knox Morgan), and out of Nona (Chestnut Chief x Mixer by Raven Chief) who traced straight to old Bulrush on both the top

and bottom of her pedigree. Easter Vermont was sold to Allan T. Olson of Perkins, California in 1955, and then was purchased by Roland Hill's son, Elmor, in 1957 as the breeding sire for the much smaller continuing operation of the Horseshoe Cattle Company. According to research by the late Leo Beckley, the bulk of the Horseshoe Cattle Company operation, including about 4,000 cattle, was sold for over \$1 million shortly after Roland Hill's death. So great was the reputation of the Hill family operation that it was resold six years later, without mention of cattle included, for more than \$2.5 million.

The nucleus of the Horseshoe Cattle Company itself, however, was retained by the Hill family, most particularly the carefully developed bloodlines of the using Morgan ranch horses. Elmor, having been placed as superintendent of the company by his father some years before, chose the stallion Easter Vermont because he embodied both in his own physical quality as well as his bloodlines, all the elements that had proven successful in the Hill operation for years. Although he had been used as a ranch sire, prior to his purchase by Elmor Hill, Easter Vermont had only produced one registered offspring, and according to AMHA records, sired 37 more for the Horseshoe Cattle Company, his last being Patchett Hill (x Starlette B by Easter Vermont), foaled in 1973. Patchett Hill went on to become sire for Lowell Hughes's Caduceus Morgans in Iowa. Stormy E. (x Easter Vermont) foaled in 1960 out of the Sonfield daughter Nancy's Charm (x Nancy Jane by Querido) was the final breeding sire used by the Horseshoe Cattle Company after Roland's daughter Jean and her husband Dick Dickinson had taken over the operation. Stormy E. produced 11 more offspring, several of which were used by Jean's daughter Rolie Jean Graye, as foundation stock for her Graye-Hill Morgans, including her senior sire, Trix Hill (x Trixie Trix by Easter Vermont). He also sired the brown stallion Roland G Hill (x Justin's Bright Star by Justin's High Honor), who was an active using stock horse and foundation sire for the late stockman Laurence Personeni of Nevada City, California, who passed away in 2015.

The Hill Morgans were in high demand because they were proven. Roland understood what is still true today, but so easily lost sight of; to be successful in promoting a breed of horse, or even for the breed to survive, they must appeal to the widest possible market, must have the temperament, willingness, and the athletic ability to perform. The versatile Morgan, easily adaptable to excel in many disciplines was the ideal horse.

Hill Morgans were also very successful in competition because they were bred to perform, and their natural ability combined with their steady work schedule made these horses easily able to compete in cutting, reining, and other competitions when they were asked. The true old Western-bred Morgan had to have a lot of fire and mettle to be able to get their work done, and the Hill Morgans were no exception. Roland Hill chose the Morgan breed because they had the strength and endurance, the speed and agility, the soundness, and the fire and mettle that was yet contained and biddable to be able to do the job at hand. This was the true heritage of the old type Morgan and the reason that the diligently selected Hill bloodlines have endured and are still honored by Morgan

breeders throughout the country today. ■

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