

Galloping into the Future

By
Garrett Nicholas Cole

// In ancient Hawai'i, the islands were vast landscapes where one traveled by foot across the expansive terrain and paddled or sailed in the majestic ocean. Unlike today, when synthetic connections are made in the blink of a button, personal interactions and trade were conducted face to face. Because many communities occupied the shoreline, canoes were the go-to vehicles, but networks of intra-island trails also saw plenty of foot traffic.



» Making a pit stop on an island tour

In 1793, cattle were introduced to Hawai'i. John Morgan, sixth-generation owner of Kualoa Ranch, observes that with them came innovation and technological advances for Hawai'i.

"When cattle were first brought here, the king was intrigued, and he allowed them to flourish on the Big Island," Morgan



» Paniolos on the Kuka'ia Ranch in the 1940s



» *Hawaii's world-famous paniolos on the range*

begins. "When the population grew, they had to figure out how to manage them. So they brought in Mexican vaqueros, who spoke espanol, which translated to the word paniolo. The paniolos basically enabled the livestock industry as we know it, and their tradition also evolved ranching cattle."

The problem they faced was the difficulty of herding cattle on foot. The solution sailed into port on June 21, 1803, aboard the *Lelia Bird*, a ship from California. Captain William Shaler and Richard Cleveland arrived bearing gifts for the monarchy. Among them were three horses — two mares and a stallion — which had never been seen in the kingdom. Two were presented to King Kamehameha, and one was left to his advisor John Young.

As time passed, the horse population, too, grew. They became an integral part of the culture and economics in Hawai'i, especially when it came to the cattle industry.

"Moving cattle has always been something done on horseback, and Hawaiians took to horses very quickly and readily," Morgan continues. "They had an affinity for it, and ever since then, the paniolo tradition has been a huge part of Hawaiian history and culture."

With horses increasing in number, what started as a luxury eventually became a staple. Horses became a valuable and more common mode of transportation, which added to the advancement of Hawai'i as a whole.

"The introduction of horses made their lives so much better," notes Morgan. "Now people could go from one side of the island to the other easier and faster, as opposed to when they went by foot."

Horses also played a key role in a variety of recreational activities, eventually leading to new forms of entertainment.

"Horseback riding became very popular with the Hawaiians, and they were good at it," Morgan says. "Races were held regularly until the mid-1900s. We even had a racetrack in Kapi'olani Park. Then there was polo, which was always seen as the sport of royalty. People still play polo on O'ahu today."

Horseback riding is now used primarily for enjoyment and as an art form. According to Judy Cook, a trainer at Malu'olu Ranch in Waimānalo, people come from here and abroad for the local experience. Cook has been a horseback rider and trainer for the past 30 years.

"We get calls from all over to come here and ride horses," she says. "We have tremendous interest from places like Europe, Japan and the mainland. We're open seven days a week, and we stay very busy." The ranch offers lessons in various horseback riding styles including English pleasure, dressage, hunter/jumper, western, trail and reining.

Some people take up horseback riding as a form of therapy. "A lot of people prefer to be in the company of horses," claims Cook. "They tell me that it's a whole lot cheaper to come out here and ride than it is to sit in someone's office and tell them their problems."



» In the late 1800s, the Hawaiian Tramway Company ran shuttles between downtown Honolulu and Waikiki.

Therapeutic Horsemanship of Hawaii uses horses as a way to help riders with physical disabilities build strength and confidence. According to THH Executive Director Dana Vennen, the bond between her riders and horses provides support in both physical and cognitive ways.

“The connection between humans and horses goes back a long way,” states Vennen. “We try to build a positive place for those who feel ‘outside the norm.’ Here, they build strength physically and mentally. It’s amazing to see what happens to a child when he begins to bond with a 1,000 lb animal.”

The continuing interest in horses is creating challenges. “The problem isn’t that people don’t want to do this — it’s that we are running out of places to do it,” muses Cook. “As people

move here, these large plots of land start to diminish. But we’re going to keep riding as long as there’s land to ride on.”

With technological gains as they are, the need for horses as transportation has all but disappeared. There are still equestrian societies, polo, rodeos and breeding in Hawai‘i, however, to remind us of a way of life that used to be prominent. Driving around the island in our cars and trucks today, we can imagine how Hawai‘i looked in the heyday of ranching and the paniolo. //



» Horses were valuable transport for Father Damien and Kalaupapa residents.



» The royalty were avid riders. Engraving by Thomas Armstrong, late 1850s.

QUEEN EMMA. PRINCESS VICTORIA. MAID OF HONOR. PRINCE LOT KAMEHA
 KING KAMEHAMEHA IV. QUEEN DOWAGER.

THE ROYAL FAMILY OF HAWAII.

Off to the races ▶
 at Kapi‘olani Park!

RACES! RACES! RACES!

Grand trotting stake Race
 TO TAKE PLACE
 AT
KAPIOLANI PARK!

Stakes
 Enters
 Enters
 Enters
 Enters

James Dood
 C. S. King William
 C. G. Butcher Boy
 B. S. Little Giant
 B. M. Dollie Varden

Mile heats best three in 6

Races to commence
 2:00 - Noon