



DISCOVER HOW THESE IOWANS IMPACTED
THE 1920s AND 1930s EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF THE AMERICAN CREAM

Saturday, June 10

JEWELL MUSEUM, 2 PM

Jewell Veterinarian Dr. Erick Christian

by Barbara Knox Homrighaus and Nancy Eich Kayser

Saturday, July 8

ELLSWORTH LIBRARY & MUSEUM, 2 PM

Ellsworth Farmers John and Jessie Lakin Yancy

by Barbara Knox Homrighaus

Saturday, July 15

RADCLIFFE DAYS, in the Park, 2 PM

Lyon Township Farmers Charlie and Hattie Hildal Knox

by Barbara Knox Homrighaus

*Developed in Iowa, the American Cream is
the only draft horse breed native to the United States*

National American Cream Draft Horse Day is declared July 11

American Cream Draft Horse Association

Saturday, July 15
RADCLIFFE DAYS, in the Park, 2 PM
Lyon Township Farmers Charlie and Hattie Hildal Knox
by Barbara Knox Homrighaus

Charles Knox 1891-1979

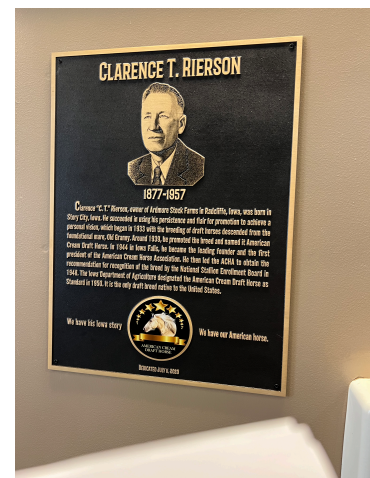
Pioneer Breeder

by Barbara Knox Homrighaus

Thank you for inviting me to 2023 Radcliffe Summerfest. My name is Barbara Knox Homrighaus and I was invited here today because I researched and self-published a book called Silver King that is all about how my grandfather Charles Knox was what CT Rierson from Radcliffe called a Pioneer Breeder of American Cream draft horses between 1911-1933 in the early days of the development of the breed. CT referred to Charles Knox and four other men as Pioneer Breeders back in 1944, when he himself was being very successful breeding and promoting American Creams and leading the newly chartered American Cream Horse Association — the ACDHA.

Because of CT Rierson's success 79 years ago with chartering the ACDHA — we're celebrating National American Cream Draft Horse Day July 11th and during this weekend here in Radcliffe.

- Back in 1944, July 11th was when the State of Iowa granted a charter to the ACDH in Iowa Falls.
- Earlier this week, on Tuesday, the 11th of July, the CT Rierson Arena was dedicated at Ellsworth College in Iowa Falls thanks to CT's grandson, Clair Rierson and family. The ceremony included this plaque which read:

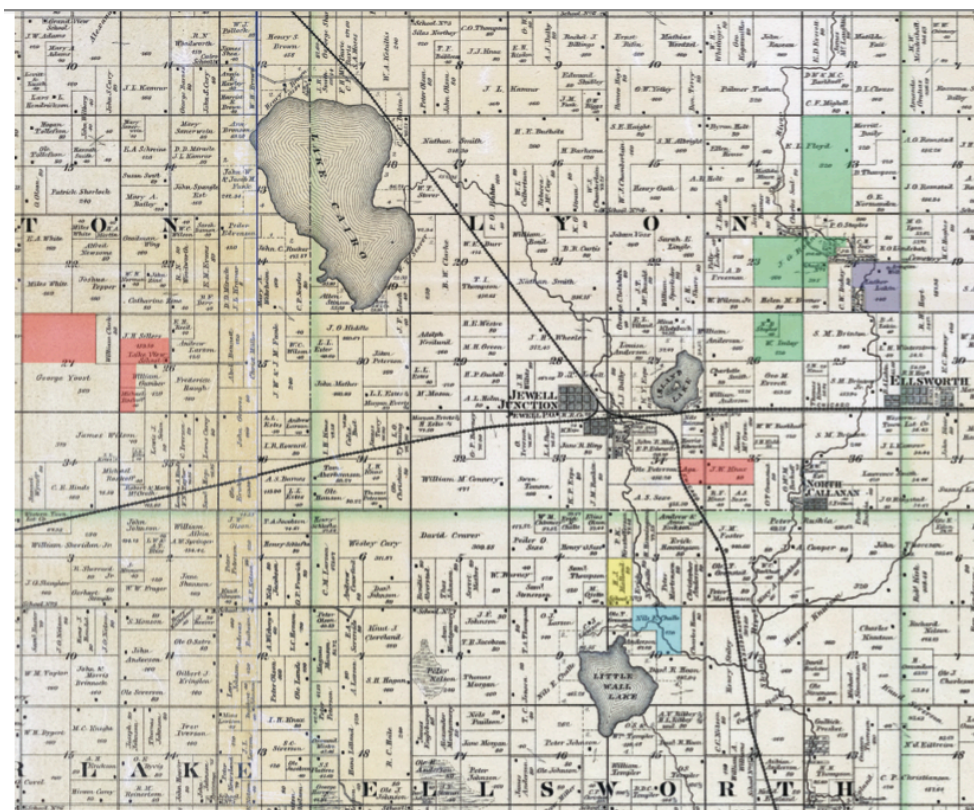


“Clarence T Rierson 1877-1957

Clarence CT Rierson, owner of Ardmore Stock Farms in Radcliffe, Iowa was born in Story City, IA. He succeeded in using his persistence and flair for promotion to achieve a personal vision, which began in 1933 with the breeding of draft horses descended from the foundational mare, Old Granny. Around 1939 he promoted the breed and named it American Cream Draft Horse. In 1944 in Iowa Falls, he became the leading founder and the first president of the American Cream Horse Association. He then led the ACHA to obtain the recommendation for recognition of the breed by the National Stallion Enrollment Board in 1948. The Iowa Department of Agriculture designated the American Cream Draft Horse as Standard in 1950. It is the only draft breed native to the United States. We have his Iowa story; we have an American horse.”

The Pioneer Breeders, according to CT, included 5 people: Hat Lakin, Hans Nelson, John Yancy, Jewell veterinarian Dr. Erick Christian, and Charles Knox, my grandfather. They all have important stories about their work with American Creams.

This is where they lived in Lyon Township, Hamilton County: Hat Lakin (purple farm); Hans Nelson and the Nelson Bros (green farms); John and Jesse Lakin Yancy (purple farm); Dr Erick Christian (town of Jewell); and Charles Knox (red farm East of Jewell).



Their names, their horse's names, and the dates those Cream horses foaled were gathered in 1935 by CT and Karene Topp. That information became the basis of the ACDHA Registry when the organization was chartered in 1944. This is the order the 5 Pioneer Breeder names and horses appeared on the ACDHA Registry: In position Number 1, Old Granny...

ACDHA Registry Numbers 1-5

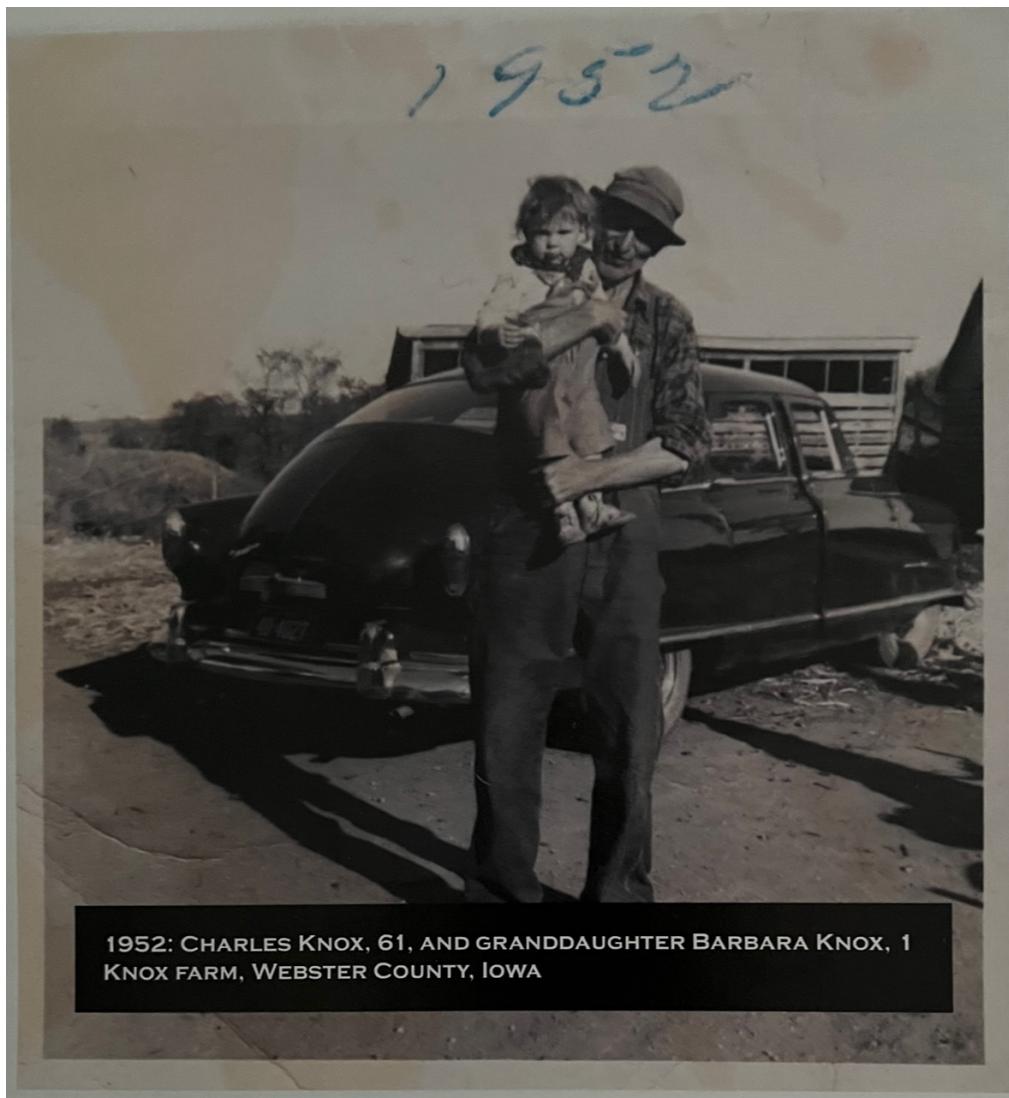
	<u>Horse</u>	<u>Breeder/Owner</u>	<u>Year born</u>
1	Old Granny	Hat Lakin	1911 purchased
2	Nelsons Buck	Hans Nelson	1920
3	Yancy	Hans Nelson Owner: John Yancy	1923
4	Eureka	Hans Bergeson Owner: Dr Erick Christian	1926
5	Knox 1st aka Big Buck	Charles Knox	1926

I knew my grandparents. We visited my grandparents Charlie and Hattie Hildal Knox many many weekends while I was growing up. My grandfather liked to play the fiddle, roll his own cigarettes, drink beer, and play cards; my grandmother liked to raise gladiolas, play the piano, go to church, and write poems. This is a photo of Charlie and Hattie and their 11 children in 1950; I didn't realize my grandfather raised Creams for twenty years 1925-1945 during the Farm Depression.



Front row: Donald, Charles and Hattie Knox, Audrey
Middle row: June, Sarah, Gladys, Lela, Esther, Ruth
Back row: Charles Kenneth, Harry, and Jack

By 1950 there were no longer any horses on the farm. I was born in 1951.

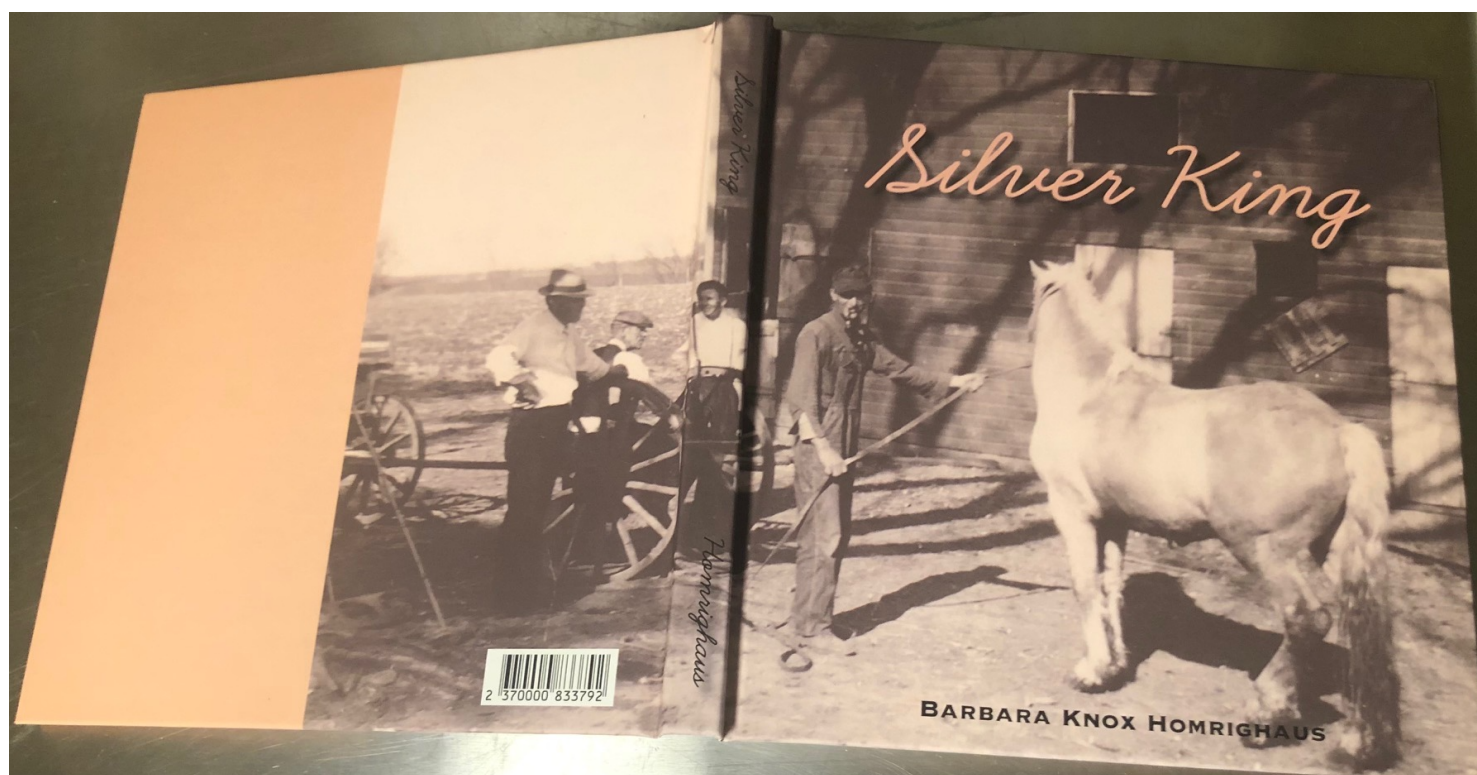


1952: CHARLES KNOX, 61, AND GRANDDAUGHTER BARBARA KNOX, 1
KNOX FARM, WEBSTER COUNTY, IOWA

As I grew up my Dad, Charles Kenneth Knox, was a welder who worked for John Deere, and was into motorcycles. I was a horse-crazy kid, and Dad made sure there were ponies around. But Dad had never talked about Cream Draft Horses or what it was like growing up with them during the Depression.

It was a 2019 newspaper article about the Radcliffe American Cream Draft Horse billboard that my cousin Marlin Smith mailed me, and his written note “Grandpa did a lot with these horses; never got much credit for it though.” that piqued my curiosity. I said “I could look into that.” What horses? what was Marlin’s note about? With questions to Aunt Gladys and Aunt Audrey, as well as to Marlin, all of 2019 was more or less dedicated to finding out. And 2020. And I found clues I’d been oblivious to in the past, and much more. With

the help of family interviews and librarians and family letters/family photos/genealogy/and memorabilia that Dad's sisters, June and Esther, had saved from their mother Hattie and her mother Lena, I wrote up all I'd learned about Charles and Hattie Knox and their Cream draft horses. The first 200 copies of Silver King were gifted to family.



What did it mean that CT referred to these 5 people, including my grandfather, as Pioneer Breeders? In 2019 I started to try to understand that by researching what my grandfather did as a Cream Horse breeder. This year I've been learning more about the other 4 Pioneer Breeders as well.

First, Charles Knox was not a pioneer in the land owning sense. None of the five were. Charlie was born on the Knox farm east of Jewell in 1891 — a farm his father first bought in 1877. He eloped with Hattie Hildal in 1915 (she was 17), whose father was a Norwegian immigrant and a tiler running crews draining farmland, and a winter fur trapper. They farmed for Charles' mother, Mary Ellen

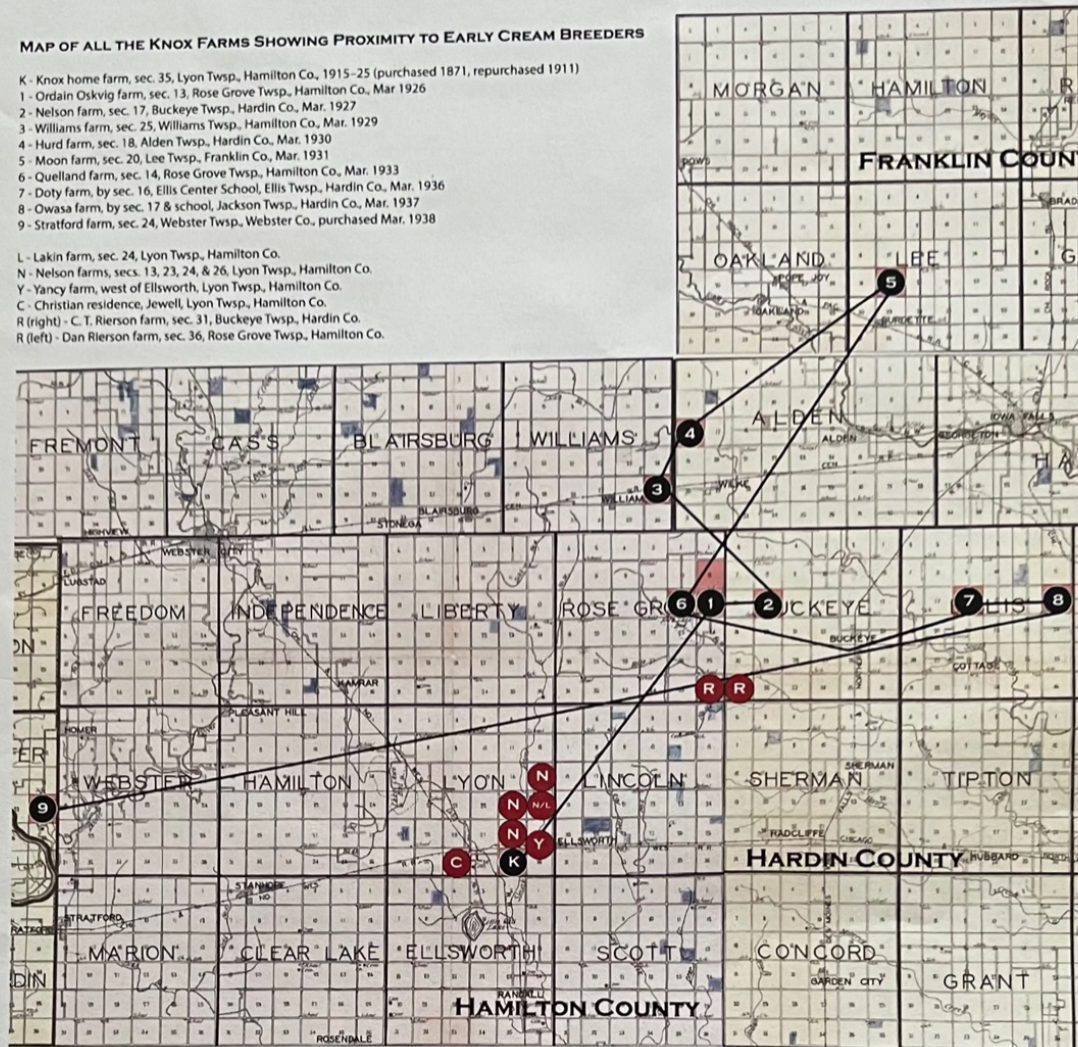
Merritt Knox. After 10 years they decided to farm for someone else. It was 1925 — there were economic and family reasons for their decision. The economic reasons were

- the times were bad; by 1925 the Iowa Farm Depression had been rolling on for 5 years
- 1925 was the first year there were more farm renters than farm owners in Hamilton County; many of those renters were negotiating contracts with farm owners who had more than one farm; to try to get ahead.
- Charlie and Hattie took a year-long contract on one of Ordain Oskvig's farms in Rose Grove Township, believing they could negotiate terms and eventually, contract by contract, build up enough while farming, for a downpayment to own a farm of their own.
- No one knew however, that the Iowa Farm Depression, which began at least 9 years before Wall Street crashed in 1929, was going to deepen and, from some historians' viewpoint today, last another 15 years after 1929, until 1944.

The family reasons for deciding to get a contract and farm for someone else were

- Charles was not going to inherit the Knox farm. His father's Will had given his mother Mary Ellen life-estate in 1909. Which meant that when she passed away, one of her five children would have to buy out the others in order to own the home farm. Otherwise, it was to be sold at public auction and the proceeds divided evenly among the children.
- 1915-1925 Charles and Hattie had been unable to get ahead renting from Mary Ellen. Believing that negotiating contracts with farm owners might result in gains, it nevertheless took 12 years of farming on rent contract before they had a down payment and purchased a farm in 1938.

These are the contract farming moves they made in Hamilton, Franklin, and Hardin counties while farming with and raising Creams:



Did you know that when draft horses began to be imported from Europe to American farms in large numbers in the last quarter of the 19th century, Iowa led the way breeding, raising, and selling them, becoming the top state for draft horse production by 1900? Or that in the peak years of 1910-1915, there were at least 1.5 million draft horses on Iowa's farms, worth an average of \$120 a head? Or that

the all time peak on American farms was 25 million draft horses in 1920?

After these positive economic conditions with draft breeds in Iowa, it was not at all clear in 1925 that the tractor was going to completely replace draft horses on farms. Cars had won; Ford produced 23 million automobiles a year in 1923 and cars had already clearly won out over horse drawn road transport. And yes, the farm economy was down in 1925, and all during the Depression, for any kind of extravagance with breeding draft horses. But when a Ford car might cost \$440 new, a tractor cost more than twice that. And the five men in CT Rierson's Pioneer Breeder category were like him in that they wanted to know whether or not there was a new draft horse, native to the United States, that would be integral to some parts of farm work. Each of them wanted Cream Draft Horses to exist, if such a new draft horse was possible.

So as I said, first, being a Pioneer Breeder did not mean being a pioneer in the landowning sense. Second, my grandfather was a Pioneer Breeder because he gambled — he took a chance that resulted in a Cream. It turns out all of the five Pioneer Breeders did. Each took that chance when they tried for a foal out of Old Granny's line — a 50/50 chance. 1925 was an important turning point for Charlie in another way. The same year Charlie and Hattie decided to take on a farm rent contract that meant a move to Ordain Oskvig's farm by March 1926, Grandpa made a deal: he also took Flody, his grade bay mixed Shire mare over to the Lakin farm in 1925, to try for a Cream foal. He knew Dr Erick Christian believed Old Granny's line might be a new draft horse breed when he made this deal with John Yancy to cross John's Cream stallion "Yancy" with his mare Flody. That foal arrived in 1926 on the Oskvig farm in May and Grandpa was lucky — the foal was a stellar Cream. In fact, the ACDHA said twenty years later:

" (Big Buck) attained the weight of around 1800 pounds, was perfect in both color and type and was the sire of several registered American Creams before his death at about six or seven years of age. This untimely incident was no doubt a great hindrance to the early development of the breed."

Grandpa's foal was place-named Knox 1st on the Registry, but Grandpa called his foal Big Buck when it was born in 1926. Daughter Esther Knox Murray's family has one of the rare photos of an earliest Cream, taken of Charlie with Big Buck in about 1930:



Charles Knox and Big Buck. Courtesy of the Esther Knox Murray family.

Dr Erick Christian from Jewell did the same thing as Charlie in 1925 even before Charlie took Flody to Yancys. He had been talking for years about the anomaly of how Hat Lakin's mare Old Granny continued to have foals with her same coloring, amber eyes, and disposition, no matter what stallion sired those foals, as being so

unusual that it might indicate a new draft horse breed. Erick made his arrangements in 1925, for ownership of Hans Bergerson's mare's 1926 foal if that mare were successfully crossed with the Cream stallion Yancy in Lakins Grove. Erick was also lucky when the Cream filly Eureka arrived in 1926. His chance — 50/50.

Both Erick and my grandfather seem to have jumped at the opportunity to be John and Jessie Lakin Yancy's clients and for good reason. Yancy was just turning two. Everyone involved knew that Yancy's sire — the Cream called Nelson's Buck, owned by Hans Nelson and his sons The Nelson Bros. was gelded, having only been kept as a stallion for about a year because Dr Christian begged them to. Knowing that Yancy's sire, Nelson's Buck had not been kept as a stallion for long, Erick and Charlie didn't know how long Yancy — the only Cream stallion available for breeding — would remain un-gelded after turning two.

All of the 5 Pioneer Breeders, Hat Lakin with the foundational mare Old Granny purchased in 1911; Hans Nelson crossing Old Granny with his black Percheron in 1919 for Nelson's Buck in 1920; Hans Nelson crossing Nelson's Buck with his black Percheron Queene in 1922 for Yancy in 1923; John and Jessie Lakin Yancy purchasing that Cream and making deals in 1925 with Erick Christian and Charlie Knox — all of them were taking a 50/50 chance that each result would be a Cream, and all of them succeeded. They were Pioneer Breeders for being among the first taking these chances, and having these Cream foal outcomes in common.

Grandpa's Cream stallion turned two in 1928, and he decided to "prove" Big Buck — he crossed him with his two draft mares, Flody, and Bonnie. When the result in 1929 was the Cream colt Silver King, he saw that he had line-bred Flody and Big Buck for every true characteristic; however the Cream colt Billy Boy, (Bonnie's foal) had a black mane and tail, which meant he was kept for farm work, but as a gelding.

In 1929, the same year Charlie's two Cream foals arrived, the Yancys, who had left Hamilton County and moved to Dows, Iowa with their Cream stallion Yancy in 1926, beginning their contract farming in Dows at exactly the same time Charlie and Hattie first moved in 1926, moved to contract farm in Martin Co, MN in 1929, where they were warmly welcomed as family because Jessie's maternal grandparents

had been early county settlers there. Their stallion Yancy remained with John and Jessie until about 1938 when it passed away. There's evidence from 1935 when CT and Karene Topp interviewed people about Cream horse genealogy of the recent past, that it was known that Yancy sired foals in Dows, IA and in Martin County, MN but no specific information was available 1935 or from then until the Charter and the Registry in 1944, and therefore is yet unknown. But after 1935, someone must have added to ACDHA knowledge about Yancy No3, because in 1946 The History and Development of the American Cream Draft Horse said the Yancy family had their Cream stallion until it died at about 15 years of age, which would have been 1938.

Charles Knox's "proof" — the two Cream foals in 1929 — had more results than how Charles decided to breed Big Buck, Silver King, Flody and Bonnie, and not breed Billy Boy in the future: once those foals were seen with their non-Cream mothers, Dr. Erick Christian immediately made arrangements for Eureka to be crossed with Big Buck. Both had been sired by Yancy No 3, and were three year olds.

From this collaboration the Cream foal Dude #7, 1930, was the result. This was the first "fixing the genes" inbreeding as a Cream on Cream cross. For the first time, a better than 50/50 chance to end up with a Cream foal. By now having the mare Eureka and the stallion Dude to go forward with, it also meant Erick Christian had achieved all he needed to further develop the new breed.

Charles Knox now had a proven Cream stallion, Big Buck, because of these three Cream foals. The next exciting development was that Henry Johnson, Fred Johnson, and GA Lenning wanted to try for Cream foals sired by Big Buck. Henry and Fred had one each in 1931 — Pet #8 and Tarzan #11 on the Registry respectively; GA Lenning had two in 1931 — Silver Lace #9 and Silver King #10. (Silver King being a movie horse name, and the "Trigger" of that day.)

Where Charles Knox went from his first Cream in 1926, to breeding 7 by 1931, Erick Christian unfortunately found his health declining to the point of being unable to care for his horses; he sold Eureka and Dude to Sam Twedt of McCallsburg sometime after Dude foaled in 1930 and yet just before his death in 1932. This was how, starting with Flody, and having no extra money to spare during the Depression years, Charles Knox was the only Cream breeder, with the

only viable Cream stallion for a short time, between 1929 and 1931. In 1931 his stallion Big Buck was only 5; the Cream colt Silver King from 1929 was turning 2. And altogether his stallion Big Buck had sired these 7 Cream foals:

1929 Silver King and Billy Boy

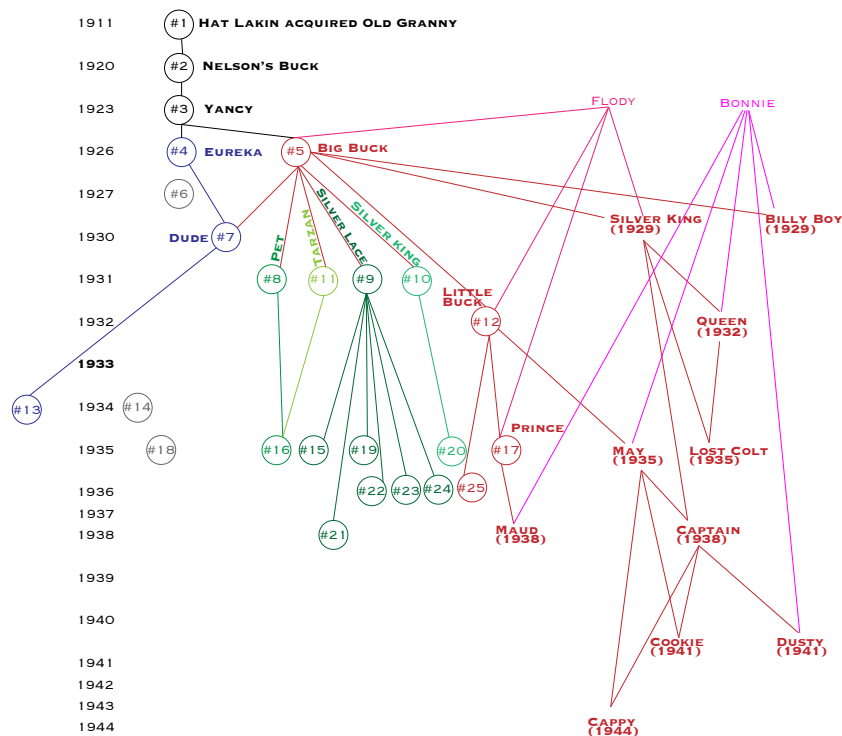
1930 Dude #7

1931 Pet #8, Tarzan #11, Silver Lace #9, and Silver King #10

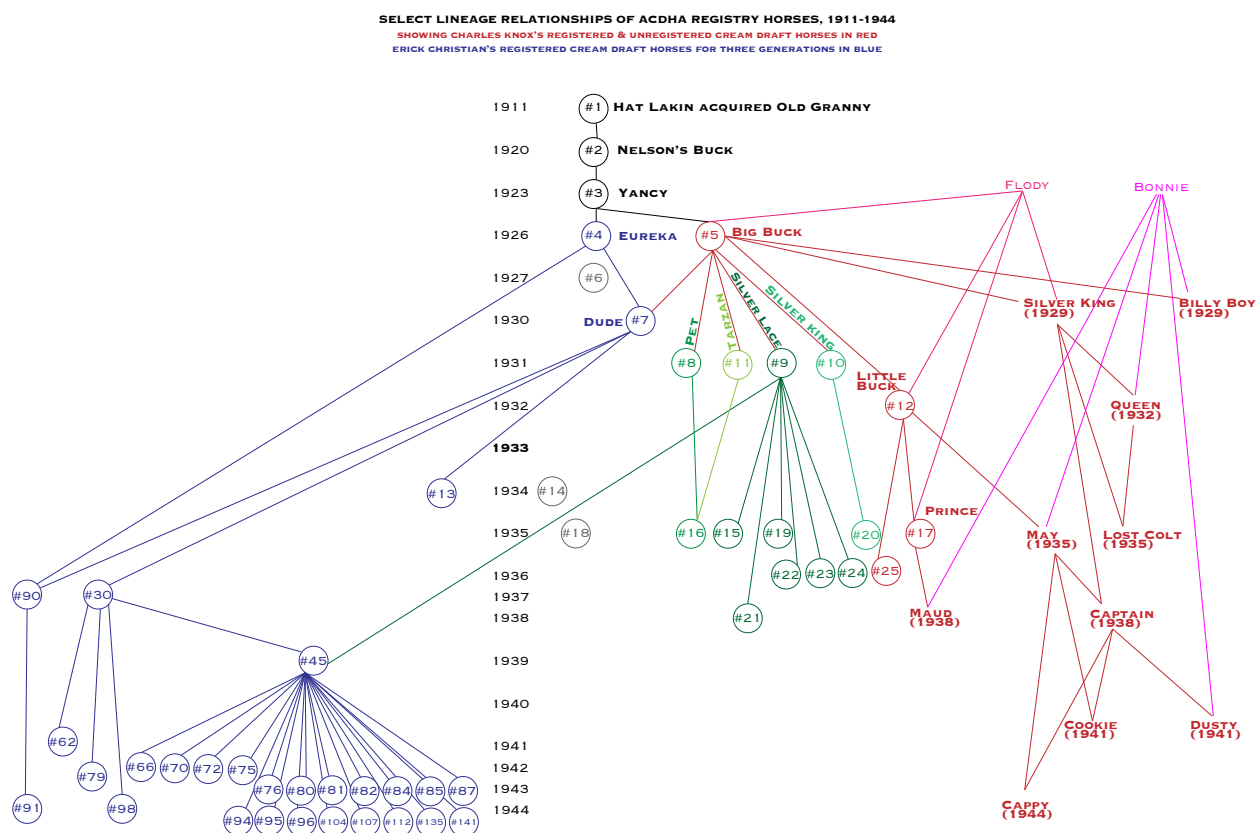
For all of this Charles Knox was honored as an American Cream Draft Horse breeder by the ACDHA in 2022 at their annual meeting in VA, and inducted into their Hall of Fame.

This is the impact of Big Buck for my grandfather Charles Knox as he continued to farm with and breed American Cream Draft Horses 1925-1945. He added stallions Knox 2nd # 12 1932, and Prince #17 1935, and eight other unregistered Creams altogether.

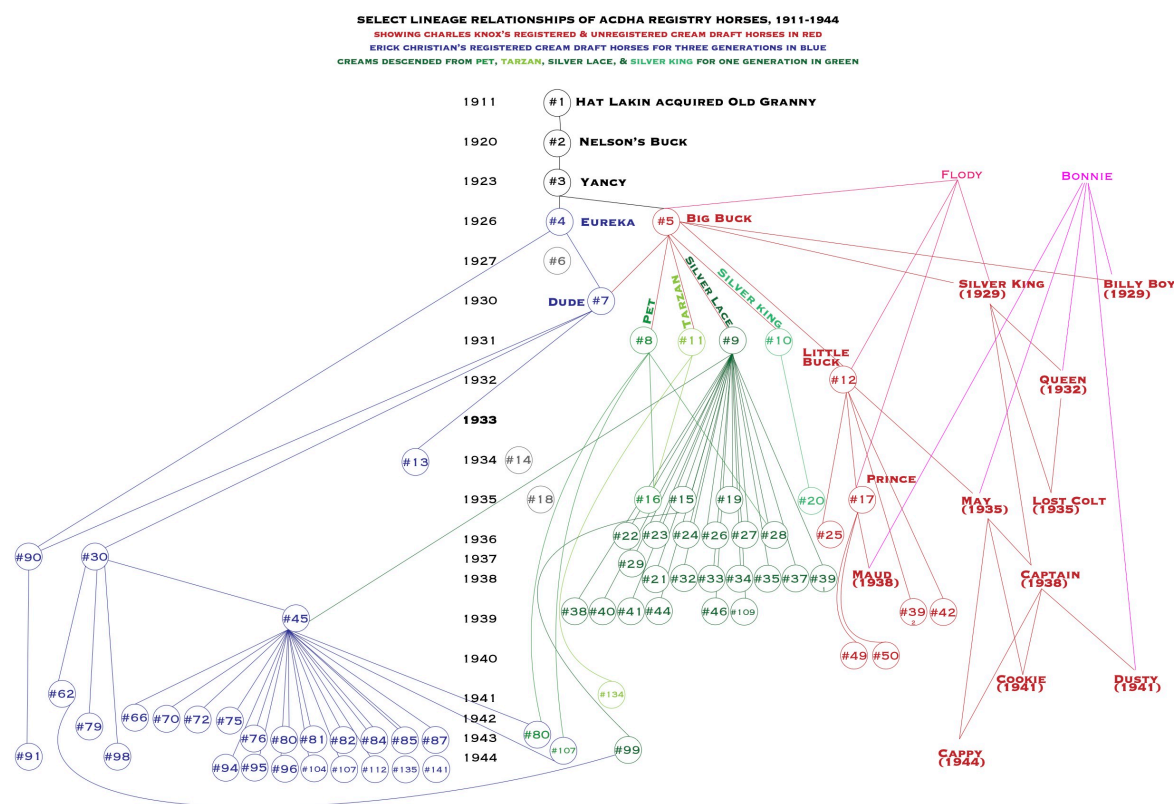
LINEAGE RELATIONSHIPS OF ACDHA REGISTRY HORSES NOS. 1-25
SHOWING CHARLES KNOX'S REGISTERED & UNREGISTERED CREAM DRAFT HORSES IN RED



This is the impact of Dr. Erick Christian's horses, Eureka and Dude:



And this is the impact of the pioneer breeders, from Old Granny, to Nelson's Buck, to Yancy. Cover everything below Yancy's name, and you'll see the impact that Cream stallion had on the development of the breed:



To complete the green central section up to 1944, I will be adding more than 60 more green circles to this diagram. CT Rierson was very successful in promoting the new Breed. In a 1939 interview he said he purchased Pet and Tarzan in 1933; in 1935 he purchased all of the fillies sired by Silver Lace he said he could find. And he spent six painstaking years line breeding and inbreeding Creams from 1933 on to succeed in further developing the only draft horse breed native to the United States, just as his plaque describes today.

In closing, I want to cover 5 points:

One: when CT Rierson referred to 5 people, including my Grandfather, as Pioneer Breeders, he was referring to the odds, to the 50/50 chance each took when they identified a possible new draft horse breed was identified and interested farmers tried for a Cream foal, as well as to the meaning of Pioneer, in the sense of someone taking actions — sometimes independent-minded and original actions — that opened the way forward in the development of something new. They came before him, they made the way. And among them I learned that my grandfather had a crucial, successful, role.

Two: I decided to be more active as an Associate Member of the ACDHA in my grandparents memory because they loved farming with these horses; I became interested in promoting and preserving the breed, which is the mission of the ACDHA, as an all-volunteer group. To be supportive, I am researching and documenting local history, the early days of the breeders and horses that came before my grandfather got involved. I've done a series of three talks in 2023, two with Nancy Eich Kayser, retired local historian in Hamilton County as my co-researcher this year, in Jewell on June 10th, and in Ellsworth on July 8th; and a third talk about my Grandfather, here in Radcliffe today.

Three: I need help. Many people in Hamilton, Hardin, and Story counties do not understand the significance their old photos might have to the Cream Draft Horse story 1911-1933. Or how their old farm journals might document something important from that time period, or how letters mentioning the five men might add to the early Cream history.

I am looking for a photo of Old Granny.

We do have photos of her owner, Hat Lakin, thanks to Janet Adix and her mother's family reunion photos:



Fred Lakin, Bessie Bainbridge Lakin, and Hat Lakin. Courtesy of Janet Adix.



Hat Lakin, far right. Courtesy of Janet Adix.

Photos of Nelsons Buck and of Hans Nelson are needed.

We do now have a photo of John and Jessie Lakin Yancy and Yancy No 3 standing in their line of saddle horses:



Undated and unlabeled. But possibly about 1934 in Welcome, Martin Co, MN with left to right: Theo, Maxine, Lester, and Wilbur Yancy, guest 1, John Yancy, guest 2, guest 3 on Yancy No 3, and Jessie Lakin Yancy. Courtesy of Paige Yancy and the Yancy family.

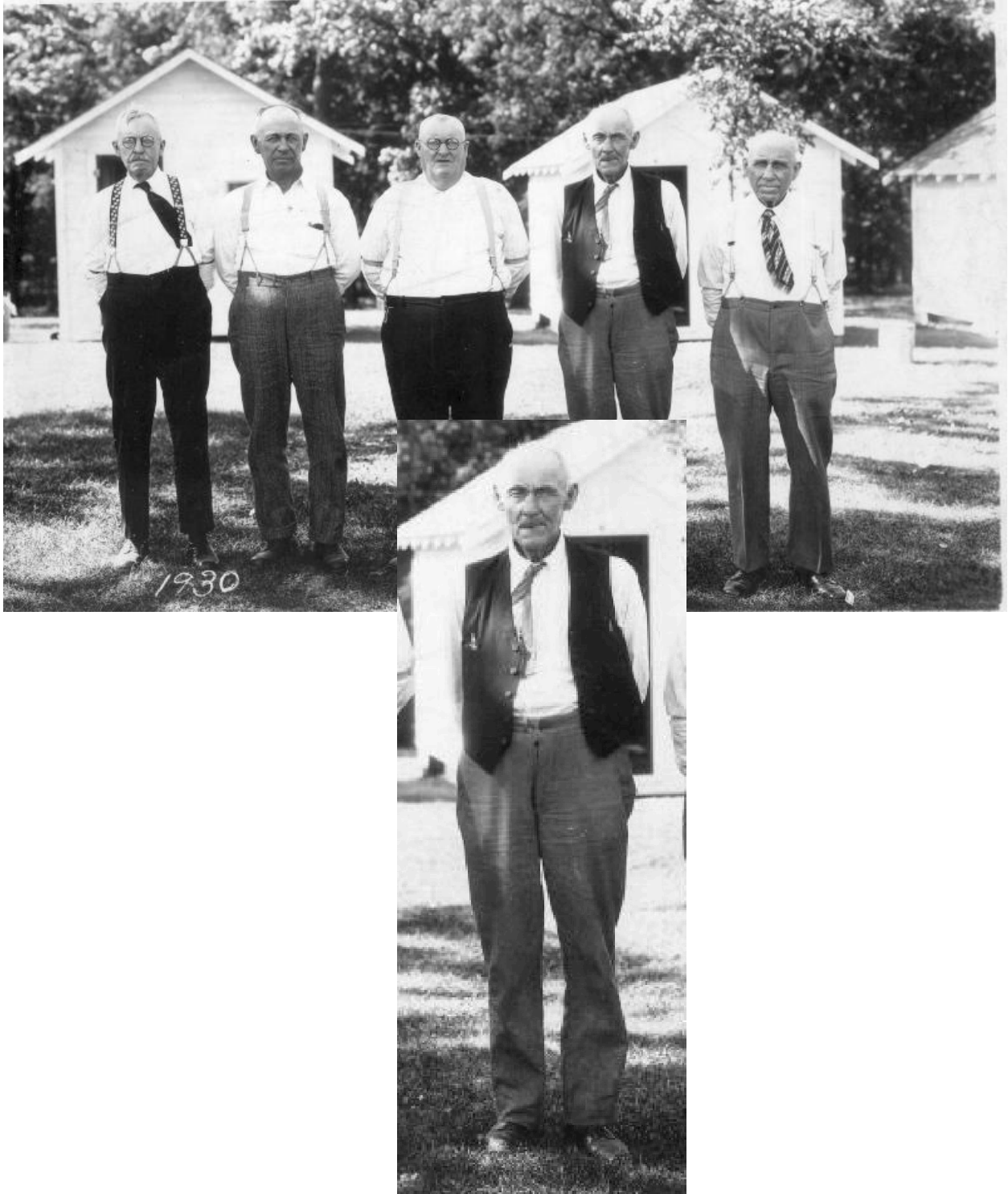
Paige Yancy and her extended family shared this photo at the July 8th Ellsworth presentation, where it was the highlight of Celebrating National American Cream Drafthorse day.

Photos of Eureka #4 and Dude #7 are needed
Six photos of Dr. Erick Christian have been located this year and were shared at the 6/10 presentation in Jewell, courtesy of Mark Christian, Laura Obrien, and Ann Omvig Maine:









Photos of Pet #8 and Tarzan #11 are needed.

I believe its not too late to better document the early history of American Creams. Many of the items that would document 1911-1933 are in an attic or an album, waiting for us to notice them. Some undated and/or unlabeled.

Four: To be supportive of the breed and of the ACDHA mission to preserve and to promote the Breed, copies of the book Silver King, about my grandfather Charles Knox, are available. However, I am not selling this book, or making money from its sale. In honor my grandparents, please purchase a copy through ACDHA: it supports the mission and automatically includes ACDHA Associate Membership.

And finally, Five:

We are Celebrating National American Cream Draft Horse Day on July 11th. We just had a Dedication of the CT Rierson Arena at Ellsworth Community College on National American Cream Draft Horse Day. I want to go further.

The American Cream Draft Horse is an Iowa story and an Iowa legacy. Developed by farmers and their families here in Central Iowa — one hundred years ago — Creams have expanding roles today, whether working on farms, drawing carriages for special events, soothing patients in equine therapy, or competing in the Show ring — they are a living expression of the American Dream, the Iowa way.

I would like you to know that there is a Bill in Committee in the Iowa Legislature, proposing Creams for the State Horse of Iowa.

I am going to ask you to consider making the only draft horse breed native to the United States, the American Cream Draft Horse, the State Horse of Iowa.

I want that Bill in the Iowa Legislature to pass; I hope you do too.

Thank you for your time.

Questions and Discussion