

A PUBLICATION  
FOR AND ABOUT  
THE TOWN OF  
NAPER,  
NEBRASKA,  
PUBLISHED BY  
THE NAPER  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY.

The mission of the Naper Historical Society is to preserve, interpret, display, communicate, promote and honor the history, original structures, special places and artifacts of the people and culture of Naper, Nebraska, and the surrounding area. The Naper Historical Society intends to accomplish this mission by operating a museum, publishing a newsletter, sponsoring events, and in other appropriate ways. The Naper Historical Society will initially focus on four themes: School Days, Life in Naper Through the Years, White Horse Ranch, and Naper 28 Plane Crash.

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# Naper Paper

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Autumn, 2024

## ALEX BENDIG HAD A HORSE—AND A DREAM

By Marilyn Sieh

This is a story about Alex Bendig, who with his wife and children, lives on a farm northeast of Naper.

In August, 2021, Alex and Kirstyn started AK Meats (see ad on page 2). Since that time, they've added work space, a freezer and lots of new and improved equipment so they can butcher and process meat for local customers.

Although his work days are full, he still finds time for his horses: two Percheron/Belgian-cross horses named Bonnie and Clyde, one Percheron named LeAnne and a two-year-old Percheron named Louise.

He uses the horses for his "old-fashioned" farming. He plows, discs, plants and cultivates corn and potatoes as well as harvesting the potato crop.

This past summer he used all of the horses in various combinations to mow hay. He discovered harvesting potatoes needs four horse power.

His horses are smart. For example, when needed, he calls out the name "Bonnie", gives a simple command such as "get up" or "easy" and she understands what he wants her to do.

When the weather is warm and there are activities in local towns, he hitches Bonnie, Clyde and LeAnne to his wagon and provides free rides for the public.

When Christmas season comes, he plans to do the same. What a charming, old-fashioned way to enjoy this special time!

The accompanying pictures were taken June 12 during Naper's Cruise Night. He was very busy giving rides (me included) around town while the cars were parked for viewing. What fun that was! Thanks, Alex!

Alex is the son of Kelly and Monica Bendig and the grandson of Grace and the late Herman Bendig.



## Explore the reading room at Heritage Hall

One of the rooms in Heritage Hall is a treasure trove for those who are checking their history.

On the walls are photos of historical family events: graduations, weddings, confirmation, baptisms.

There is a framed plat of the German Congregational Cemetery which is located northwest of Naper. There are plat books of Boyd, Holt, Brown, Rock and Keya Paha counties.

The official Naper Paper file is displayed, as well as additional copies that are available.

One corner is the Zimmerman corner with history of the Zimmerman family and Dr. Charles and Molly Zimmerman's drug store.

Claus Vogt's records of the funeral home/furniture store and his homestead are available.

But by far, the most information one can access in the reading room is (believe it or not) by reading!

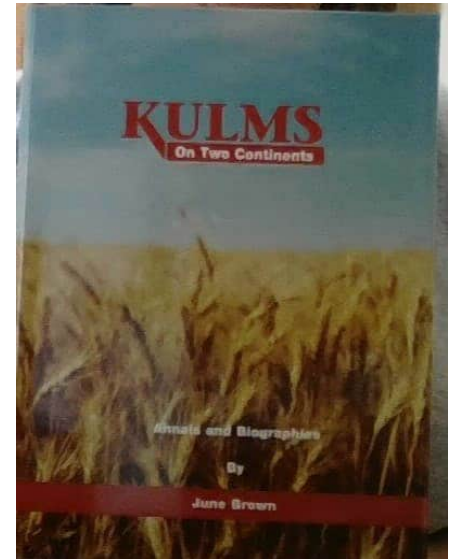
There are several scrapbooks which have been compiled by local citizens.

There are two large volumes of death notices and obituaries in alphabetical order as much as possible. Another volume holds photos and clippings of Naper history.

There is a notebook filled with family and individual histories of Almon Adam; Prentis Biletar; Hazel Blake; Ernest and Grace Conrad; Albert and Doris Dalldorf; Dr. Philip Holmgren; Alvin and Christina Kahler; Lucia Leslie; Wilhelm and Kathryn Ludemann's sons—John, Carl, Henry and Fred; Fred and Anna Rockholm; Janet Sattler; Amanda Schochenmaier; Michael Schock; Louis Thibault; Charles and Henry Tienken; and Elmer and Ethel Wright.

Gary Cline has donated a six-volume history of the Cline family dating back to the Revolutionary War.

Marcia Neumiller Hogan recently presented Kulms on Two Continents, a 1200 page history of the Kulm family in Europe and the United States, written by June Brown.



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# LIFE IN THE 50s—1950s, THAT IS!

Long ago and far away, in a land that  
time forgot,

Before the days of Dylan, or the  
dawn of Camelot.

There lived a race of innocents, and  
they were you and me,

For Ike was in the White House in  
that land where we were born,

Where navels were for oranges, and  
Peyton Place was porn.

We learned to gut a muffler, we  
washed our hair at dawn,

Girls spread out crinolines to dry in  
circles on the lawn.

We longed for love and romance and  
girls waited for their prince. ,

And Eddie Fisher married Liz, and no  
one has seen him since.

We danced to 'Little Darlin,' and sang  
to 'Stagger Lee'

And cried for Buddy Holly in the  
Land That Made Me, Me.

Only girls wore earrings then, and  
three was one too many,

And only boys wore flat-top cuts,  
except for Jean McKinney.

And only in our wildest dreams did  
we expect to see

A boy named George with Lipstick,  
in the Land That Made Me, Me.

Girls fell for Frankie Avalon, but for  
boys, Annette was oh-so-nice,

And when they made a movie, they  
never made it twice.

We didn't have a Star Trek Five, or  
Psycho Two and Three,

Or Rocky-Rambo Twenty in the Land  
That Made Me, Me.

Miss Kitty had a heart of gold, and  
Chester had a limp,

And Reagan was a Democrat whose  
co-star was a chimp.

We had a Mr. Wizard, but not a Mr. T,

And Oprah couldn't talk yet, in the  
Land That Made Me, Me.

We had our share of heroes, we nev-  
er thought they'd go,

At least not Bobby Darin, or Marilyn  
Monroe.

For youth was still eternal, and life  
was yet to be,

And Elvis was forever in the Land  
That Made Me, Me.

We'd never seen the rock band that  
was Grateful to Be Dead,

And Airplanes weren't named Jeffer-  
son and Zeppelins were not Led.

And Beatles lived in gardens then,  
and Monkeys lived in trees,

Madonna was Mary in the Land That  
Made Me, Me.

We'd never heard of microwaves or  
telephones in cars,

Babies might be bottle-fed, but they  
were not to be grown in jars.

Pumping iron got wrinkles out, and  
'gay' meant fancy-free,

And dorms were never co-ed in the  
Land That Made Me, Me.

We hadn't seen enough of jets to  
talk about the lag,

And microchips were what was left at  
the bottom of the bag.

Hardware was a box of nails, and  
bytes came from a flea,

And rocket ships were fiction in the  
Land That Made Me, Me.

Buick's came with portholes, and  
sideshows came with freaks,

And bathing suits came big enough  
to cover both your cheeks.

Coke came just in bottles, and skirts  
always below the knee,

And Castro came to power near the  
Land That Made Me, Me.

We had no Crest with fluoride, we  
had no Hill Street Blues,

Girls all wore superstructure bras,  
designed by Howard Hughes.

We had no patterned pantyhose or  
Lipton herbal tea

Or prime-time ads for personal  
things in the Land That Made Me,  
Me.

There were no golden arches, no  
Perrier to chill,

And fish were not called Wanda, and  
cats were not called Bill.

And middle-aged was thirty-five and  
old was forty-three,

Though ancient were our parents in  
the Land That Made Me, Me.

But all things have a season, or so  
we've heard them say,

And now instead of Maybelline, we  
swear by Retin-A.

They send us invitations to join AARP,

We've come a long way, baby, from  
the Land That Made Me, Me.

So now we face a brave new world in  
slightly larger jeans,

And wonder why they're using small-  
er print in magazines.

Now we tell our children's children  
the way it used to be,

Long ago and far away in the Land  
That Made Me, Me.

**(Ed Note:** Thanks to the internet/  
social media that posts light-hearted  
comments like this.

Do you know who Jean McKinney is?  
And how about gutting a muffler?

No author cited so credit can't be  
given.)

## Meanwhile, Back at the Ranch . . .

Many times in the 21 years of publication of the Naper Paper, the White Horse Ranch has been mentioned for various reasons. The local folks know the history but for everyone else, here's the rest of the story.

Caleb and Hudson Thompson were born near West Point, Nebraska, in 1890 and grew up ranching and dreaming. And aren't all ranchers dreamers? They, however, dreamed of raising pure white horses.



In 1917 they found the perfect snow white stallion in Illinois. They bought Old King from Prof. William P. Newell for \$300, quite a lot of money in those days. Old King became the sire of a new breed of horse known today as the American Albino. He was foaled in 1906 in Ohio and possessed style, good conformation, smooth gaits, intelligence, stamina and docility. He was about 15 hands and two inches tall, weighing about 1200 pounds. He had pink skin, snow-white hair and brown eyes. He was sound and vigorous, always cool-headed and an easy-keeper.

Cal and Hud gathered a herd of colored mares, most of which were of Morgan breeding. After the first year of breeding Old King with colored mares, about half of the foals had white hair with pink skins. As the program developed and they bred using only white stallions and white mares, nearly all foals born in the herd were white.

However hard times came to them after World War I. Interest rates climbed, prices dropped, unemployment increased. The brothers lost almost everything, including the purebred Hereford cattle for which they were well-known. They were able to keep their horses and moved them to their uncle's ranch at Swan Lake, in Holt County, Nebraska. In 1922, another disaster struck when most of the horses in the herd got swamp fever. They moved the horses to the Merriman, Nebraska, area hoping the dry range in the Sandhills would be the solution. Old King survived the initial onslaught of fever, but died in 1924 of its after-effects.

Then came the Depression and the drought across the Midwest. Again they had to decide if they could hang on or get out of the ranching profession. Hud actually got out and went into the ministry. Cal stayed with the horses and began to accumulate another herd of cattle. In 1934 while pasturing his cattle in Bennett County, South Dakota, he met Ruth Hackenberg who was teaching school near Tuthill. They were married in 1936 and Cal's gift to his bride was a white stallion.

In 1936 Cal and Ruth moved to a ranch south of the Niobrara River in Holt County, Nebraska. In 1937, the American Albino Horse Club was formed and incorporated so Old King's progeny could be traced. The first horse registered was Snow Chief II, a grandson of Old King.

In 1938 Cal and Ruth moved across the Niobrara River into Boyd County six miles south of Naper. They leased a 2400 acre ranch for a few years and later bought it. It came to be known as the White Horse Ranch. Everything on the ranch was white—the buildings, the corrals, the fence posts! Imagine painting enough wooden posts for a barbed wire fence encircling and cross-fencing 2,400 acres!

The ranch was home to many different white animals. The white horses were first of course, followed by cattle, ducks, geese, dogs, cats, rats, mice, peacocks, a white coyote and the most awesome of all, white bats! The white bats were in a covered box hanging on a post. When one climbed the ladder and opened the box—guess what? Two baseball bats painted white! Cal loved pulling that trick on anyone who passed by.

Until they moved to Boyd County, most of the horses were sold unbroken because the Thompsons were concentrating on the breeding and development of the albino/white strain. At that time, horse trainers thought it inadvisable to start work with horses until they were at least two and three-year-olds. Ruth thought that advice wasn't particularly good advice and started a school for the colts. Remember Ruth was a teacher and thought the earlier learning is started, the easier and more productive it is.

The first lesson for a colt is to be taught to lead—the first lesson and the hardest one, as those of you who have tried, will attest. After several weeks of patiently coaxing and pulling (and I daresay occasional pushing) the colts responded to Ruth and her tactics. The Thompsons had two rules when training: The horses were trained with kindness, not the spur nor the whip, and the horses were never rewarded with sugar but with a kind word and a love pat, possibly followed by some oats.

When horses completed their course work at the White Horse Ranch, they would be gentlemen or ladies in every sense of the word. The horse would be gaited. It would kneel so the rider could mount. It might have been taught to bow, stand at attention, cake-walk, dance, mount and balance on a pedestal, play dead, sit up, ring bells, walk and trot in reverse, and many

other tricks. Cal and Ruth thought the albinos were the most intelligent of all animals and could be easily trained as they are quiet, calm and cool-headed. They are loyal and protective of their riders. They are happy and responsive when on display. The tune going through their heads—"I Love a Parade!"

Not so long after Cal and Ruth had trained a few horses, they were asked to lead a parade in Butte, NE, and to put on a show at a rodeo in another near-by town. Neighbors were interested in how the horses were being trained and word soon spread about the "horse whisperers" who could get amazing results with kindness and patience. Soon almost every Sunday afternoon during the summer would be "Showtime!" at the ranch. It wasn't long until youngsters began to ask how they could be a part of the action.



Ruth was ready—she started the Ranch in White Training and Riding School where the students learned by doing. A student was assigned a horse and used that horse exclusively while in the school. Each one was taught to ride bareback. Instruction was individualized so students could develop talents and skills unique to each student

and his or her mount. Tuition was \$25 per week which covered room, board and laundry. Back in the 1940's, \$25 was a fairly good chunk of change and some children couldn't pay it. So they would be "working" students and earned their way by doing extra chores. This might be where painting fence posts comes in.

The school was six weeks long and after graduation, the student might be invited to ride with the group, "The White Horse Troupe", as they performed locally and on the road. Those selected to travel had mastered roman team riding, jumping, "wild horse" riding (riding without saddle OR bridle), and various other routines. During the 1940s and 1950s, the White Horse Troupe became internationally famous and toured all over the United States and Canada. The Thompsons quit touring in 1952.

In 1945, Life Magazine visited the ranch and produced an extensive story for the August 13 issue. In 1946 Warner Brothers made a movie short. In 1952 Warner Brothers revisited the ranch and made another movie short. (Both of these movies, Ride a White Horse and Ranch in White, are available for viewing at the Nebraska State Archives.)

Ruth and Cal wore many hats. Ruth was chief cook and bottler as well as the teacher, the road manager, the publicist, a confidante and no doubt the referee from time to time. Cal had to be the chief mechanic and engineer, the "in charge" guy and a shoulder to lean on when needed.

Cal had an awesome talent for painting. He would paint on any surface, used any brush he could find and any paint that wasn't all dried up. He would first paint all of the surface black ("the world is dark"), then add a layer of white ("the light came to the world") and then begin his painting. Every one of his paintings have three items—a tree (the tree of life), a road (the road to eternal life) and water

(living water). None of his paintings included animals so if you see a Cal Thompson painting with an animal super-imposed on it, you'll know Ruth



added it after Cal was gone.

In 1963, Cal died June 15, the night before the annual Father's Day show at the ranch. The show went on. Ruth was unable to keep the ranch operating as they had done as a couple. Their herd of nearly 175 white horses was sold except for the pairs of breeding stock horses Ruth placed with other white horse breeders to preserve the Old King bloodline.

During the 1980s, Ruth returned to the ranch and conducted horse shows. In 1985, Ruth renamed the registry the International American Albino Association, Inc., as she registered horses internationally. In 1990 Ruth died. She and Cal are buried in the Leatherman Cemetery just east of the ranch buildings. That same year, Ruth was inducted into the National Cowgirl Hall of Fame and the ranch was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The ranch is in a family trust and rented to a local farmer.

Today there are registered Albino quarter-horses, Belgians, Morgans, Arabians, thoroughbreds, miniatures, and more. Horses whose lineage can be traced back to Old King will be found in horse shows, parades, movies and bridle paths all over the world. The IAAA registry is still in force and maintained by a volunteer .



The Ol' Homesteader keeps lookin' for news about Naper!

The Naper Paper is your paper. We rely on you, our readers, for support, both financial and "a pat on the back". We count on you for stories and ideas about what we need to write, print, explore, photograph. We appreciate you and want to say "Thanks!"

### SCHOOL DAYS AGAIN!

Kyla McCarthy (daughter of Darren and Connie McCarthy, granddaughter of LeRoy and Maxine Windmeyer McCarthy) attended the FCCLA National Leadership Conference in Seattle June 29-July 3.

The Boyd County Junior and Senior High School Band marched and played at the State Fair in Grand Island on August 26. Congratulations on surviving the heat!

### BUSY SUMMER DAYS

Lucas Alford (son of Marcus and Candace Alford, grandson of Jim and Becky Alford, great-grandson of Lois Alford) and Cash Nordstrom (son of Bob and Jamie Zeisler Nordstrom, grandson of Craig and Stacy Zeisler) played on the 10U Boyd County baseball team, coached by Marc Alford and Bob Nordstrom.

Aaron Melton and Landon Melton (sons of Shelby and Heidi Vogt Melton, grandsons of Bryon and Sharon Sattler Vogt, great-grandsons of Mabel Riesselman Sattler) played on the 12U Boyd County baseball team, coached by Shelby Melton.

Emma Vogt attended the National CommonGround Conference in Des Moines, Iowa, in July. CommonGround Nebraska is a group of farm and ranch women who have conversations with consumers about food. Emma gave a demonstration at the State Fair in Grand Island.

The Sterling and Sheila Melton family won first place at the Ribfest at the Boyd County Fair.

### NEWS FROM THE AMBULANCE CREW

by Rindy Zink.

We have been busy taking refresher classes. We renewed our CPR class last month.

We now have a Life Vac for the ambulance. A Life Vac is a non-powered, non-invasive, airway clearance device developed for resuscitating a patient with an airway obstruction when current choking protocols have been followed without success.

It works on the principle of Place, Push, Pull.

1. (Place) Position the mask over the person's mouth and nose ensuring a good seal.
2. (Push) Press down on the plunger to expel air out of the sides of the device.
3. (Pull) quickly pull up the plunger creating a vacuum that helps remove the obstruction from the airway.

### SAYIN' GOODBYE TO OLD FRIENDS

Ruth Camin Compton died May 30, just four days short of her 102nd birthday. She grew up south of Naper near the Keya Paha River and had lived in California for many years.

Cindy Ulmer Lindgren, age 63, died June 14. She grew up southwest of Naper near the Keya Paha River and attended Naper High School.

Duane Lee Kibby died June 17, 2024, in Billings, Montana. He grew up on a farm southwest of Naper, graduated from Naper High School in 1958, served in the US Navy for two years and taught school in Tacoma and Renton, Washington, school districts.

Myrna Gosch Beauchamp, who died August 14, graduated from Naper High School in 1955 and taught school in Boyd County for four years before her marriage. She lived in Burke and worked many years as a paraeducator.

Have you looked at the Naper Historical Society website? ([napernebraska.org](http://napernebraska.org)) You'll find every issue of the Naper Paper (photos in color on the website!), photos of all the classes from Naper High School, stories of Naper history, the White Horse Ranch, businesses, cemeteries, and historical photos.

If you need to contact the historical society, you may:  
**call** 402-832-5471,  
**mail** to Naper Historical Society Box 72  
 Naper, NE 68755  
**e-mail** at [papabear@threeriver.net](mailto:papabear@threeriver.net)

## SOME LETTERS,

I appreciate your work on the Naper Paper. Please note my new address.

**Marjorie Kortmeyer Saiser**

Greetings,

Again I enjoy the Naper Paper. Big thanks to Margaret Ludemann for telling me about it. So good to see Larry Segar's note. We were teachers in 1974 plus. Enjoyed the picture of Charlie and Ruby Tienken. As I read the article, I was sitting by our beautiful plant in my home in Omaha which Ruby had given a "slip" to Verna in 1975. Made my day. Thanks for the good work!

**Duane Salonen**

You can delete Duane Kibby's name from your mailing list. Enclosed is some \$\$\$ for the Naper Paper. Always a treat to receive each new edition.

**Lois Kibby Chittim**

## A WHITE HORSE RANCH SOUVENIR



Pictured above is Mabel Sattler holding a cane imprinted "White Horse Ranch, Naper, Nebraska." In the 1980s, the Naper community, including Lions Club members, helped Ruth Thompson put on a two-day horse show for White and Cream horses at the White Horse Ranch. Roy Olson from Butte sold the canes and many folks from Naper bought one for \$1.

## SOME OTHER THINGS

### THOUGHTS ABOUT LABOR ON LABOR DAY

Labor Day, the first Monday in September, was declared a national holiday by President Grover Cleveland in 1894.

The first celebration of Labor Day was in 1882 in New York when over 10,000 persons marched signifying the importance of workers in all fields.

A lot of people have had something to say about labor and work.

"I'm a great believer and luck, and I find the harder I work, the more I have of it." Thomas Jefferson, President of the United States 1801-1809

"Thunder is good, thunder is impressive; but it is the lightning that does the work." Mark Twain, American author

"Nothing will work unless you do." Maya Angelou, American poet and civil rights activist

"There are no shortcuts to any place worth going." Beverly Sills, American opera singer

"Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can." Arthur Ashe, American tennis player

"The big secret in life is that there is no big secret. Whatever your goal, you can get there if you're willing to work." Oprah Winfrey, American entertainer and businesswoman

"The road to success is always under construction." Lily Tomlin, American comedian and actress

### LEARNING ABOUT THE JONS' DAIRY

Verlyn and Dana Jons operate a dairy in about five miles northeast of Naper. Their farm, which is the last dairy in Gregory County, South Dakota, but also the last one in South Dakota west of the Missouri River, was recently featured in the Gregory Times Advocate.

When Verlyn was younger, Gregory County had the largest number of dairies in South Dakota. In the 1990s, there was a push to enlarge dairy farms. As a result, most small dairy farms disappeared.

The milk produced on the Jons dairy is transported to Le Mars, Iowa, for processing. Processors set a quota on how much milk a dairy can produce, so the Jons dairy can't get any bigger.

Even so, at the size their dairy is now operating, it is a job requiring them to be on the job seven days a week, always seeking to improve quality and efficiency.

### PINNING DOWN SOME INFORMATION

by Marilyn Sieh

I've had this pin forever but never knew what it was until recently.



It's a kilt pin, a piece of jewelry worn on the front of a kilt, a traditional Scottish garment. It's main purpose was to prevent the kilt from flopping open.

Most kilt pins were very fancy.. They are usually made of metal—silver, gold or pewter—and featured various designs of Scottish symbols.

This plain pin might have had a simple decoration attached, It might have been used for another purpose once upon a time—perhaps horse blankets or possibly as a key holder.

My great-great-grandfather Fee came from Scotland and settled in Omaha so he was not a farmer. He worked for the Union Pacific Railroad.

Family history says he witnessed the driving of the Golden Spike which connected rail lines from east and west near Ogden, Utah, in 1869.

# NAPER PAPER

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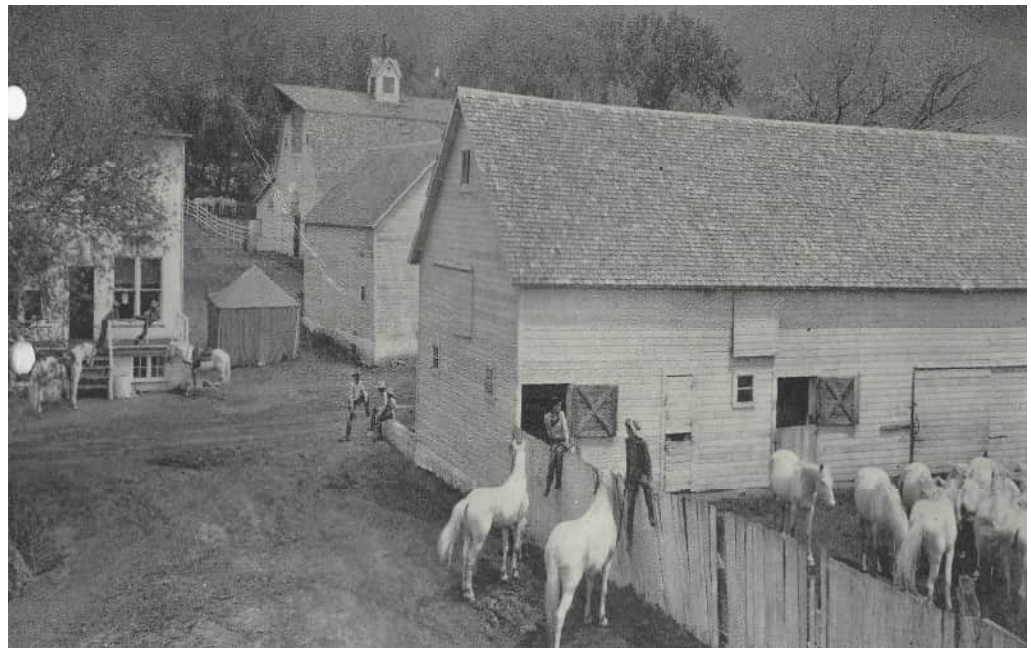


Photo from LIFE magazine story of the White Horse Ranch, August 13, 1945. This is the east side of the "Long Barn". On the west side, Cal had painted a mural that extended the full length. Building to the left was the store on the Wright Homestead. In later years, Dean and Carley Daugherty developed it as a museum. Building near the top of the photo is the horse barn.