

Clabber

Inducted into the American Quarter Horse Hall of Fame in 1997



Mention the name "Iron Horse" to an old timer and one horse comes to mind – Clabber. The hard knockin' sorrel stayed sound amidst hard use over many years. He was not good looking, but he could run, and this trait placed Clabber among the greats.

Clabber was foaled in 1936 on Frank Smith's ranch in South Texas. His sire was My Texas Dandy and confusion surrounds his dam. Later issues of the AQHA studbooks list Blondie S, by Lonestar as Clabber's dam. However, [Bob Denhardt \(/proving/webrewrite/umbraco/~link.aspx?id=CC78AA805AB24AC8AAE9A61E50F8E94C&z=z\)](http://proving/webrewrite/umbraco/~link.aspx?id=CC78AA805AB24AC8AAE9A61E50F8E94C&z=z) and [Melville Haskell \(/proving/webrewrite/umbraco/~link.aspx?id=83E89A2D71E24C62BF72032DC71864F4&z=z\)](http://proving/webrewrite/umbraco/~link.aspx?id=83E89A2D71E24C62BF72032DC71864F4&z=z), founder of the American Quarter Racing Association, list Golden Girl by Possum, as the correct dam.

Either way, there was speed on Clabber's maternal side. In 1938, A. A. "Ab" Nichols of Gilbert, Arizona, bought the sorrel colt. The horse was not much of a looker. He was roman-nosed and his feet flared out like clapboard on the side of a house. Nichols entered the horse in his first race as "Clab Foot."

Before long, the colt's fans were calling the chestnut "Clabber," and the name stuck. However, there was more to Clabber's life than racing. Nichols would ride the stallion all day ranching, roping, heading and cutting cattle.

Clabber was then hauled 100 or more miles to match-race three or four times a weekend. The sorrel did not receive the special training or the bandages, blankets, liniment or special treatment other racehorses received.

Nichols once said, "He (Clabber) could outrun those pampered horses that smelled like a drug store any day of the week and twice on Sunday."

And Clabber did, earning the nickname "Iron Horse." The American Quarter Racing Association named Clabber the world champion Quarter Running Horse and world champion racing Quarter Horse stallion in 1940-41.

In 1944, Frank Vessels Sr. (/proving/webrewrite/umbraco/~link.aspx?id=F58848FAA46C4F5AA1836E337605DD48&z=z) purchased the sorrel and moved him to California. Vessels would build Los Alamitos racetrack and become a well known racehorse breeder.

Clabber proved his worth as a sire. He sired Tonto Gal, who rated AAA; Wagon N, Clabber II, Clabbertown G, Clabber's Flossie V and Clabber Girl.

Clabber died of a head injury on Vessel's ranch in 1947 at 11. He was inducted into the American Quarter Horse Hall of Fame in 1997.