

Remembering Velma Bronn Johnston, Wild Horse Annie, During National Women's History Month

Wild Horse Annie is remembered and credited for starting the movement to save America's wild mustangs.

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The women who established the [National Women's History Alliance](#) began planning a women's history week in 1977. Women's History Week became the National Women's History Week in 1981. It became National Women's History Month in 1987. "The expansion from local to national and from week to month was the result of a lobbying effort that included hundreds of individuals and dozens of women's educational and historical organizations. It was an effort mobilized and spearheaded by the National Women's History Alliance."



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Nothing is impossible, the word itself says I'm possible.”

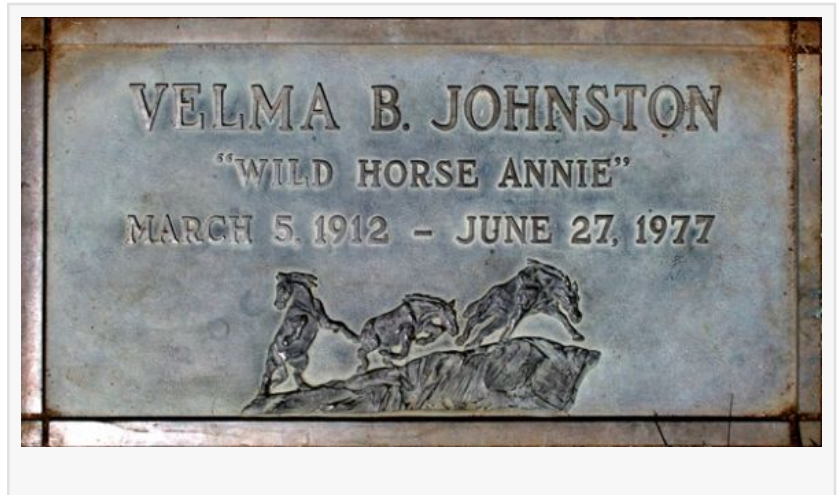
Audrey Hepburn

The Library of Congress writes, “Since 1995, presidents have issued a series of annual proclamations designating the month of March as Women's History Month. These proclamations celebrate the contributions women have made to the United States and recognize the specific achievements women have made over the course of American history in a variety of fields.”

<https://womenshistorymonth.gov/about/>

Velma Bronn Johnston was born on March 5, 1912. She later became known as [Wild Horse Annie](#) because of her efforts to save wild horses from mustangers who hunted the horses for commercial purposes. She is also recognized for her grassroots work to stop the decimation of free roaming mustangs and burros from public lands. Wild Horse Annie generated public

support for the horses and burros from her public appearances and the efforts of school children's letter-writing campaigns to the Congress and Senate. Newspapers published articles about the exploitation of wild horses and burros. The Associated Press wrote on July 15, 1959, "Seldom has an issue touched such a responsive chord."



Wild Horse Annie and the Last of the Mustangs: The Life of Velma Johnston is a book written by David Cruise and Alison Griffiths. It documents her journey to save mustangs. After following a stock truck hauling animals, the discovery of brutally rounded up and injured horses in the trailer led her to do something about what she saw.

A chapter in the book, [The Road to Reno](#), contains a gut wrenching account of what she saw inside the trailer that fateful day. Readers may access the full chapter text using the hyperlink. Open the book's cover photo.

An excerpt reads, "Where did these horses come from and why are they in such terrible condition?" Velma gasped.

"Oh, they were run in by plane out there," the driver replied, "from the hills of the Comstock Lode."

Velma was sensitive when it came to animals, but she wasn't squeamish. She stood by Charlie when he'd been forced to put a calf out of its misery after a birth gone wrong, and then there were all those puppy litters. She hardly shed tears since her days in the polio cast. But what she saw in that truck was beyond anything she'd ever experienced.

"No point in crying your eyes out over a bunch of useless mustangs," the driver said. "They'll all be dead soon anyway."

"Five days after encountering the stock truck, Velma stood nervously in front of the Bureau of Land Management's regional district offices in downtown Reno. She concluded all trails led to the BLM. Most of the remaining wild horse herds were living on land managed by the Bureau. But she did not know whom to ask for or what to say about her concern for the captured horses."

From this life-changing moment on, Wild Horse Annie, Velma Bronn Johnston, worked to fight for protection of the free-roaming horses throughout Nevada and across all the federal lands in the west. Because of her work, the Wild and Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971 passed

unanimously.

Wild horse advocates remember her to this day. Supporters carry on at state and federal levels, calling on the Bureau of Land Management, Congress and the President of the United States to maintain protections for the Country's wild and free-roaming horses and burros.

American Equine Allies Association is a Georgia advocacy and awareness non-profit corporation. The conviction that every horse owner in the United States needs the ability to safely re-home their horse, should a need arise, led to the formation of the organization. American Equine Awareness, its media awareness program, shares equine information and issues with the public and news outlets.

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