

Virginia Cowan-Smith and Bonnie Domrose Stone, *Aloha Cowboy*.
Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1988. Pp. 152, illustrated,
notes, selected bibliography, index. US\$19.95.

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Vignettes of cowboys and ranching in Hawaii, horseback-riding, rodeos and round-ups are presented in word and in photo in Virginia Cowan-Smith and Bonnie Domrose Stone's *Aloha Cowboy*. Obviously not meant to be a scholarly and historical treatment of the subject matter, this book offers the casual reader or devotee of horsemanship some

familiarity with the history of horsebreeding and horsemanship in Hawaii. The authors have more than adequately researched their topic, gathering previously scattered bits of information into one place.

Beginning and ending chapters appear appropriately in their chronological setting, but intervening chapters appear disjointed in sequencing. Perhaps this is because no clear theme is developed at the outset. Hence, the book reads somewhat like a series of interesting articles. Moreover, text throughout the book is broken up by a series of contemporary color photo plates on subjects that three out of four times do not relate to the text they interrupt.

The book is arranged topically beginning with a good brief history of the arrival of cattle (1793), horses (1803), and, subsequently, cowboying in the islands. Unfortunately, the 1980s color photo plates found in the first chapter do not match its content. They serve to break the story line as does the story of the demise of David Douglas, the botanist of Douglas fir fame. After such breaks, however, the story refocuses on horses, especially those that became known as Mauna Kea mustangs, and here the authors initiate a style of bringing the topic under discussion up-to-date. Efforts of David Woo and Franz Solmssen in perpetuating the Mauna Kea as a breed are recounted--an episode of living, breathing "historic preservation." The book continues with the oft-cited information on John Palmer Parker and his ranch to the 1880s.

Subsequently, the twentieth-century history of rodeo cowboys and rodeos are each given a chapter, one focusing on Hawaiian rodeo champions like Ikua Purdy and the other on the rodeo cowboys who came to the islands with the military and World War II. The next two chapters, "Armed Forces Cowboys" and "On the Plains of Leilehua," highlight the military, its role in reviving rodeo action in Hawaii, and its earlier cavalry horsemanship. These two chapters provide an interesting addition to the standard information on horses and cowboys in Hawaii. They also incorporate military-generated activities into local culture and history, something not commonly done. These chapters are somewhat difficult to follow, however, as contemporary and polo photos intersperse historical discussion on rodeos. The second chapter also sidetracks into confusing, and perhaps irrelevant, commentary on a variety of clubs and their activities. If the book's intended audience are horse lovers and horse riders, reference to rodeo and other associations and organizations is useful. If not, to the casual reader such references appear somewhat irrelevant and, potentially, boring.

Horsebreeding, polo, horseracing, and equestrian activities fill the following three chapters, therein rounding out the book's coverage of

both horsebreeding and horsemanship. In the first two of these chapters, the authors have included interesting stories of Queen Emma and her grand cavalcade as well as notes on rental horses at the Alexander Young Hotel. Historic photos of excursions and races are particularly well chosen, though contemporary color plates are again misplaced. The chapter on the equestrian scene of the 1950s, followed by much on the 1980s, seems out of place and perhaps inappropriate in its length as well as its placement. Some mention of this topic would have been fitting in a book called *Aloha Cowboy*, but not fourteen pages. By focusing on this topic, not commonly discussed in books on Hawaii, however, *Aloha Cowboy* serves a definite informational purpose.

The next two chapters, "Pa'u" and "Talk Story," return the reader to more unique aspects of traditions surrounding horsemanship in Hawaii. One wonders, though, why the *pa'u* chapter does not precede the chapter on the equestrian scene of the 1950s-1980s, as well as equal it in length. "Talk Story" adds some warmth to the text with stories of some of the folk heroes of Hawaii's ranch life, such as Frank Freitas, Lloyd Cockett, Inez Ashdown, and Armine von Tempski. Still, this chapter, too, seems misplaced, with no direct connection to the chapters around it. The book concludes with chapters on modern rodeos and ranching in Hawaii in the 1980s, an excellent ending to an otherwise uneven work.

For the more academic or thorough reader notes provided at the rear of the book are excellent. The selected bibliography is also useful, though sources such as L. A. Henke's *A Survey of Livestock in Hawaii* (Honolulu, 1929) and Mifflin Thomas's *Schooner from Windward* (Honolulu, 1983) are not included.

An interesting and little known part of ranching's history in Hawaii is referred to in a photo caption that notes ranching's ties to the sugar industry, yet little explanation and few details are provided. Mention is also made about the existence of some 399 ranches in the state. The stories of some of these other ranches and ranching developments need to be written to provide us with a more balanced history of the time-honored and well-developed tradition of the Hawaiian cowboy and his workplace. In the meantime, Stone and Cowan-Smith have done well in pulling together some valuable and relatively uncommon information, particularly on the subject of horsebreeding in Hawaii.

For a tradition and industry that was very integrated into the lifestyle of native Hawaiians, however, little of that sense of deep tradition emerges through this book. Instead, the reader gets a sense of horsemanship as a tradition of outsiders maintained by outsiders. The almost equal reference to cowboys from outside of Hawaii who happen to be

plying their trade while resident in Hawaii tends to diminish the tradition and history of the Hawaiian cowboy. This is of special concern since the book's title, *Aloha Cowboy*, implies that the Hawaiian cowboy is the focal point and that is simply not the case. All in all, the title *Aloha Cowboy* appears misleading. Nonetheless, despite its inadequacies, this book represents a beginning to the long-untold tale of the Hawaiian cowboy and the history and role of ranching in the state.