Chapter 1

The Birth of Anti-Horse Thief Societies

In the period of United States history known as the colonial era (late 1500s to early 1800s), crime was not a major focus of concern—basic survival was. The majority of the average American Colonial's day was spent in basic survival activities: hunting, gathering, and planting food; collecting water and firewood; and building and improving on their homes, barns, and other outbuildings. Neighbors were more than the people who lived next door; they were fellow pioneers who shared the same dreams and aspirations, weaving a web of reliance that included trapping the occasional horse thief.

Most of the colonists lived in small communities, which meant that the detection of a crime, and often the person responsible, was not easy to evade. A crime committed by someone outside the community, a stranger, often would increase the fear associated with crime. Horse theft, as a crime in general, often included removing the animal from the area to be used or sold without fear of being discovered. Given the typical *modus operandi* of this crime, therefore, apprehension required pursuit, if the animal was to be recovered. Fear of the often unknown thief, the direction of travel, and the many possible outcomes in a confrontation, required several people, a society, be involved in responding to the crime. And this method of response was familiar to many.

Colonial cities often required their residents to serve in various organizations and societies for the mutual protection

of life and property. In 1712, Philadelphia imposed a fine on any adult male who refused to serve as a member of the watch. In Charleston, South Carolina, local law created a night watch that consisted of constables and local citizens who would serve on a regular rotating basis. Heads of households, male or female, were pressed into service, and a fine awaited any who missed a rotation unless he provided an appropriate substitute. The watch, who were authorized to arrest any wrongdoer, worked a shift that lasted from ten in the evening until sunrise.

The early American militia system is a classic example of the citizen role in community safety. In Boston, from 1760 to 1820, more than 1,900 voluntary associations were created. By the 1820s at least seventy a year were founded. These associations were diverse in make-up and purpose, but they did include associations for the enforcement of laws, including associations specifically formed for the detection and apprehension of horse thieves. This phenomenon was not limited to Boston or Massachusetts. The idea of citizen organizations to prevent and combat crime is well ingrained in early American culture. Societies for the detection and apprehension of horse thieves are a natural and pragmatic extension of this culture.

Capt. William Lynch was proud of what he had built out of the wilderness now known as Virginia. It had not been easy. Weather was much more wild and unpredictable than the old country. Clearing land for the planting of crops was backbreaking work whose monotony was interrupted only by assisting his neighbors in a barn raising or harvest. It felt good to, on occasion, stand back and look at what he had accomplished. These reflections were brief, for taming the beast of nature required constant attention else it would revert to its wild nature.

Lynch did not mind helping his neighbors on occasion. He understood that these breaks in the realization of his own dreams created an unwritten *quid pro quo* where he

could count on assistance in return. Lynch knew and relied upon the character of his neighbors. A man's character was often the only currency that he had to trade. The social cohesion created by neighbor helping neighbor was often the one factor that kept a man's dreams from turning into a nightmare.

The one call for assistance that really upset Lynch was a call from neighbors to respond to a crime. If a man's horse was stolen, or his neighbor's horse, he was rightfully indignant. Time must be spent away from planting or harvest to investigate and attempt to gain the stolen animal back. Responding to a common enemy brings people together, but in colonial America it meant time away from survival—time away from fulfilling one's dreams. Lynch had had enough. The wide geographical boundaries and lack of a centralized government meant that any help had to come from Lynch and his neighbors.

Lynch met with his neighbors in Pittsylvania County, Virginia, in 1780 and they agreed to band together to protect themselves from horse thieves and other criminals. Set forth in writing, this became one of the earliest societies created to fight horse thieves, spurring many others to follow suit.

> Whereas, many of the inhabitants of the county of Pittsylvania . . . have sustained great and intolerable losses by a set of lawless men . . . that . . . we, the subscribers, being determined to put a stop to the iniquitous practices of those unlawful and abandoned wretches, do enter into the following association . . . and if they will not desist from their evil practices, we will inflict such corporeal punishment on him or them, as to us shall seem adequate to the crime committed or the damage sustained.
>
> —William Lynch et al., Agreement, 1780

Captain Lynch was not the only "Lynch" Virginian. At about the same time a Virginia planter, Col. Charles Lynch,

who served as a colonel under Gen. Nathanael Greene during the revolutionary war, and his fellow planters formed an organization with the expressed purpose to punish *horse thieves* and any other criminals. Suspects, almost always a Tory (pro-England), would be arrested and brought to the home of Lynch. A trial would be held with three neighbors acting as associate justices, and the accused was allowed to present witnesses and plead his case. If he was condemned, the punishment would range from whipping to hanging. Those found innocent would receive an apology and sometimes even reparations.[1] Between the vigorous actions of both Lynches against horse thieves and other criminals, "Lynch Law" and "Lynching" quickly entered the American lexicon, forever associated with the fate of horse thieves.

The majority of vigilant societies that were formed in the colonial era were started by farmers to address the crime of horse theft. The earliest society seems to have been formed in Northampton, Massachusetts, in 1782, one year before the formal end of the Revolutionary War. The horse's importance in war made it a prime target for thieves operating black markets selling to both the British and revolutionaries. The Revolutionary War gave the colonists freedom from British rule and taught the population that much could be accomplished through collective action. Just as the founding fathers met to form a new nation and sign their intent through a Declaration of Independence, this era saw the start of covenant groups and formal compacts to address the detection, apprehension, and often punishment of horse thieves. In 1786 the Friends of Justice was born in Wilmington, Delaware. "The primary objective of the earliest vigilants was the horse; hence, the label *horse-thief societies.*"[2] In 1789 the Pownal Association to Counteract and Detect Horse Thieves was created when horse theft was so rampant in their community that collective action was seen as the only resort.

How anti-horse-thief societies persecuted the offenders was divided between turning them over to the centralized legal system and acting as their own judge and jury. In many areas of the colonies, the victim would be expected to pay the expenses of prosecution. Taken in conjunction with the time and costs associated with leaving their farms and businesses, traveling to the nearest court, and returning to give testimony in court, often summary judgment made much more sense from a fiscal perspective.

Whatever their response, these early societies made their objective clear with their names:

1782	MA	Northampton Society for the Detection of Thieves and Robbers
1786	DE	Friends of Justice
1789	VT	Pownal Association to Counteract and Detect Horse Thievery
1791	MA	Oxford Society for the Detection of Horsestealers and Thieves
1793	CT	Woodstock Theft Detection Society
1795	MA	Massachusetts Society for Detecting Horse Thieves
1795	MA	Society for Detecting Horse Thieves in the Towns of Mendon, Bellingham, and Milford
1796	CT	Glastonbury Association for the Detecting Horse Thieves
1796	MA	Rehoboth, Seekonk and Pawtucket Detecting Society
1797	MA	Norton Detecting Society Formed for the Purpose of Detecting Horse Thieves and Recovering Horses

The swift and sure capture, and sometime lynching, of a horse thief provided both specific and general deterrence. Specific deterrence was aimed at ensuring that the individual offender does not repeat his crime. Jail, public

whippings, branding, mutilation, restitution, and public shaming were efforts by communities to invoke individual rehabilitation. General deterrence was accomplished through harsh punishments that sent a message to all potential horse thieves not to consider similar actions. Although these rules might have worked within a given community, the colonials had to face the ongoing problem of horse theft from Native Americans and as a result of war.

Native Americans and the Horse

The speed of the integration of the horse into Native American culture is something akin to an anthropological breaking of the sound barrier. Prior to 1541, Spanish law expressly prohibited any Native American from riding a horse. Facing a revolt in central Mexico, the viceroy of New Spain realized that he needed the help and support of Aztec chieftains so he gave them horses—creating the first recorded evidence of the new relationship between the horse and Native Americans.[3]

Prior to the introduction of horses in the United States, Native Americans traveled by foot or along water routes in canoes. To many Native American tribes the horse was a strange new animal seen as a food source rather than an indispensable tool. The strangeness quickly wore off and the value quickly came into focus. The Navajo Apaches located to the northwest of early European settlements were known to steal horses as early as 1659. Historian Haines (1938) reported that: "Five years later an account states that this has become a constant practice, and that the Apaches to the east bring in Indian captives from other tribes to trade for horses."

By the mid-eighteenth century horses had become an integral cultural component of the Native Americans between the Great Lakes and the Ohio River. The horses were obtained through trade and war parties. Horse theft

from the British and colonists became another common source for horse flesh. This was a "serious problem" at Fort Pitt along the Ohio River:

> On July 10, 1761, Colonel Henry Bouquet, a British Officer, cut off all trade with the Shawnees until they promised to stop stealing horses and returned the white prisoners being held. In later years Johnson complained that the Indians were stealing horses from both the British government and the traders.[4]

Bouquet also pointed out that pack horses and draft horses were not only numerous but important to Fort Pitt and the frontier outpost. The trip over the mountains was arduous not just to the travelers, but to the horses as well. The norm was to turn the horses loose to allow them to graze and recuperate from the trip. In correspondence written on May 4, 1761, Bouquet explained that these horses "were a great temptation to the Indians, who stole them. It was tantalizing and difficult to deal with the horse thief—an individual so ubiquitous on the frontier."[5]

There were three common root causes of the theft of horses by the Native Americans. The first cause is the constant and often-organized war against the various Native American tribes. From the introduction of the horse in 1519 through the turn of the twentieth century, there were ongoing hostilities between the white settlers and the indigenous peoples. Horses were an integral instrument of war in the ongoing struggles. The second cause was the utilitarian nature of the horse. Prior to the horse, dogs were the only pack animals used by Native Americans but they adapted to horses easily: "As they already developed techniques for handling dogs, the natives found it relatively easy to transfer that experience. Indeed, for many Plains tribes, horses were thought of as a larger, more useful breed of dog."[6]

The ability to increase transportation and hunting with a horse fit the culture of so many of the Native Americans

that by the mid-1700s the horse had spread to many tribes including those of the Plains. Many Native Americans captured wild horses, but with the blatant discrimination and social disadvantages faced by so many Native Americans, theft could be rationalized as a viable option to obtain what could not be owned through conformity to the societal norms. The third cause was the value placed on horses after the rapid acculturation of this animal. It did not take long before the horse became the symbol of wealth. In an effort to accumulate more horses, and the corresponding social standing, raiding parties between rival tribes became common. This method of accumulating status in a community through the amount or breed of horses was similarly mirrored in many of the European settled communities.

My horse be swift in flight.
Even like a bird;
My horse be swift in flight.
Bear me now in safety
far from enemy arrows,
And you shall be rewarded
With streamers and ribbons red.

—*Sioux Warrior's Song*[7]
(Whitelaw 2007, 118)

In the land that was to become Kansas, the Pawnee culture not only changed to assimilate the horse but also manipulated their environment to support the horse. The Pawnees had discovered that by setting fire to the dead grass in the spring, the green-up period was hastened for the purpose of grazing of their horses.[8] If the Native Americans were quick to adopt the horse into their culture, the same could be said for the cowboy and the Cossack—both of whom had to keep vigilant against the horse thief.

Cowboys & Cossacks

On the other side of the world, the legend of man and

horse continued in the form of the Russian Cossack. These superb cavalry members personified much the same mythos as the American cowboy. Protecting the borders and justice of mother Russia from the saddle, they provided just as many stories and legends to the people of Russia as the American cowboy. For both the cowboy and Cossack, for both the farmer/rancher and peasant, the importance of the horse cannot be overestimated. To look into horse theft and the peasant response in Russia in the 1880s is to look in a mirror of the American experience. Consider the following story from Russia in the mid-1880s:

> Gritsenko immediately recognized the man as an inveterate horse thief suspected of several crimes in his village, including the theft of one hundred rubles from Gritsenko himself. The elder physically overpowered the thief and then tied him up with his belt. He swung his victim across his back and carried him back to Potasha repeatedly shouting to villagers, "*Hromada* [assembly of heads of the household], to the meeting place, Nen'ka has been caught."[9]

The villagers held a quick "trial" where Nen'ka confessed and named several accomplices who were summoned before the assembly, pled guilty, and were jailed. After several bottles of courage, the assembly returned to the jail, removed the guilty parties, and the beatings began (one of the horse thieves died from his injuries). Though this occurred in Imperial Russia, this just as easy could be an event from Caldwell, Kansas. The theft of horses was just as important in peasant life of the late Imperial Russia as it was for the settlers of the western states.

The incidence of horse theft and the responses to it were a matter of the demographics of the frontier settler, geography of the new lands, as well as the political landscape. The self-sufficient and independent nature of those living in the frontier was one that would not wait for the lag of government-run law enforcement to catch up with the spreading population.

As Christine D. Worobeck (1987) pointed out, in the United States, as well as Russia, "The incidence of theft [horse] and background of the thieves, the limitations of government response, and above all the reactions of peasants themselves reveal much about rural conditions and outlook, and particularly the balance between state and self-government among Russia's [and the United States] majority."

In Russia as well as the United States, horse thieves could be found operating in gangs with their own networks to identify potential victims and markets for the stolen horses. Horses would be stolen in one area and sold in another to avoid detection. Consider the Talbott Gang that operated out of the southwest part of the Oklahoma Indian Territory in the early 1880s. This gang was one of many that used the Oklahoma Indian Territory as a base, in part, because of the jurisdictional headaches it caused those in pursuit, and the geography seemed to be created with the idea of hiding stolen horses and cattle.[10] Horses stolen in Missouri and Kansas could be hidden in the canyons and caves of the Oklahoma Indian Territory and sold to unsuspecting buyers in Colorado.

Historically, the idea of using state jurisdictional lines to confound pursuit was not a new development in the United States. In the late 1700s in New England "Thirty-three societies were located near state lines, where they served victims of theft who wished to recover stolen goods without engaging the vexations process of extradition. Indeed, thieves recognized that jurisdictional questions could impede the public authorities, and they often planned their operations accordingly."[11] In 1902 there were 219 chapters of the Anti-Horse Thief Association located in Kansas. One hundred and fifty of the chapters were located in fourteen of the counties that bordered Missouri and the Oklahoma Indian Territory with 6,127 members on the rolls. This excludes similar organizations such as the Central Protective Association.

Across the globe, geography also came into play when

stolen horses were hidden in canyons and caves. "The village of Zbeliutka was an ideal headquarters for the thieves because it had a large underground cavern . . . a rendezvous point for stolen horses before they were whisked away across the border to be sold."[12] This bears more than a striking similarity to Mitchell County, Iowa. "Stolen horses were hidden in a cave on the west bank of the Cedar River . . . concealed until the search was disbanded, and then taken out of the country."[13] With little or lax enforcement by the government along the Russian frontier, the various communities engaged in extralegal action to detect, apprehend, and punish horse thieves. Punishment included hanging, beatings, branding, torture, and even banishment.

The responses of the peasants in post-emancipation Russia (the 1880s) to horse thievery showcased the inability of the centralized government to effectively deal with the issue, not unlike what was occurring in the Old West. The horse was too valuable to be lost to theft. The time needed to track down and return stolen horses made it difficult for a farmer to drop his work and chase the outlaws. The Russian peasants went after horse thieves with the same collective action, the same purpose, as was seen in the United States. Their survival depended upon cooperation of neighbors and friends in not just agricultural tasks, but in the detection and apprehension of criminals. The American cowboys and the Cossacks made their living astride a horse in the 1880s and witnessed the same struggles and responses to the crime of horse theft on the frontier.

Indians, Gypsies & Horse Thieves

Violence, particularly vigilante violence, is much easier to commit against people who are demonized by the actors of the violence. Two groups have been strongly demonized by the white European settlers in general, and regarding horse theft in particular: Native Americans and Gypsys. The Native Americans long held the role of scapegoat for all manner of

thievery, deserved or not. In the Yellowstone area, white settlers agreed that "the Absaroka (Crow) were inveterate and skillful thieves. Men, women, and children were adept at pilfering and the only disgrace connected with it was to get caught at it."[14] On the other hand, a white man stealing horses from a Native American was not considered a crime; it was more along the lines of good fortune.

Keeping the Native Americans a marginalized people made it easier for vigilantes to mete out justice. In May 1853 in the San Fernando Valley, Native Americans stole some horses that belonged to the area Indian Agent. The "noble sentiments" of those who gave pursuit were described by one of the riders:

> We will let those rascally redskins know that they have no longer to deal with the Spaniard or the Mexican, but with the invincible race of American backwoodsmen, which has driven the savage from Plymouth Rock to the Rocky Mountains, and has headed him off here on the western shore of the continent, and will drive him back to meet his kindred fleeing westward, all to be drowned in the great Salt Lake.[15]

As this sentiment demonstrates, not just the Native American was marginalized but the Spanish and Mexican, also, foreshadowing the groups to follow, such as the anti-Catholic, Chinese, and union "leagues."

It wasn't always just stealing a horse that would get a thief into trouble, but whom the horse was stolen from. Discrimination and the demonization of the Native American was much too common in the old west. Steal a white man's horse and you could be hung; steal the horse from a Native American and you would not be given a second thought. It was this attitude that almost saved Billy Downs and California Ed. Billy Downs had garnered a reputation of stealing horses and feasting on beef with dubious origins. One year on July 4, the Montana vigilantes ordered Billy Downs and California Ed from their home to answer charges of stealing horses and

killing cattle. Quick to admit to stealing horses from Indians, they held fast to their story of never stealing from white men. Normally this would have resolved itself as a simple misunderstanding, but when the horses in their pens were studied twenty-six of them had the brands of white men. Stealing from white men could not be tolerated so they were quickly taken to a nearby grove, sturdy trees were selected, and Billy Downs and California Ed were hung.

The *Anti-Horse Thief Weekly News* (1902) tells the story of the early days of Topeka, Kansas, when there were three brothers who were known to be the terror of the area. Killing was "their idea of a humorous incident . . . And what was worse in [those] days they stole horses." One of the brothers, Ike, had been drinking when he met Fourchey, a Native American who was also drunk. "They both mounted the Indian's pony, Fourchey in the saddle and 'Ike' riding behind. After a series of blood curdling whoops the pair started toward an Indian village on Blacksmith creek, but reaching the present site of Washburn college, 'Ike' decided that he was too proud to ride with a native American, so he playfully stabbed Fourchey in the heart, rolled him off in the trail and getting in the saddle, as befitted a white man of magnitude, rode back to town and absorbed some more fire water." The fact that a cold-blooded murder could be described as a playful stabbing, by itself, showed the attitude of many early pioneers towards Native Americans.

The Anti-Horse Thief Association accepted Native Americans into their organization, but it still took some convincing as is evidenced in the following story that appeared in the *Anti-Horse Thief Association Weekly News* in 1902:

> Our lodge is composed of the best material in the land, in more than one. We are a bunch of men standing as one. This lot of men is composed of full blood Cherokee, half breed, and the white men. We are proud of our union. We use interpreters in the lodge so as to make those understand

> who do not talk English. Our Vice-president is a full blood Indian who talks both languages fluently. Our treasurer is a full blood who does not speak English. . . . We have not had any thief to catch since we organized over a year ago but I can promise one thing sure, if our lodge should strike his trail we would get him, as a full blood Indian can beat the world trailing anything.[16]

Another group that had long been blamed for horse theft was the Gypsies. The caption under an illustration of Hungarian Gendarmes from the September 2, 1899 issue of *The Graphic*—a British weekly newspaper—states that the Gypsies who live in Hungary are all horse thieves and difficult to capture. An 1883 article published in the *New York Times* titled "Horse-Stealing as an Art; An English Gypsy's Operation in America" tells the story of William Temple, a full-blooded Gypsy, who left England and in 1866 selected twenty-five "of his kind wandering about the country" to create a gang of horse thieves. Each member took one of six roles in the gang: prospectors, actual workers, runners, doers, gig-workers, and livery-racket men.

Prospectors had to be able to act and assume the different disguises of a stock-buyer, horse trainer, doctor, or any other sort of man who would not garner attention in the shopping for horses, when in fact he would be attempting to determine where the most valuable horses were kept, the security, and escape routes. After the intelligence was reported to the gang headquarters, the actual workers would be sent out to remove the horses. Typically young, fearless, and expert horsemen, the actual workers would soon turn the horses over to the runners. The runners would take the horse and ride it some distance to a stock farm owned by the gang. Stock farms were located in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Ohio.

Once a stolen horse arrived at a stock farm the "doers," the artists of the gang, would set about in a process of altering the

appearance of the horse. Some of the techniques included clipping, dyeing, altering brands, and singeing. Many times the appearance change would be so dramatic that the horse could be sold in the same area from which it was stolen! The gang also had a rule never to steal wagons or harnesses from farming neighborhoods. In cities and large towns the gig-workers and livery-racket men would ply their trade. Gig-workers would watch the homes of leading physicians who would drive alone and leave their horses at the homes of patients, where they would be quickly untied and spirited away by the gig-workers. The champion gig-worker of the gang was known as "Dr. Poles."

Working in the livery-racket meant that one would show up to town well dressed with valuable-looking luggage and spend money freely. They would make many "business" trips in the outlying areas renting rigs, returning as promised, and paying promptly. Once a pattern had been established and trust obtained, the livery-racket man would then hire the best team and rig for a pleasure drive never to return. When the gang was broken with arrests, and reported by the press, Gypsies and horse thieves seemed to be inseparable in the minds of many. Another close association with horse theft was war.

War, What's it Good For?

Of all the scars that war bestows upon man, often it is the scars not seen that have the most lasting impact. At the end of the French and Indian War (1763) many men were released from their militia duties and returned to their homes in Pennsylvania, Virginia, and the Carolinas. The sudden transition to civilian life proved difficult for men "who for years had been accustomed to Murder & Pillage." The veterans of war in the backcountry, being forever hyper-vigilant, found themselves "chusing a life of Idleness . . . form'd ymselves into Gangs, and rang'd over, & laid under Contribution y whole Continent."[17] Horse theft proved to

be a crime that offered excitement and profit for those who survived. Consider the case of Winslow Driggers.

> Some outlaws were corrupted by the disorder and license that accompanied the Cherokee War. Winslow Driggers, for instance, came from the Peedee area and was probably related to Mark Driggers, a landholder on the little Peedee. As a youth of twenty, Driggers fought in the militia under Captain Alexander McIntosh during the Cherokee War and sometime thereafter became an outlaw. Ten years later, a thorough villain, he returned to the Peedee at the head of a marauding gang.[18]

The story of Winslow Driggers was a very familiar one throughout the history of the United States. The aftermath of war seemed to have brought about waves of expansion and crime. The anti-horse-thief movement arose "spontaneously" after the Revolutionary War. This is easy to understand, for during the Revolutionary War the use of, and corresponding demand for, horses spiked. Redcoats and state militias alike were quick to "release" horses held "captive" by farmers. The Revolutionary War, for many of the colonials, "debased public authority." "After the war [Revolutionary], armed, rootless men drifted home to find few economic opportunities awaiting them. The war also disrupted traditional social hierarchies, making it difficult for local notables to impose order through position."[19] Law and order seemed to apply only to a select and privileged few while the rest experienced a void that the criminal quickly exploited. In 1793 the Woodstock Connecticut Theft Detecting Society was established because "horse stealing had become an occupation."[20] Volunteerism during the war gave the public further skills needed to create anti-horse-thief societies. The number of anti-horse-thief societies exploded throughout New England. As the expansion of the country moved west, a second anti-horse-thief movement "spontaneously" arose at the start of the Civil War, exploding in number by the end of the war.

The Civil War brought a high demand and corresponding high prices for good horses. Both Union and Confederate forces made attempts to legally obtain horses, and when the legitimate sources ran dry, there was a flourishing black market. Many troops engaged in the routine behavior of raiding towns and farms for needed supplies during long and extended campaigns. "Horses had been taken as needed from the beginning. This was the custom of cavalrymen, both Union and Confederate. It not only gave the raiders fresh mounts along the way, it denied them to their pursuers."[21]

As the scarcity of horses increased, so did the actions of the horse thief. In 1861 Kansas, "organized gangs of horse thieves threatened to sweep the boarder clean of livestock." The standard *modus operandi* of these gangs was to reconnoiter border farmers and ranchers, identify those who seemed to be politically indifferent, "accuse him of disloyalty, then despoil him of his wealth. With a good horse going for hundreds of dollars on the black market, the rewards were great."[22]

On September 11, 1856 the Kansas territorial governor, John W. Geary, issued a proclamation to disband all militia and other armed organizations. The fight between anti- and pro-slavers was seen by many victims as acts of terrorism. "The problem of horsestealing is one of more than passing importance in this stage of the story of Kansas and its leaders, although it has been customary to ignore it."[23]

The winter of 1856-57 saw the National Kansas Committee report "during the last war a great deal of damage has been done by the system of pressing horses." Claims to the committee for stolen horses showed that it was a regular practice for followers of John Brown, as well as pro-slavers, to steal horses in Kansas and sell them in Iowa. The money gained would then be used to purchase guns to aid the continuation of the fight that garnered the title "Bloody Kansas." An editorial in the June 20, 1857 edition of the *Herald of Freedom* titled "Be on the Lookout" explained it thus:

> Reader, would you know who were concerned in stealing and running off horses to Iowa last summer and autumn; and who opposed the pacific efforts of Gov. Geary to restore tranquility to this distracted territory? Would you know who it is that is desirous for another collision; and who, as soon as the strife should open would be seen on some honest man's horse making all possible speed to Iowa again that he might sell the horse, and return for another. Go into the street at any time of day in Lawrence, and you will find him denouncing the Herald of Freedom, threatening to read the editor out of the Free State Party, and branding him with being a renegade to the cause of freedom.
>
> For the last week we have been writing down the names of a number of young men of the character given above. Persons visiting Lawrence will have no occasion to see a list of those names; but if the same policy is pursued in the future that has been in the past, our forty-two thousand readers in the East shall have the pleasure of seeing those names, to the end that they can see whether they recognize any old acquaintances. The persons to whom we allude will be particularly bitter during the next few weeks, mark that, and among that number is one reporter for the Eastern press, whose pen has dipped in gall for several months whenever he alluded to our paper.[24]

As Szymanski (2005) pointed out, the surge in anti-horse-thief societies after the Civil War was primarily a western phenomenon and as a result "antitheft societies, along with other regional associations, declined more in the urban Northeast than in other, more rural, parts of the country." The most likely reason for the decline cited was the corresponding increase in police forces in the smaller cities and towns. Following the Civil War there was widespread distrust of law enforcement in the western frontier. Many saw the boom towns as a feudal system, where the landed gentry who did not serve in the war saw the law as a device that applied to others and had the law enforcement officers in their pocket. "That the Civil War was followed by a

renewed outbreak of crime throughout the country is a well documented fact."[25] The spike in horse theft in post-war Kansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma often was committed by war veterans. Post war saw gangs made up of ex-guerrillas from both Union and Confederate troops pillaging and seeking revenge for wartime acts and battles won and lost.

In Missouri:

> Numerous armed bands, each protecting its own interests, clashed in the countryside. Legal protection was often unavailable. All this was not merely the last gasp of the Lost Cause; it was not a simple reflection of Union/Confederate divisions. Many local ex-Confederates, for example, opposed the James-Younger gang. The Confederate background of the outlaws certainly won them some sympathy, but only within the local context of chaotic, factional disorder.[26]

The result was the creation of several vigilante and self-protection groups, including anti-horse-thief societies.

Study any country that has been embroiled in war and it is apparent that destruction is often not limited to lives and property but spreads to the very fabric of the country's social institutions. "The young men who returned from the four-year struggle had come of age while in the service, and regulations accepted as a matter of course by the youths of 1861 were challenged by the veterans of 1865."[27] Attempts to reestablish law and order, to repair the tear in the fabric caused by the war took many forms, such as the temperance movement and the various manifestations of anti-horse-thief societies. These societies offered the returning men an organization formed along military lines with members who shared similar experiences, and the ability to ensure some control in the reestablishment of law and order in their communities.