

Manny Kicks Long Ear Lore

By Chris Stuckenschneider

CHAPTER 2: We're Royal to the Core

Kickin' it today, thanks to a pail of oats, a tastier treat than Fruit Loops sprinkled with candy corn. Speaking of corn, the tasseled kind with silky hair and yellow kernels, mules like me once were used extensively for agricultural purposes.

Sometimes I shorten that word, use it as a nickname for a mule pal from Texas, Maggie the Aggie. She's rippling rural, and cute to boot.

Whoa, better harness the humor on that hottie. I've got history to cover. You'll recall from the first chapter, that mules have donkeys for dads. But our breed's Big Daddy is President George Washington.

He was not only a statesman, but an extraordinary equestrian, known far and wide for his skill in the saddle.

In history books on the Revolutionary War, you've probably seen GW pictured on Nelson, his prancing, white steed. After the war, Washington didn't turn in his black boots, he returned to his family plantation, Mount Vernon, and became a smartly turned out gentleman farmer, but one who wasn't afraid to get his hands dirty.

Washington was innovative and he developed methods

Lifelike sculpture of George Washington at age 45. Mount Vernon Ladies' Association.

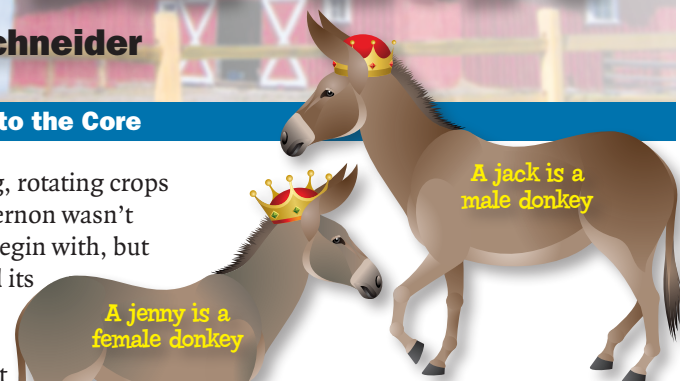
for improving farming, rotating crops and the like. Mount Vernon wasn't a small enterprise to begin with, but Washington increased its size until it comprised 8,000 acres on five farms. He realized that mules would outshine horses in handling heavy farm work, and set his sites on developing a strong breed.

There were already donkeys in the United States, but they were too small to be very effective. What Washington needed was an Andalusian Donkey from Spain.

In 1785, the King of Spain sent Washington two jacks and two jennets. Though the animals sound like Jack and Jill, they really have nothing at all in common with the nursery rhyme—there was no hill, other than the one Washington probably had to climb to get the king to send him what he wanted. But perhaps there was a pail; donkeys have to drink, after all. And come to think of it there was a crown of sorts in both stories.

Back to the European jacks—one didn't make it to America. He died along the way, sad to say. But the other, Royal Gift, arrived safely, and Washington was so happy he could have danced on the head of a quarter. He then received a Maltese jack, a black jack named Knight from Malta, even though he arrived on American shores in the daytime.

Washington bred the Spanish and Malta jacks with some mighty nice mares, and – bingo, bango, bongo, Compound resulted, the first breeding jack born in the U.S.



So began the American Mammoth Stock, (Jack Stock) mule superstar ancestors I'm really proud of, a respectable race with royal roots that has revolutionized our nation's history from east to west and north to south.

Mules didn't just make farm life easier. When the U.S. began to expand westward, mules pulled pioneer wagons, and when homesteaders claimed their land, mules carried and dragged logs to help build homes.

Hopefully, I'm winning readers over. As Ms. Aretha Franklin says in her song, it is all about "R-E-S-P-E-C-T. Find out what it means to me" in the next chapter when I come to you with more mule facts, stories, and a song, too.

Just a little mule humor!

Mule Links to Learnin'



1 Meet George Washington on his home turf, www.mountvernon.org.

2 Read children's book, "George Washington's Birthday: A Mostly True Tale," by Margaret McNamara.

Kickin' Quote: "My favorite animal is the mule. He has more horse sense than a horse. He knows when to stop eating—and he knows when to stop working." Harry S. Truman

Common Core Standards:
R.CCR.1, R.CCR.2, R.CCR.3, R.CCR.4, R.CCR.5, R.CCR.7,
W.CCR.4, SL.CCR.3, L.CCR.4