

## Fred Barton and the Warlords' Horses of China: How an American Cowboy Brought the Old West to the Far East

Larry Weirather



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In the years before World War I, Montana cowboy Fred Barton was employed by Czar Nicholas II to help establish a horse ranch--the largest in the world--in Siberia to supply the Russian military. Barton later assembled a group of American rodeo stars and drove horses across Mongolia for the war-lords of northern China, creating a 250,000 acre ranch in Shanxi Province.

Along the way, Barton became part of an unofficial U.S. intelligence network in the Far East, bred a new type of horse from Russian, Mongolian and American stock and promoted the lifestyle of the open range cowboy. Returning to America, he married one of the wealthiest widows in the Southwest and hobnobbed with Western film stars at a time when Hollywood was constructing the modern myth of the Old West, just as open range cowboy life was disappearing.

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