

Cattle Ranching



The Days of the Mission Vaqueros

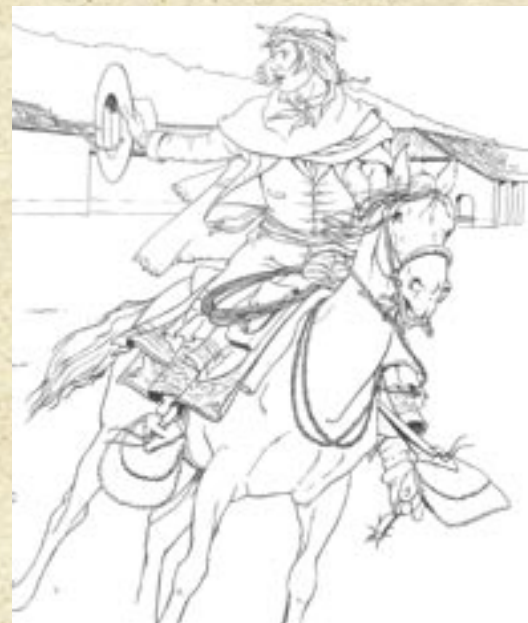
When the Spanish arrived in California, new animals and industries were introduced to the Native American peoples. Spanish animals like horses, mules, and oxen brought new forms of transportation besides traveling by foot or canoes.

Other animals introduced included cattle, hogs, goats, sheep, and chickens. These animals changed food sources and industries. For the most part, Spanish industry was closely linked to cattle for tallow and hides and sheep for cloth production.

All of the new animals were the responsibility of the two resident padres of the mission. The padres needed to manage the herds of cattle, and because they could not take care of all the ranching duties, they trained and entrusted the herds to specially selected Native American men called vaqueros, or cowboys.

The Native American men were tested in strength, endurance, and trustworthiness. The job involved leaving the Mission for weeks at a time, and the padres had to be confident the men would fulfill their duties.

Those who passed the test, learned roping, horse saddling, throwing, riding, rounding, branding, slaughtering, hide skinning, tallow removal, and much more. Skilled vaqueros worked 12-14 hour days, woke early (4AM), and went to bed early (8PM). Sleeping conditions were rough and meals were basic. Life was demanding for Mission vaqueros, but their work contributed to the Mission's success and overall self-sufficiency.



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