

Horsemanship and the *Californio Vaquero*

Whenever *vaqueros* (cowboys) got together in leisure there was sure to be hilarity and horseplay. They were always ready to place a bet, take up a dare, or enter some competitive game. In one game, a coin was placed under each knee and held tight against the saddle. In order to win, the coin had to be in place after the rider had galloped over several closely set hurdles and returned, weaving in and out, to the judge, where he brought the horse to a sliding halt.

The group might also try *carrera del gallo*, a popular sport involving a live cock buried with only its head above the ground. At a signal, a rider started off at full speed from a few feet away, leaned down over the side of the pony, and with a quick swoop grasped the cock by its neck and pulled it out of its dirt bed. If he swung back in the saddle with the rooster in his hand, he won his bet and received shouts of approval from the crowd.

Another game at these gatherings was the *juego de la vara*, the game of the rod. A ring of horsemen was formed. Each horseman faced the center with his right hand open and held behind him. One rider rode around the outside of the circle. He chose one of the players, thrust a yard-long rod into his hands and rode away. The receiver dashed after him. If he could overtake him, he was allowed to hit him over the shoulders with the rod. Only by fast, skillful horsemanship could the first player avoid a drubbing.

--Adapted from *Californios*, Jo Mora, Jo Mora Publications, Garden City, NJ, 1949.

Questions:

- Why were horsemanship skills important to a *vaquero*?
- Would you have enjoyed the *Californios* games? How did the *Californios* treat animals?

Sanchez Adobe



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Living History Program Teacher's Guide

In this hands-on living history program, your students will experience life on the Mexican ranchos. Among the activities they will participate in are making adobe bricks, grinding corn, roping a "bull," and making candles. They will also have the opportunity to tour the adobe.

To help your students make the most of this outing, we suggest that you review the history of the area and the history of the Sanchez Adobe site. We have also listed some activities you may want to do with your class before and after your program at the adobe.

Enjoy your visit to the Sanchez Adobe and this chance to relive history.

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History of the Sanchez Adobe Site

The oldest objects found at the Sanchez Adobe site are from the **Ohlone** village of *Pruristac* (pre-1769). The Ohlone were hunters and gatherers who had a rich material culture. Tools, weapons, and jewelry they created from bones, stones, and shells have been recovered. The Ohlone had many uses for the variety of plants that grew in the area. For example, tule was used for making houses, boats, mats, women's skirts, decoys, strings, and for food.

Spanish explorers looking for a great bay came to the Peninsula in 1769. Later, Spanish missionaries established a mission outpost called *San Pedro y San Pablo* at the site. The Spanish introduced agriculture to the area. They grew corn, beans, wheat, peach trees, quince trees, and grape vines. The food grown at the site supported the inhabitants of Mission Dolores.

Francisco Sanchez was an *alcalde* (mayor) of present-day San Francisco. In 1839, **Mexican** Governor Alvarado granted 8,926 acres to him in present-day Pacifica. Sanchez operated a rancho at the site. Cattle were raised for their hides and tallow. The hides could be made into leather goods such as saddles or boots. The tallow was used to make soap and candles. The hide and tallow were traded for goods that could not be made locally. Sanchez built his adobe home between 1842-1846.

In 1871, **American** Edward Kirkpatrick bought the house. In the early 1900s, the adobe became the Hotel San Pedro serving tourists traveling on the new Ocean Shore Railroad. Near the coast, the adobe became a speakeasy serving smuggled alcohol during Prohibition. In later years, it served as an artichoke shed.

In 1947, San Mateo County bought the Sanchez Adobe as a historic site. In 1953, restoration returning the building to its Mexican-era appearance was completed. A county park, it is interpreted by staff and volunteers of the San Mateo County Historical Association.

Activities

- Adobe is a mixture of mud and straw used to make bricks. Discuss what adobe is with your students. Why was it necessary to use straw or other “temper” in making adobe bricks?
- An Adobe brick is 10” wide by 17” long by 3” high. The Sanchez Adobe is 22’ wide, 66’ long, and 18’ high. The bottom story (9’ high) has two rows of bricks. Estimate the number of bricks used to build the Sanchez Adobe.
- Discuss the different kinds of food eaten on a *rancho*. What foods were different from the foods the Ohlone ate before the arrival of the Spanish?
- After your visit, review how corn was ground using a *mano* and *metate*. Try making tortillas from *masa* (corn meal).
- Think of all the possible products and goods cattle give us. What part of the cow was called the California Dollar? What part was used to make candles and soap?
- Discuss the methods of transportation available in the 1850s. How were hides transported?
- After your visit, experiment to see how long one hand-dipped candle burns. How many would be necessary to light the Adobe for one week? How would the Adobe smell?
- Research other ways of making candles.
- Construct a timeline of the Sanchez Adobe site. Be sure to include the Ohlone village of Pruristac, the mission outpost, and the construction of the Sanchez Adobe.