

STATEWIDE GUIDE TO DINING, ENTERTAINMENT & FINE ART

GARDENS
SOUTHWEST
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SOUTHWEST SPIRIT

yesterday and
today, from the hallmark
designs of the Fifties in Tucson
to the new mountaintop retreat of
Western balladeer Dolan Ellis



EARTHCARE

PRESERVING THE PRIDE OF THE CONQUISTADORS

BY ELIZABETH AL-HAZZAM DAWSARI & GAIL PEARL

WHEN YOU THINK OF THE Old West, you think of the horse, just as "Africa" conjures up visions of the elephant. Most people have seen television specials about our world's diminishing numbers of animals—poachers wiping out African elephants, developers cutting down the forest home of orangutans, etc. But, who would dream that something similar nearly happened in Arizona?

Sadly, a small and unique band of Spanish mustangs, whose ancestors came to the New World with the Conquistadors, was designated for elimination because the federal government planned to reintroduce yet another diminishing species, the masked bobwhite quail. Only a handful of people saw history slipping away and wanted to preserve the doomed creatures.

The crusade began at the end of 1989, when Barbara Rustin, secretary of the Spanish Mustang Registry, received information

from the Bureau of Land Management regarding a herd of horses on the Arizona/Mexico border in Arivaca, Arizona. She asked Marye Ann Thompson, a Willcox resident and registrar of the Spanish Mustang Registry, to confirm the claim that these horses were descended from foundation stock whose his-

ory was traceable to Padre Kino.

The saga of Spanish horses in the New World began when they were shipped to New Spain with the Conquistadors to be war horses. Demand for them was so intense that ranches were established in the Caribbean to breed horses destined for the New World conquest.



Members of the Spanish Mustang Registry visiting the Wilbur-Cruce Ranch in Arivaca before the roundup kept a respectable distance as Spanish mustang herd sires battled it out for dominance.

After a gruesome Atlantic voyage in 1493, survived only by the hardiest, the first horses arrived in Santo Domingo. From 1519 to 1548, the ships of Cortez, Narvaez, DeSoto, Alvarado and Coronado landed, bringing 1782 horses and mules. In April, 1598, Juan de Onate crossed into New Mexico from Mexico bringing 7000 horses, donkeys, cattle and sheep. He became the governor of New Mexico, and established a horse breeding settlement near Santa Fe, the most important distribution center for horses at the end of the 16th Century.

Nearly a century later, the livestock "industry" was profoundly affected by a Jesuit missionary. Padre Daniel Angelo Marras, assigned to San José de Matape, a mission of the Camino Real in Mexico, started with 600 head of breeding stock. By 1681 he had increased this to in excess of 50,000 head!

In 1687, Jesuit Padre Eusebio Francisco Kino established his home base, mission Nuestra Señora de los Dolores, at Cosari in the Pimeria Alta. Padre Kino was a stockman and a priest. He kept large herds of cattle,

sheep, goats and horses to supply local needs and to be used in stocking new missions.

"He did exactly as Marras had done—he also begged breeding stock and increased the herds into the tens of thousands. Most of the Sonoran missionaries benefitted from the solid foundations Marras laid down, although few were as successful as Marras or Kino," according to Father Charles W. Polzer of the University of Arizona, who authored the *Kino Guide II*.

According to Marye Ann Thompson, "The actual Kino records are in the archives of Spain and in private collections. In them is proof that he furnished herds of breeding horses to each new mission.

Padre Kino's horses probably made up most of the seed stock of northern Mexico and southern Arizona. Mission Dolores was a very large horse breeding center in the early 1700s, and the area, including nearby Magdalena, produced horses for 150 years."

Alexander Humboldt, 18th Century scientist and traveler, wrote that "the horses of northern Mexico were as fine as those of Chile, and exportation of them to Natchez and New Orleans increased yearly."

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Mrs. Eva Antonia Wilbur-Cruce, author of *A Beautiful, Cruel Country* and last family member of the Wilbur-Cruce ranch, was happily present at the dedication of her Spanish mustangs' new home at Pioneer Arizona Living History Museum.



The Pioneer Arizona museum's vaquero escorts the youngest members of the Spanish Colonial herd to new homes during the dedication ceremonies.

