

# Vaquero Heritage Days 2016

Benefiting St. Francis Retreat on Historic Rancho San Justo

11/15

## Of Interest.....

**California Vaquero Background:** The original Spanish & Mexican vaqueros were part of Mission history during late 1700s known for their skills in horsemanship, riata roping and handling herds of cattle and livestock which numbered in hundreds of thousands on vast Mission ranchlands. During the Rancho era in the 1800s, vaqueros continued their skills on the many Mission and Rancho land-grants. The “best” of the vaqueros were often called “Californios” – a name used today when acknowledging those who excel in vaquero-style horsemanship skills, use of gear and knowledge in early California vaquero methods of making spade-bit bridle horses. These skills have been handed down through generations, and today masters of vaquero techniques share their knowledge of horsemanship, stockmanship and handmade gear along with talented artisans who create the highly detailed silver bits, spurs, braided rawhide gear and leather carved saddles – styles derived from our vaquero heritage. Media and public has shown overwhelming interest in understanding this lifestyle, and many horse enthusiasts have begun seeing the benefits of the slow, easier techniques of horse and livestock handling and importance of respect, honor and integrity in day-to-day life. The California vaquero has great significance in our heritage and is acknowledged around the world.

**California Vaquero-style Events:** Only a few dedicated traditional vaquero-style events continue to be held in California. All events feature selected vaquero-style artisans, historians, exhibits, vaquero horsemen demonstrations, and when space allows, riata roping competitions and cattle work. Selected artisans, historians and vaquero-style horsemen welcome the opportunity to take part in our San Juan Bautista Show & Sale, an event held on historic land where vaqueros lived and worked during the Mission and Rancho eras.

**Vaquero Heritage Days:** The original 2-day 2010 event was held at Mission San Juan Bautista’s parish hall “Casa Maria”; proceeds benefited the Mission Preservation Fund. The event was the first of its kind to be held at a California Mission. The 2012 & 2014 were each a 3-day event, hosted by Franciscan Friars at St. Francis Retreat on Historic Rancho San Justo in San Juan Bautista, the location where early vaqueros rode and roped during Mission days, the Rancho era 1800s, and into the 1900s. Proceeds benefited the Retreat Center. The 2016 event will be held again at St. Francis Retreat. Vaquero Heritage Days has attracted thousands of visitors around the globe. The serene, historic environment is reminiscent of early California.

**St. Francis Retreat/Rancho San Justo:** Mission San Juan Bautista’s vast ranchland was divided into “ranchos” in 1833 with Rancho San Justo covering 34,615 acres. A portion of this rancho, 2 miles from the Mission housed families and vaqueros. In 1947 Franciscan Friars purchased a 73 acre portion with its historic charm and structures for use as a retreat center offering conference facilities for non-profit organizations, group meetings & spiritual solitude. *Vaquero Heritage Days* proceeds help sustain this property – a significant piece of history.

**Join us in honoring the heritage and traditions of the California Vaquero!**