

## **Animals of the Sonoma Mission**

### **Cattle**

Cattle provided the valuable skins and fat that were exported for the Hide and Tallow trade. Mission cattle were descendants of the Spanish Mission stock, slim bodied with longhorns, like Texas longhorns. Their colors were spotted red and white, black and white, and tan and white, also, solid black and some were red with white feet with a white line down their backs.

Mission Uses: Meat for cooking, meat dried for jerky. Rawhide (untanned leather) becomes soft when soaked, it was cut into strips and woven to make reatas (ray-ah-tahs), soles for shoes, and it was used to hold beams together in construction. Soft tanned leather uses were: rugs, bedding, window coverings, saddle leather, and shoes.

Trade Values: Whole Rawhide cowhides were the most important Rancho product sold in California, called "California Banknotes" worth about \$1 to \$2 apiece. They were sold to ships from Britain and the United States, the Rawhide was made into shoes and belts for running the machinery in factories.

### **Cattle Tallow**

The fat was rendered from the cattle and boiled down until it turned to tallow.

Mission Uses: Melted fat was used to make candles, soap, greasing cart axles, and as weather proofing on sails and clothing.

Trade Values: Tallow was sent to huge candle making operations in Peru, and also used to make explosives for mining in South America. For shipping, the melted tallow was poured into leather bags and sewn shut.

### **Cattle Horns**

Mission Uses: When the horns from cattle are boiled they become soft and can be carved, cut, and molded into useful objects like spoons, combs, and powder horns.

### **Horses**

Mission Uses: Horses were used exclusively for riding, never for farm work. They were small fast animals with remarkable endurance. The Mares (females) were never ridden. The tail hair was sometimes cut to make horsehair ropes, called mecates (mah-cah-tays). On favorite riding horses, owners let the mane and tail grow very long, and for parties, fiestas, and fandangos, the hair was groomed and decorated.

## **Other Mission Animals**

Sheep's wool was spun and woven into clothing and blankets. The sheepskin with the hair on was used for bedding. The meat was eaten and the tallow used for candles. The sheep at the Mission were Merino. Burros were ridden by the Padres, used to turn wheels for gristmills, and used to carry loads. Dogs were used by shepherds to keep coyotes and mountain lions away from the herds. Cats helped keep mice away from the buildings and away from stored food.