

The Sheep Trade Industry

by Dona Conchita Lucero

One of the most delightful books I happened across was written by one of our members, John Baxter its title is "Los Carneradas". Since most of our ancestors were involved in the sheep trade one way or the other you may find some family members in this book.

Vasquez de Coronado brought sheep in the 16th century when he came with others soldiers exploring. When Juan de Oñate came with settlers to establish settlements in this vast land they brought 4000 sheep and began the first livestock industry in Nuevo Mexico. Nuevo Mexico exported salt, piñon and hides.

San José de Parella, Mexico was a favorite trade area and it could absorb all of the sheep @ 1.50 pesos and cattle @ 5 pesos.

When De Vargas returned with settlers in 1692 they had to rebuild the livestock industry. The 1697 allocation of livestock in the Rio Abajo area the sheep were the most important. These sheep were the Churros which were the common sheep of northern Spain. They were hardy and could adapt quickly. The Churro sheep used a minimum of water because the vegetation provided the additional moisture required. These sheep are now referred to as the Navajo Churro sheep completely ignoring the fact that the Spanish settlers were the ones who started the industry and showed the Indians how to card, spin and weave the wool. Many of the designs used can be traced back to Celtic and Turkish design amongst others. The Navajos raided the Spanish settlements for sheep and slaves.

Diego Padilla raised his heard into 1700 sheep, 141 cattle and assortment of horses, mule and oxen. The partido system of raising sheep was used in New Mexico which allowed payments to be in the form of livestock usual 20% for those who took a heard to raise and increase a fold.

Some of the big names in the sheep trade industry were Phillip Silva, Jose Diaz de Campo. Don Joseph Reaño de Tagle's estate listed 1,300 withers of all ages and more than 1,000 pregnant ewes. He was a native of Santander, Spain and became on of the first ricos of New Mexico with a fortune valued at 21,460 pesos. When Don Clemente Guiterrez died in 1895 he had \$80,000 pesos. Jose Antonio Baca owned 7000 withers and 13000 breeding yews. By 1827 NM sheep industry had grown to one quarter of a million sheep, wit 65% being in the Alburquerque area. (This brings to mind a trivia question can you name the eight land grants that the sheep represent on the Bernalillo County seal?) There was little change in the quality of the breed.

Many hardships were endured by the individuals raising and trading livestock. To name a few there was the 1828 epidemic broke out which affect the sheep industry in Durango, Mexico and 250,000 head were lost and the constant raiding by the Indians. The epidemic made the long and dangerous trip profitable for New Mexico sheep herders.

The Candalaria family tried to improve the breed with merinos because their wool had more lanolin but their hoofs were too soft and they could not adapt to the roof terrain.

The sheep Industry prices collapsed in 1854 ending the first phase of New Mexico trade with California. Traders watched the open range give way to fenced pastures and the railroads pushed into the territory making the long drives of the past obsolete. The unsung heroes who traveled this country over long dangerous trails have been forgotten as other parts of our rich history go unnoticed.

I hope you will take the time to read this very informative book and hope you enjoy it as much as I did. This is truly a book worth your time and it is really easy reading.