

Museo de Charrería [Charrería Museum], Corner of Isabel la Católica and Jose Maria Izazaga, Mexico City. Monday-Friday 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. No entrance charge.

This museum occupies part of the ancient Convent of Monserrat, which was constructed between 1587 and 1590. The building was restored in 1973 and contains offices and meeting hall of the Federation of Charros, a restaurant open to the general public, a small shop, and the museum. The museum has approximately 4,000 sq. ft. of exhibit area, located in what was the main section of the convent's chapel. Its store carries saddles, lariats, whips, fancy horse gear, hats, clothing, boots, and curios.

*Charrería* is a traditional activity of Mexico (a *charro* is a participant in the sport), and although practiced by relatively few individuals it could perhaps be considered the country's "national sport." It grew out of practical

work done on the *haciendas* from the 1500s onwards, and only in the last 100 years or so has it taken on its modern form as sport. The National Association of Charros was founded in 1921 and the Federation in 1933. Activities performed at *charro fiestas* include: (1) parade of horses and riders, (2) *cala* of the horses, in which the rider enters the ring at a full gallop, coming to an abrupt stop in the center, and then exits backwards, (3) pursuit of a bull on horseback and throwing him by grabbing his tail (*coleadero*), (4) bull and bronco riding, (5) roping bulls and wild mares by trapping their legs (*pialar*), (6) fancy rope spinning (*florear*), and (7) the *escaramuza*, showy maneuvers on horseback by female participants.

The museum's 35 large display cases contain dioramas with figures of men and women dressed in typical clothing, from simple ranch workers' wear to fancy charro outfits; saddles, bits, tack, guns, sabers, lances, and other equipment; and a model of a typical *lienzo* and *rueda*, the keyhole-shaped corridor and ring that are used today for charro events. The saddles and clothing reflect evolution of the activity and the type of people who participated in it. One of the saddles belonged to Pancho Villa; another to the emperor Maximilian. On the walls are paintings, equipment, and small figures; a large photograph of Mexican President Pascual Ortiz Rubio (1929–32), who instituted the *Día del Charro* [Charro Day], September 14; and 10 plaques (in Spanish, English and French) which give a brief history and description of *charrería* from its beginnings in the early 1500s through the disappearance of the great haciendas after the Mexican Revolution, and its emergence as sport. There are also two life-size plaster horses with saddles and bridles and a large scene containing life-size human figures in a dining room with traditional Mexican furniture.

Southeastern Louisiana University

Richard V. McGehee