

This month's theme:  
**Horses**



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The Newsletter of the Idaho State Historical Society's Junior Historian Program

# PROSPECTOR

November, 2005



## Indians and Horses

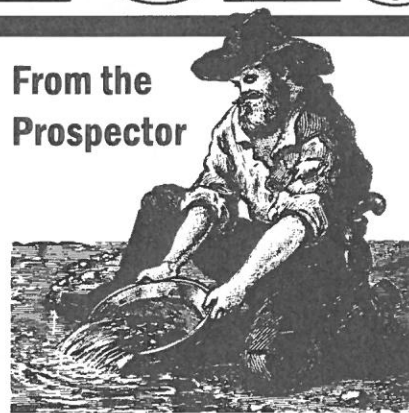
It would be difficult to imagine Native Americans without horses. The images we're familiar with in paintings, photographs, and movies typically show Indians riding across the plains on their great steeds. To most of us, Native Americans and horses go together like fireworks and the Fourth of July. You might be surprised to learn then, that the Indians didn't always have horses. In fact, they lived in North America for thousands of years before the

modern horse arrived. But if Native Americans didn't always have horses, when did they get them? And perhaps more importantly, in what ways did the arrival of these animals change the lives of Native Americans?

It seems that there is no right answer for the first question, but most of the experts who have studied the arrival of the horse in America put the date sometime around 1600-1650. One thing they do agree upon is that it was the

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## From the Prospector



### Howdy Prospectors!

Looks like I got into a bit of trouble this month. I thought everyone would enjoy an issue on horses. After all, how can you learn about the history of the West without horses? Apparently though, there's one critter in Idaho who's not too fond of equines, and unfortunately he works in my office...my mule. He's furious. He thinks if we're going to do an issue on four-legged creatures it should be about mules. Too late now. It's going to take a month of apples and sweet talk to turn his anger back into a smile. Enjoy this month's issue!

*Lucky Noah*

## Indians and Horses Continued

Spaniards who first introduced the horse to Native Americans in the plateaus and deserts of the American Southwest. From there the Indians began to trade horses with each other. In very little time, horses were roaming the high deserts and plains of North America.

By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, tribes east of the Mississippi river also began acquiring horses. But these horses were different from the animals originally introduced by the Spanish. Over time, the Indians had bred horses for the traits they found most useful. Compared to the horses that European traders and settlers brought with them, the Native American horses were stronger, faster, and able to run much further distances without stopping.

This superior breed of horse became an important trade item for the Indians. As European settlers moved westward they brought with them many items that the Native Americans wanted. Horses were traded for everything from clothing and cooking utensils to tools and whiskey. Horses also allowed the Native Americans to offer the Europeans another important trade item, buffalo hides.

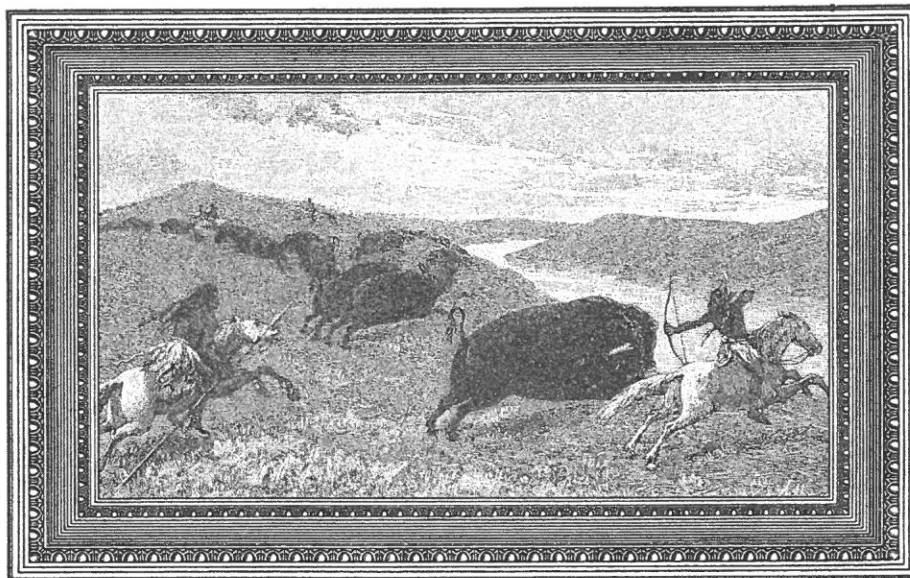
Native Americans had hunted

buffalo long before horses arrived, but hunting a giant animal like a buffalo on foot could be dangerous and frustrating. Horses made hunting buffalo much easier. This new method helped the tribes obtain

place to plant their crops.

One of the problems with this ability to move to new areas was that tribes began to move into the territories of other tribes. Like anybody else, Native Americans are

protective of the lands on which they hunt, fish, grow crops and live, so some tribes became hostile when other Indians began trespassing. Guns were useful for hunting, but became very destructive once people started turning them on each other. Once the tribes had guns, the warfare that broke out between



more food and useful tools. Buffalo hides could be used for everything from clothing to tepee covers. They could also be used for trade. This meant more contact between Native Americans and settlers. Indians soon acquired many of the items the settlers brought with them, including guns and ammunition.

If we think about the ways in which the invention of the automobile or the bicycle changed the lives of those people at that time we can get an idea of how the horse impacted the lives of Native Americans. The horse allowed Indians to travel much greater distances in a shorter time. This meant that they could travel farther distances to hunt, trade, or simply find a better

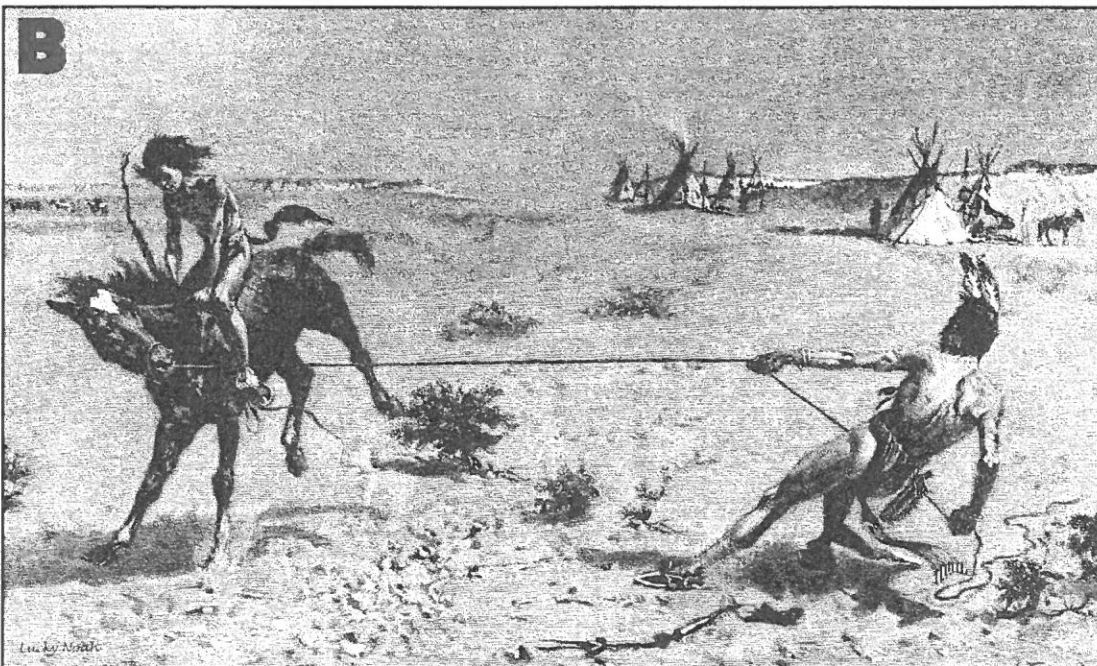
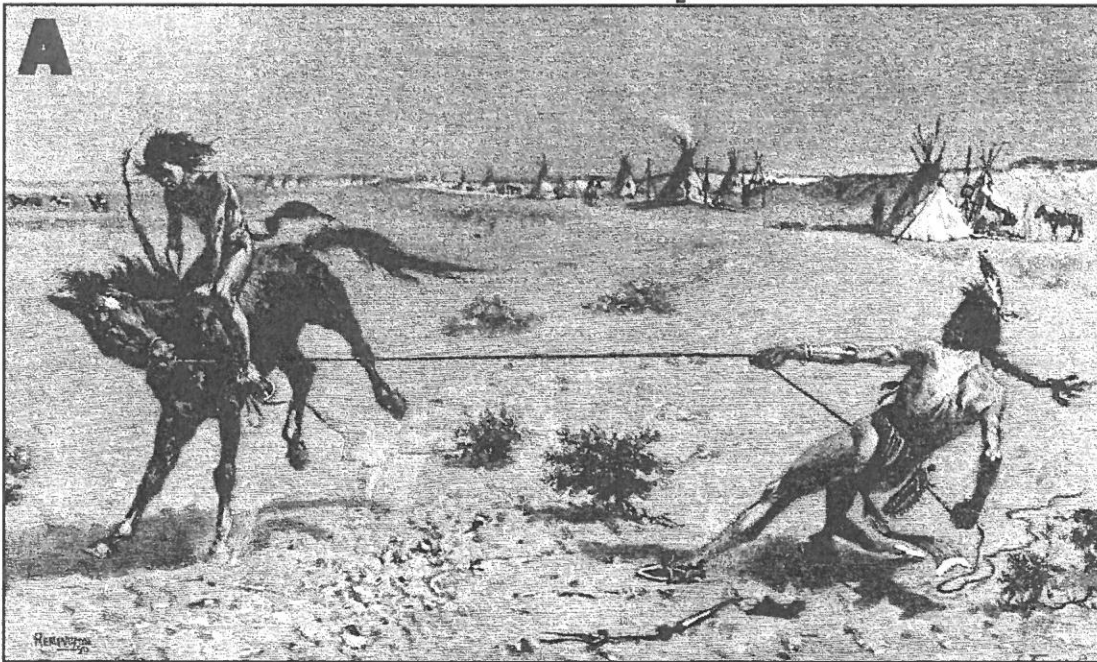
place to plant their crops.

The arrival of the horse meant big changes for Native Americans living in the Western Great Plains and Northwest regions of North America. Horses helped the Indians obtain a better food supply, buffalo hides for warmer clothes, and the ability to move to warmer areas during winter. On the other hand, horse allowed the Indians to obtain some trade items that might cause even bigger changes in the future. ♦

*By Glenn Newkirk*



**Find 9 differences between pictures A and B**



Answers: 1) Horse in background changes directions 2) Extra feather on Indian's head 3) Stripes on Indian's clothing 4) Horse's tail shortens 5) Horse's forehead spot is a heart 6) Bushes change places 7) Teepees disappear 8) Indian's ponytail disappears 9) Artist's signature changes



## Next Month's Activities

**W**ell, we've told you all we know about horses in the West, but we need your help so that we can learn more.

Pick from one of the activities below or make up your own horse project and send it in to our Prospector Headquarters.

We'll take some of your best work and print it in next month's magazine. Remember to include your name, where you're from, and the name of your Prospector chapter. We can't wait to see what you send in!

### **Painted Horses:**

Horses changed the lives of the North American Indians. For the tribes living near the Great

Plains, horses meant that they could travel farther to hunt buffalo. Since they believed their horses were important, many tribes treated them with respect and decorated them with painted shapes and patterns. If you had a horse, how would you decorate it? Show us a picture of your new precious pet and the artwork that would cover its body.

**Horse Race:** A horse is fast, but there are other critters in North America who are known for their speed. What if, when horses first came here, there was a race between all of the animals so see who was the fastest? Write a story about

Appaloosa originally raised by the Nez Perce Indians. But there are many other famous breeds of horses here in America and throughout the world. Pick an interesting breed and do some research on it. What do the horses look like? What

makes the breed special? What part of the world do these horses come from? Write us up a short report and tell the rest of the Prospectors what you discovered.

Send in your work by December 12<sup>th</sup> to:



the great race. Was the horse the easy winner or was it challenged by some of the other speedy wildlife of the West, like the antelope, falcon, or jackrabbit? We can't wait to hear about the great contest!

**A Different Breed:** One of the great horse breeds of the West is the

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610 North Julia Davis Drive  
Boise, ID 83702

Or email it to us at  
[kzwolfer@ishs.state.id.us](mailto:kzwolfer@ishs.state.id.us).