



Spanish-Norman Horse Registry, Inc.

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From the pages of history... traversing the centuries... the mighty chargers of the medieval knights... the valiant steeds of the crusaders... the powerful equines of the conquistadores... now are historically and genetically re-created as Spanish-Norman horses, "the warhorse of the ages as the sporthorse of today!"



The Baroque Breeds

by Christina Keim
Horsemen's Yankee Pedlar; June 2001

The term "Baroque Breeds" is an umbrella that includes such horses as the Andalusian, Lusitano, Lipizzaner and Spanish-Norman. What these breeds share is a common heritage, docile personality, and striking good looks. But the slight differences between the breeds are perhaps what make them most unique, distinguishing themselves not just from each other but the horse world in general.

*"A Horse for the Time Traveler
or the Romantic in Us All"*

The Draw

Breeders of Baroque horses have many reasons for becoming interested in their breed of choice. Perhaps it was the history of the animal, or their athleticism, or maybe they were captivated by the horses' beauty. Tina Veder, who operates [Caballos de Los Christiani](#), an Andalusian and Lusitano breeding farm near Saratoga Springs, New York, has a family tradition of owning these breeds. But her family's relationship with these horses was perhaps unconventional by most American standards.

"My family had [Andalusians and Lusitanos](#) in Europe, in the circus," says Veder. "They are show biz friendly -- they have an easily trained temperaments and super personality, and they're beautiful. They really capture the romance." Veder says that even still, many prospective owners calling or visiting her farm have seen these two breeds in an exhibition at some point in their lives.



For Linda Hamid and her husband Allan, the [Spanish-Norman](#) was a creation they saw in their minds' eye long before they saw it in the flesh. As the co-founders of the breed, the Hamids have a unique perspective on why the Spanish-Norman is so captivating.

"These are the horses of the knights," says Linda Hamid. "My husband is a historian. He determined that the knights' horses must have descended from Spanish stock." With the help of [Dr. E. Gus Cothran of the University of Kentucky](#), the Percheron and [Andalusian](#) were genetically types as descendants of the now-extinct Norman horse of the knights. Both breeds share the genetic markers of Spanish horses. By crossing the two, the [Spanish-Norman](#) was created to simulate the horses once ridden by knights and nobility. This crossing results in a horse that possesses substance, bone and an athletic personality. They are popular as field hunters, according to Hamid, and are also used in medieval games and recreations.

According to information from the [United States Lipizzaner Registry's website](#) ([Lipizzaner](#) is sometimes spelled [Lippizaner](#)), these horses are one of Europe's oldest domesticated breeds of horse, with over 400 years of selective breeding resulting in the horse of today. The breed traces its Spanish roots back to Archduke Charles, who established a stud farm in Lipizza (now Lipica) using imported Spanish Andalusians, [Barbs](#) and Berbers to cross with the native Karst horses. The [Karst horse](#) was small, white and slow to mature, and featured a high stepping gait -- all traits the [Lipizzaner](#) shows today. During the land's occupation by Napoleon, the breed was infused with Arab blood as well. Their longevity, willing and gentle temperaments, and natural flair for dressage have made the [Lipizzan](#) and its crosses highly popular riding horses in Europe and the United States.



Early Training of the Iberian Breeds



Breeders of Baroque horses almost universally agree that their early training is critical to their future development. For starters, they tend to be late bloomers. Neither Hamid nor Veder will begin training their youngsters before they are three years old.

"Every horse in every breed has its good qualities and its obstacles," says Veder "and because the Iberian horse was bred for centuries to perform collected movements, their natural balance is set on their hindquarters. That is why their talent reached its zenith in the upper **FEI** levels of dressage". Veder believes that the correct early training is critical for the Iberians to reach their full potential.

The advice that Veder gives to anyone wanting to train an Iberian for competitive dressage is to spend the required time developing their "pushing power" and their topline. Once you have that foundation in place, the rest of the training follows so easily. For example, Veder says "We don't expect suspension in the trot until the horse reaches the level to learn the passage, because we believe that suspension should be developed out of roundness".



Hamid agrees that her babies need to be started correctly. Since **Spanish-Normans** must have at least fifty percent **Andalusian** blood in their pedigree, it stands to follow that the new breed would share some of the development characteristics with its foundation stock. Hamid says that her breed has a tremendous work ethic.

"They are almost anxious to work," says Hamid. "All different types of trainers endorse the breed for this reason."

The **Lipizzan** is perhaps the slowest to mature of the Iberian breeds, with animals not being fully grown until seven and not fully mature until ten. It is not uncommon for members of this breed to live late into their thirties, however. Similar to the **Andalusian and Lusitano**, the Lipizzaner displays obedience and a desire to please his trainer, yet without losing their proud manner and presence. They show power and grace under saddle and a docile, gentle temperament on the ground. Early training must emphasize a long, lengthened stride with the head stretching toward the bit to allow the

maximum strengthening of the neck and flexibility later in life.

According to the **USLR**, choosing a trainer carefully is critical for the early training of this breed. They are highly intelligent, naturally athletic and very proud. Their trainer needs to be flexible, respectful and use an individualized approach to each animal's training. For example, cues to perform a particular movement must be given only once, as the breed quickly will become dull to the aids if used in a nagging manner.

The Lipizzan features a natural piaffe and passage, and excels in collected work., making them a prime candidate for upper level dressage careers. They are also successfully shown in jumping events, eventing and in harness.

A Glimpse of Fame

The Iberian breeds have always been known for their extravagant appearance and generous attitudes. They were the Horse of Kings, prized in the courts of Europe. They were the Fountainhead of Classical dressage, revered by the Masters of past and present. However, in 1996 the Spanish Equestrian Team competing in their first Olympics in Atlanta, showed the equestrian world first hand the talent, willingness, and athleticism of their beloved Andalusian horses. Since that time, more and more famous competitive riders and trainers are looking to the Iberian breeds and have acquired [Andalusians and Lusitanos](#) for their future dressage stars.

"In California, these horses have been promoted as the horses of the celebrities," says Veder. "But in the northeast, horses must be functional to sell. For so long, as the northern European countries dominated dressage, there was a prejudice against these horses. But as the upper level dressage tests have changed, and dressage has evolved, even the Europeans realized that horses which could naturally do the collected movement will get the high scores.

"The piaffe and passage lead to high scores. Judges now look for a horse that must sit, lowering his hind end and elevating the front; they want a horse that is more classically correct."



Veder points out that the Iberian breeds are naturally more uphill, not so horizontal. The slant of their pelvis, and the manner with which they come under themselves both help them to be more classically correct in the collected work than even many warmblood breeds.

The [Lipizzan](#) has been famous since the [Spanish Riding School](#) Vienna, Austria moved their stallions back in 1955. The school has toured internationally, showcasing the breed's heritage, dressage talent and their natural "airs above the ground". These airs allow the stallions to show their inborn ability to sit onto their hind end and elevate the front as well as leap into the air and kick out their legs, among other feats of strength and

flexibility. Breed fans may also remember the [Disney film *The Miracle of the White Stallions*](#), which tells the true story of General Patton's 1945 rescue of the Lipizzan stallions from a war-torn land.

The [Spanish-Norman](#) breed exploded on the national radar when the Hamids' stallion, [Romántico HHF](#), became the only American bred horse of Spanish descent to win a USET ribbon. And the amazing piece was that the ribbon came at the [Festival of Champions](#) in Gladstone, New Jersey, in [freestyle reining](#), a sport typically dominated by a relic of our cowboy heritage -- the American Quarter Horse.

"We took him to the [Quarter Horse Congress](#) in 1999," says Hamid. "He took a fourth place in freestyle reining there. He was the only non Quarter Horse out of 8500 horses at the show." Hamid says that when [Romántico](#) entered the arena, you could have heard a pin drop, and for a moment they thought they had made a mistake in bringing him to the Congress.

"I think the overall reaction was respect that a larger horse could still be so agile," says Hamid.



Popular Uses

Obviously, the Baroque breeds have excelled as dressage horses, partially because they are among the original horses to have performed in the sport, and partially due to the international renown of the **Spanish Riding School**. But dressage is not the only sport where Baroque and Baroque crosses have been appearing.

The **Spanish-Norman** in particular has been breaking barriers with Romantic's success in the freestyle reining arena. The breed has proved popular especially with men, who Hamid says look to the **Spanish-Norman** as a field hunter.

"I think they appreciate its substance. I have heard so many stories of men looking for a horse of another breed, then choosing the **Spanish-Norman**," says Hamid.



The **Kentucky Horse Park** in Lexington, Kentucky now is featuring a Spanish-Norman mare, Victoria of Fox Run, in its daily Parade of Breeds. Victoria, owned by Victoria McIntire and Ronald Phillips of Fox Run Farm in Richmond, Kentucky, is also being trained to demonstrate many of the medieval games this breed was once used for. The Horse Park is currently working on a program that will demonstrate and showcase these games.

"My biggest market is people who really want to start enjoying their riding," says Veder. "Look at the Olympic tapes, and you will see horses that look more Iberian than ever in their structure. Mostly I get calls from women who ride warmbloods and are just tired. They want a horse they can dance with. A horse with lightness, that they don't have to push."

The **Lipizzaner** has become popular in dressage especially because of its natural self-carriage and even, steady, rhythm and tempo. They have a quiet, steady way of going that appeals to both amateur and professional. Their unflappable nature makes them for show or exhibition.

Contacts

For more information about any of the exciting Baroque breeds, contact the organizations listed below, or any of the breeders advertised in this issue.

- **International Andalusian and Lusitano Horse Association**, 101 Carnoustie North, Shoal Creek, AL 35242; 205-995-8900 (ph) or 205-995-8966 (fax); www.ialha.org; info@ialha.org
- **Spanish-Norman Horse Registry, Inc.**, P.O. Box 985, Woodbury, CT 06798; 203-266-4048 (ph); www.spanish-norman.com
- **United States Lipizzaner Registry**, 707 Thirteenth St. SE, Suite 275, Salem, OR 97301; 503-589-3172 (ph), 503-362-6393 (fax); www.lipizzan.com/uslr.html; USLRoffice@aol.com