

New World Hispanic Heritage Along the Anza Trail

By linking together significant sites along a historic route, long distance trails offer the opportunity to tell more complete stories than a single site can. Along the 1,200-mile Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail from Nogales, Arizona, to San Francisco, California, the National Park Service, in cooperation with its many partners, can tell the story of Spanish colonization and the imprint that its quest for empire left on Arizona and California.

History of the Anza Route

The national trail commemorates the route followed by Anza in 1775–76 when he led a contingent of 38 soldiers and their families to found a presidio and mission at the port of San Francisco in order to occupy and hold the area against foreign incursions. Now officially recognized only in the United States, the route began as far south as Culiacán, Mexico, where Anza began his recruitment.

The story and the route are well-documented in the journals of both Anza and Father Pedro Font, the chaplain of the expedition, translated in Herbert Bolton's five volume work (see refer-

ences). Juan Bautista de Anza, a second generation frontier soldier, gained permission from the viceroy of New Spain to lead settlers to California after proving the overland route was feasible by financing his own exploratory expedition in 1774. In October 1775, Anza left from his presidio at Tubac, the final staging area, with a group of over 240 people and 1,000 head of livestock, most intended to start the mission herds in California. The group suffered one death due to complications after childbirth and added three new babies during its nearly five-month journey from Tubac to Monterey, then the northernmost outpost of Spain.

Maps from NPS brochure.



The most daunting part of the journey was crossing the Colorado desert in California, which took nearly the entire month of December. There they encountered snow and lost many of the livestock to cold, starvation, exhaustion, and lack of water. They were rewarded at the Santa Ana River in Riverside County today by finding an area “entirely distinct from the rest of America which I have seen; and in the grasses and the flowers of the fields, and also in the fact that the rainy season is in winter, it is very similar to Spain” (Font, January 1, 1776).

Of the travelers, 198 stayed as settlers; over half of those were children under 12. Nearly all the settlers were born in the New World, which Spain already had occupied for over 200 years, and were of mixed European, African, and Indian parentage. These settlers and their offspring, along with others who traveled the Anza route until 1781, when the Yuma Indians effectively closed the route, formed the majority of inhabitants of European or mixed race population in California.

Elements of Spanish Colonial Empire

Anza’s identification of an overland route to Alta California and use of it to carry settlers and livestock to populate the area was an integral part of Spanish foreign and colonial policy in the New World, whose goal was to contain England and Russia and extend Spain’s hold upon her territories.

Along the route today can be found vestiges of the three elements of Spanish colonial conquest and occupation: the military, the religious, the civilian. The military, although small in numbers, provided exploration and conquest. Once a region was occupied, a presidial force of 40 to 50 men (even smaller in California) provided a sufficient garrison for a wide area. Because soldiers’ families were present, presidial towns sprang up, and the presidios became the social and political centers of

Alta California. Along the Anza Trail, the military is exemplified in Anza’s Tubac Presidio, an Arizona State Historic Park today; the Presidio of San Francisco, a national park; and the presidios of Santa Barbara and Monterey, California state historic parks.

The religious, in the form of missionaries, either preceded or were escorted by the military into new territory. Like the military,

the church in the Americas was subordinate to the king of Spain. The missionary was a direct royal agent. The institution of the Spanish mission was intended to convert the Indians of a region to Christianity and to keep them in subjection to secure and protect the royal domain from other Indians or foreigners. No Spaniards other than the missionaries, the mission guard of four or five, and an occasional civilian official could stop at the mission or reside there. The missions had the best lands, and with Indian labor, cultivated crops, raised large herds of cattle, and carried on various economic enterprises. Mission land was coveted by the military and civilians.

Along the Anza Trail, one can experience the extent of the Spanish mission plan. In Arizona are the missions of Tumacácori, now a national park, and San Xavier del Bac, a National Historic Landmark, now an active parish. Originally built by Jesuits, they passed to Franciscan hands in 1767 when the Jesuit order was expelled from Spain. In California, the expedition stopped at the missions of the Franciscan chain built at the time: San Gabriel, San Luis Obispo, San Antonio, and San Carlos de Borromeo del Carmelo (Carmel). Others were later built along the route: San Buenaventura, Santa Barbara, Soledad, San Juan Bautista, San Francisco de Asis (Mission Dolores) located by Anza, Santa Clara de Asis, and San José. All are active parish churches today. La Purisima, now a California state park, is along the auto tour route for the Anza Trail.

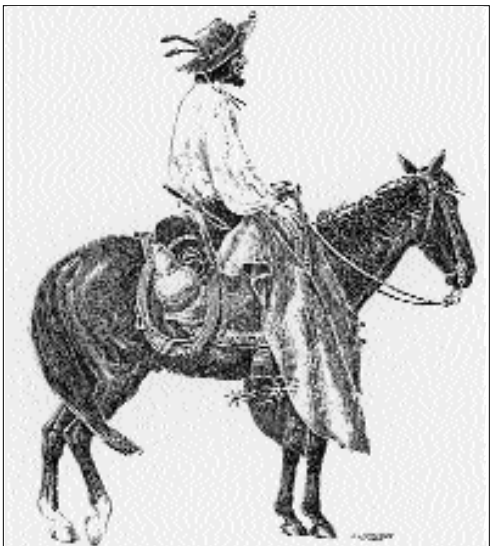
The third element of Spanish conquest, the civilian, is represented along the trail by the pueblos of San José (1777) and Los Angeles (1781). The *comisionados*, governor’s military representative and the chief authority, of these two civil settlements were Anza expedition members, as were nearly the entire group to first settle San José. The pueblo plazas of these two large cities are still vital centers, and the cities take increasing pride in their Hispanic heritage. Some buildings related to the Spanish period are preserved on the plazas in both cities.

Another type of settlement, the private ranch, was unusual in the Spanish period. Of the 600 or so “Spanish land grants” only 20 were actually made in the Spanish period, usually to retired presidial officers. Several went to Anza expedition members or their descendants. From the missions to the ranches, cattle raising was a major occupation along the Anza route from the arrival of the cattle his expedition brought well into this century and, in some areas, to the present day.

The National Park Service Role

The Comprehensive Management and Use Plan for the Anza Trail, approved in October 1996, identifies 119 potential historic or interpretive sites

Sketch by J. Cisneros, *El Paso* from Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail by Don Garate, 1994.





along a designated auto tour route that are related to the Anza expedition, its descendants, and Spanish colonial history. These sites can become official components of the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail through certification, a voluntary process in which a site owner or manager agrees to adhere to National Park Service standards for resource preservation, protection, and public

enjoyment. The official Anza Trail marker will be used only at certified trail locations.

Thirteen percent of the Anza Trail crosses federal lands which, according to the National Trails System Act, automatically become components of the trail. Only two national park units along the route are directly related to the Anza expedition—Tumacácori National Historical Park at the southern end of the trail and the Presidio of San Francisco at the northern end. Therefore, nearly all protection, marking, and interpretation of sites will be accomplished through certification agreements and memoranda of understanding (MOU) with myriad state and local agencies, organizations, and individuals along the route. The National Park Service (NPS) can offer technical and limited financial assistance to certified sites.

The NPS is currently preparing an MOU with the State of California Department of Parks and Recreation to certify 23 park sites associated with the Anza Trail. These sites include some of the most pristine and historic trail segments as well as missions, presidios, adobes, and other vestiges of Spanish colonial rule. Another MOU with the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) will provide for marking the auto tour route with the official marker. The agreement will include Caltrans sharing its cultural resource inventories along highways that are part of the auto route. The NPS will seek similar agreements with the State of Arizona.

Many resource protection measures originate with nonprofit groups or local agencies. For example, in Cupertino, California, local activists led by the county chairperson for the Amigos de Anza, a support organization for the trail, rallied to save from housing construction the knoll from which Anza and Font first viewed the bay of San Francisco. The developer agreed to preserve the knoll as public open space and to interpret the site as part of the Anza Trail.

In Atascadero, a city in San Luis Obispo County, California, the Amigos de Anza chairperson encouraged the city, the county, the mutual

water company, and a nonprofit organization to work together to mark and protect for public use about three miles of the Anza Trail along the Salinas River.

In Riverside County, California, the Anza Trail was a key element in a resource agency receiving funds to acquire for conservation and public use Mystic Lake, originally named "Bucareli" by Anza for the viceroy who authorized his expedition. Protection of an associated habitat corridor will preserve the historic viewshed.

In Arizona, Pima County, where Tucson is located, has recognized the Anza Trail on its county plans and regularly acquires easements from developers along the Santa Cruz River, the Anza route. Last May, the county passed a bond issue which includes funds for the development of the four Anza expedition campsites in the county. The county archeologist has been involved in all these projects and ensures that proper surveys are conducted and protection measures incorporated.

In Santa Cruz County, the Anza Trail Coalition of Arizona has been active in constructing and maintaining 4.5 miles of the Anza Trail made available to the public by a local developer. Recently, the county board of supervisors agreed to pay liability insurance for the Coalition so that it can take over the easement for that section of trail and 10 more miles of trail offered by another developer.

The National Park Service supports the many efforts on behalf of the Anza Trail with letters and technical assistance, as appropriate. When owners and managers request it, the NPS will certify and mark sites and trail segments and work cooperatively to see the Anza expeditions, the Spanish colonial period, and the New World Hispanic culture interpreted for public education and enjoyment.

References

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