

Anza Expedition of 1776



Paths Through a Varied Landscape

In 1775 and 1776, Lt. Colonel Juan Bautista de Anza and Father Pedro Font led an expedition of 240 settlers, soldiers, and others 1,800 miles from Sonora, Mexico to Monterey, California to colonize the Bay Area. Anza and Font then led a much smaller group to choose sites for the mission and presidio in San Francisco, and to explore the East Bay.

Alameda Creek, then a major waterway, flooded the land downstream from here. The surrounding marshes made traveling by horseback impossible, so the Anza Expedition instead rode north through these foothills, on paths most likely created by Indians who had lived here for some 13,000 years.

The lush grasslands covering the hills were dotted with wildflowers and allowed the Expedition great views. The forested streambeds were hard to navigate, though Anza found an accessible crossing of Alameda Creek close to this very spot on March 31, 1776.



This section of Father Pedro Font's map of the Expedition shows the route along the foothills in the southeast bay where travel was relatively easy.

Font's map courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University, Rhode Island
Trail overlay color added by Exhibit Design



Since Anza's time the East Bay landscape has gone through incredible changes; perhaps this painting of a marshland downstream from here is what Anza might have seen when he visited in 1776.

Welcome to the homeland of the Tuibun, an Ohlone-speaking tribe.



Dates and stories taken from the diaries of Anza and Font, courtesy of the Center for Advanced Technology in Education, University of Oregon, www.anza.uoregon.edu.

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