

Anza Expedition of 1776



“...what we see and have before us is not a river, but much water in a pond.”

From Father Pedro Font's diary, April 3, 1776

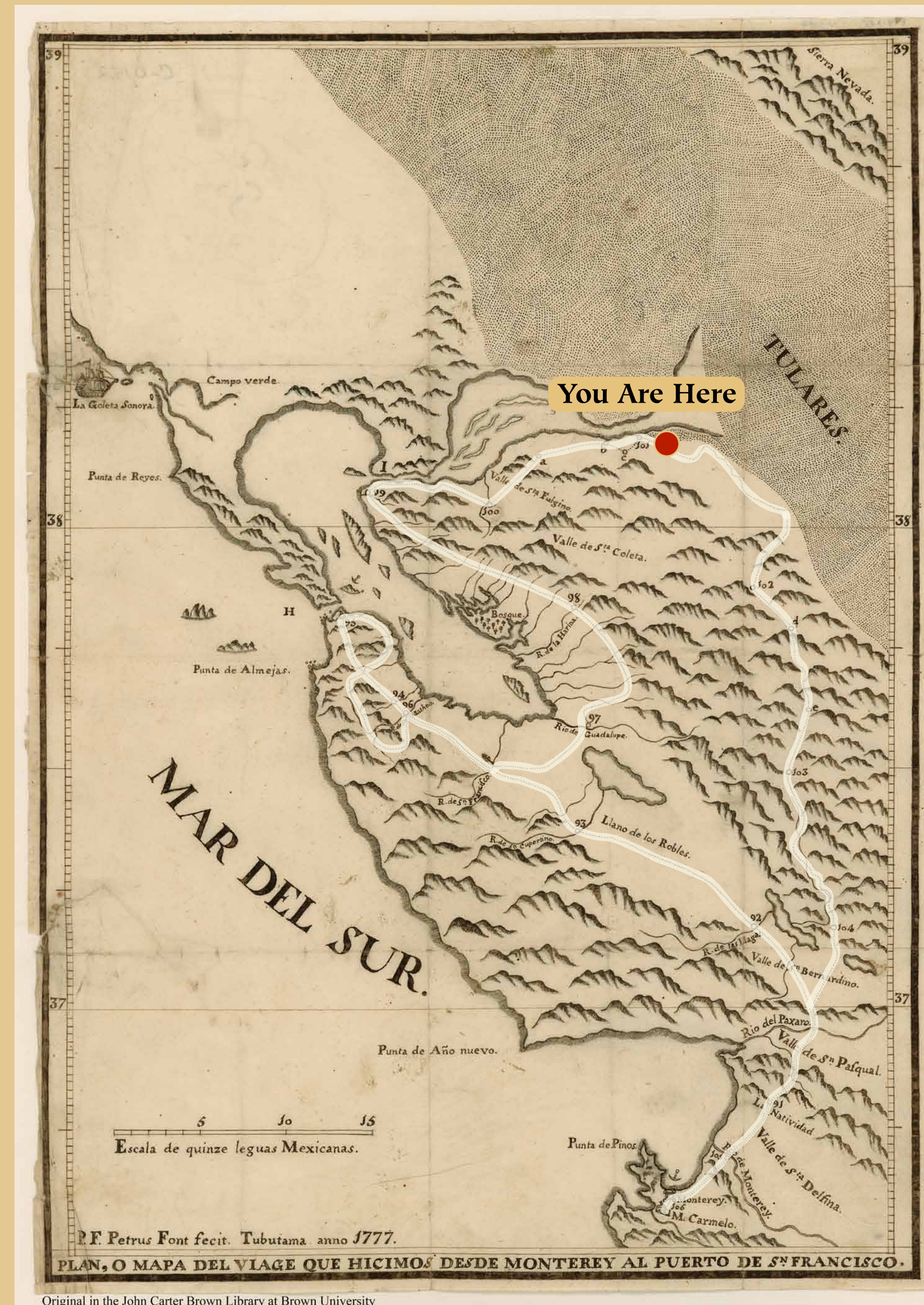
In the spring of 1776, Lt. Colonel Juan Bautista de Anza, Father Pedro Font, and a small group spent four days exploring the East Bay. They wished to verify an earlier expedition's report of a river, the “Rio Grande de San Francisco,” flowing into the Bay. They camped here, examining the shoreline.

Anza and Font began to doubt that these waters were a river. They saw none of the expected signs of seasonal flooding. There seemed to be no current, only the rising and falling of the tides which they carefully measured.

[Anza]“Father, is it not enough that these gentlemen say that they have seen the river...?”

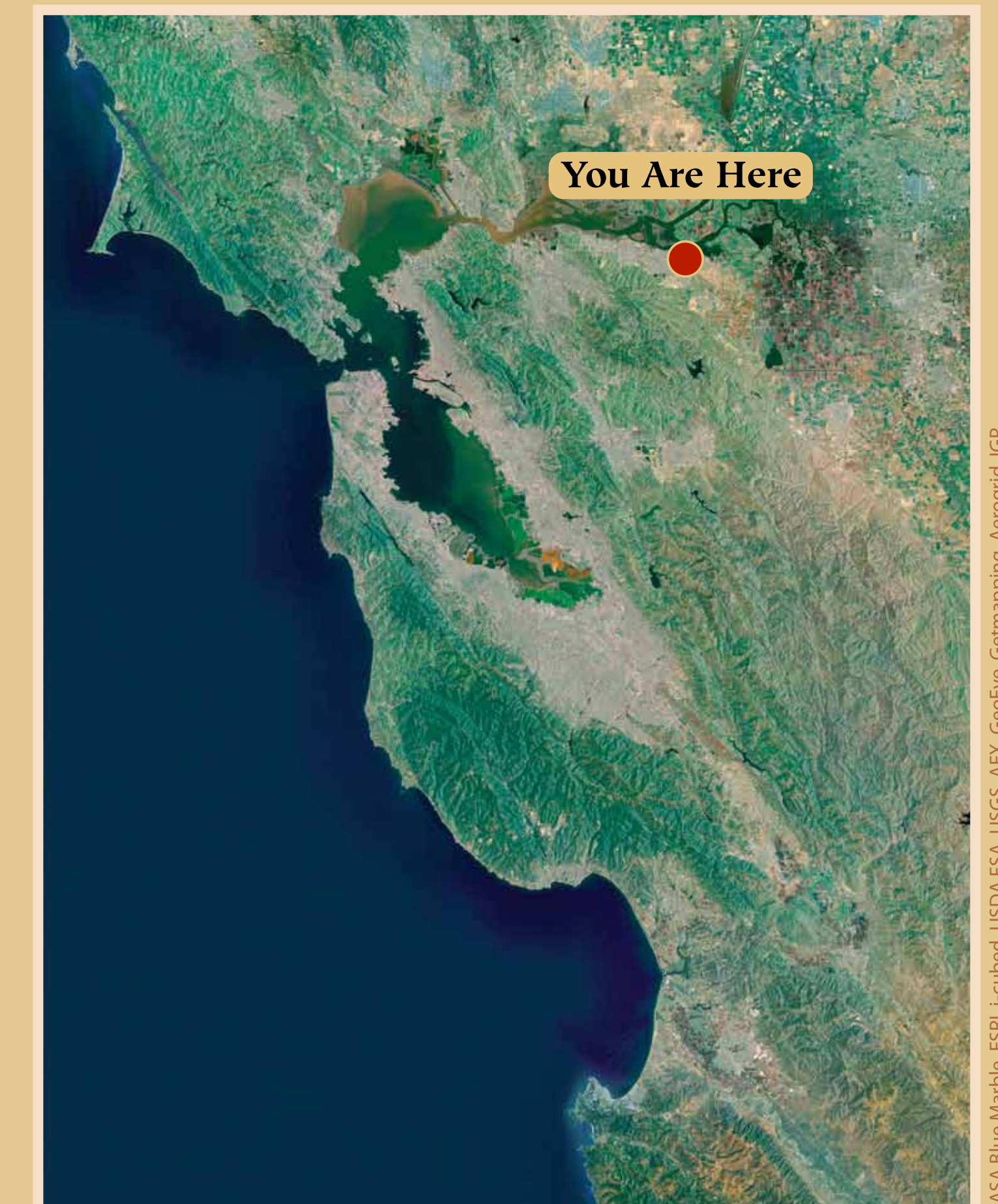
[Font]“Señor, it is not enough...no such river is to be seen...” From Father Pedro Font's diary, April 3, 1776

This was no river, Font concluded, but a freshwater inland sea that extended east to the great, green “tulares,” the marshes that once filled much of the Central Valley.



Original in the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University
Father Pedro Font's map of the route taken by the Anza Expedition from Monterey to the San Francisco Bay Area in the spring of 1776. Route highlighted by EBRPD.

Font's confusion is understandable, thinking that the water in front of him was an inland freshwater sea. These tidal waters are actually the northern reach of the San Francisco Bay, but they also drain two major rivers, the Sacramento from the north and the San Joaquin from the south.



A present-day NASA satellite image of the San Francisco and Monterey Bay Areas.

Welcome to the homeland of the Julpun, a Bay Miwok-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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