

Anza Expedition of 1776



A Changing World

In 1775 and 1776, Lt. Colonel Juan Bautista de Anza, Father Pedro Font, along with 240 settlers, soldiers, and others traveled 1,800 miles from Sonora, Mexico to Monterey, California. Their purpose was to colonize Spain's "Alta (Upper) California," and to establish a mission and presidio (military base) in San Francisco.

Successfully arriving in Monterey after a long and adventurous journey, Anza then led a much smaller expedition to explore San Francisco and the East Bay. They traveled close to this very spot on March 31, 1776 on their way to investigate the source of the water in the area we now know as the San Francisco Delta.



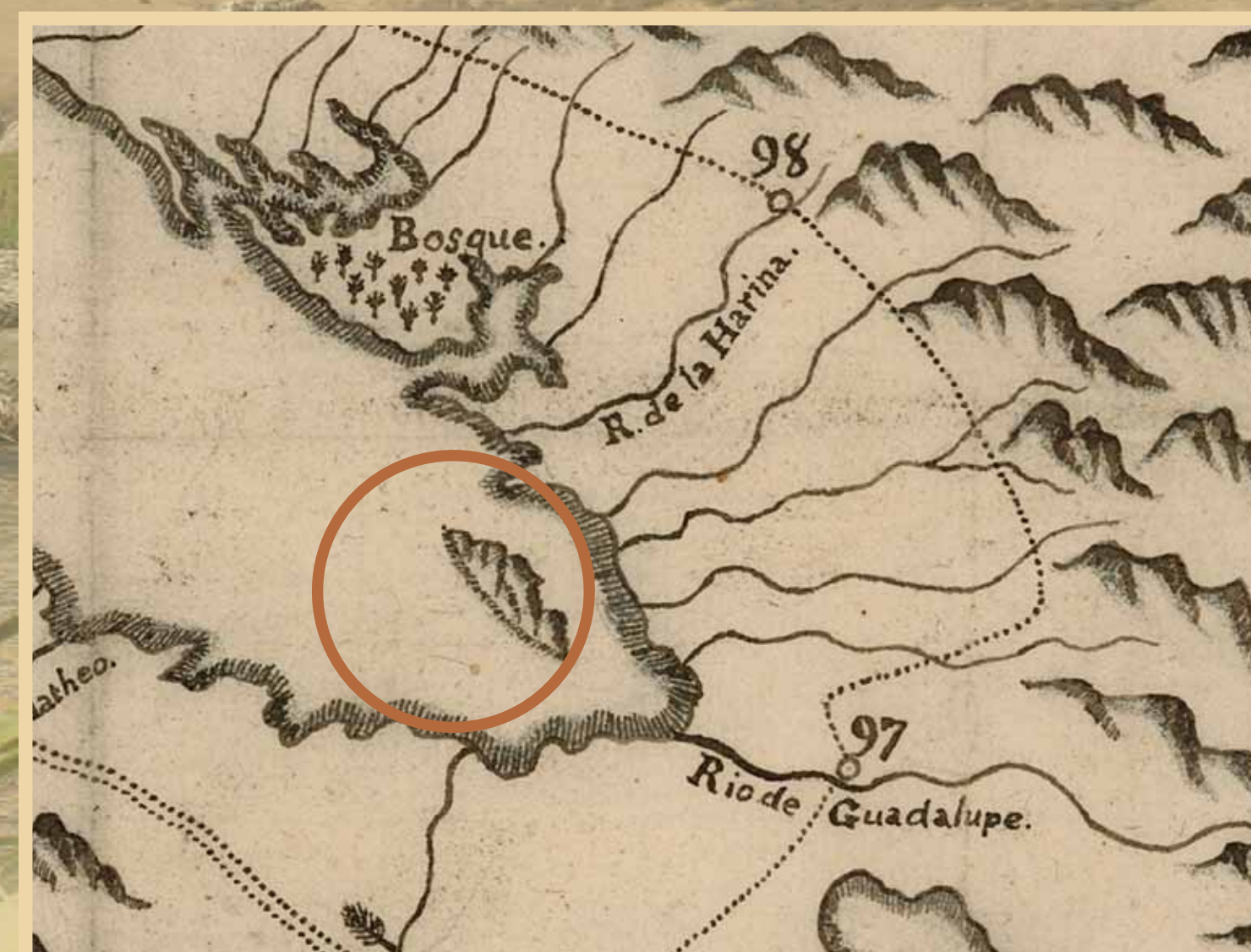
Painting by David Rickman, courtesy of the National Park Service

Imagine the reaction of the Anza Expedition to these lands and of the Indians when they saw these strangely-dressed people traveling by horseback. Could any have known the profound future changes to their lives and the land that were being set in motion by the Anza Expedition?

Father Pedro Font wrote on March 31, 1776: "All day today... I have been in doubt as to whether the island at the end of the estuary... is really an island or not, because... we were not able to see the water on this side of it." From a higher viewpoint up this trail looking towards the Bay, you can see what is now called Coyote Hills Regional Park, which was mostly surrounded by marsh in 1776.



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



Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University, Rhode Island.

In this section of the map made by Font in 1777, Coyote Hills Regional Park is shown as an island.

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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.