

JUAN BAUTISTA DE ANZA II

Juan Bautista De Anza II was the son of Juan Bautista De Anza and Maria Rosa Bezerra Nieto. He was born in July 1736 at either the Presidio at Fronteras, Mexico, which his father commanded, or at the family ranch in Cuquiarachi, Mexico. His father was killed by Apaches on 9 May 1740 near the family-owned Divisadero Ranch that was located south of the Guevavi Mission.

Anza decided at an early age to be like his father and make the military his career. He joined the Spanish Militia in December 1751 at San Ignacio, Sonora, Mexico and became a “cadete” in the cavalry at the Fronteras Presidio in 1754. At Fronteras, he was under the tutelage of Captain Gabriel de Vildosola, his sister’s husband, and learned the art of frontier warfare. He proved his ability as a soldier, was twice wounded by the Apaches and was promoted to Cavalry Lieutenant at Fronteras in 1756. When Juan de Belderrain, the first Captain of the newly established presidio at Tubac, was killed in a campaign against the Seri Indians, Anza was selected in December 1759 to become the next Captain of the Tubac Presidio. He became well known for his abilities as a soldier fighting the Apaches in the north and the Seri Indians in the south. Anza married Ana Maria Perez on 24 June 1761 but had no children.

The Spanish had long been interested in reinforcing their presence in upper California to secure the Pacific coast from Russian and English influence. Settlement of Alta California by sea expeditions or land expeditions through Baja California was extremely difficult and the Spanish needed a new overland route originating in Sonora. In 1772 Anza proposed to the Viceroy of New Spain that he lead an expedition to Alta California. The expedition was approved by the King of Spain and on 9 January 1774, Anza left Tubac to explore an overland route from Sonora Mexico to Alta California. He arrived at Mission San Gabriel near present day Los Angeles on 22 March 1774. He returned to Tubac in late May. As a result of this exploratory expedition, he was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and ordered to lead a group of colonists to California.

Anza began organizing the second expedition in January of 1775. He started recruiting colonizers in the villages of Culiacan, Sinaloa and El Fuerte in the province of Sinaloa, Mexico and in Alamos, Sonora in the March through May time frame. He spent the summer training his recruits for the difficult journey that lay ahead of them. They arrived in Tubac in mid-October and continued preparations for the trip. The expedition left Tubac 23 October 1775 with 300 people and 1000 head of livestock. They used no wagons or carts. All supplies were carried on pack mules, which had to be loaded every morning and unloaded every night.

The expedition arrived in San Gabriel on 4 January 1776, 74 days after leaving Tubac and 8 months after leaving Culiacan. They departed San Gabriel on 17 February and arrived in Monterey, California on 10 March 1776. Anza arrived in California with two more people than



had left Tubac. Three children were born along the way and one woman died in childbirth at Canoa, at the first encampment. Leaving the colonists in Monterey, Anza proceeded to the San Francisco Bay area and after selecting the future sites of the San Francisco Presidio and Mission Dolores, he returned to Tubac in April. On 17 June, the colonists left Monterey and proceeded to found what was to become the City of San Francisco.

After Anza returned to Mexico City to report on the expedition, he was made commander of all the troops in Sonora in the fall of 1776. He was made Governor of New Mexico in 1777, a position he held until 1787 when he was relieved at his request. He became commander of the Buenaventura Presidio in 1787 and then the Tucson Presidio in the fall of 1788. He died 19 December 1788 and was buried in the cathedral at Arizpe, Sonora, Mexico.

Congress established the Juan Batista De Anza National Historic Trail in 1990. The trail is administered by the National Park Service.

Summarized by T. Johnson in October 2004 from various Web Sites

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