Documenting Life at the Edge of the Spanish Empire

New discovery suggests evidence of the Briones house at the SF Presidio

From Dr. Barbara L. Voss
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This summer, Stanford University archaeologists discovered new evidence of Spanish-colonial and Mexican daily life at El Presidio de San Francisco. Founded by the Anza expedition in 1776, El Presidio de San Francisco was Spain’s northernmost military outpost in California.

Its archaeological remains were first discovered in 1993, and since then the National Park Service, the Presidio Trust, and the Army Corps of Engineers have led an active research program to better understand the history and culture of this important settlement.

Summer 2003 marked the beginning of a new chapter in this research. To date, most of the work that archaeologists have done at El Presidio de San Francisco has focused on the settlement’s main quadrangle – the nucleus of the presidio. But the daily life of the settlement extended far beyond the walls of the quadrangle. Now a new five-year research partnership between Stanford University, the Presidio Trust, and the National Park Service promises to unlock new information about the ways that colonists and Native Californians worked and lived on the lands surrounding the main quadrangle.

The focus of this study is the Tennessee Hollow Watershed – a sheltered valley located immediately east of El Presidio de San Francisco’s main quadrangle. Tennessee Hollow is rich in both historical and ecological significance. The year round presence of fresh water supports diverse plant and animal communities. During the Spanish and Mexican periods, the valley floors were used for farming and grazing, and the serpentine bedrock outcrops on some of the watershed’s slopes were quarried for stones used to make the foundations of adobe buildings at El Presidio de San Francisco.

El Polín Springs was the primary source of water for both the indigenous inhabitants of San Francisco and the members of the Anza expedition.

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The ultimate goal of the Tennessee Hollow Watershed Archaeology Project is to understand the complex interactions between colonial and native populations that occurred at El Presidio de San Francisco, and to trace the emergence of the City of San Francisco from its origins at the Presidio. Data from the project will also be used to inform the environmental and historic management of the Presidio of San Francisco National Park.

**EL POLÍN SPRINGS**

This summer, we began our research in Tennessee Hollow by excavating at El Polín Springs, the name given by Spanish-colonial settlers to the headwaters of the central tributary of the watershed. El Polín is a bowl-shaped valley with at least three springs that emerge from the valley slope and gather into a small stream. El Polín was an important water source for El Presidio de San Francisco. It is located only a short five-minute walk from the main quadrangle along the trail that used to lead from the Presidio to Mission San Francisco de Asís (Mission Dolores).

By the 1810s, El Polín had become the home of a large extended colonial family headed by Marcos Briones and at least three of his adult daughters, María de Guadalupe Briones (married to Calendario Miramontes), Juana Briones (married to Apolinario Miranda), and the widow María de la Luz. Marcos Briones and his daughters all had large families, and at least thirty children were raised at El Polín Springs.

The Briones family’s residence at El Polín Springs marked the beginning of civil settlement in colonial San Francisco. Living between the presidio and the mission, the Briones family was affiliated with both but under the direct control of neither.

In time, other families joined them in Tennessee Hollow.

Marcos Briones’ adult children became founders of other civil settlements in the San Francisco Bay area, including the Pueblo of Yerba Buena in San Francisco and towns and ranches in Half Moon Bay, Bolinas, Contra Costa County, and Santa Clara County. However, María de Guadalupe Briones, her husband Calendario Miramontes, and their children continued to live at El Polín until the U.S. Army took over the land in 1848.

Juana Briones’ connection with the Anza expedition comes through her mother, Isadora Tapia and Marcos Briones. Tapia was a member of the 1776 expedition and arrived in San Francisco when she was four. Her father was a soldier stationed at the Monterey Presidio.

While historic research provides much information about the Briones family, only archaeology provides information about the other people who lived and worked at El Polín Springs: Native Californians.

When we first discovered archaeological deposits at El Polín Springs during a survey of the watershed in 1997, I was struck by the presence of artifacts related to traditional Native Californian material culture: debris from crafting flaked chert tools, a cut and shaped trapezoidal abalone shell, and fragments of groundstone tools. From military documents we know that there were many Native Californians who lived and worked at colonial El Presidio de San Francisco (some as hired laborers, and many others as war captives). Could it be that some of them were working and perhaps living at El Polín Springs, alongside the Briones family?

**NEW DISCOVERIES**

This summer was the first season of intensive excavations at El Polín Springs. Our initial goal had been to use test excavations to find archaeological deposits that were intact and had good research potential. But through both fortune and good work, our research team encountered much more!

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During the second week of our excavations, one of our test units hit the corner of a stone foundation of an adobe house. We quickly changed our research strategy to focus our efforts on determining the orientation, shape, and size of the house. We found that the eastern part of the structure is well-preserved and probably contains intact floor surfaces. This house would have been one of several in the residential compound that the Briones family lived in. We plan to excavate the interior of the house next summer, which will give us a window into the ways that the Briones family lived their daily lives.

To the north of the house, another of our excavation also encountered what appears to be a pit or well. Our excavations also recovered substantial amounts of debris from stone tool manufacture. This debris — called debitage by archaeologists — represents all different stages of stone tool production.

The relatively high amounts of debitage at the site is strong evidence that Native Californians were indeed working and perhaps living at El Polín Springs during the Spanish-colonial/Mexican period. This will be an important focus of our excavations next summer.

From our excavations, we also gained substantial information about the environmental history of El Polín Springs. Today, El Polín is a popular forested picnic area with shade trees and grassy meadows. Two hundred years ago, before El Polín was modified by the U.S. Army, the area looked quite different. Then, El Polín was a patchwork of low-lying marshlands, sand dunes, and hill slopes. It was rich in diverse communities of plants and animals.

This environmental data will be particularly important to Presidio Trust planners and resource managers who are currently developing plans to enhance Tennessee Hollow’s natural and cultural resources.

Our Summer 2003 excavations recovered over 100,000 archaeological specimens. During the 2003-2004 academic year, members of our research team will work at Stanford University to analyze and catalog these finds. We will also be enlisting the help of zooarchaeologists and paleoethnobotanists to study the animal bone and plant remains that we found. The data from these analyses will help us to plan our next season of excavations at El Polín in June and July 2004.

You can watch and comment on our progress through updates on our project website: http://www.stanford.edu/group/presidio. And, if you are in San Francisco next summer, we hope you will come to the Presidio to visit the excavations in person.

The Tennessee Hollow Watershed Archaeology Project is directed by Dr. Barbara L. Voss through a research partnership between Stanford University and the Presidio Trust in cooperation with the National Park Service. Funding for this research has been provided by several Stanford University programs, including Urban Studies, Feminist Studies, the Office of Technology Licensing, the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, and the Iris F. Litt, M.D., Fund.

One of the issues raised in creating the Long Range Interpretive Plan was the need for accurate information about the trail. Future editions of Noticias will highlight ongoing scholarly research related to the various Anza Trail themes. Work will be solicited from a wide range of authors with pertinent information. Articles will deal with the full range of issues and events related to the Anza expedition. Writers interested in sharing their work should contact Meredith Kaplan at (510) 817-1438.
Members of the Salinan Tribe and local musicians are still in a state of shock following the theft of the José Carabajal Violin from the Mission San Antonio de Padua.

The two-century old instrument had been on display in the mission museum for a number of years. John Warren, director of the New World Baroque Orchestra, had gone to the museum to retrieve the violin for a performance in September, only to discover that it had been replaced with an inexpensive copy. Warren immediately contacted the local sheriff’s department who continues to investigate the theft.

The violin was part of a collection of instruments created by members of the Salinan tribe at the mission in 1789. Salinan musicians that were associated with the mission site performed a variety of traditional and Spanish music at the mission even following secularization. The instruments had been in tribal hands continually until they were donated for safe keeping to the mission.

John Warren, above, playing the José Carabajal Violin. Warren was the first to discover the theft of the violin from the mission. Photo courtesy John Warren

The New World Baroque Orchestra specializes in music from the Spanish colonial period and had been allowed to use the violin during their past performances.

Boy Scout Jeff Lyon was recently lauded by the National Park Service Director Fran Mainella for his work on the Anza Trail. She thanked Lyon and his troop for their work on the new trail segment through the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area.

Lyon and his troop spent this summer installing trail markers along miles of trail in the Cheeseboro section of the park. He was supported in his effort by his parents Debi and Doug.

Lyon is a member of Boy Scout Troop No. 127 in Agoura Hills, California. The signing project along the trail is part of Lyon’s Eagle Scout Project.

The NPS has partnered with the Boy Scouts of America to offer a Service to America Award for work done in support of National Parks. So far, ten members of Lyon’s troop have received it for work on the trail.
Perhaps I should not have been so surprised, but each day as I walked the Camino de Santiago I was amazed at the parallels with our vision for the Anza Trail. I was seeing the vision incarnate for the Anza Trail. I also experienced the tremendous attraction of a historic route that can be traveled on foot, bicycle, or even horseback and the allure of experiencing history in place, at a historic pace that allows attention to the details of sight, sound, and smell.

Many of the towns were founded to support the needs of millions of 11th to 15th century pilgrims. Today there exists an infrastructure of support for walkers and bicyclists based on the history of protection and care and hospitality offered those pilgrims. With my credencial del peregrino (pilgrim credential), which registers each person at the beginning of their trek, I could stay in an albergue or refugio, much like a youth hostel, for three to four Euros a night (about $3.45 to $4.60). Volunteers from all over Europe staff these municipal albergues.

At each albergue, a hospitalero (volunteer caretaker) stamps and dates the credential to attest to the fact that the pilgrim did, indeed, walk or bicycle the trail. Albergues generally occur at no more than 20 kilometers apart (about 12 miles), mostly in towns but sometimes in isolated areas. Of course, in the towns I could also stay in a range of places from inexpensive hostals (hotels) to the high-end government-run paradors. Cafes and restaurants are also available along the way and offer special peregrino menus. Meals for a day add up to about 13 Euros (about $15).

This kind of support is a distant dream for the Anza Trail, but not out of the question. Support from county and municipal governments and commercial establishments along the way could meet this need. Rather than albergues, I picture a system of camp sites every 15 miles. In the towns, hotels and cafes could offer a special price to walkers or bicyclists having some sort of credential. Of course, segments of the trail would be used by local residents for walking, jogging, bird watching, horseback riding, or getting from place to place, just as the Camino is.

Lest you think the Camino has operated this way for centuries, you should know that the millions who traveled it from the 11th to the 15th century dwindled to almost nothing by the 16th century and beyond. Only in the very late 20th century was there a resurgence of interest in the Camino due to the support provided by Spanish public administrations and religious bodies, its declaration as a European Cultural Itinerary in 1987, and the establishment of numerous associations and brotherhoods. In 2001, over 61,000 pilgrims from over one hundred different countries reached Santiago. About 77 percent traveled on foot, 22.5 percent on bicycle, and a small 0.5 percent on horseback. Now that following the Camino has become so popular, private albergues and cafes are springing up, revitalizing ancient towns and leading to protection and restoration of historic buildings and monuments.

Our vision for the Anza Trail is stated on page 6 of Noticias. I have seen that this vision is a possibility. Be inspired by it. Join us as we work to make it a reality.
Interpretive Plan Offers a Vision for the Future of the Anza Trail

The recently published Long Range Interpretive Plan (LRIP) for the Anza Trail offers a clear and strategic guide to direct interpretive efforts for years to come.

After over two years of input from hundreds of people from along the entire length of the Anza Trail - from its origins in Mexico to its terminus at the San Francisco Bay - a much clearer picture has emerged as to the best way to tell the story of Anza’s overland expedition from Sonora to Alta California.

The LRIP will serve as a tool, allowing park and community planners to follow a systematic and strategic approach to getting the word out about what the trail is and what it has to offer.

Like all National Park Service (NPS) units, the Anza Trail is directed by NPS policy to create and use an LRIP. In the National Park Service, interpretation describes the way visitors make emotional and intellectual connections with a park or trail.

In 2001, trail staff began interviewing people with an interest in the Anza Trail in an effort to determine what made it unique and special. These stakeholders offered a tremendous range of sentiments concerning the trail. The responses were varied and evocative:

“The trail connects me with my ancestors and the incredible hardships they endured to give their family a new and better life.”

“The trail was the beginning of the end – it allowed for the destruction of so much of what was part of the Native American people living in the southwest.”

“The Anza Trail gives my community the chance to have a little bit of green space before everything is taken over by urban sprawl.”

These different perceptions of the trail are captured in the trail’s themes. These themes will be used in all of the trail’s interpretive products to offer a consistent message that has found resonance with trail stakeholders. The final trail themes are:

1. The Anza expedition settlers came from varied cultural backgrounds. These people and their stories live on today through their descendants and their legacy.

2. Anza’s planning, perseverance, and charisma provided the dynamic leadership that was necessary for the success of the expedition and for opening a route across Arizona and the California desert.

3. The women and children on the Anza Expedition were important components to the overall success of the trip and were key to the eventual settlement of Spanish Alta California.

4. The Anza Trail represents a universal story of migrants crossing great distances and enduring tremendous hardships in the hope of a better way of life.

5. The eventual expansion of the Spanish settlements that resulted from the Anza Trail came at the expense of indigenous peoples and their cultures. Although many Native American customs and people were eventually incorporated into and enriched Spanish colonial life, the long lasting changes caused by the arrival of the Anza settlers forever compromised the indigenous cultures of California and Arizona.

6. The Anza expedition contributed to the introduction of new land uses, plants, and animals to the California landscape, setting in motion long-term ecological changes that have altered the regions’ landscape and biological systems.

7. The tensions between Spain and the other European powers of the time were pivotal in the viceroy’s decision to attempt the expedition and settlement at San Francisco in order to protect the possessions in Alta California.

A major effort was made to make this plan as strategic as possible in order to guarantee results. Specific action items and dates are in the plan to ensure that this will move the process along in three major stages. The first stage, set to run through 2005, is primarily intended to gather the
The trail’s volunteer plan will be implemented during this stage. By 2008, the staff will build on the increasing level of knowledge about Anza among people living near the trail. This will mean an increased emphasis on education both in the schools and at historic sites along the trail. Other interpretive ideas – increased waysides and exhibits at rest stops, a trail video, and a trail passport – will be implemented as well to move visitors from information to interpretation. During this phase, volunteers will offer increased services to trail visitors, including living history, historical walks, and educational programs. This phase will see increased partnerships with other federal and state partners, as well as private groups like the South Coast Railroad Museum. Finally, visitors to the trail will begin to see products available at bookstores and gift shops that offer more in depth information.

By 2013, during the final stage of the plan, visitors will be able to use an increasingly continuous trail from Mexico to San Francisco. There will be interpretive opportunities in Sinaloa, Sonora, and Baja California. An expanded staff will be able to offer sufficient training to volunteers and partners at the associated visitor centers on the trail. Using grants and other sources, there will be an established system of funding available to maintain adequate trail operations.

These stages are meant as guidelines that will help move the trail towards that eventual vision. Opportunities will arise on occasion that will compel the trail staff to move ahead on projects even though they are part of a future phase. Also, there will be portions of Phase One that will go on for the life of the trail. For example, gathering accurate information will be an ongoing process. Other stages – creation of an audio tour – are unique events. The plan is a guide – firm enough to provide direction yet flexible enough to take advantage of new opportunities.

All of the governmental partners and organizations that have a relationship with the trail will receive copies of the plan in the next few weeks. Copies are also available to the public. Please contact David Smith at (510) 817-1323, 111 Jackson #700, Oakland, CA 94602, or at david_smith@nps.gov to receive a free copy in the mail. An electronic version will be available shortly on the web at the trail website, www.nps.gov/juba.
Local business leaders have joined with Rio Rico Properties to create a visitor-friendly trailhead at the southern terminus of the Anza Trail in Santa Cruz County.

Rio Rico Properties has become a major partner in helping to develop the recreational component of the Anza along the Santa Cruz River. As one of the principal landowners in the county, they have shown a long term commitment to creating a recreational trail for hikers and equestrians through their property.

Currently, Rio Rico properties has donated the land for a trailhead overlooking the Santa Cruz River near the community of Rio Rico. When complete, the trailhead will provide safe and ample parking for visitors hoping to explore this segment of the trail.

The business community and trail volunteers are helping to help create the trailhead. Mike Collins of Collins Excavating and Billy Padilla of Padilla Sand and Gravel donated their time and equipment on the project. Jima La Puza and Victor Gabilando coordinated the work and maintained safe access to and from the trailhead. Karen Gallo of Luka Signs provided stone signs marking the trail location. The county provided necessary fill while Granite Construction finished the road work.

Visitors to the Santa Cruz County segments of the trail can follow established trail on most of the route between Rio Rico to north of the community of Tubac. Rio Rico Properties is working on a master trail plan for their properties which shows a continuous Anza Trail.

In Memoriam

The Anza Trail lost one of its great resources August 1 with the death of Brother Dennis Goodman. He was 88.

Goodman spent the majority of his life documenting the history of the San Francisco East Bay as an archivist at Saint Mary’s College. Over the years, he served as a lecturer, teacher, and librarian at the college.

Brother Goodman wrote extensively about the Anza exploration of the East Bay. He was the author of The De Anza Exploration of the East Bay and was an important resource to trail patriarch George Cardinet and others as they plotted out Anza’s route during the drive to create the national trail.

Brother Goodman arrived in Moraga in 1928 as a seminarian. He quickly became interested in the history of the area. Through visits to local churches, state archives, and Mexico, he effectively pieced together the story and history of Moraga leaving a treasure of information behind.

Volunteers donors turned out in force to offer materials, land, and equipment to create the new Anza Trail trailhead and parking area in Rio Rico, Arizona, at the southern end of the Anza Trail.
Join the Backcountry Horsemen for their annual trail project at Anza Borrego Desert State Park this November 13 to 16. Whether you have a horse or not, all those interested in helping out on the trail are invited to come, rain or shine. The highlight of the event will be a trailside dinner and barbeque followed by a campfire talk.

Please contact Tom or Linda Marshall at (760) 731-0444.

Amigos de Anza-San Luis Obispo has been busy maintaining the trail along the Salinas River in Atascadero. In September, Jim Patterson delivered a load of wood chips to help eliminate dust during the dry season and mud during the wet season for the trail and trailhead.

Leeann Brown continues to organize and supervise the trail patrol along this segment of the trail. The Atascadero News did a full color feature on the program.

Julia Bendimez, Baja California Director for the Instituto Nacional de Antropología y Historia has been working with the Anza Trail to mark the historic sites along the route in Baja California. International Resource Program Coordinator Howard Ness from the National Park Service US/Mexico Affairs Office, has allocated additional funds to help mark the international trail. Bendimez hopes to have a dedication along the route in December.

The Hayward Historical Society will sponsor a teacher training session on the Anza Trail and California’s colonial history November 8. Teachers will receive materials to help them share information about the Anza expedition, California’s indigenous populations, and where to explore the Anza Trail.

Staff at the historical society is also helping to produce a number of Anza related wayside exhibits adjacent to San Lorenzo Creek in downtown Hayward.

Groups up and down the Anza Trail have found special ways of commemorating the Anza expedition. In San Jose, Los Fundadores y Amigos de Alta California celebrate the story with an annual trek the the 1976 commemorative plaque marking the Anza Trail. For more information about Los Fundadores, contact the Historic Museum at (408) 248 2787.

Meredith Kaplan was on hand in October to honor ATCA volunteers in Pima and Santa Cruz Counties for the tremendous work they have done on the trail. Dennis Jex and trail foreman Mike Burns received special plaques in honor of their effort to
create the new trail segment north of Tubac. Although Mike was honored, he and his wife Amelia were most excited about being able to show off their new baby daughter, Raven. Congratulations Mike and Amelia!

**Brother Guire Cleary** was joined NPS Rangers Naomi Torres, Fatima Colindres, and David Smith for what is hoped to be a semi-annual hike from the San Francisco Presidio to the

he would have appeared in 1776. **Brother Cleary**, who serves as the archivist at the Mission, provided the group with a private tour of the Mission site.

After many years of service commemorating the history of San Francisco’s indigenous and non-indigenous inhabitants, **Brother Cleary** is leaving for New Zealand to serve a new community. **Andy Galven** will replace **Brother Cleary** when he leaves this spring.

**Presidio Trust** programs employee Lisa Hillstrom has started work on a hiking guide for children and their parents who want to know more about the Anza Trail. Working with Crissy Field Center manager Naomi Torres, the two are working on an interactive trail book that children can use as they hike around Mountain Lake in the San Francisco Presidio.

The Presidio Trust has offered to print and distribute this guide as part of the Kids on Trails series. **Hillstrom** hopes to have the guide available for distribution by early next year.

**Paul Trujillo** was on hand at a recent celebration in Los Angeles’ Exposition Park to share his knowledge of Anza with children. **Trujillo** talked about the

Young people from Los Angeles learning more about early California history.

Anza Trail and wore a costume that was typical of an early Californiano. Over 40,000 children attended the event.

**Author John Bankston** and Mitchell Lane Publishers have just released the newest title in their series *Latinos in American History - Juan Bautista de Anza*. The hardback children’s book retails for $19.95 and is available from the publisher at (800) 814-5484.
Anza Borrego Desert State Park, California
November 3-4, Saturday 8:30 to 4:30 and Sunday 8:30 to 12:00. Anza Trail Advisory Council meeting will be held in Borrego Springs adjacent to Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. The public is invited. See related story on page three.

November 14-17, Thursday to Sunday, all day. Trail Cleanup and Camp-out. Contact Tom or Linda Marshall for more information 760-731-0444 or at Traleman1@aol.com. additional information in Along the Trail.

Tucson, Arizona
October 26, Sunday, 10:00 a.m. Trail Hike. Join the Anza Trail Coalition of Arizona for a morning walk commemorating the anniversary of the Anza expedition in Tucson. Meet at Congress Street and the west bank of the Santa Cruz River. Contact Don Kucera at (520) 792-0554.

Tumacácori, Arizona
December 7-8, Saturday and Sunday, all day. Fiesta de Tumacácori at Tumacácori National Historical Park. For more information, call the park at (520) 398-2341.

December 24, Wednesday, sunset. Luminarios at the Mission Tumacácori. Call (520) 398-2341.

Los Angeles, California
February 21, 2004. Celebrate the opening of the new Anza Trail segment as part of the 25th anniversary celebration of Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. Contact David Smith at (510) 817-1323.

Culiacán, Mexico to Tucson, Arizona
April 16-25, 2004. Tour the Mexican portion of the Anza Trail through the states of Sinaloa and Sonora with historians and descendants. Contact the event organizer at http://www.touraz4fun.com or (602) 993-1162 for more information.

Algodones, Baja California Norte, Mexico
December 9, 2003. Dedication of Anza Trail in Baja California. Contact Meredith Kaplan at (510) 817-1323 for more information.
“And may God be thanked that the people escaped with their lives, without anyone dying or becoming ill, for this was no small marvel... and it has been a great pleasure to all that they should arrive today, whereby we have succeeded in being reunited to continue the journey.” - Father Pedro Font, December 17, 1775. The Anza expedition was thrilled to successfully cross the barren desert west of the Colorado River to the comparatively lush vegetation of Coyote Canyon. Today, Anza Borrego Desert State Park is little changed from what faced Anza over two centuries ago. Photo courtesy Phil Valdez