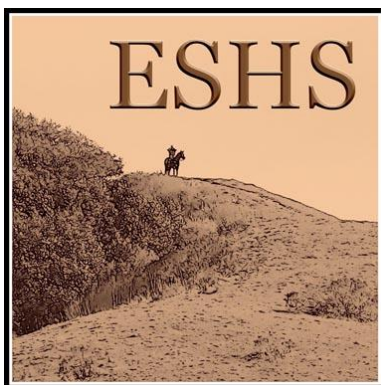




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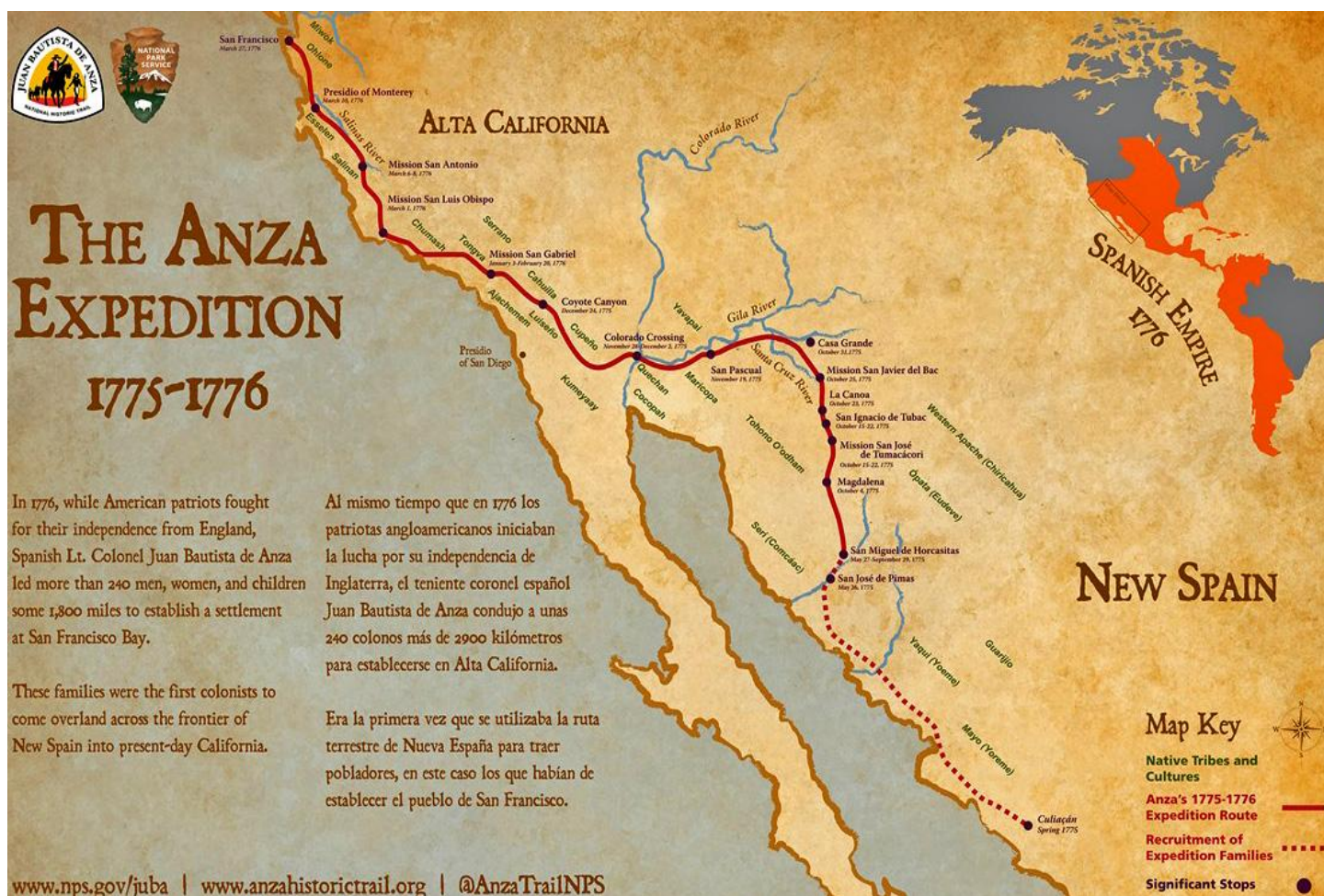
THE LEFTOVERS

Issue #59

Summer 2026

The Colonizing Expedition of Juan Bautista de Anza, 1775-1776, Part One

Donald Bastin



As we noted in our last issue of our newsletter, this year marks not only the 250th anniversary of our Declaration of Independence, but also the 250th anniversary of the Spanish expedition of colonization of “Alta California,” led by presidio captain Juan Bautista de Anza. In our last issue we briefly touched on the expeditions which preceded the Anza trek, and the strange trail that led to the naming of the bay and city of San Francisco. In this issue we will examine, largely in Anza’s own words, taken from his diary, the roughly 1000 mile journey taken by the group of colonists, soldiers, and clergy. A total of 240 persons were part of the group, including 29 women, wives of the soldiers. The trek took over 7 months, and involved many hardships. Incredibly all survived, except one woman, who died in childbirth. However, her newborn son, described by Anza as “a lusty boy,” survived.

The Anza expedition is often described as the “first” or “seminal” colonizing expedition, implying that other expeditions followed. This was not the case. While it was certainly expected that more colonists would follow the trail blazed by Anza, originally in 1774, the expedition of 1776 was in fact the one and only colonizing expedition to Upper California. The trail led through territory controlled by native groups in what is now part of New Mexico and Arizona. Anza had taken pains to develop good relations with these groups, including bringing with him 5 interpreters of at least 4 Indian languages, prudently realizing how dependent he was on their good will and ability to feed and guide the Spanish colonists. Unfortunately, subsequent group leaders and soldiers failed to treat the natives with



suitable respect, leading to warfare and the total shutdown of the Anza trail for over 40 years, well into the Mexican period. Thus, the original group of 240 colonists was essentially isolated in their new home, numbers growing largely through natural increase, and gradually developing their own unique character, neither Spanish

nor Mexican. They became “Californios.” But more detail on this period in our next issue.

By early November, the expedition had reached territory occupied by the Pima Indians, a group living in what is now north Sonora, Mexico, and southern Arizona. The name for themselves is “O’odham.” Anza gives the following description of his meeting on this occasion:

The affability and friendly treatment which I experienced from these people in my last expedition (1774) I have found repeated on this occasion. . . This good treatment I reciprocated with an abundance of glass beads and tobacco, distributing them amongst all those assembled, who were more than a thousand.”

Anza’s forethought in bringing along gifts for such large groups of natives speaks strongly to his desire to maintain good relations at all times.

Further along, the expedition enters territory occupied by the Yuma Indians (Quechan). It is here that Anza re-established his relationship with an Indian leader who the Spanish had named “Salvador Palma,” who had apparently been of great help to Anza during his first, exploratory visit to this area. Anza’s diary is primarily directed at the Viceroy of New Spain, Antonio Maria Bucareli y Ursua, who had authorized this expedition, and the captain emphasizes the apparent willingness of the indigenous people to adopt the teachings of the Catholic faith:

I have no doubt that they will embrace our faith and our customs with all complacency. . . One of the many proofs is that now when they show us their wives they boast that they only have one. . . More than this, we have found them so well covered for modesty’s sake that this has surprised us as much as their nakedness surprised us when they came before us on the first occasion.”

Here, Anza is clearly reporting what he judges that his superior wants to hear. Nonetheless, he is a man of his time and place, and it is not surprising that he might believe that his work and the work of the missionaries will be welcomed and be of benefit to the natives that he encounters.

By early December, the weather had continued dry, but cold, and water was scarce, particularly for the cattle. In fact, by this time, many of the precious cattle had died. Again, the group was aided by local Indians:

*“We have been indebted for their supplying us. . . with their present crops, such as maize, beans, and calabashes, and more than **two thousand watermelons** (emphasis, ed.) of enormous size. Indeed, we threw watermelons away because we had nothing in which to carry them.”*

It is probably not an exaggeration to say that the ultimate success of the Anza expedition was largely due to the help received from the native peoples encountered along the route. And in addition to food, the Indians were exceedingly helpful in guiding the expedition through unfamiliar territory and in crossing the Gila and Colorado rivers.

By mid-December the expedition encountered alternating periods of rain and snow, which led to the death of many of the cattle and horses. The sight of snow-covered mountains was “terrifying” to most of the people of the expedition “who, since they were born in the Tierra Caliente, have never seen such a thing before.” The people were only partially consoled when they were told that the missions, which were along the seacoast, were situated in a much milder climate.

On January 4, the expedition reached the mission of San Gabriel. There, Anza met with Don Fernando Rivera y Moncada, the commander of Upper California, and Anza’s superior. Anza had hoped to go on from that point directly to the presidio of Monterey, but it seemed that fate had another obstacle in store. Several days before, the presidio of San Diego had been attacked by “reduced Indians” (Christianized) and had killed one of the missionary fathers and wounded several soldiers. The mission itself, it was feared, would likely be attacked, and Rivera ordered Anza and some of the soldiers to accompany him back to San Diego to help deal with the rebellion, in which it was feared 600 Indians, both “heathen and reduced” were involved.

During the remainder of the month of January, and well into February, Anza was occupied in assisting Rivera in the pacification of the rebellious Indians of the San Diego Mission and presidio, much to his discomfort. From this point on, he and Rivera were in fundamental disagreement as to where their priorities lay. Anza’s original orders had been to proceed to the presidio of Monterey and from there proceed to San Francisco, locate a suitable site for a presidio, and lastly, to explore the “River of San Francisco” (Sacramento River). Rivera was much more concerned about the situation in San Diego, which Anza realized was a matter which would take months, if not longer, to resolve. Therefore, despite the conflict with his superior officer, Anza returned to the mission of San Gabriel, arriving there on February 12, eager to continue the march to Monterey as soon as possible. At last, on February 21, the expedition left San Gabriel for Monterey.

On Sunday, March 10, at 4 o’clock in the afternoon, during a heavy rain, the Anza expedition arrived at the presidio of Monterey, after a journey of “316 ½ leagues” (approximately 1000 miles). Here, the plan was to leave the colonists, with the anticipation that Commander Rivera would later accompany them to San Francisco. In the meantime, Anza would go ahead with a small party to select a site for the presidio of San Francisco, and then complete his mission by exploring the shoreline of the River of San Francisco, (Sacramento/San Joaquin River). But again, Anza was delayed.



Just three days after his arrival at Monterey, Anza was “suddenly attacked by some very severe and sharp pains in the groin, the hip, the knee, and the left thigh, which have been so violent that I could not breathe and I thought I should have suffocated and die.” For over a week, Anza was barely able to move, but by the 21st, and with assistance, he was “able to take a few steps.” The next day he reports: “I decided, although against the advice of the surgeon, to mount a horse to continue my journey for the exploration of the port and river of San Francisco, hoping with the exercise of the road to recover my health.” He therefore left the presidio of Monterey on the morning of March 23, in the company of Lieutenant Don Joseph Joachin Moraga, Father Pedro Font (another diarist of the expedition), and eleven soldiers. On Wednesday, March 27, Anza and his small party arrived “at the mouth of the port of San Francisco.” Anza does not report any further medical issues. (End of Part One)

History of the Friends of the El Sobrante Library (FESL) *Sharon Miller*

'FRIENDS OF LIBRARY' SET AS NEW EL SOBRANTE ORGANIZATION

The Friends of the El Sobrante Library (FESL) formally organized on February 28, 1957, a few years before the El Sobrante Library was built.

The original Friends group was called the Friends

of the El Sobrante Library League. That group spearheaded fundraising to build the library. At a committee meeting on March 8, 1957, the President A.B. Miner oversaw the formation of the by-laws, and appointment of officers and board of directors. A Richmond Independent news article announced the group, “It is the purpose of the group to pay the rental of present quarters out of individual memberships while looking for a more permanent library facility”. On November 28, 1960, the groundbreaking ceremony for a new library was held at the corner of Appian Way and Garden Road. On June 3, 1961, the dedication of the new library building was held.

Many years later Sally Teegarden became the President of FESL and served until she retired in 2017. The group has always operated out of an older, small building behind the main library building. Sally fought to save the building when it was slated to be demolished. Due to her insistence that the building be saved, the back room that had water damage was removed and the roof was repaired. After the building opened in June 1994 the Friends held a grand opening book sale inside. Since the building still lacked shelving the Friends held bag sales in the library plaza twice a year in May and October. The books were laid out on long tables for shoppers to fill a bag. It was a major effort for the crew.



The building was originally called the Friends Book House and was later renamed The Fahden House for county supervisor Nancy Fahden, who used the building for her office. The dedication of the new

building was held five years ago, in 2021, after the building was remodeled for ADA compliance and the El Sobrante Historical Society History Center became tenants of the shared space. Although there was less room for books in the shared space, the new shelving was a huge improvement, along with the addition of a restroom and a ramp for accessibility. We are indebted to County Supervisor John Gioia for marshalling funds for this extensive remodeling work, which took place at the same time the library was remodeled following a fire in 2018.

FESL remains dedicated to improving library services in El Sobrante. Our purpose is to sell donated books to the local community at a very reasonable price. The proceeds support the El Sobrante Library adult and children's programs and other library needs. The library has a book bin for donations that is checked daily by one of our volunteers. We also accept book donations on Tuesdays from 10am-12pm during our sort and shelving time period. Our donation guidelines can be found on the El Sobrante Library website: <https://ccclib.org/esl-friends/>

The book sale is held the first Saturday of each month from 10am – 2pm. Members are invited to shop from 10am-12pm, and the public is welcome without membership from 12-2pm. Members receive advance notice of book sales. Each month we feature a different genre to encourage shoppers to look at the large variety the bookshop carries. Twice a year we host a local award-winning jam maker who donates those proceeds to the sale.



The board consists of four officers and a group of dedicated volunteers. From left, above: Judy Ward, Treasurer; Charlotte Schell, volunteer; Paula Garton, volunteer; Martha Booz, President; Lawrie McDonnell, volunteer; Robert Bartholomew, volunteer; Sheila Webb, volunteer; Sidney Thompson, Vice President; Sharon Miller, Secretary. Not shown: Susan Wright, volunteer

In addition to the book sales and membership dues, we have an account with ThriftBooks and receive income based on a percentage for the books we sell online. The books we are unable to sell are donated to Better World Books or the El Cerrito Recycling Center book exchange. Books are also donated to the Little Free Library by the Good Table Cafe.

Our memberships are an affordable way to support our community with dues of \$5 a year for individual or \$10 for family. We will graciously accept a \$200 donation for a lifetime membership. All donation amounts are greatly appreciated. FESL membership total as of July 2026 is 163. We have struggled to retain members in the digital age. For comparison, in November 2019, we had 255 members. Please consider joining.

Follow us on Instagram: [elsobrantebooks](#)

Meet the New Director:



Sharon Laverty Miller was born and raised in San Pablo the youngest of eight in an Irish immigrant family. She moved to Santa Cruz to attend Cabrillo College. In 1998, she moved to El Sobrante with husband Mike and sons, while employed as a business analyst at UC Berkeley. While at Cal she earned a BA at JFK University. After retiring she was recalled to The Bancroft Library to assist the Director. Sharon is writing her father's memoir about his political activism in Ireland and California, and volunteers with the El Sobrante Friends of Library and the Green Team 94803.

Goodbye to Sam's Dog House

Roxy Miravalle



Only a few businesses in El Sobrante can claim their crown of longevity; Oliver's Hardware, Ed's

Place, Rancho Liquors, Clancy's and the former Horseshoe Liquors & Café just to name a few. However, there's another place that has over 40 years in business; Sam's Dog House. Now, Sam's, sadly, is no more. The news of Sam's closing spread like wildfire on social media. The response to this shocking news and the comments that followed were like a tribute to the passing of an old and dear friend.

Sam's Dog House is one whose closing has hit hard, not just for El Sobrante but for anyone who has come here since its opening. The owners did a nice farewell on their [website](#) and [Facebook page](#) opening with "To Our Valued Customers, Friends, and Community. A Farewell and Heartfelt Thank You from Sam's Dog House. June 21st, Father's Day is our final day! Hope to see more of you hotdog lovers!"

People came in droves to visit Sam's one more time, for the last time, before it was gone forever. Soon, photos by the dozen began appearing on social media which included some of the staff that had been there for a long time as well. One long-time employee in particular is Pat Turley. She had been at Sam's since the beginning when it opened in 1984. In March 2024, they celebrated her 85th birthday at Sam's and she's still going strong!



Sam's Hot Dog sign courtesy
Cindy James

I wrote about Sam Lesti and his iconic hot dog restaurant in our [Spring 2025 issue](#) and the barber shop the "Sportsman" that preceded it. Sam originally opened his hot dog place in October 1984. Mike and Renee Stewart-Rowland took over Sam's Dog House in 1996, running the beloved El Sobrante hot dog stand for another 30 years.

A review of Sam's on Yelp from Apr 2017: "Very good high-quality meat; delicious hot dogs. Two sweet ladies who run the place and remind you of the 1950s. The best hot dog you can get in this area."

Sam's was not just a place to get a hot dog; it had the feel of an informal community center where everyone gathered and was welcome. Loyal customers were grateful to have this wonderful eatery where everyone raved, not just about the food served but the ladies who served them.

And although it's hard to say goodbye to a place you've known since childhood; where you stopped by after school, after work and on the weekends. A place where generations of families have come to have a good hot dog, a shake and make new friends. From the business side of it; you look forward to that long-awaited break from the 9 to 5; to sit on the beach and enjoy the sunsets.

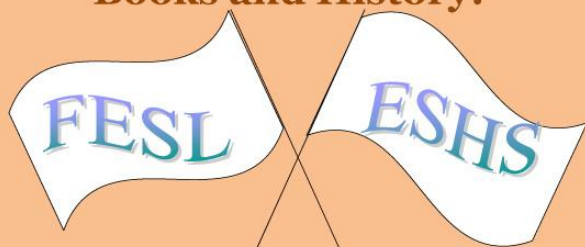
For Sam Lesti and Mike and Renee Rowland, they did what they set out to do; serve their community well. And "serve" it well they did! 🍴



Upcoming Events:

Wednesday, August 19

Books and History!



Chamber Mixer

Wednesday, August 19, 2026, 5:30 pm

Fahden House

Join the [Friends of the El Sobrante Library](#), and the [El Sobrante Historical Society](#) as we celebrate the fifth anniversary of the opening of the Fahden House, in 2021.

[Refreshments](#)

[Raffle](#)

September 20: El Sobrante Stroll

Visit our booth while enjoying El Sobrante's signature event. See you there!

The Leftovers is published quarterly. Articles for publication are encouraged, as are comments. See e-mail address below.

The El Sobrante Historical Society is a formal nonprofit organization, and donations may be tax-deductible. We are dedicated to the preservation and display of the history of the community of El Sobrante.

Visit us on **Facebook**:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ElSobranteHistoricalSociety/>

Mission Statement

To promote the awareness and appreciation of El Sobrante history through preservation and education, and chronicling of the community's heritage for current and future generations.

ESHS Board of Directors

Donald Bastin: President; Historical Researcher and writer. Newsletter editor.

Roxanne Miravalle: Vice-President; Historian and Writer; Genealogist.

Steve James: Treasurer; Membership and Communication Secretary; Researcher/writer.

Lyle Miller: Secretary; Community Liaison; Researcher/writer.

Emil Munkres: Director; Historian.

Sharon Miller: Director; Historian

Visit our website at:

www.elsobranthehistoricalsociety.com

Questions, Comments, and other communication? Send to
ESHISTORY@GMAIL.COM



1919 Electric



Aptera

The Electric Car: History and Overview

Donald Bastin

Tuesday, September 1, 6:30 pm,
El Sobrante Library

Join us for a discussion of the electric car, including its history and details of its unique characteristics. There will be time for questions and answers.