Ohlone and Portolá Expedition Route Documentation

Saturday October 21, 1769 – one league south of Año Nuevo – Waddell Creek

Described as being one league¹ south of Año Nuevo with the bearings were reported as 37° 22’ north latitude². Rested for two days.

Figure 1 USGS 30 Minute Santa Cruz Quad, 1902, of the regions of the Portolá Expedition trek of October 23rd to 24th starting out from Waddell Creek to Whitehouse Creek. From there up through Arroyo de los Frijoles hollow to the lake, then through Pescadero northwards along today’s Stage Road towards San Gregorio.

¹ The Spanish league was originally set as a fixed unit of distance of 5,000 varas (slightly more than an English yard), about 2.6 miles or 4.2 km. In 1568 Philip II of Spain officially abolished the league. It originated as an average distance you expect to cover in one-hour walking over level terrain.

² Crespi field draft (Brown 2001) page 576, revised to ½ league in 1770 final report. This bearing would be near Tunitas Creek, north of San Gregorio
These dirt roads followed the existing native American routes.

Monday October 23rd – Waddell Creek to Whitehouse Canyon

Traveled on a northwestward course, they arrived at a point of low land going a great way out to sea.

Upon the tablelands of grass-grown level soil with fresh water stream and live oaks they changed course to NNW & N keeping the white mountain range on their right. In two leagues they came to a small valley among knolls where there was a good-size village. The hills behind the village were covered in pine trees. The village included a grass-roofed half-orange shaped building large enough for the whole community, as well as great many small houses of upright split sticks.

Figure 2 USGS 7½ Minute Año Nuevo Quad 1948 showing the open tablelands and the tree lined streams and hills. Paved highway replaced dirt roads.

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3 Crespi, pg 576-579
4 Added in final report, not in field notes
5 Added in final report
6 Added in final report

Here they were greeted warmly by the Quiroste and presented black and white pies made from pine-nuts and acorns with wild tobacco to smoke. Gifts of four tall red-colored staffs.

Figure 3 Proxy to the village site as the archaeological reconnaissance map is redacted from the public record (PLN2017-00024)

They were visited by bearded locals from a nearby village who also have great red staffs and hats of green wreaths. They interpret from the villagers that two harbors lay north in a three days march. The bay is surrounded in pines and a ship is waiting. This is the relief supplies they expected at Monte-Rey. This village of the Mitine is named San Juan Nepomuceno (Saint John of Nepomuk)

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7 The Quiroste Valley Cultural Preserve within Año Nuevo State Park is still maintained near this location
8 Not mentioned in final report
9 Altered with other pen point and ink from: San Pedro Regalado (Saint Peter of Regalado)
10 Costansó, pg 98 Rancheria de la Casa Grande
No plaque nor marker

Tuesday, Weds, Thurs Oct 24, 25, & 26th 11 – Whitehouse Canyon to San Gregorio and rest spot

Left with two 12 Quiroste, traveling due northward traversing knolls bare of trees that had been recently burned.13 The hills in the distance were heavy treed. Two leagues beyond the streams they came to two adjacent hollows, one with a good size lake. The streams were plentiful, lined with hazelnuts, the soil dark and ideal for farming. They named it San Pedro Regalado14.

Over the next five leagues they were plagued by brambles hindering traveling until they came to the next village. They stopped half league from the grass housed village Zucigim in a valley which was close to the shore. The Oljon here dress in white tippets, carrying staffs of many colors & feathers. The stream offered a good flow of water, suitable for irrigation, the ranges of treeless knolls suitable for dry farming with the hills providing great deal of timber. This area was named Nuestro padre Santo Domingo (Our Father Saint Dominic)15, a good spot for a good-size mission. The trek was longer than usual, tiring the mules.16

11 Crespi, pg 579-584
12 Four people in final report
13 Farming here was done with fire whereas the Spanish used irrigated waters for same type of land.
14 Altered from San Fructo (Saint Fructus)
15 Costansó pg 99 The soldiers called it Valle de los Cursos (Valley of the Courses)
16 Costansó pg 99
Figure 4 The expedition followed roughly the old highway route from Pescadero (San Pedro Regalado) to San Gregorio (Nuestro padre Santo Domingo). Map is from the War Department Army Corp of Engineers 15 Minute Halfmoon Bay Quad 1940.
California State Historical Landmark # 26 text at San Gregorio State Beach

37.322874, -122.401452

Approved 15 June 1932: PORTOLÁ EXPEDITION CAMP AT SAN GREGORIO CREEK The Portolá Expedition on October 24, made camp at an Indian rancheria on San Gregorio Creek, about one-half league from its mouth. Tired and sick, they rested here over the 25th and 26th.

Text from October 16, 1949 plaque (replaced 1958, moved in 1970, currently missing): PORTOLA CAMP Captain Gaspar de Portola and his party of Spanish Explorers, journeying overland from San Diego in a fruitless search for Monterey Bay, camped here by San Gregorio Creek for a three day rest and treatment of their sick, October 24 – 27, 1769. Having missed Monterey, they later discovered San Francisco Bay instead. State Registered Landmark No. 26 Tablet placed by California Centennials Commission Base furnished by County Board of Supervisors in co-operation with San Mateo County Historical Association. Dedicated October 16, 1949

The exploration team rested here, on the 25th because the mules were exhausted. Extended through the 26th as the commander and Captain were “indisposed” with scurvy and diarrhea. Scouts explored four leagues northward along the coast.

Friday, October 27th 19- San Gregorio to the Mouth of Purisima Creek

Continued to travel due northward, over ranges of burnt grassy knolls guided by four locals of the village showing water holes. The terrain is tablelands that end in cliffs at the sea, bare of trees. Crossed three streams with very steep cliffs in a span of two leagues. Stopped at an abandoned Torose village at the northern side of the third stream. The guides told them they have moved into the mountains. The stream was named San Ivo (Saint Ives).

17 Crespi, pg 584, added in final report
18 Costansó, pg 99
19 Crespi, pg 583-585
20 Costansó, pg 101

Figure 5 Road on the Plat of Rancho Cañada de Verde y Arroyo de la Purisima, nearly identical on a USGS map a century later
Figure 6  Continued northwards following the old highway from San Gregorio to Purisima (San Ivo). Map is from the War Department Army Corp of Engineers 15 Minute Halfmoon Bay Quad 1940.
California State Historical Landmark #22 location
½ mi West of State Highway 1 (P.M. 24.6), 4.1 miles South of Half Moon Bay; west of the ghost town of Purissima

≈37.404842, -122.422783

Approved 15 June 1932:
PORTOLÁ EXPEDITION CAMP ON PURISIMA CREEK  The Portolá Expedition of 1769 on October 27 camped on the south bank of Purisima Creek in the vicinity of the Ocean Shore Highway near the mouth of said creek. The Indian village on the north bank of the creek was named 'Las Pulgas' by Costanso, the army engineer with the party, because the soldiers who occupied some abandoned Indian huts became covered with fleas.

No plaque nor marker

Saturday October 28th The plain of Los Santos Apóstoles San Simón y San Judas Tadeo (Holy Apostles Saint Simon and Saint Jude) & Sunday 29th 21 – Purisima Creek to the Mouth of Pilarcitos Creek

Traveled along the burned tablelands by the cliff edge. In two leagues they came upon a large stream. Here they spotted, a league further, a very long point running out into the sea and afar westward island rocks. 22 The road they were traveling is similar to the previous day, likened to a long slope. 23

The four guides from the last Ssaliame village are leading the expedition to the next settlement, Ssatumnunumo, which should be close, about a league away. While they were visited by many of the locals, they were from communities they have already passed, whereas this area is sparsely inhabited 24. Again, the lands are bare, with trees sighted in the distant mountains, but no trees nor firewood close by.

They halted in the vicinity of the beach with a high point of land terminating in the sea behind two sharp-pointed rocks to the northwest. Wondering where they were in relation to Monterey, suffering frequent rains, foul breezes & fog, with provisions running short, rations cut, they were considering killing their mules for meat. 25 Most everyone is, to some degree, sick and miserable.

21 Crespi, pg 585-587
22 Farallones, Crespi, pg 585
23 Costansó, pg 101
24 Costansó, pg 101
25 Costansó, pg 101
The field notes state they traveled north-northwest, whereas the final report and Costansó stated they stayed the day and the village visited the encampment. Costansó named the area *Llano de los Ansares*.

*Figure 7 The Llano de los Ansares where they traversed October 28th from Purisíma to the mouth of Pilarcitos or possibly Frenchman Creek. USGS 30 Minute Santa Cruz Quad, 1902*
California State Historical Landmark #21 ½ mile West of State Highway 1 (P.M. 29.0), Half Moon Bay

~37.472644, -122.446324

Approved 15 June 1932:
PORTOLÁ EXPEDITION CAMP NEAR PILARCITOS CR The Portolá Expedition of 1769 camped close to the mouth of Pilarcitos Creek on October 28 and 29. Portolá was very ill and they spent the week end there – Saturday and Sunday. They noted Pillar Point but did not apply a name to the promontory.

No plaque nor marker

In July of 1769 an overland expedition headed by Don Gaspar de Portola left the presidio at San Diego to search for the bay of Monterey, using a seaman’s journal of 1603 as a guide. Not knowing that they had missed Monterey and in desperate need of provisions and medical help from the supply ship San Antonio, the discouraged band camped at Pilarcitos and Frenchman’s Creeks, October 28 and 29. From this point they pressed on to discover "a great estuary that extended many leagues inland" (San Francisco Bay) on November 1.

This plaque installed with the cooperation of the San Mateo Historical Association, The Spanish.

Figure 8 Mock-up of plaque for Landmark #21 to be installed on Main Street Bridge in Half Moon Bay but never commissioned.
Monday October 30th 26 – Pilaritos Creek to Martini Creek at foot of Montara Mountain

Traveled northwesterly for a league along the shore, again noticing the grasslands have been burnt off with the tablelands27 bisected by four or five streams, and a great many mussels; the farallones (rock islands) are in view from here. This area is a good embayment and a good site for a town but lacking for wood. This point is named punta del Angel Custodio (Guardian Angel Point). Sea stacks are spotted off shore with one set connected.

Figure 9 October 30th trek to el arroyo hondo del Almejar (Martini Creek) at top of map. USGA 15 Minute San Mateo Quad, 1896

26 Crespi, pg 587-589
27 In the final report they noted the burning was done to increase the yield of grass seeds

In another league they again crossed a good size stream. Two leagues further along they crossed two streams deep enough to construct bridges. A spot with very large and numerous mussels they named *el arroyo hondo del Almejar*\(^28\) (deep stream at the Mussel Bed).

![Image of Ohlone/Portolá Heritage Trail](image)

California State Historical Landmark # 25 ½ mile east of State Highway 1 (P.M. 37.2), 0.9 mi north of Montara

\(-37.554056, 122.506950\)

Approved 15 June 1932:

**PORTOLÁ EXPEDITION CAMP AT MARTINI’S CR** The Portolá Expedition of 1769 camped on a stream at the foot of Montara Mountain which now blocked their way. Here was found a plentiful supply of mussels which food was badly needed. They named the camp “El Rincon de las Almejas”. Here Sergeant Ortega with a small party was sent break a trail over the mountain barrier.

No plaque nor marker

A bight or wide bay begins here and runs north to historically named *punta de los Reyes* (Point Reyes) therefore near the harbor of San Francisco. Within the bay are mussel beds and six of seven *farallones* as depicted by Cabrera Bueno. Having found Point Reyes they conclude in the Final Report but not in the Crespi’s field notes they have passed *Monte Rey*.\(^29\)

**Tuesday October 31**\(^30\) – San Pedro Valley

Departed from the mussel bed stream ‘thronging with fleas’\(^31\), they were forced to climb northwesterly through steep high grassy knolls lacking trees and covered with chaparral for about a league from the previous point, and again viewed the guano covered Farallones, Point Reyes, and the oceanside harbor then called San Francisco, identified by the three bluffs, matching the historical accounts, confirming they had passed Monterey; reckoning by the engineer of 37° 33-35’\(^32\). The Expedition team has problem reconciling historical record latitudes to current observations making them second guess their relative position.

\(^28\) Castansó pg 103 called the site *Rincón de las Almejas*

\(^29\) Crespi, pg 589

\(^30\) Crespi, pg 589-593

\(^31\) Sand fleas?

\(^32\) Castansó, pg 105; the range crest is at 37° 34’ 50”N
They descended a knoll to a level area 600 vara long by 100 vara wide. This valley has two streams, one from the northwest and the other from the east that meet in the flats. The area lacks trees except for a few low willows along on the stream bed. The only trees that can be seen are upon the mountain range summits. The great oceanside bay is estimated being three or four leagues across and all of the navies of Spain can fit within it.

![Map of the area](image)

*Figure 10* San Pedro Valley is also the location of Sanchez Adobe, California Historical Landmark # 391. USGS 15 Minute San Mateo Quad, 1896

Today’s march is one league over very broken ground, where they noticed a change in grasses.

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33 The dimensions are the size of four south of Market Street, San Francisco city blocks (100 x 150) which were laid out incidentally in varas.

which are not as lush, but ubiquitous, with chaparral, rose bushes, and lush plants; deer abound
upon the knolls. Camp is made a short distance from the beach near a stream terminating into a
marsh that disappears before reaching the sea. After camp was made they were visited by locals
bearing seed pies and mussels. They suspect many villages exist along the harbor due to all the
smokes visible. In the distance there are three white gorges where one has a cove providing
shelter from the ocean winds.

California State Historical Landmarks # 24 & 394 at the
SE corner of Crespi Dr and State Hwy 1, Pacifica

Approved 16 June 1932:
PORTOLÁ EXPEDITION AT PEDRO COVE The Portolá
Expedition of 1769 camped near a lagoon receiving
what is today the San Pedro Creek where there was an
Indian village from October 31 to November 3. It was
from this camp that Sergeant Ortega went on a trip not
exceed three days and discovered the southeast arm of
what is now San Francisco Bay

Text from the 1949 plaque: DISCOVERY OF SAN FRANCISCO BAY Captain Gaspar de Portolá camped,
October 31, 1769, by the creek at the south side of this valley, and to that camp scouting parties brought news
of a body of water to the east. On November 4 the expedition advanced. Turning inland here, they climbed to
the summit of Sweeney Ridge and beheld for the first time the Bay of San Francisco.

Tablet placed by California Centennials Commission. Base furnished by County Board of Supervisors in
cooperation with the San Mateo County Historical Association. Dedicated October 16, 1949.

Wednesday and Thursday, November 1st All Saints Day & November 2nd All Souls Day [and Friday
November 3rd]34 – Waiting

The Governor sent Sergeant Ortega and eight scouts out to explore for three days to determine if
Monterey is ahead or behind them while they remain encamped. Bear tracks and scat have been
spotted here. The harbor is estimated to be four leagues away at 38° 00′ north.35

During the night of the 2nd, a north wind blew so hard it tore down ‘everything that was standing
and tossed quite large firebrands into the air.’ A hunting party reports that a great estuary extends
inland with tree studded plains with smokes from the native population can be seen from the top
of the hills.36

34 Crespi, pg 593-595
35 Point Reyes is at this latitude
36 Costansó, pg 107
Friday night\textsuperscript{37}, November 3\textsuperscript{rd}, the scouting party returns firing off their guns to tell of a great sea arm, \textit{el brazo del mar}, or inlet that reaches inland. The inland has large plains, large tall white and live oaks, vast numbers of deer, and many lakes with enormous numbers of geese, ducks, cranes, and other fowl. Close by are seven villages and the locals report there are two harbors and a ship at the second one\textsuperscript{38}, the expected \textit{San Joseph} a two-day march away\textsuperscript{39}. They offered to take the explorers there but decline to report back to camp.

Noted in the Crespi’s fieldnotes but not the Final report was the joyfulness that they have arrived at \textit{Monte Rey} despite the conflict with earlier recorded observations and Don Miguel Costansó reporting \textit{Monte Rey} being at 37° 24’ N\textsuperscript{40}. Knowing that they expected a relief ship, they were relieved, for their provisions were running out.

\textbf{Saturday November 4\textsuperscript{th}} \textendash{} \textit{Discovery Site}

In the afternoon started by the shore and proceeded in a northwest direction avoiding the boggy lands of the two streams looking for the port. Ascended the burned knolls climbing a high hill where they saw a large arm of the sea that was four or five leagues in width.\textsuperscript{42} From here they stopped to view the surrounding area.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{figure11.jpg}
\caption{Undated photo from Centennial Commission}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{37} The Final reports it was 8 PM on the 3\textsuperscript{rd} making it Saturday making it the night they were expected to return.
\textsuperscript{38} Not mentioned in the Final Report
\textsuperscript{39} Costansó, pg 109
\textsuperscript{40} This would locate Monterey near Tunitas Creek, whereas Monterey is at 36° 36’, 55 miles to the south of the reported position
\textsuperscript{41} Crespi, pg 595-597
\textsuperscript{42} The final report states three or four leagues, varying in width to as little as two and one at its narrowest.
Various mountain ranges surround the area, one was one and half to two leagues away,\(^{43}\) obscuring the entrance to the sea arm. Estimates of the bay are eight to ten leagues long running from northeast to southwest. After traveling two leagues, they decided to circle the bay from the south. They went down the hill to a hollow\(^{44}\) running between high grassy knolls and a mountain range green with low woods that they kept on their right\(^{45}\). At two leagues they made camp near a lake filled with countless ducks, cranes, geese, and other fowl, at the foot of the mountain range.\(^{46}\)

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\(^{43}\) San Bruno Mountains

\(^{44}\) A type of valley

\(^{45}\) They would have avoided the marshes of the bayside as the foul airs, *mal arie*, Spanish for bad air, were considered to cause sickness like malaria.

\(^{46}\) Neither the Crispi’s travel journal nor does Costansó diary mention a lake, only the Final Report does. The San Andreas valley would afford water with streams running in the same direction they were traveling. There is a small pond in a spot most likely where they would have stopped.
Figure 13 1896 USGS map; November 4th campsite is under the reservoir near the ‘A’ of LAKE

Figure 14 US Army Engineer 1867 survey with trail from San Pedro Valley to Discovery Site to San Andreas Valley
Figure 15  1869 map showing San Pedro Valley with lagoon in lower left corner to San Andreas Valley. Note the scattering of trees on the knolls on eastern side of the valley. November 4th campsite is around the small pond in lower right corner.

California State Historical Landmark #27 at the end of Hillcrest Blvd, just west of the 280, Millbrae

37.588959,-122.413143

Approved 15 June 1932: PORTOLÁ EXPEDITION CAMP AT LAGOON  The Portolá Expedition of 1769 camped near a lagoon now covered by San Andreas Lake which is a part of the water supply of the City of San Francisco, on November 4, 1769. They camped here a second time on their return trip on November 12.

From the 1976 plaque: DISCOVERY OF SAN FRANCISCO BAY On November 4, 1769, the expedition of Captain Gaspar de Portola, after crossing Sweeney Ridge, beheld the Bay of San Francisco for the first time. That night they camped at a small lagoon, now covered by San Andreas Lake. Finding the Bay too large to go around and thinking they had bypassed Monterey Bay, the expedition camped here again on November 12, 1769 on their return to San Diego.

First made a state registered historical landmark no. 27, June 15 1932, this site was rededicated as a U.S.A. bicentennial project of San Andreas Lake Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution and the City of Millbrae, California on November 6, 1976.

Location granted by the State of California. Monument base of serpentine rock, official state rock of California. Furnished by The San Francisco Water Department.