



Juan Bautista de Anza: Basque Explorer in the New World

Donald T. Garate

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The name of Juan Bautista de Anza the younger is a fairly familiar one in the contemporary Southwest because of the various streets, schools, and other places that bear his name. Few people, however, are familiar with his father, the elder Juan Bautista de Anza, whose activities were crucial to the survival of the tenuous and far-flung settlements of Spain's northernmost colonial frontier. For this first comprehensive biography of the elder Anza, Donald T. Garate spent more than ten years researching archives in Spain and the Americas. The result is a lively, vividly drawn picture of the Spanish borderlands and the hardy, ambitious colonists who peopled them. Anza was born in the Basque Country in 1693, a poor boy in a typical Basque village. Like so many of his contemporaries, he made his way as a young man to America, where he joined many of his Basque compatriots as part of Spain's colonial establishment. After working for a few years as a miner in Sonora, he became a soldier and spent the rest of his life protecting a vast and turbulent territory covering much of present-day Sonora and Arizona, as well as parts of Chihuahua, Texas, and New Mexico, struggling to maintain order among the settlers, establish trade routes, and pacify the numerous hostile Indian peoples. Anza's career exemplifies the vital role played by Basques in the settlement of Spanish America. Upon arrival in Mexico, he became part of a vast ethnic network of Basques who were finding in the colonies the opportunities for professional and economic advancement denied them in their crowded and poverty-riddled homeland. Anza's brief but eventful career was part of this Basque contribution to the settlement of the Americas, and represented the adventurous life of an authentic frontier hero.

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