

# Spanish Explorers in Our Valley

## **FOCUS:**

- To understand that the Spanish explorers and missionaries wanted to secure land for the Spanish government and convert California Indians to the Western way of life.
- To understand why our Indians left the San Ramon Valley.
- To understand the end of the Tatcan and Seunen Indian life in the San Ramon Valley.

## **MAIN IDEA:**

Read to find out why there were Spanish explorers in our San Ramon Valley and what happened to the Indians.

## **VOCABULARY:**

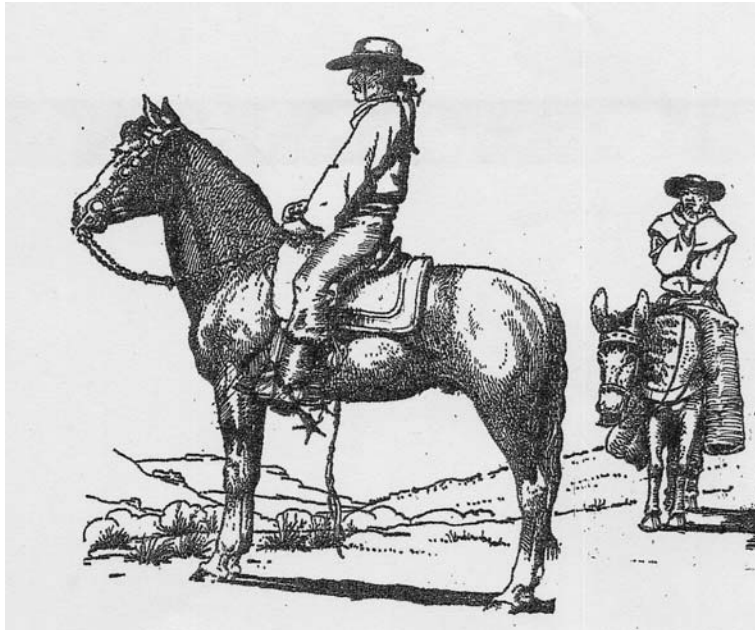
expedition  
to convert  
missions  
the Western world  
journal



# Student Pages

## Meeting the First Spanish Explorers

Imagine the fear that local Indians felt when they looked up and saw the first Spanish **expedition** of soldiers come into their valley. They had never seen pale-colored men before, nor had they ever seen horses, mules, sheep or cattle. The Indians must have thought these beings were from another world, a spirit world. The Indians were happy to see that the Spanish were actually people when they got off their horses. The soldiers had curious hairy faces and were dressed in long pants, long-sleeved shirts and leather boots. They were carrying many new trade items, including beads, bells and woven fabric. And they carried guns which were powerful enough to kill a bear.



All this was new and different to valley Indians. However, the Indians would have been more frightened if they had known that this would lead to the end of the familiar life they had known for thousands of years.

## Spanish Invasion

Many explorers came to California. Most of them were Spanish who came north to California from the land that is now Mexico. They came to claim land for the Spanish government and represented **the Western world**. They wanted to change the Indians' way of life to the way the Spanish lived. The Spanish created **missions** where the Indians could work, worship and live away from their villages. The Spanish believed it was their duty to bring western culture, western religion, and education to the native Indians. The Spanish believed their way of life was better than the way the Indians had always lived.



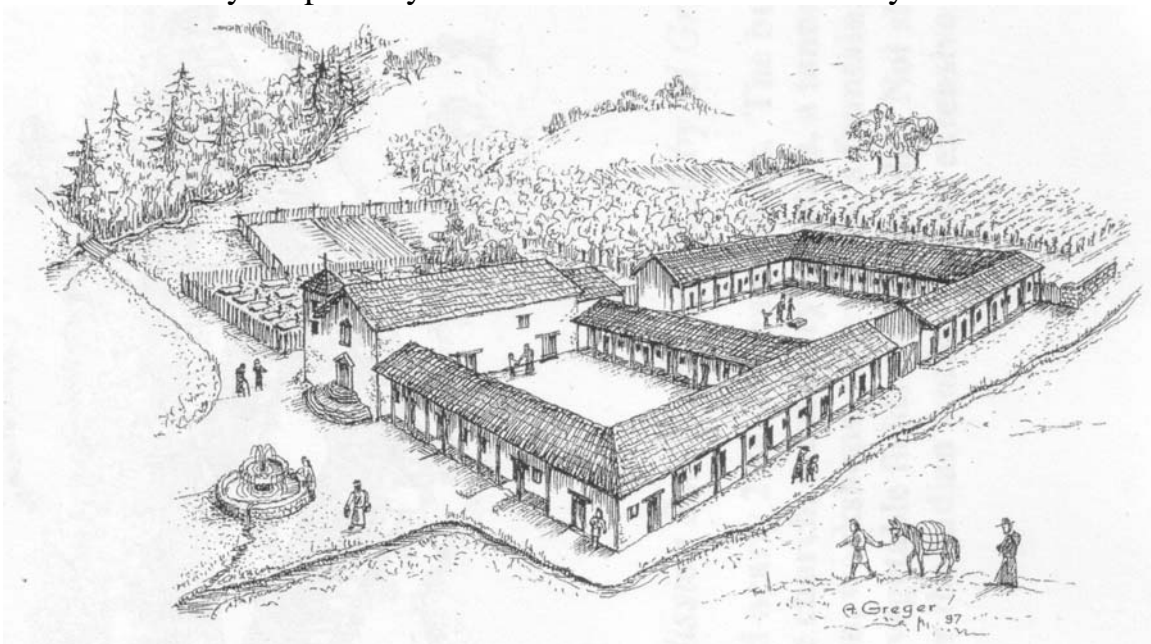
The first Spanish **expedition** to visit our San Ramon Valley, was led by Captain Pedro Fages, accompanied by Franciscan missionary Father Juan Crespi in 1772. Father Crespi's job was to take care of the religious needs of the soldiers and **to convert** and baptize the Indians. Father Crespi wrote a **journal** of the trip, and it is from this diary that we know of their encounters with our Indians.

*March 31 - At six in the morning we set out...we came to three villages with some grass houses. As soon as the Indians caught sight of us they ran away, shouting and panic-stricken...This valley seemed to me to be a charming site for a settlement...*

*April 1 - We set out at six, following the same valley in a southerly direction, the excellence of the path covered with many trees. The land was all level land, with grass and trees and many good creeks, with numerous villages and many gentle, peaceful Indians.*

The Indians began to trade goods and food with the Spanish right away. The Spanish encouraged the Indians to come to the **missions** nearby. Many Indians went because they were curious about the Spanish life style, impressed by these new ways or felt the Spanish **missions** would provide a better life.

Soon the Indians became unhappy in the **missions**. They were not allowed to leave and return to their homes and valley. The food the Spanish provided was not what they were used to. The Indians did not like being ordered around and changing the way they lived. They had to wear long pants and stiff shirts that were uncomfortable. The Indians were sad and often sick. They desperately missed their San Ramon Valley.



The villages remaining in the valley had very few people living in them and soon disappeared, because there were not enough Indians to keep the village working. Many of the Indians caught the white man's diseases, like measles, small pox, or flu and died. Little by little the Tatcan and Seunen people's way of life was gone.

*Kathie Petrie, 2004*

# Teacher Pages

## Student Activities

- **Critical Thinking**

1. Explain why the Tatcan or Seunen Indians were not happy living in the missions. Why did they miss their native way of living?
2. Explain how the arrival of the Spanish exploration brought about the end of our Indian tribes.

- **Show What You Know**

### Art Activity

- **Design a Postcard**

Think about what the first Spanish exploration found when they entered our valley. If you were a part of this expedition, what would you have written on a postcard to someone back home telling of your experience? On one side draw a picture of what you might have seen. On the other side, write a few sentences telling about your journey. Share your postcard with a partner.

## Field trips (See special section on field trips.)

- **Family field trips:** Oakland Museum, Mission San Jose, Lindsay Wildlife Museum
- **Passport Opportunity:** Go to the commemorative plaque at the SE corner of Danville Blvd. and El Portal, on the boundary between Alamo and Danville

## History/Social Science Standards

- 3.b Understands and knows how to analyze human and chronological relationships and patterns.
- 3.e Interprets historical events.
- 3.3 Draws from historical and community resources to organize the sequence of events in local history and describe how each period of settlement made its mark on the land.

# Additional Resources

## *Drawings*

## *Essay*

*The Sword and the Cross, Mission San Jose and the San Ramon Valley*

## *Websites*

- [www.californiahistory.com](http://www.californiahistory.com)
- [www.californiahistory.net/European explorers](http://www.californiahistory.net/European_explorers)
- [www.californiahistory.org](http://www.californiahistory.org) (geared for elementary students)

## *Books*

### **EXPLORERS, WHO, WHERE DID THEY COME FROM, WHAT DID THEY FIND**

- J917.94041 AKYROYD – Exploration of the California Coast
- RJ920.02 –Explorers and Discoverers from Alexander the Great to Sally Ride
- J978.009 DOHERTY – Explorers, Missionaries, and Trappers
- J979.4 CALIFORNIA – California Explorers – Fact Cards
- 979.4 EMANUELS – Early California Voyages
- J979.4 OH – Oh, California
- JB SERRA
- JB DRAKE
- JB CABRILLO

### ***SUBJECT SEARCH FOR LIBRARY CATALOGUE:***

*Explorers California, California discovery and exploration*

# The Sword and the Cross

## The Hispanic era in San Ramon Valley from 1772-1830

The year was 1772. That spring Europeans traveled into the San Ramon Valley for the first time, camping overnight in Danville and continuing south to Monterey. In their diaries they noted the Valley's oaks, plentiful water and numerous Indian villages. For those Indians and others of the East Bay this visit presaged the end to their traditional way of life.

### Spanish Invasion

On March 20 of 1772 this Spanish expedition, led by Capt. Pedro Fages and accompanied by Franciscan Father Juan Crespi, left the Monterey presidio and investigated the eastern and Carquinez shoreline of the Bay, turning back after viewing the Delta. The expedition was an effort to determine if the Bay could be circled on land, so that a mission honoring St. Francis could be placed on the north side of the Bay. They were the first Westerners the Contra Costa Indians had ever seen.

Other explorers had touched the coast of California in the years before this inland expedition. In 1542, a scant 50 years after Columbus landed, Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo had mapped part of the coast under a Spanish flag. Francis Drake, an Englishman, landed north of the San Francisco Bay in 1579 but stayed only to repair his ships and didn't discover the fog-shrouded entrance to San Francisco Bay. Others sighted, mapped and stopped briefly on the coast.

Not until the 1760s did the Spanish move to occupy Alta (Upper) California. A combination of personal ambition and a perceived threat of Russian invasion led New Spain's Visitor-General Jose de Galvez to initiate a plan to consolidate and develop the northwest area of Spanish territory, including California.

In 1769 the "Sacred Expedition" led by Captain Gaspar de Portola and Father Junipero Serra traveled north, founding the first mission in San Diego mission. Pedro Fages led a light infantry of 25 Catalanian volunteers and came by sea to San Diego, while Juan Crespi traveled with the overland group. In an era when the state and church were united, this combination of military and missionary colonization had worked for the Spanish throughout the new world.

Fages and Crespi then accompanied Portola to Monterey and points north for further exploration and settlement. A presidio (fort) and mission were founded at the Monterey Bay in 1770 and Fages was appointed commander when Portola returned to New Spain.

On March 31 and April 1, 1772, Father Crespi, a disciplined and meticulous diarist, described the San Ramon Valley as well grown with a large variety of trees, fertile land, plenty of running water, "numerous villages of very gentle and peaceful heathen" and "very suitable for a mission." He noted that the Indians upon first meeting them had run away, "shouting and panic-stricken without knowing what had happened."

The Indians had never seen horses, mules, woven fabric, armor or guns before and their first reactions reflected their astonishment. They were relieved to see the Spanish alight from their horses and realize these visitors were human beings. These new and obviously powerful people were fascinating to the Native Americans. For their part, the Europeans were pleased to find the Indians to be friendly. Trade began immediately with food, furs, feathers, arrows and baskets offered by the Indians and bells, fabric and beads coming from the Spanish.

Even though California Indians had an elaborate social and economic system which had sustained them for many years, this system was not understood at all by the invaders. The Spanish felt they were civilizing and converting a primitive, starving, pagan people who had no culture. The Indians were expected to become Spanish in language, culture and religion and provide the labor for the Spanish mission settlements.

### **Bay Area Missions Begin**

In that first decade two missions were founded in the Bay Area at San Francisco (1776) and Santa Clara (1777) and hundreds of Indians went to live at the Missions while others worked as day laborers. Once Indians were baptized, the missionaries kept close track of them, expected them to turn away from their old traditions, and used soldiers and the threat of force to keep order.

The Native Americans came to the missions for a variety of reasons. Many wanted to ally themselves with the powerful newcomers and thus have an advantage over other Indian tribes. Eventually their food supplies were damaged by the Spanish grazing and cultivation practices. Foreign diseases for which they lacked immunity decimated them. The physical, social and psychological environments of their tribes deteriorated and village life collapsed.

Tatcan Indians, probably from the Alamo and Danville area, went to Mission Dolores in San Francisco early in 1795 along with a large contingent of Lafayette-area Saclans. A devastating epidemic (perhaps typhus) killed many of them in March and April. Soon after, Saclans and others left the Mission in large numbers, becoming part of a major Indian



resistance in the East Bay. Because of this hostility Mission San Jose was located only 13 miles from Mission Santa Clara, instead of in the San Ramon or Amador Valleys.

Indians from the eastern valleys began to come to Mission San Jose after it was founded in 1797, although in the early years unfriendly Indians threatened anyone who went there. By 1806 there were 662 Indians at the Mission, with a peak population of 1,886 in 1831. Most Tatcan Indians, who spoke Bay Miwok and lived along San Ramon Creek, went to Mission Dolores from 1795 to 1806. The Ohlone (Costanoan) Indians, including Seunen from the south San Ramon and Dougherty Valley areas, are recorded as having arrived at Mission San Jose beginning in 1797. In 1805 some Seunens joined with Volvons to plot against Mission Santa Clara, but a large Spanish expedition squelched their plans.

## **Mission San Jose and the San Ramon Valley**

Mission San Jose became one of the most prosperous in the entire 21 mission string with its excellent water supply, fertile land, many Indian laborers and location near the Bay. In addition the Mission was fortunate in its competent missionary fathers. Narciso Duran, pastor from 1806 to 1833 was an able administrator who became president of all the California missions in 1825. He initiated a renowned music program which included a large Indian orchestra and choir. He and Luis Arguello led one major exploration into the Delta in 1817.

In 1824 Duran drew an extraordinary map of the Mission San Jose territory. On the map the San Ramon Valley is called "Yngerto Canada", its original Spanish name. "Injerto" means "a graft" and, in this case, referred to a joined oak and willow tree at the Creek's origin. "Valle de San Jose" was the Mission name for the Valley which stretched from Sunol to Livermore; it was the Mission's main grazing ranch. The map also marks the first written account of "M. del Diablo," an abbreviation of Monte del Diablo or "thicket of the devil". This referred to the thicket in north Concord where Chupcan Indians had escaped from a Spanish expedition in 1805. Later the Americans transferred the name to the mountain we call Mount Diablo.

Probably some time during Duran's tenure an Indian named Ramon had taken care of sheep in Injerto Canada. According to testimony in a land case (1855), Jose Maria Amador said that the Creek and Valley were named for this Indian who was later mayor domo (supervisor) of the Indians at the Mission. The "San" was added to conform to the custom of the day.

The San Ramon Valley was part of Mission San Jose's grazing land and, by 1827, 9,000 cattle and 10,000 sheep were maintained in El Valle de San Jose in the summer and moved through the San Ramon Valley to the Chupcan Indians' area in the winter. In 1832 the harvest at the Mission included 6,400 bushels of wheat, 1,760 bushels of barley and 1,700 of corn, in addition to a wide array of other vegetables.

By 1830 the Spanish no longer ruled Mexico or Alta California. The Mexican battles for independence, which began in 1810, concluded successfully in 1821. The Mexican government policies regarding the Spanish missionary priests, trade with foreigners, the disposition of mission property and the role of Alta California Governors were much debated by many native Californian families. They also challenged decisions of the new Mexican government and fought among themselves. The history of this period was a turbulent one.

The San Ramon Valley sat on the outskirts of effective Hispanic control throughout this entire period, the rural edge of a sparse necklace of settlements strung along the Pacific coast. In the Valley Mission livestock grazed and both Europeans and Indians hunted deer, but no permanent settlements were built. When Jose Maria Amador, Mariano Castro and Bartolome Pacheco requested grants for ranches here in the 1830s, the Mexican Rancho era began.

From *Yesteryear in the San Ramon Valley* Beverly Lane

### **Sources**

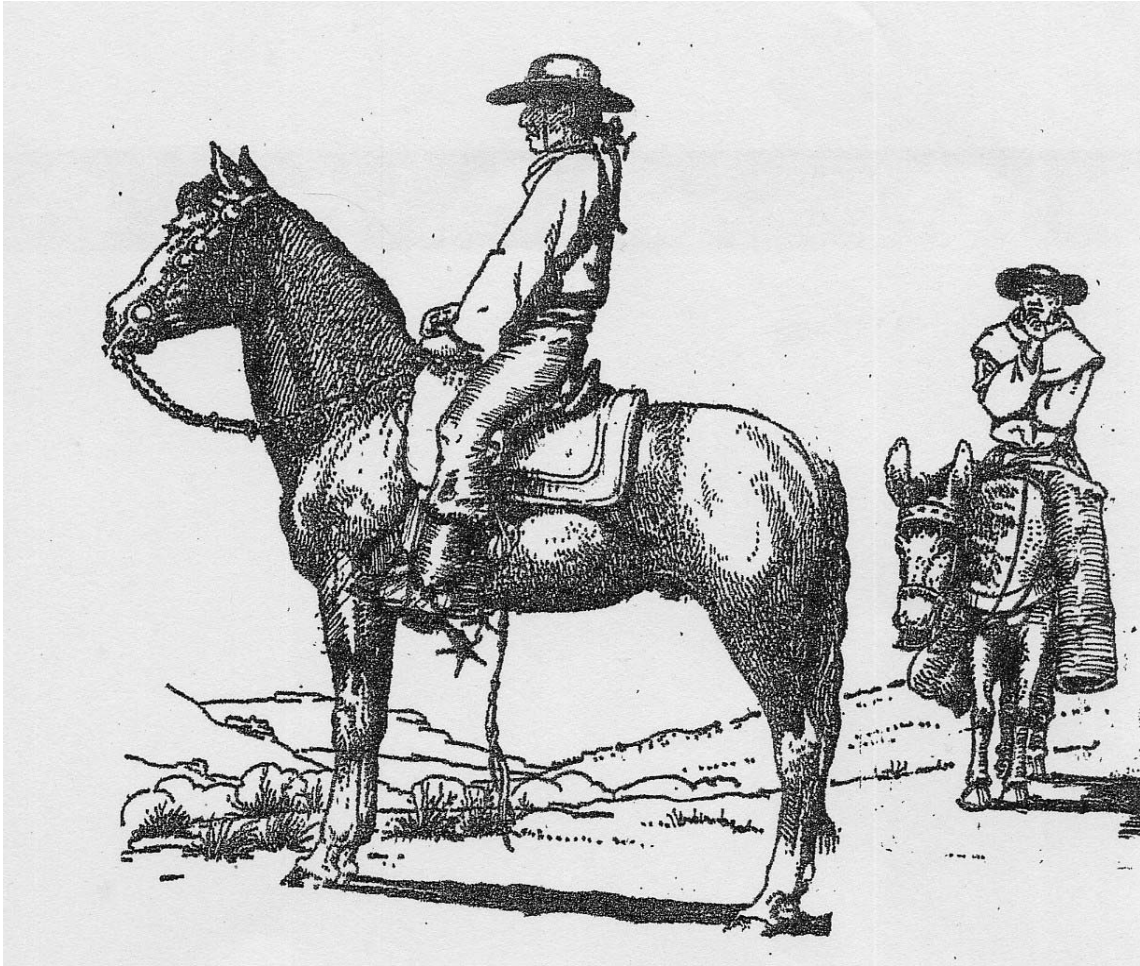
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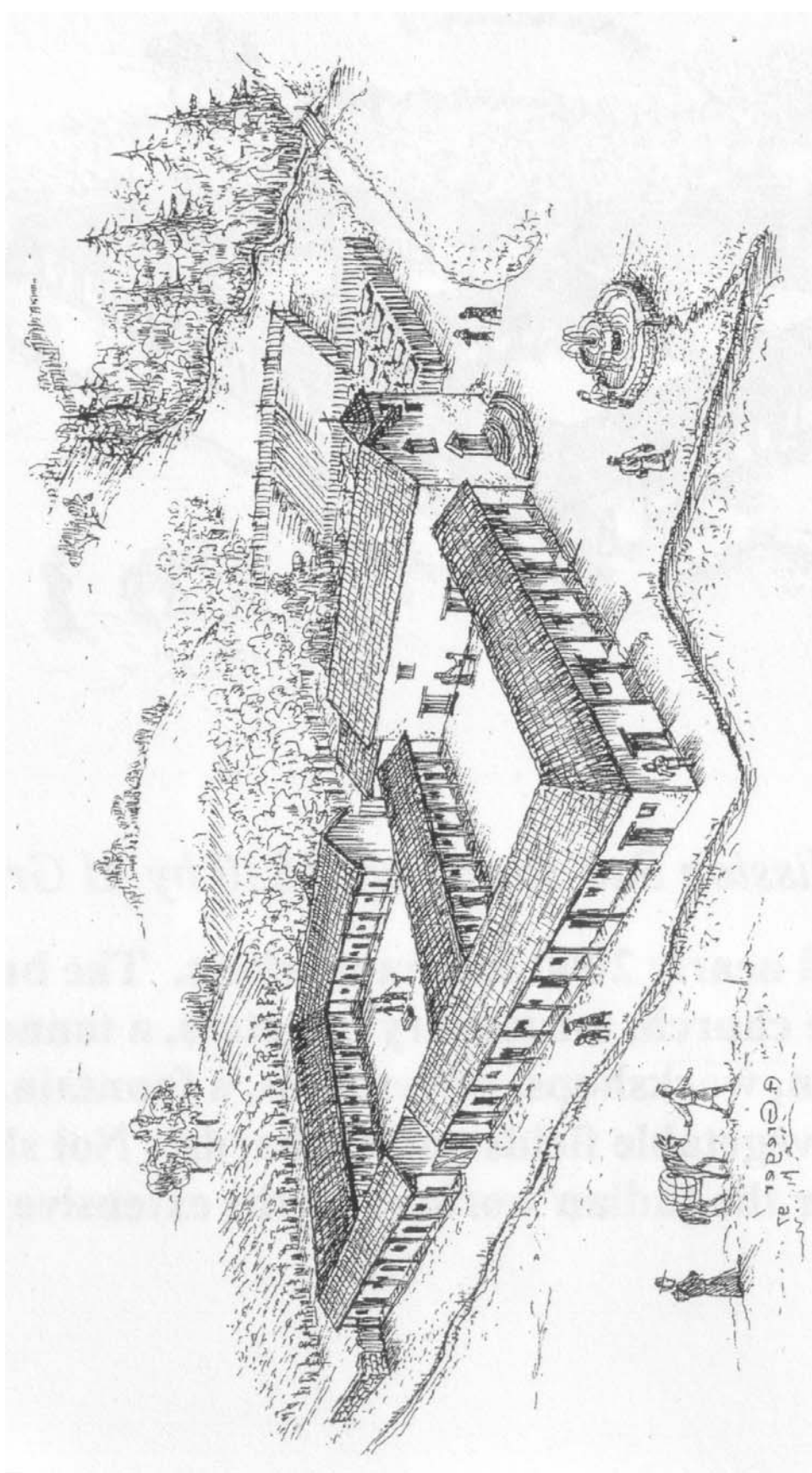
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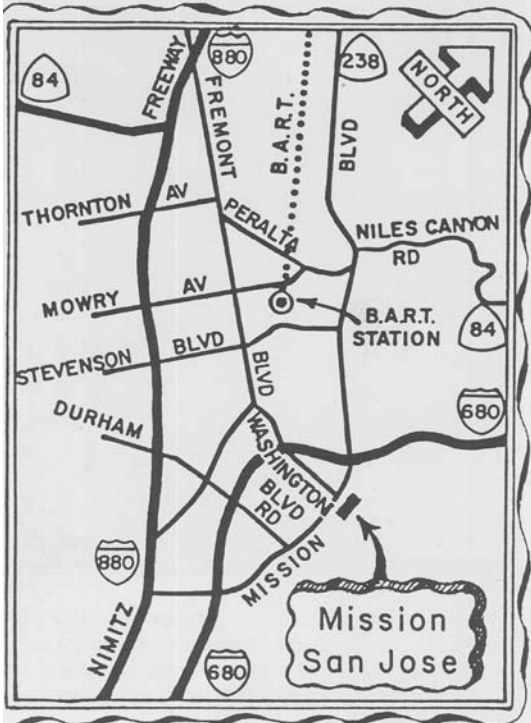
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## Vaquero and Missionary



Transportation to the door is available on A/C Transit buses No. 28 and No. 24. These connect with Santa Clara County Transit Express Bus No. 180, and Bart trains from San Francisco and the Bay Area.



*Albin Greger*

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