

# HISTORICAL ATLAS OF CALIFORNIA

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and  
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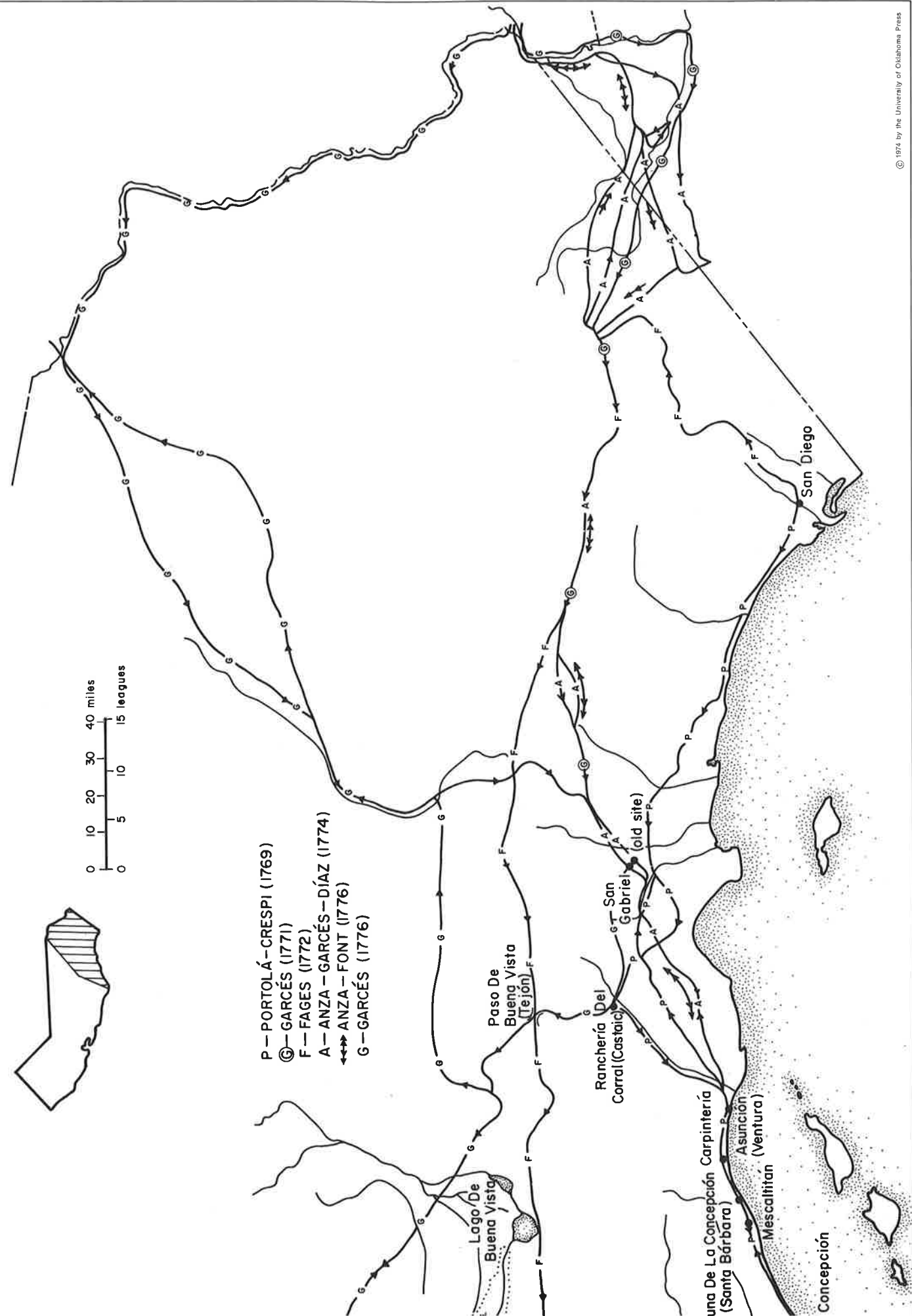
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15. FIRST SPANISH EXPEDITIONS—SOUTH

FROM THE TIME of the initial settlement at San Diego in 1769, Spanish explorers scattered throughout California and by 1776 had charted most of the trails and had become familiar with most of the southern and coastal areas.

Gaspar de Portolá, accompanied by Father Juan Crespi, whose diary recorded the route, left San Diego on July 14, 1769, to find and settle Monterey Bay. The party followed a route northward along the coast which was later designated as the King's Highway. On July 28, while the party was on the banks of the Santa Ana River, a strong earthquake was felt, followed by many additional shocks in the following week. August 2 found the group camped on a river near the site of the present city of Los Angeles. From this point the expedition went through the San Fernando Valley to the Santa Clara River, which they followed to the sea at Asunción (Ventura). At Carpintería they found a large pueblo and at Laguna de la Concepción (Santa Barbara) they noted a rancharía. A large village, some ten miles west of Santa Barbara, was named Mescalitian.

One of the most remarkable Spanish explorers in southern California was Father Francisco Garcés who made several journeys from the Sonoran missions to the Gila-Colorado area. While searching for mission sites in 1771 he made his way to the Yuma Indians on the Gila River and, crossing the Colorado River at Yuma, he blazed the trail across the Colorado Desert to within sight of the San Jacinto mountains. His trek became the basic overland route in the Spanish period. This virtually waterless trail was known as El Camino del Diablo (Devil's Road).

Pedro Fages, one of the key figures in the founding of California, charted a new route northward in 1772. Heading eastward from San Diego to the desert, he then turned northward along El Camino del Diablo through Paso de Buena Vista (Tejon

Pass) into Antelope Valley and on into the San Joaquin Valley.

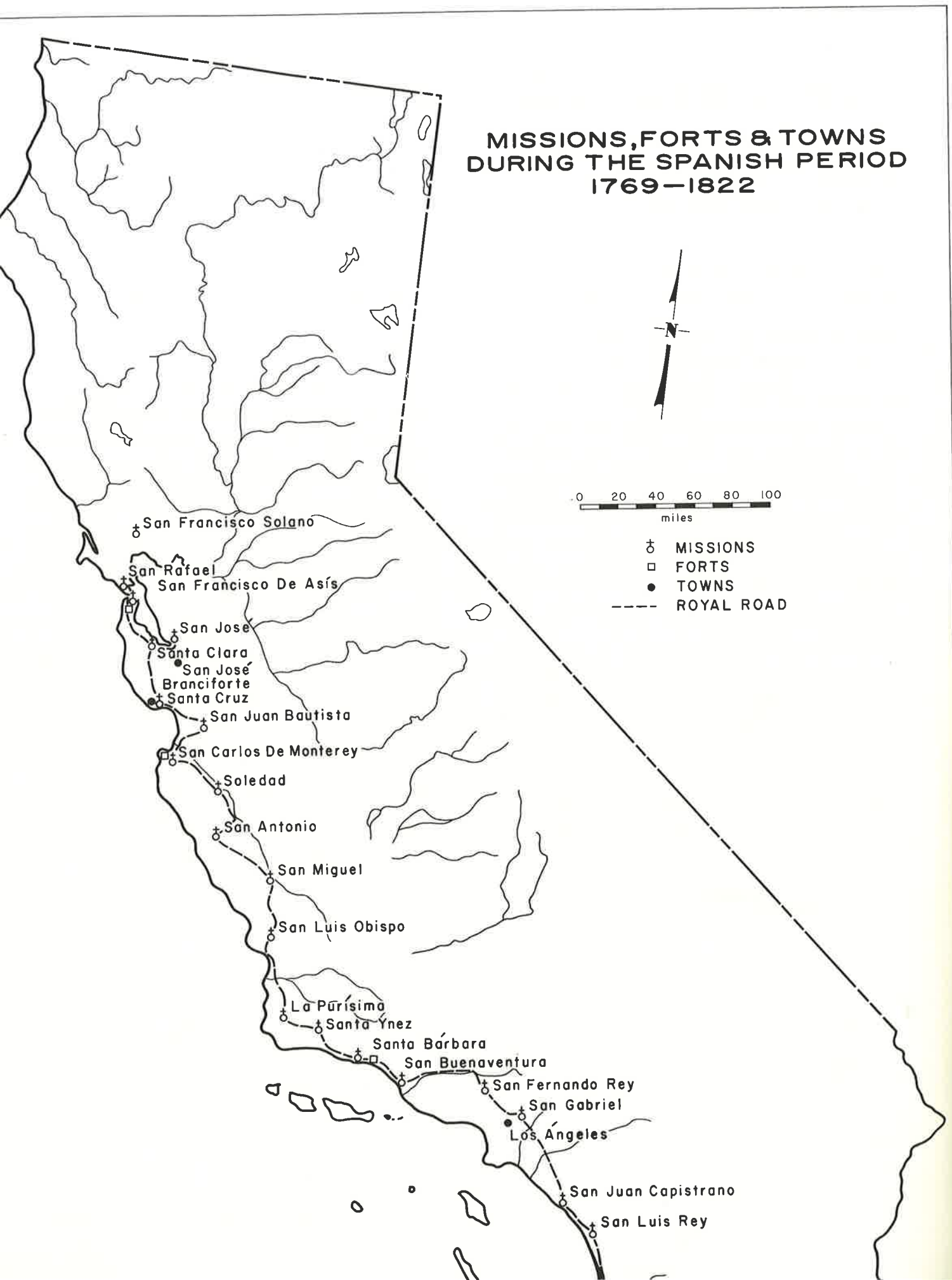
The inadequacy of the sea route for settlers and livestock prompted official encouragement for the charting of a land route to the new colony. On January 8, 1774, Juan Bautista de Anza, accompanied by Father Garcés and Father Juan Díaz, retraced the route Garcés had followed in 1771 from Sonora. A total of thirty-four persons made up the party, which lost its way in the desert and did not reach Mission San Gabriel until March 22. Anza went on to Monterey using the coastal route, but returned the same way.

Having proven the feasibility of the land route, Anza organized an expedition of colonists totaling 240 persons and more than 1,000 livestock. With Fathers Garcés and Pedro Font the group left Tubac in Sonora on October 23, 1775, followed their previous route across the Colorado and the desert, and arrived in Monterey March 10, 1776.

Father Garcés left the Anza expedition near the junction of the Gila and Colorado rivers and, with only an Indian guide, went up the Colorado. Seeking a better land route to Monterey, Garcés traveled westward along the Mojave River and through Cajon Pass, approximating the route of the latter-day Santa Fe railroad along the thirty-fifth parallel. After resting at San Gabriel, the wandering cleric again tried to reach Monterey via an interior route. Going through Tejon Pass to the vicinity of Bakersfield, he went on nearly to Tulare Lake. At this point he returned to the Colorado, probably via Tehachapi Pass. Difficulty in crossing the Colorado at Yuma possibly prompted Garcés' further search for a new route.

Unfortunately, the land route which Garcés had done so much to blaze was closed by the Yuma uprising in 1781, an event in which the great Franciscan explorer lost his life.





**MISSIONS, FORTS & TOWNS  
DURING THE SPANISH PERIOD  
1769-1822**

**19. MISSIONS, FORTS, AND TOWNS DURING THE SPANISH PERIOD, 1769-1822**

THE MISSION was the most important Spanish institution in California. Designed to Christianize the natives, it was also intended to strip them of their aboriginal culture and Hispanize them. Incidentally, the mission also became a significant vehicle by which Spain could advance her frontier, and it was the missionary drive, developed in Mexico, which led to the ultimate settlement of Alta California.

Twenty-one missions were established from San Diego in the south to Sonoma in the north. They were located approximately thirty miles apart, or a single day's journey along the Royal Road. This highway was usually little more than a bridle path and in many places followed the ocean beaches and was all but impassable in rainy weather.

The preferred mission site had timber, good soil, a convenient water supply, and Indians. Partially because of their excellent location, partially because of an ample labor supply, and partially because of the able leadership provided by the Franciscan friars, the missions flourished far more than did secular institutions. Within a few years the missions were producing an abundance of crops and a surplus of livestock. Thus, in actuality, it was the Franciscans who really conquered and settled California.

December 8, 1787	La Purísima Concepción
August 28, 1791	Santa Cruz
October 9, 1791	Señora de la Soledad
June 11, 1797	San José de Guadalupe
June 24, 1797	San Juan Bautista
July 25, 1797	San Miguel Arcangel
September 8, 1797	San Fernando Rey de — España
June 13, 1798	San Luis Rey de Francia
September 17, 1804	Santa Ynez
December 14, 1817	San Rafael Arcangel
July 4, 1823	San Francisco Solano

The Spanish fort, or presidio, was intended to protect the missions from savage Indians or from attack by foreign intruders. The four forts were established at San Diego (1769), Monterey (1770), San Francisco (1776) and Santa Bárbara (1782). They were initially well constructed, but with the passage of years were permitted to fall into decay. According to many foreign visitors, their defenses were so weak that any invader could easily capture them. There were but few soldiers in the province (372 in 1812, for example), and these were reported to be of inferior quality. But however weak or small, the presence of a Spanish military force deterred foreign invasion. For an attack on a California fort would constitute an attack on Spain herself.

**A Mission Chronology**

The missions and the date of their founding were:

July 16, 1769	San Diego de Alcalá
June 3, 1770	San Carlos de Monterey (moved to Carmel in 1771)
July 14, 1771	San Antonio de Padua
September 8, 1771	San Gabriel Arcangel
September 1, 1772	San Luis Obispo de Tolosa
November 1, 1776	San Juan Capistrano (First founded November 30, 1775)
October 9, 1776	San Francisco de Asís (or Dolores)
January 12, 1777	Santa Clara de Asís
March 31, 1782	San Buenaventura
December 4, 1786	Santa Bárbara

Spanish towns, or pueblos, were founded at San José (1777); at El Pueblo de Nuestra Señora—which was shortened to Los Angeles (1781), and Villa de Branciforte (1797). The towns were established in the hope that their citizens would raise enough surplus food to feed the military and also to provide a militia to assist in the defense of the province. It was hoped that the towns would be settled by a high caliber of citizenry, who would provide fine examples to the Indians. These hopes were not realized, and often California was something of a penal colony. Together, the towns and the forts provided a secular influence that was resented, sometimes with good cause, by the Franciscan friars.