

25th Anniversary [Anza Society](#) Conference Summary

On March 23, 2022, the time finally arrived for the 25th Anniversary Anza Society Conference in Banámichi, Sonora, Mexico. After two years of Covid restrictions and multiple postponements, the Board of Directors and guests were more than ready for this conference! Thanks to much pre-planning by our conference lead, Vice-President Jesús Roberto Romo Véjar, we were in good hands. By January, 2022 we had sought out presenters and were able to announce solid conference plans to our members. Sadly, over the last two years we lost several of our vital supporters, Bob Cardoza (CA), Joseph (Joe) Meyers (AZ) and Richard (Dick) Nelson (CA). Their memory remains deeply with us all; they were dearly missed during the Conference.



On Wednesday, many attendees arrived at La Quinta Inn, Tucson, which became the central gathering place for out-of-town members lodging there. Members traveled to the La Expedición de Anza, 1775 (LEA) accessible cultural history park on the Santa Cruz River area. The Anza Society has made this worthy contribution to the community along the Anza Trail highlighting his expedition. The project is located adjacent to the Arizona School for the Deaf and Blind (ASDB). Ron Quinn and Dave Jefferies provided history and updates on the project construction as we walked along the trail. Members of the ASDB staff and students also presented relative commentary. The park provides a visual anchor to the Anza era history and honors his 1775 expedition to Alta California.

Following this presentation, we gathered at a nearby restaurant to partake in delicious drinks, outstanding Mexican cuisine and lively conversation. Taco Giro is definitely a place to return to when in Tucson! Afterwards with “panzas llenas” we returned to the La Quinta for a restful night.

Early on Thursday, March 24, luggage was loaded and we boarded the bus for Mexico! With 32 people on board, there was plenty of room to be comfortable. Dave and Jan Jeffries made refreshments available. The bus ride provided plenty of time to visit and reconnect.

An added bonus was the remarkable Alexander La Pierre who was on board. Alex is a “walking encyclopedia” on borderland history. He shared freely his amazing



knowledge of the entire area as we proceeded south. Scholar La Pierre, founded [Borderlandia Border Tours](http://www.borderlandia.org), a bi-national organization committed to building public understanding of the borderlands. In his young life he has dedicated himself to research and study; serving internships at various southwest historic sites, and the National Park Service. They offer group travel into various borderland areas and elsewhere. Please visit www.borderlandia.org for more information and to subscribe to his newsletters. By the end of the trip, he was better known as “Alexander the GREAT!” which fits most appropriately. Thank you, Alex, for your kindness and generosity!

A big thanks to South of the Border Tours for providing our transportation and a most capable driver Jeff. Company owner, Steve followed the bus by car to the border to help negotiate the border crossing with relative ease and limited trouble. Alex was also extremely helpful with translation and streamlining the Visa procurement process.

With fanfare we were greeted in Fronteras by the Mayor and local historians. Anza I served as a Captain in Fronteras which is also the birthplace of Anza II. We were escorted to historic c. 1600 gravesites and the site where Chief Geronimo is buried. In addition, we visited the Presidio ruins. The society of women of Fronteras served the group a delicious lunch.



Arriving in Banámichi, via La Pera Route, we found lovely accommodations at the Los Arcos and La Posada Hotels. Both are within walking distance of “Casa Vejar”, residence of our Vice-President Jesús & Gabriella Romo-Véjar. They hosted our very special reception and we were welcomed by Mayor Heberto Corella López. The evening was pleasant as we watched the sunset from the beautiful patio. We enjoyed locally made Tequilla Margaritas accompanied by giant hot-off-the-grill “water tortillas” with butter. This local specialty is made of wheat and water and formed into large pizza size tortillas which are then thrown directly onto a hot grill. They were paper thin, crispy and a delicious appetizer to the lovely meal and dessert which followed.



Presentations on Friday, March 25 began at 10 AM with a welcome by ASI, Inc. President, S. Pauline Anaya. Our first presentation was *“Where People Lived in Spanish Colonial Los Angeles”* by lawyer and historian Phyl van Ammers, M.A. Following presentations were given by representatives of Fronteras with two Indian re-enactors to emphasize the historic importance of this area in promotion of tourism.



Thanks to our tag team of translators Alex and Javier Torre, everyone was able to hurdle the language barriers and enjoy the programs along with all other bi-lingual aspects of the trip.

An enthusiastic José Omar Montoya, Historiador, Huépac, spoke about the reports that Anza sent to the authorities in Mexico City regarding the Opata Nation.

Dr. Ronald Quinn, 15-year member and ASI Secretary, presented on the influence of Colonial Spain on the history and development of the American Southwest. His topic *“Fernando de Rivera y Moncada: The Forgotten Governor of Alta California”* was quite informative.

Professor José Maria García-Sánchez, Ph.D., Chair of Modern Languages and Literature at Eastern Washington University, presented *“Juan Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra (1743-94) y Juan Bautista de Anza (1736-88): vindicaciones afines”*



Los Arcos Hotel provided a delightful lunch in the courtyard and lovely weather prevailed.

Following lunch, Archeologist César Armando Quijada López, Instituto Nacional de Antropología y Historia in Sonora, spoke on identifying and registering archeological sites of the original dwellers of the Sonora River with special emphasis in the towns of Huépac and Banámichi.

Just a few weeks before our ASI, Inc. board finalized the agenda, headlines in Tucson and other newspapers throughout the Southwest reported on renowned anthropologist, explorer and internationally recognized scholar Dr. Deni Seymour’s latest discovery.

Her discovery involved Vasquez de Coronado Archaeological sites in Southern Arizona. One of the longest standing mysteries in the American Southwest is the route taken by Fray Marcos de Niza and Francisco Vazquez de Coronado through Sonora and Arizona (1539 and 1540). Our VP, Jesús Romo-Véjar made a call to Dr. Seymour extending an invitation to join our 25th Anniversary Conference and she graciously agreed.

Dr. Seymour added to the specialty of the occasion. Her endearing outstanding qualities and intellectual expertise were greatly admired and it was a pleasure to get to know her personally. Dr. Seymour ended our lecture series Friday with a video *"Anza Route and Campsites in Southern Arizona"*. She is currently working around the Tubac Presidio finding new archaeological, physical and geographic, evidence of the actual trail and campsites and has been able to discern strong evidence of the Anza Route.

Friday evening dinner was served in the courtyard by Los Arcos Hotel. An evening of socializing and camaraderie was enjoyed by all. Some folks were able to stroll a few blocks away and take pictures of the lovely town plaza and beautiful church.

After breakfast Saturday, we boarded the bus for field trips beginning with a visit to Tetuachi ruins. Special permission was given by the mine officials to visit this town that was once owned by Juan Bautista de Anza I. It was a remote short walk to view the small ruins of the church dedicated to the Basque Virgin of Aranzazu. The visit allowed time for those interested to view the ancient Indian irrigation system along the river. It was carved into the upper rocks and carried water to irrigate the fields.



Arriving in Arizpe, a welcome reception was held at the private cultural performing arts center by community members. After a short walk to the Plaza, we entered a large community hall where an indigenous ritual dance was performed. Roses were distributed to all the ASI attendees and refreshments generously offered. We were served a delicious lunch by the Church women's society in their hall.

The last stop, and the highlight of our day in Arizpe, was visiting the church, Our Lady de La Asunción where Juan Bautista de Anza II is buried. We enjoyed a historic presentation about the church, its art, and location of Anza's remains. Our



day in Arizpe was very insightful and helpful in understanding area history. Thanks to our ASI member, Guillermo Antonio Molina Paz for helping with this.

We returned to Banámichi for a quick rest then enjoyed a local performance of lovely music and dance in the town Plaza by Danza Folclóricaby Group “Masehua”. Across from the plaza in the Town Hall, we dined in the open patio for an evening of outstanding special foods and drinks.



Presentations were offered by a local historian regarding the area, as well as a local Muralist, Beatriz Corella, discussing her inspiration and design of the large beautiful Town Hall Murals that graced the inner court yard. They feature ranching, mining and agriculture, major life lines in the area.

Our Keynote Speaker, Deni Seymour, Ph.D. who has been called the “Sherlock Holmes of History”, shared her recent discoveries of the route taken by Francisco Vazquez de Coronado and Fray Marcos de Niza 1540 in search of Cibola through the Sonora and Santa Cruz Rivers. Dr. Seymour’s topic, *“Discovery of Vazquez de Coronado Archaeological Sites in Southern Arizona,”* contained remarkable information and slides to further our understanding of her work and discoveries.

Sunday, after another delicious breakfast at Hotel Los Arcos, we held our traditional ASI Board of Directors meeting. Fortunately, due to



holding prior Zoom Board meetings, we were able to wrap up in just an hour and half. Bidding our gracious hotel hosts Adios, we boarded the bus for our return



stateside. Enroute, we visited the plaza in Magdalena to see padre Kino's memorial tomb and church. Many also enjoyed the local market. Sack lunches were provided by ASI for the return trip.

Alex once again streamlined our return border crossing and everyone was sad at his parting as we dropped him near his home in Tumacacori, Arizona.

Many folks were anxious to return home while others spent a final night at La Quinta. Some gathered for dinner at a lovely nearby restaurant to socialize.

Parting was sad after next morning's breakfast but with promises to stay in touch and gather once again during next year's conference to be held September 14-17, 2023 in Alamosa, Colorado.

We much appreciate all the volunteer efforts made by the Anza Society Board of Directors. They provided amazing experiences with the 25th Anniversary Conference. They are a testament to what the generosity of human spirit can provide freely! A round of "Thank you's" to Vice-President Jesús Romo Véjar, Secretary Ronald Quinn, Treasurer David Jeffries, Webmaster/Membership Bob DeWitt, Members and Program architects Prof. Javier Torre, Prof. Joe Barrera, V.P. Jesús Romo Véjar, Past Presidents Sharon Myers and Stella Cardoza, Dorothy Merlo for her Graphics expertise, our faithful membership and to all those who helped in so many ways not mentioned! We look forward to our 2023 experience!

Gratefully, Anza Society, Inc. President, S. Pauline Anaya, Psy.D.

(with additional content and editing by Bob DeWitt and Dorothy Merlo)

Editor's note: And last, but not least, we are most grateful to our fearless leader, Pauline Anaya who steered this ship and navigated the many reefs encountered, especially during the pandemic era, to allow us to have another great conference!