

S. P #70

## ANZA DESERT STATE PARK

(Summary by Kathleen Camilla Wade)

In order that an outstanding desert portion of California might be preserved for the enjoyment of present and future generations, the Anza Desert State Park was formed early in 1937. It includes approximately 1,500 square miles of the California section of the great Colorado desert. This desert, slopes toward the Salton Sea, and there is evidence that this whole area was once completely covered by water.

The Salton Sea and Imperial County form the eastern boundary of the Anza Park, and it extends from Riverside County on the north, to the Peninsular Range on the west, and almost to the Mexican border. It comprises four units, as the Salton Sea, the Vallecito, and the Carrizo deserts have been added to the former Borrego State Park.

Contrary to the popular conception of deserts, it supports an amazing amount of plant and animal life. The northwestern unit, Borrego, is perhaps most outstanding in variety of scenery and vegetation, combining species typical of desert, chaparral, and alpine. Central Vallecito has the greatest historic interest, while the northeastern Salton region and the southern Carrizo section are "bad lands." The first two are essentially valleys, while the latter are

colorful open wastes; and oddities of geology and of flora and fauna are found in all.

The northern portion of the park was inhabited by the Cahuilla Indians, and the southern by two Yuman groups. Their culture represents a blending of the influence of their northern neighbors, and of the Colorado tribes.

The park came into history when Captain Juan Bautista de Anza, for whom it is fittingly named, blazed a trail through Borrego on his two expeditions from Mexico, over the years 1774 to 1777. There is evidence, however, that Pedro Fages may have entered the park area in 1772; and it was also Fages who cut a diagonal route through the park in 1782, which was to supersede the Anza trail in popularity.

The Fages route was used by Mexican couriers, American fur men, prospectors, and scientists before 1846, and in that eventful year it saw the passage of United States troops engaged in the conquest of California. American and Mexican gold seekers and parties of scientists conducting boundary and railway surveys filled it between 1849 and 1854. It was used by the first overland mail train, the San Antonio-San Diego line, during the year 1857, at the end of which the service was taken over by the great Butterfield Enterprise. The latter sent stages through the

park until 1861; but after that time, stories and the two stations of Carrizo and Vallecito were all that remained of the undertaking. The latter station has recently been restored.

The Civil War, like the Mexican War affected the park, and the Fages route was used by Union troops and discontented secessionists alike. This great road and the Anza trail are now approximated by good highways, and other roads and well-marked trails now traverse the park area making its interesting features easily accessible to all.

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The story of the Anza Desert State Park wonderland of the unexpected and the beautiful, concerns not only the typical adventurers of the desert but also the great human problems of communication and warfare. Little wonder then that this area has been chosen for preservation so all may enjoy it.

8/22/38. J.F.  
San Diego <sup>and</sup> Imperial  
Counties

Dark life  
9.7.9  
C 23

Carew Harvey  
The West is Still Wild  
New York, 1932

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East of the Imperial is one of the menacing and tragic spots in the United States — the dread sand-dunes. Although you didn't know it, you have probably seen them a great many times. They have been the deserts of Arabia in many motion pictures. Somewhere out in that wilderness of shifting sands is a movie castle that was used in 'Brave New World'. All this Country has been immortalized by the two expeditions of Juan Bautista de Anza, whose place in American history is coming to be recognized. In the year of our revolutionary war, he made the first overland trip up from Mexico, bringing the two hundred and forty colonists who were to found the city of San Francisco.

Although burdened with women and children.

Book Hill  
9.7.9.  
C 23

Carr Harvey  
The West is Still Wild  
New York, 1932

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and enduring the most frightful hardships, his march will stand forever unequalled. The rate of his marching was about forty per cent faster than the trained Spanish regulars of Gaspar de Tortola were able to march up the coast of California. Juan Bautista was a delightful character.

Whenever the expedition had conquered some particularly frightful obstacle, he served out a pint of aguardiente to each pioneer and let them get boiling drunk — to the frozen horror of the good priest Father Font, who accompanied the expedition. Even De Anza was turned back by the sand-hills. He circled far down into Mexico and came up through the hills to the west of Kane Springs on the

Dark Hills  
9.7.9  
C 23

Cave Harry.  
The West is still wild  
New York, 1932

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San Diego <sup>Imperial</sup> California

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on the edges of what is now Salton Sea. Until recent years these great mountains of loose sand defied roadmakers. Driven by the wind, they moved along. A road of today would be hidden under a mountain a month later. At last a clever young engineer conquered the age-old menace by the simple device of cutting a deep V-shaped niche in the tops of the sand-hills. This prevented the wind from rolling sand up the slope of a sand-hill and depositing it on the other side.

<sup>Time of the</sup> In the dim past, these frightful stretches of desert claimed many victims from a forgotten people.

In building the new concrete highway, the road gangs found skeletons lying beside the

Dark Hill  
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C 23

Cave Survey  
The West is Still Wild  
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broken earthen water bottles.

At some time an old-folk-trail must have run through the sand-hills. It does not stagger the probabilities to say that it was one of the original trails of America — possibly as far back as the Cro-Magnons of Europe — the forefathers of America making their way down from the crossing in Alaska to the warm lands of the South.

When you ride through this region, the sputter of your automobile tires echoes against the footprints of half-ape men, who were pioneering in a new land.

pp. 37. Going through Tuma on a Pullman train, you look out of your hot berth into a dim midnight — at far squaws squatting on a depot platform, holding up beaded purses and bows and arrows for sale. You do not



Derk White  
9.7.9.  
C 23

Cover Harvey  
The West is still Wild  
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realize that the little town whose lights gleam against the hills is a cradle of history.

There are certain places in the world which attract high drama as wet sugar attracts flies.

Such a place is Yuma. From the earliest days, it has lived a sensational life.

The great Aztec race is supposed to have originated north of Yuma driven by droughts to undertake the long trek to Mexico. Yuma saw strange races cross the river and wander on to the south. Father Kino's earliest explorations Yuma. Father Garcés, the greatest of early Southwest explorers, was massacred on the hill where the church now stands. Juan Bautista de Anza crossed the river just above the place where the Gila passes into the 'Sil-ver-ee' Colorado—anyhow the radio singers say it is silver.

Park Lib  
9.7.9  
C 23

Carr Harry  
The Truck is Still Mild  
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The chemical analysis shows that its about sixty per cent mud, and it is the color of boarding-house coffee.

On the river-bank just below the automobile bridge was old Fort Yuma, where our troops were once stationed to protect the river steamers and covered wagons from hostile Indians. Stern-wheelers used to paddle up the river to the mines, carrying up supplies and bringing down ore. They worn on the mud-bars about as often as they were in the water. There have been no river steamers for many years.

There is drama down in the fat, dumb-looking Indian on the depot platform. The Yumas played a great part in early history. They once had a great chief named Palma. But for his friendliness and help, it is doubtful if

Dark Lib  
9.7.9  
C 23

Carew Harvey  
The West is still wild  
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California could have been held by the Spaniards. It might now be under the Russian flag. He fed and protected the early Spanish explorers. Father Garcés talks how, not being able to swim, he laid himself out like a stiff corpse while the Indians carried him on their heads through the river. Palma adored Dr. Anga, who dressed him up in a sword and the regalia of a Spanish knight. In later years, a political bureau snubbed him. It cost the life of Father Garcés, who was beaten to death with clubs by his flock. From that day to this, the Gumas have hated white people probably as do all other tribes.