

Journey North

This letter might have been written by a young settler in early California.

April 10,

1781

Dear Grandfather,

As I write this letter, it is spring in the year 1781. More than five years have passed since our family left New Spain. I am sending this letter so you will know about our journey and what has happened to us. We know now that we will never be able to return to New Spain, and my parents have asked me to caution you and the others about joining us as we had agreed before we left. The journey by land is too dangerous, and even travel by sea would be difficult and very long.

We are grateful that we are all in good health. My youngest brother, Pedro, was born since we arrived in Alta California. My other six brothers and sisters are busy helping our parents. There is rich land here, but all that we have must be made or grown with our own hands. Since I am thirteen now, I am responsible for the fields and for taking care of the cattle while my father is guarding the mission and our community. The houses of the community lack even small comforts, and sailing ships seldom come this way with supplies.

I am able to send you this letter because I studied with Father Font, the Franciscan priest who accompanied us on the trip north. Learning to read and write during those difficult days gave me hope. Our leader, Juan Bautista de Anza, kept our caravan moving in spite of hardships that you cannot imagine. He cared for those who became ill and gave cheer when our spirits and our faith failed us. Without him, we would have perished before reaching Alta California.

Traveling with mules and cattle proved to be a challenge for our families. It was a major task to organize our caravan every day before we set out, and we had to find

food and water for the animals all along the way. We had to stop many days so that the animals could eat and rest.

During the first few days of the trip, everyone was in good spirits, even though our progress was very slow. The hot summer days had passed, but the area was windy and unpleasant, and the desert provided little water and grass for our animals. After a month, we reached the camp of a Pima chief on the banks of the Colorado River. The cold, bitter winter had made fording the river impossible. Many of us had never seen such a wide river and such rushing water. We feared the crossing and would have returned to New Spain if we could have. Then, a narrow flow was found to the north, and the Pimas helped us cross. We exchanged gifts with them, and they gave us fresh food from their gardens.

As we continued northwest across the desert, thick brush scratched our arms and legs, and dust and alkali were tossed at us by icy winds. Our animals suffered, too. Some of them strayed and died. When we finally found water, the animals drank until there was little left. We bundled grass for them and bottled the last of the water. Our leader divided the animals into three herds so they would arrive at the water holes at different times. That way, the water holes would have time to fill again for each herd.

Then the ground froze, and more animals died. At one point, the animals stampeded back to the last water hole. We could not stop them, and many of them froze to death, but, somehow, we survived. On Christmas, we camped near a village of native people. The cold and snow had surprised them, too, so they had nothing that they could offer our animals or us. They did not even have wood for fires.

Without horses for everyone, we could not continue our journey. Our leader sent soldiers on to Mission San Gabriel. They returned with horses, but brought few supplies. As we slowly made our way to the mission, bandits stole some of our animals, and more horses died from the harsh weather. We waited at San Gabriel for supplies from another mission.

Travel to the mission at San Luis Obispo was uneventful. The long, difficult journey had made us despondent, but our spirits improved after we celebrated our safe arrival, and we gave thanks that we would soon be in Monterey. If it had not been for the rain and the mud, we would have reached our destination much sooner.

We expected to find a town and shelter in Monterey, but because the settlement was new, there weren't enough buildings to shelter us. We had to huddle inside our tents during the storms. Even so, we gave thanks that we did not have to endure a longer journey. Some of our party would go farther north to a great bay, but our family stayed in Monterey. We looked for land and began the construction of our adobe house.

A galleon sets sail for New Spain tomorrow. I don't know when it will arrive, but we have given the captain spring water and fresh vegetables for his table in return for delivering this letter. I have been told that the letter will be taken north from the port of Acapulco by mule train, along with other mail and supplies. It may be a year before you receive this message, but it comes with great love from all of our family.



Questions About *Journey North*

1. In what year did Antonio and his family leave New Spain?
2. Why did Antonio's parents discourage the rest of the family from joining them in Alta California?
3. How was Antonio helping his family?
4. Why do you think that Antonio's parents asked him to write the letter?
5. Was Juan Bautista de Anza a good leader? Explain your answer.
6. List four hardships the caravan faced on the trip to Alta California.
7. Why will it take a long time for Antonio's grandfather to receive the letter?

Vocabulary

Write the correct word from the list below on the line to complete each sentence.

despondent hardships galleon comforts adobe
fording alkali caravan

1. _____ bricks are made of sun-dried clay mixed with straw.
2. In the eighteenth century, a large sailing ship was called a _____.
3. A _____ is a large group of travelers on a long overland journey.
4. Difficulties that cause sorrow or suffering are _____.
5. _____ is a mineral salt.
6. When people lose hope and courage, they become _____.
7. _____ are things that make life easier or more enjoyable.
8. _____ a river means wading across at a shallow point.

Pronouns

Read each sentence below. Then review the story and write the noun that the pronoun in bold type replaces.

Example: As I write this letter, it is spring in the year 1781. Antonio

1. We will never be able to return to New Spain.
2. He cared for those who became ill.
3. ...gave us fresh food from their gardens.
4. We could not stop them.

5. The cold and snow had surprised them, too.
6. They returned with horses but brought few supplies.
7. I don't know when it will arrive...
8. It comes with great love from all of our family.

Action Verbs

Find a form of each action verb below in the story and write it. Then write a sentence using the verb in a present-day situation to show that you know what the word means. Use clues from the story to help you understand the meaning.

1. accompany:
2. caution:
3. endure:
4. exchange:
5. huddle:
6. perish:
7. stray:
8. suffer:
9. survive:

Sequencing

Record the events below in the order in which they happened in the story.

1. We traveled to the mission at San Luis Obispo.
2. Our leader divided the animals into three herds.
3. We looked for land and began the construction of our adobe house.
4. On Christmas, we camped near a village of native people.
5. We reached the camp of a Pima chief on the banks of the Colorado River.
6. We expected to find a town and shelter in Monterey, but because the settlement was new, there weren't enough buildings to shelter us.
7. Traveling continued northwest across the desert, thick brush scratched our arms and legs, and dust and alkali were tossed at us by icy winds.
8. During the first few days of the trip, everyone was in good spirits, even though our progress was very slow.

Generalizing

1. Write a statement that explains why few people traveled from New Spain to Alta California in the 1700s.
2. Write a statement that tells why people might have braved the hardships to travel from New Spain to Alta California.