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E CLAMPUS VITUS®
AND THE
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PRESENTS ITS
WINTER ICE EVENT
Borrego Springs
A FOUR WHEEL DRIVE EXPLORATION OF THE
ANZA-BORREGO DESERT REGION



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The Society of Vituscan Missionaries®

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The Ancient and Honorable Order of

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Presents its Semi-annual
Historical 4-Wheel Drive Trek

(number 51 in a continuing series)

**An Historical Tour of Borrego Springs
&
The Anza-Borrego Desert**

January 24 - 26, 2014

Held under the Spiritual Aegis of our Patron

Saint Vitus

And the tactical and temporal control of Head Abbott
Brian Nash, XNGH – Proctor

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DEAD ABBOT VII, T.R.A.S.H. Board

BORREGO SPRINGS

ANZA EXPEDITIONS

By 1769, the Spanish Empire had established missions, presidios, and other settlements in Baja California. However, while it claimed Upper (Alta) California, Spain had no presence there. Concerned that the Russians might establish outposts in this unoccupied territory (Russia had already created outposts along the coast of Alaska), Visitador-General Jose de Galvez organized an expedition to establish the first permanent Spanish settlements in Alta California. In early 1769, two ships left Loreto on the Baja California peninsula; their destination was San Diego, which had been located by the explorer Vizcaino 170 years earlier. At the same time, two overland columns left Loreto, also headed for San Diego. Later called the Sacred Expedition, the objective of this adventure was the bay of Monterey on the central California Coast. By June of 1770, the expedition's military leader, Gaspar de Portola, had established two presidios, one at San Diego, and the other at Monterey. At the same time, the Sacred Expedition's spiritual leader, Father Junipero Serra, established missions at these locations. Spain now had a foothold in Alta California.

Although Serra had established five missions by 1772, the colonies in Alta California were struggling. The largest problem was that of resupplying the missions and presidios. It was not practical to send supplies from Baja California, because the settlements there had very little to send. Further, supply by sea was very unreliable; contrary winds might cause a ship to take several months to reach Alta California from mainland Mexico (Hoffman 1996). Determined to make the colonization of Alta California a success, Spanish Viceroy Antonio Maria Bucareli y Ursua, with the urging of Father Serra, ordered the establishment of an overland route between northern Mexico and the upper California settlements. If such a route could be found, perhaps

enough supplies could be brought to the missions and presidios to make them self-sufficient. But was such a route possible?

Juan Bautista de Anza thought it was. Anza was captain of the presidio at Tubac in northern Mexico. He heard from local Indians of the activities of the Spaniards at San Diego, and concluded that there must be a line of communication between the coastal Indians and the Indians near Tubac. Therefore, he further concluded, an overland route to the settlements would be feasible. In 1772 Anza submitted a request to lead an overland expedition to Alta California. The request was granted by the Viceroy in September of the following year.

On January 8, 1774, Anza set out with “21 soldiers (one of which knew the mission road), 5 muleteers, a carpenter, a Pima language interpreter, Anza’s two servants, and 200 animals consisting of beef cattle, pack mules, and saddle horses.”(Lindsay 2001) Also accompanying the expedition were Fathers Juan Diaz and Francisco Garces. Fr. Garces was a veteran explorer. They would serve the spiritual needs of the group, and Garces would also serve as a guide. Their goal was to find an overland route from Sonora to the Mission San Gabriel Archangel that would be suitable for colonists, including women, children, and animals.

As fortune would have it, the expedition encountered an Indian named Sebastian Tarabal, who had just run away from the San Gabriel Mission. Anza recruited Sebastian as guide, and soon came to the Colorado River. Here Anza was able to make peace with the Yuma Chief Salvador Palma—friendship with the Yumas was essential to the establishment of an overland route because the Yumas controlled the crossings of the Colorado River (Lindsay 2001). After several attempts to move west of the river, the expedition moved in a wide sweeping arc from present day Winterhaven southwest, then northwest, crossing the present U.S.-Mexican border near Signal Mountain. On March 8, good water was found at Yuha Well (or Santa Rosa de las Lajas). Sebastian then led them to the junction of San Felipe and Carrizo Creeks, where they

found another good supply of water on the 10th. In his honor, the place was named San Sebastian Marsh.

After crossing the marsh, Anza followed San Felipe Creek and entered the Borrego Valley. On March 12 the expedition camped near Borego Spring. Anza named this campsite San Gregorio, and here found the best water and grass he had yet encountered west of the Colorado. San Gregorio is one of the stops on our Vituscan Trek. The expedition rested here one full day. At San Gregorio Anza met a friendly, timid group of natives who spoke the language of the San Diego Indians. On March 14, Anza moved further up Borrego Valley to the mouth of Coyote Canyon. They camped at the Lower Willows, and named the site Santa Catarina. The next day Coyote Canyon was ascended; Anza was pleased with the change in vegetation as the canyon was topped; he concluded that the worst of the road was now behind him. In fact, it was, and on March 22, 1774, Anza and the expedition arrived at Mission San Gabriel. From the mission, Anza and an escort proceeded to Monterey, while the rest of the soldiers, with Father Garces, returned to the Yumas on the Colorado River. The road from Sonora to Alta California was now open.

But this was not to be the end of Anza's labors in California. After giving a report of the success of the expedition to the Viceroy in Mexico City, Anza (promoted to Lieutenant Colonel) was given orders to recruit families from northern Mexico to further colonize California. On October 23, 1775, 240 men, women, and children, and about 1000 head of livestock (Lindsay 2001) left northern Mexico for California. According to Hoffman, "Profiting from his earlier mistakes, Anza was able to minimize the hardships of crossing the desert. Several babies were born on the journey, and only one person died. Anza again made a special effort to keep the friendship of the Yumas. By January, 1776, his second expedition had reached the San Gabriel Mission." (Hoffman 1996).

Anza's expeditions were key in the transformation of Alta California. While the first expedition opened the road, the second proved that the road was a practical route for moving colonists and supplies between California and Sonora. The presence of families in the second expedition meant the transition of California from an outpost to a colony, and the cattle and horses brought on this expedition would lead to "great herds of thousands of head of cattle by the 1830s—the basis of a major California industry." (Hoffman 1996) Borrego Valley thus became a thoroughfare for the first great migration to California.

PEGLEG SMITH

Along our route, toward the north end of Borrego Valley, is a monument to Pegleg Smith. Born in Kentucky in 1801, Thomas Long Smith was one of the most noted mountainmen in the west. He trapped and traded from the Missouri River to the Pacific Ocean with such famous colleagues as William Sublette, Antoine Roubidoux, and Jedediah Smith. In addition to trapping and trading, his resume included Indian fighter, prospector, horse thief, miner, horse thief (he really liked horse thieving), and inglorious liar.

Smith is most noted for his moniker, "Pegleg," which was earned in the fall of 1827. Shot by Indians in the lower left leg, Smith, with the help of fellow trapper Jim Crockrell and lot of "Taos Lightning," was forced to amputate the offending appendage. He then whittled a wooden leg for further use. The Californios called him "El Capitan Cojo," the Lamé Captain. (Lindsay 2001) Details of the incident are somewhat unclear, as Smith would tailor the retelling of the story to suit his audience.

Smith is believed to be one of the first Americans to enter the Borrego Valley. In 1829, he and Maurice LeDuc left the Colorado River enroute to Los Angeles to sell their pelts. The story has it that Smith took the old Anza route through the desert to the San Gabriel Mission, and then on to the Pueblo of Los Angeles. Here he proceeded to sell his pelts, get drunk, and make

enough trouble so as to get thrown out of town by the Alcalde (Lindsay 2001). However, while crossing the Borrego Valley, Smith picked up a number of black pebbles that were scattered across three buttes in the area. In Los Angeles, he discovered that the pebbles were nearly pure gold. However, he could not remember exactly where the three buttes were located. That's one story, anyway.

Another story has Pegleg either back in Borrego Badlands or the Santa Rosa Mountains (just north of Borrego), or perhaps the Chocolate Mountains. Here he supposedly found a large outcrop of gold-bearing quartz, which he worked for several years. However, Indians forced him to abandon his claim. Smith sold maps, as well as his claim (multiple times to multiple parties) to prospectors and miners until he died in 1866.

It was well known that Smith was a liar of the first degree—even by his own admission. In 1893, the Los Angeles Herald reported on an expedition to find Pegleg's lost mine. An ex-deputy sheriff named Mellerus arrived at the following conclusion, which he reported to the Herald the day after his return from the desert:

"I want to say for the benefit of future prospectors that there is and can be no such place as the Pegleg mine. I have looked up old Pegleg's record, and judging from the evidence of his friends and acquaintances, the old man was a blamed old liar. He has been the cause of many a good man losing his life, and I want to say right here, that he was a fakir [sic] of the first water." (Los Angeles Herald, May 18, 1893)

Treasure seekers today still venture out to the Borrego area to search for Pegleg's Lost Mine. Is it really there? Or could Pegleg have been wearing a Red Shirt while he spun his tails of lost gold in the desert? You, fair reader, will have to decide for yourself.

BOREGO

The word Borrego seems to come from the Spanish word for "sheep" (or, more closely, "yearling lamb"). But what sheep? Domestic or bighorn? Fr. Pedro Font, chaplain and navigator

on Anza's second expedition, noted the presence of desert bighorn sheep. The name Borego (one "r") has been used for a number of geographical sites in the valley; it appears the first place to be given this name was the spring used by Anza on both of his expeditions, which he named San Gregorio. This spring was the site of a large Indian village as well.

Lindsay, in "Anza Borrego A-Z," references the story of the Helm brothers (cattlemen) running off a Frenchman named Bosque, as well as his herder and several hundred sheep. Bosque had settled at the spring, but cattlemen were not known for their fondness for sheep, and apparently the Helm brothers won the contest. (Lindsay 2001) This was 1872; perhaps the association between the sheep at the spring and the Spanish word "Borrego" led to the naming of the site. The first official use of the term "Borego Spring" came in 1883, when a San Diego County map indicated its position.

In 1910, the first homesteaders began to move into the Borrego Valley. The Homestead Act of 1862 (amended in 1912) allowed Americans to claim quarter sections (160 acres) of unoccupied federal land. If the homesteader occupied the land for three years, cultivated part of it, and made certain other improvements, he would then gain a patent on the land, and it became his. By early January, 1913, the Brawley News reported that a dozen families had already settled in the Borrego Valley. The biggest draw to this very isolated spot was the availability of large quantities of water. In some places the water table was only four feet from the surface; in most places it was within thirty-five feet (Brigandi 2001).

Not the valley's first homesteader, but possibly its most notable, was "Doc" Beatty. Doc, along with his wife (Francis) and daughter (Fleta) arrived in January, 1913. Doc's original homestead was located just south of the present Borrego Springs Airport; however, he found land more suitable to farming at the mouth of Coyote Canyon to the northwest, and filed a claim there in November of 1913. While Doc started farming alfalfa up at the Coyote Canyon site, Francis and Fleta remained at the original homestead, living in tents and cooking outside. In fact,

Francis was often alone, as by that time Fleta was attending school in Julian, and Doc was either at Coyote Canyon or doing road work for Imperial County. In order for patent to be granted on a homestead, it had to be occupied for three years; this is why Francis stayed at the original site.

In 1917, after the original homestead was proved up, Francis moved to the Coyote Canyon site to join Doc. For quite awhile, accommodations there were also quite primitive, starting with a ramada that Doc eventually tented over to keep the wind out.

By 1916 there were 16 registered voters in the Borego Valley. (Brigandi 2001) But the first wave of homesteaders was beginning to fall off as the United States prepared to enter World War I. After the war, however, there was a second spurt. Changes to the homesteading laws made it easier for veterans to claim and prove-up on land. In addition, access to the Valley by automobile began to improve. The first deep well was drilled in 1926. By 1928 the best land for homesteading in the Valley had been filed upon, and the first post office was opened in March of that year. Eslie Wynn was postmaster, and the post office was in his house. Wynn also installed the Valley's first gas pump, again at his home, later that year. In 1929, he built a new structure across the road from his home, and moved the post office there. In September, he opened Borego Valley's first grocery store. After Wynn died suddenly in 1935, Glenn and Eddie Duvall bought the store, and ran it into the 1950's. The post office, however, closed in July 1940, after which Borego's mail was sent to Julian.

People homesteaded the Borego Valley for much the same reason they homesteaded places like Lanfair Valley, Newberry Springs, and the Coachella Valley: the potential for agriculture. The first cash crop in the Borego area was alfalfa. Other crops were tried as well, with varying degrees of success. Watermelons, wheat, barley, lettuce, black-eyed peas and many others were planted. It was very much a trial-and-error venture: there wasn't any way to tell which crops would be successful and which wouldn't. Dates and citrus were successes, and so were grapes. The most profitable enterprises were those that "beat the market." A farmer could get a better

price for his crop if he got it to market before his competitors; the warm desert environment gave farmers in the Borego Valley an advantage over their competitors on the coast by ripening fruits and vegetables earlier in the season, sometimes by as much as several weeks.

TRUCKHAVEN TRAIL

By the 1920's, Borego's boosters understood that the valley's future rested on fulfilling two potentials: agriculture and tourism. However, these potentials could not be realized without adequate automobile access to the valley. To this end, Doc Beaty and other homesteaders pushed for a road linking Borego with the Coachella Valley. Beaty was at the forefront of the drive to collect funds to build a one lane road from Truckhaven, a gas station and café on Highway 86, to Borego. In 1929, Beaty, along with local residents Gilbert Rock, Eddie DuVall, Glenn DuVall, and others began work on the Truckhaven Trail. They used teams of horses pulling Fresno scrapers (owned by Doc) to level the road. Wives of the homesteaders did the cooking and followed the crew as the road progressed. Groceries were brought in from Julian, and perishables were stored in a cave near the point where the road descended from Arroyo Salado. This cave became known as Beaty's Icebox, but flooding has caused it to disappear.

Construction of the Truckhaven Trail was completed in 1930, but it was difficult to maintain. Summertime flashfloods often washed out the road. When it was open, Truckhaven Trail allowed the two-ton produce trucks of the time to access Borrego Valley. While the construction of the thirty-mile road was quite an accomplishment, it was not in use for long. In 1933 State Highway 78 from Julian to Kane Spring was opened. Borego's inhabitants preferred that route to Truckhaven. Today, the Borrego-Salton Seaway, opened in 1968, essentially follows the track of the old road.

MARSHAL SOUTH

One of the more unusual residents of the Borrego Springs area was Marshal South and his family. Roy Bennett Richards was born in Adelaide, Australia on February 24, 1889. Writing under the pen name of Marshal South, Richards went on to author several western novels and dozens of articles for Desert Magazine. Perhaps following the lead of the Transcendentalists of the mid-nineteenth century, South and his wife, Tanya, spent seventeen years living a primitive life in what is now Anza Borrego Desert State Park.

Marshal and Tanya were married in 1923. In 1932 The couple, broke and fed up with the complications of “civilized” life, loaded up their Model T and headed to Blair Valley. Here on a hill Marshal South named Ghost Mountain, the two began what they called their “experiment in primitive living.” On the top of Ghost Mountain, eleven miles from their nearest neighbor, Marshal and Tanya built an adobe home. Here they adopted a lifestyle similar to that of the desert Indians, hunting and gathering their food, and hauling water a mile up the mountain to their home. They supplemented their food with canned goods donated by friends and others.

The Marshals and their three children, Rider, Rudyard, and Victoria, lived on their mountain-top home, which they called “Yaquitepac,” for sixteen years (less two years off the mountain, once in 1943 and the other in 1945). Both Marshal and Tanya were writers, and earned a meager salary by selling their works to Desert Magazine, the Saturday Evening Post, and other publications. Tanya, who was a graduate of Columbia University, undertook the education of the children.

The experiment came to an end in 1946 when Mrs. South filed for divorce. San Diego Superior Court Judge Arthur Mundo granted the divorce on the grounds of “extreme cruelty” in November 1947. (Lindsay 2001) Desert Magazine readers were stunned when the news of the divorce was made public. For years they had been reading Marshal South’s description of the

idyllic life on Ghost Mountain. In an article in the San Diego Examiner, Kenneth Brantingham wrote,

Later in life Tanya looked back bitterly at the whole 17 year episode. And when others wanted to create a memorial, she wrote in 1983 at the age of 85, "the idea of establishing a cultural preserve to 'honor' the stark, miserable existence that Yaquitepec represented is quite absurd to me. Marshal has glorified our existence on the mountaintop in his articles in the Desert Magazine. He was a superb fiction writer." (Brantingham 2009)

Marshal South moved to Julian after the divorce, where he died in 1948. Tanya continued to write for Desert Magazine from her home in La Mesa. As a final word, the following anecdote, taken from "Anza-Borrego A-Z, is humorous:

Years later in the 1970s or early 1980s, Ranger Tom McBride gave guided interpretive hikes at Yaquitepec. One Saturday, after a large group of tourists had heard his well-researched story, a single man remained behind in the parking lot. He walked up to McBride and said, "That was a great story! But it had absolutely nothing to do with the way it really was. My name is Rider South." (Lindsay 2001)

WORLD WAR II

The following article was written by Mike Warner of John P. Squibob Chapter, E Clampus Vitus, and is used with his permission.

Military Presence in Ocotillo Wells

Shortly after the war started the War Department began negotiating with the State Parks Department for the use of 400 sq. miles of park land for training purposes. On March 20th, 1942, Major General Wilson, Commander of the Southern California Sector of the Western Defense Command, announced the opening of the "Borrego Maneuvering Area." The borders of the Maneuvering Area were the Riverside County line on the north, Highway 78 on the south, Route 86 to the east and a north/south line through the old Borrego Post Office to the west. The only exclusions were some private property and the Benson Dry Lake in Ocotillo Wells, which was owned by the Navy at that time. The Maneuvering Area was used by the Army for anti-aircraft artillery training and by both the Army and Navy for bombing and strafing practice. The

Marines used it for night driving training. Contrary to popular belief, General Patton's troops never made it to Borrego Valley. The entire California-Arizona Maneuvering Area, also known as the "Desert Training Center" commanded by General Patton was located east of Salton Sea.

Although the entire Ocotillo Wells Vehicle Park is in what was the Borrego Maneuvering Area, the absence of any significant military debris would suggest little training actually took place inside the Vehicle Park area. The exception to this is the Benson Dry Lake and air strip that was used as a dive-bombing range by the Navy. The majority of the training that took place in the BMA was at Clark Dry Lake northeast of Borrego Springs at the base of the mountains. The Navy had an additional landing field and bombing facility located there. Nearby the Army practiced spotlight and anti-aircraft artillery firing at remote controlled drones and towed target arrays using the Santa Rosa Mountains as a back stop. The closest significant training to the Vehicle Park took place in Military Wash just inside the State Park north of Blow Sand.

As a point of interest there are some historical military artifacts located on Military Wash Road where it leaves the Vehicle Park and enters the State Park just north of Blow Sand. On the ridge inside the State Park you can see the remains of an old observation platform, or, "rake station" overlooking what was once a bombing and strafing range just to the north. In the early 1940's this range was used by the Navy aircraft from North Island to practice high level bombing and their .50 caliber and 20 MM cannon strafing skills prior to being sent off to war. It appears that this rake station was eventually used as a target itself when it was no longer needed. If you have a street legal vehicle or are into a short walk, the road cuts through the east end of this historical range. While thousands of brass casings have long since disappeared, the site is littered with thousands of spent bullets and the metal shell connectors that were spit out by the attacking aircraft some 60 years ago.

Along with this rake station, two additional stations still stand in Clark Dry Lake to the north. These protective structures are made of reinforced concrete. When they were in use, large steel

plates were placed around the legs forming a protective enclosure. Observers would look out holes in the steel walls to judge the accuracy of the bombing and strafing planes. Devices resembling rakes were used to determine how close to the target the ordinance was hitting.

L90 - Ocotillo Airport

This is one of the most popular dirt strips in Southern California. It's about 45 minutes flying time from the coast. Flying east from North County San Diego over the Ranchita is a dramatic site and thrill as the mountainous terrain suddenly drops off some 4000 feet to the desert floor below. This small airstrip played a significant role in the training of our Navy pilots during WWII. This has earned it an interesting and unique place in our nation's military history. In Ocotillo Wells in the mid 1930's Jack Benson and his family owned the dry lake bed and lived just south in a house across the street (later this house became the now defunct Burro Bend cafe). At that time Jack allowed both the Army and Navy to use the lake bed for both aerial and landing practice. As the war in Europe escalated Jack sold the lake bed to the Navy. When the United States entered WWII the Navy started using the surrounding desert known as the Borrego Maneuvering Area for bombing and strafing practice. Most of the pilots who trained here in the 1940's were from the 11th Naval District, North Island. The Navy had a policy that all dive-bombing ranges were required to have an emergency landing field adjacent to them, so they used the flat area just north of the landing field as their dive-bombing range. Most of this area today is designated for use by ultra-light aircraft. The field saw little military use after the war and in 1956 was turned over to the County of San Diego for general aviation use.

For many years following the war small practice bombs could be found all around the vicinity of the airstrip, particularly in this flat area. These small 10-inch long projectiles are anti-personnel practice bombs that were used by Navy dive-bombers. They had a small charge in the

nose that would discharge upon impact helping the spotters to determine the accuracy. Pieces of these practice bombs can still be found scattered about the Vehicle Park today.

BORREGO SPRINGS

Modern-day Borrego Springs is the brain child of Alphonse A. Burnand, Jr. Burnand got his start in grapes in the Central Valley near Delano in the early 1900's. Before long he not only grew grapes, but marketed them, and soon he handled the marketing for many local growers as well. In 1933 Burnand, at the suggestion of one of his employees, visited the Borrego Valley looking for a spot to grow "early" grapes. It took several attempts to get his vineyard off the ground, but Burnand knew that the Borrego Valley was the spot he was looking for. In 1943 Burnand began to lay out his vision of Borrego Valley as a desert community that would rival Palm Springs. After World War II ended, he was able to bring his vision to fruition.

Burnand eventually acquired over 17,000 acres in the Borrego Valley. His plan was to create a planned community "laid out for comfort." Part of Burnand's strategy to lure investors was to enlist the help of contemporary celebrities, including Frank Morgan (the Wizard of Oz) as Honorary Mayor, and Leo Carillo. Marketing literature "boasted that it was the gateway to the largest state park in the nation with a county airport, bus service, a newspaper, several resorts and developments, and jeep tours of the valley and the park." (Lindsay 2001) The airport opened on May 1, 1949. At first, development proceeded rapidly.

In 1953 plans were announced to construct the De Anza Country Club, a golf course, and 300 home sites surrounding the golf course. However, while lots sold well, not many of them had houses on them. Population growth was slow as well. In 1940 the Borrego Valley had 90 residents. That figure grew to about 600 by 1950 with the first Borrego Springs growth spurt, but the next ten years brought only 180 more people. As the sixties and seventies progressed, two points of view developed in regards to Borrego Springs' growth: those who hoped it would

expand quickly (like Palm Springs) and those who favored the slower growth that has preserved the tranquility and peace of the Valley.

Today Borrego Springs offers a peaceful sanctuary to those seeking an escape from civilization. Agriculture and tourism are the valley's mainstays. Several resorts operate in the valley, and the Chamber of Commerce boasts that the nearest stoplight is fifty miles away. The Chamber is proud of Borrego Springs' "slower, uncomplicated pace" that, with its natural beauty, provides for "a rustic desert experience, a special place, in all seasons." (Borrego Springs Chamber of Commerce 2010)

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