

Document A: Miguel Costansó (Original)

Miguel Costansó was a Spanish mapmaker and engineer. He was part of the Portola expedition and kept a diary of his travels.

We broke camp in the morning, directing our course to the west-southwest for a distance of two leagues. We reached the coast, and came in sight of a real town, the most populous and best arranged of all we had seen up to that time We counted as many as thirty large and capacious houses, spherical in form, well built, and thatched with grass. We judged from the large number of people that came out to meet us, and afterwards flocked to the camp, that there could not be less than four hundred souls in the town.

These natives are well built and of a good disposition, very agile and alert, diligent and skillful. Their handiness and ability were at their best in the construction of their canoes made of good pine boards, well joined and calked, and of a pleasing form. They handle these with equal skill, and three or four men go out to sea in them to fish, as they will hold eight or ten men. They use long double-bladed paddles and row with indescribable agility and swiftness.

All their work is neat and well finished, but what is most worthy of surprise is that to work the wood and stone they have no other tools than those made of flint; they are ignorant of the use of iron and steel, or know very little of the great utility of these materials, for we saw among them some pieces of knives and sword-blades which they used for no other purpose than to cut meat or open the fish caught in the sea. We saw, and obtained in exchange for strings of glass beads and other trinkets, some baskets or trays made of reeds, with different designs; wooden plates and bowls of different forms and sizes, made of one piece so that not even those turned out in a lathe could be more successful. They presented us with a quantity of fish, particularly the kind known as bonito (this was the season to catch it, judging from the ease with which they took it); it had as good a taste and as delicate a flavor as that caught in the tunny-fisheries of Cartagena de Levante and on the coasts of Granada.

Source: Miguel Costansó, diary entry, Monday, August 14, 1769, close to what is today Ventura.

Document B: Juan Crespi (Original)

Juan Crespi was a Spanish priest and missionary. He served as the chief diary writer of the Portola Expedition and focused on locating sites to build missions.

After traveling seven hours, in which we made two leagues, we arrived at the camping place, which is in a small valley with a good village of heathen, who received us with much friendliness. They are fair, well formed, and some of them are bearded. They have their village near the beach, about half a league from the camping place; but they also have little houses in this valley, and at present are living in them. The valley has a great deal of land, much of it good; in the middle of it there is an arroyo with plenty of running water which goes to the beach, on whose edge, lower down, these heathen have their village. The only short coming that I noticed was the scarcity of wood, but the mountains are near, and there is plenty of brush from the redwoods. I believe the place is a good site for a mission, for which purpose I dedicated it to our Father Santo Domingo, so that the conversion of this village may proceed under his patronage. . . . The heathen gave us many tamales made of black seeds, which are not so bad, so the soldiers say, for making atole.

Source: Juan Crespi, diary entry, October 24th-25th, 1769, San Gregorio Creek.