

Summary: Presidios and Settlements

A Growing Colony

Spanish leaders wanted more people to settle in Alta California. In 1774, Juan Bautista de Anza, a soldier, set off to find a better land route. He crossed the Sonoran desert and arrived at Mission San Gabriel in three months. The next year, he led 240 settlers from Mexico to Monterey. He led others further north to start a settlement at San Francisco.

To protect settlers, Spain built presidios, or forts, along the coast. The presidio was usually near a port, so the colony could be protected. Forts were evenly spaced so soldiers could protect the missions against Indian revolts. A long dirt road connected all the missions and presidios. It was called El Camino Real, “The Royal Highway.”

Soldiers did more than guard the missions. They also explored and carried mail along El Camino Real. They captured escaped Indians. Life was difficult for soldiers and their families. There was no school for their children. They often lacked food, money, and even gunpowder. Soldiers sometimes didn’t get paid for years.

Starting Pueblos

In 1771, The King of Spain made Felipe de Neve governor of Alta California. He brought more settlers to California. He wanted them to start pueblos, or towns, and to grow food for the soldiers. He also hoped they would stay and raise families. In 1777, 14 families started the first pueblo, called San Jose. Four years later, in 1781, 11 families started Los Angeles. More than half were African, and the others were Spanish and Indian settlers.

Many of the first settlers were farmers, miners, and traders from Mexico. Soldiers and Indians also lived in pueblos. Settlers received land, tools, and money from Spain. They also got cattle and horses. In return, they built houses and grew food. Many hired Indians to do the work.

Each pueblo had an alcalde, or leader, who had the power of a mayor or judge. The governor chose the first alcaldes. Later, people in the pueblo voted for their leaders. Presidios protected missions and pueblos from attack. In return, missions and pueblos grew food for the soldiers.



Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

presidio *noun* (Spanish), fort

governor *noun*, person who leads a colony or state

pueblo *noun* (Spanish), town or village

alcalde *noun* (Spanish), leader of a pueblo



After You Read

REVIEW Why did the Spaniards build presidios in California? Highlight the sentence that answers this question.

REVIEW What were the jobs of settlers? Put a box around the paragraph that explains what the settlers did.