RANCHO BODEGA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Juan Bodega Story, Chapter 3, Heading North Into the Unknown

by Robin Rudderow, RBHS Archivist

It's March 1775, and Lieutenant Juan Francisco Bodega y Quadra of the Spanish Navy has taken command of the schooner Sonora, as it accompanies the much larger ships, the Santiago and the San Carlos, northward from San Blas, New Spain (now, Mexico).

San Blas was a relatively new and rudimentary port on the Pacific Ocean. It was located south of Baja California and 195 miles north-west of Guadalajara, at 21° 32' N latitude. The ships' orders were to drop off the San Carlos, with its supplies and personnel, at Monterey, and the Santiago and the Sonora were continue up the northwest coast to the 65th parallel, to Alaska and the Bering Sea, looking for evidence of Russian incursion into Spanish territory, and making a landing to plant a cross and officially claim the land for Spain.

The Santiago was the largest ship built in the shipyard of San Blas. Its first journey up the Pacific northwest coast in 1774 under the command of Juan Perez was successful in that the ship and sailors made it up to Queen Charlotte Island (52° 39' N) and back, but unsuccessful in its primary mission of enacting a ceremony of possession-taking. It had not approached the coast for fear of crashing, so there was little exploration.

Earlier Spanish explorers had only made their way as far north as San Diego in 1542 (Carillon) and Monterey in 1602 (Vizcaino). The 1775 expedition promised to broadened the Spanish knowledge and understanding of the vast territory that it claimed as its own.

Since the Santiago was so large, and thus difficult to bring in close to land, the much smaller Sonora was added to the second northward expedition as an escort vessel because it could more easily get close to shore.

The expedition set off on March 16, with Juan Bodega initially as second-in-command of the Sonora, but after Manrique, the captain of the San Carlos, had a nervous breakdown just days out of San Blas and was returned to port, Juan Bodega was elevated to the commander of the Sonora - his first command at sea!

It soon became apparent that the Sonora was not well suited to ocean sailing, being slower and less maneuverable at sea that expected. As a result, she delayed the expedition to the point of exasperation. Bruno Hezeta, the commander of the expedition and of the Santiago, ordered that the Santiago tow the Sonora, which slowed down the Santiago.

Despite adjusting the sails and the cargo, little improvement was made to the speed of the Sonora. To test the spirit of his crew, Juan Bodega put on as much sail as he dared, but "such was the fear that they felt ... that they pretended to have some ailment in order to be transferred to the frigate." The same fear of Sonora's inadequacies were shared by the crew of the Santiago; Hezeta threatened them with transfer to the Sonora as punishment for misdeeds.

Juan Bodega showed great kindness to his crew. He encouraged them to persist, giving them small presents and reminding them of the glory they would obtain on their return. During one heavy windstorm at night, when he had gone below to get some rest, he learned the mainsail had been lowered and reefed to slow down the ship. Annoyed, Bodega rushed up on deck and ordered the reef removed and the sail hoisted. He admonished his crew that the conditions would only get worse as they reached more northern latitudes, that they had to be brave, and he assured them that he was "their companion in their labors." This exhortation apparently did some good, and Bodega saw a new spirit in them, a desire to please him, and a resolve to follow him to any destiny whatever.

The journal of Father Miguel de la Campa tells the tedious tale of a journey at sea. Days of wind so slack that little progress was made; nights with winds so strong, that with the sailors' working of the ship and the heeling of the vessel, there was little sleep. Considering that Father Campa was on the 225 ton, 82 foot Santiago, and not on the 32 ton, 37 foot, Sonora, the sailing experience on the Sonora must have been felt so much more strongly!

"April 10. Most of the day we were becalmed, and the slight wind that did blow was northwest. We were at 17° 35'. At night the wind, though mild, was favorable and we made a good board, almost north." The ships initially headed south when they left La Paz, possibly because towing the Sonora threw them off course, and because Hezeta believed they would catch better northward winds farther out to sea.

"April 15. The wind freshened a good deal and although it blew us a little off our course we gained somewhat in latitude, to 18° 20'. Today the topmast showed signed of splitting in two places and it is now three pieces patched together. We lost headway in making repairs."

"April 21. The calm continued, with some cat's-paws which were hardly propitious. It was very cloudy, so observations could not be taken. At night there was a little wind and we made some progress." ["Cat's paws" is a nautical term for ripples on water caused by a light breeze or gust of wind. Sailors use the term to indicate that wind is about to blow.]

"May 5. The wind was even stronger, there was a rough sea. We were at 28° 36'. The wind continued but no longer so strong, nor was the sea so restless. At night the wind dropped, the sky filled with clouds, and in rained enough to hinder the sailors. Beginning today we have felt the cold keenly."

"May 11. The wind continued brisk and more favorable in the morning. We were at 32° 8'. In the afternoon the wind slackened, but at nightfall we had a somewhat brisk southeast blow. Today two men showed signed of scurvy. God grant that this adversity may not continue." [Scurvy is a disease caused by a severe lack of vitamin C. Common symptoms of scurvy are weakness, bleeding gums, and skin bruising.]

"May 13. A south wind arose, the first we have had on this voyage, but very mild. We therefore went on slowly but succeeded in gaining latitude and in getting nearer to land, which is very far from us. We are at 34° 7'."

"May 21. Dawn came with rain and at 8 a.m. a northeast wind blew on our bows. In order that we should not lose distance a few sails were set. We were at 37° 1'. The same wind continued, very cold."

Finally, by May 21, they ascended to a position parallel with Monterey, but well out to sea. Hezeta was ready to throw in the towel and have all of the ships go to Monterey, but Juan Bodega was steadfast in sticking to his orders to sail to 65° N. He wrote to Hezeta: "I am of the opinion that on no account should we put into Monterey. The reasons which compel me to hold this view are solely dictated by service to the King and the better fulfillment of our mission."

Juan Bodega lamented the arduous nature of the voyage, given the small size of the Sonora, its poor handling, and slow speed, but said it's too late now, he and his crew were resigned to their fate. He was relieved to find no water in the hold of the boat, and despite the rough sailing, there had been no accidents. He closed with: "In the final analysis, God encourages and aids great actions and when fortune is so adverse that nothing can be done about it, it is glory for posterity for each one to die doing his duty and [to die] for the King."

Swayed by Juan Bodega's passionate sense of duty, Hezeta sent the San Carlos off to Monterey, and the Santiago and Sonora continued northward.

Maps were a critical component to the success of early explorers. Some maps were created by cartographers half a world away, such as Jacques-Nicolas Bellin of France, who created his maps by meticulously compiling information from various sources like navigational journals, explorer accounts, missionary reports, and astronomical observations, prioritizing accuracy and functionality over decorative elements; he often referenced existing maps and then added new details based on the latest discoveries and expeditions.

Using a Bellin map, Juan Bodega believed he was close to land, and signs of land became visible by June 7. The Sonora ventured close to shore, seeking a good harbor, and finding one, on the 9th the two ships anchored in modern-day Trinidad Bay, California (41° 03' N).

The native Yurok peoples came out in canoes to greet the ships, and in a friendly manner, traded deer skins and sea otter pelts for knives, beads, and other small gifts, yet they seemed uninterested in European clothing.

Hezeta, together with officers, chaplains, and crew, landed and took possession of the harbor in the name of the Spanish Crown. It being June 11th, day of the Feast of the Holy Trinity, they named the bay "Trinidad". The traditional cross was placed on a prominent vantage point overlooking the bay, and Fathers Miguel de la Campa and Benito de la Serra chanted a hymn of gratitude. The cross was still there when George Vancouver came through many years later.

For the next ten days the Spaniards explored the harbor, carried out latitude and longitude observations, and mapped the region. They took on wood, water and fresh fruit, and made repairs to the Sonora in hopes of increasing her speed. The officers and chaplains took formal leave from the Yurok by paying one last visit to their village, and the ships set sail from Trinidad Bay, heading north, on June 19, 1775. ■

TONY ANELLO

Anthony 'Tony' Richard Anello Jr. - Spud Point Crab Company

August 23, 1948 - September 28, 2025

Tony was born and raised in San Francisco to Anthony and Frances Anello. His family had moved to Guerneville when Anello was a boy. But the working San Francisco waterfront, with its world class views of the Bay, always held a special place in his heart.

As a young adult he was a Calf Roper. After he married his wife and started his family he worked in construction. He had his own Backhoe Business and got into the Apple Business leasing several apple orchards. Tony had trucks for hauling and had a trucking business on the side.

Tony bought his 1st of many Commercial Fishing Boats while still tending to his other businesses. He joined the Guerneville Fire Department as a volunteer in 1967 and that was when his love for the Fire Service began.

Tony held several positions in the Fire Service. He was an EMT Firefighter and was proud to be in the first EMT class Sonoma County had. Tony was also an Engineer, Captain, Training Officer, Battalion Chief, Union Steward and was a director in two Fire Departments.

Many Paramedics and Fire Fighters here in Sonoma County are the product of Tony's skills as a Training Officer. Tony was very happy to have one of his dreams come true in the Fire Service, he was able to run the S.F. Fire Boat from the Golden Gate Bridge to the Bay Bridge.

In 2004, following his 37-year career in the fire service, Tony and Carol founded Spud Point Crab Co. in Bodega Bay, with the intention of bringing a slice of Fisherman's Wharf to the Sonoma Coast. Two decades later, that no-frills restaurant is a North Bay icon, tourists and locals alike queuing up for Dungeness crab and Carol's prize-winning clam chowder.

Often, when his shift at the firehouse ended, "he was ready to go fishing. The beginning of commercial crabbing and commercial salmon [seasons] – that's when he took his vacation time," said Carol. "

Lori, their oldest, gravitated to firefighting, and became one of the first female chiefs of a volunteer fire company in Sonoma County.

Spud Point Crab Co
Bodega Bay, CA
1910 Westshore Road (707) 875-9472

Gina manages Spud Point Crab Co. – "she has it running like clockwork," says her mother – while Lisa is highly involved in their nearby fish market, Anello Family Crab and Seafood.

Son Mark Anello is a fishing captain, his two boats tied up at Spud Point Marina, working hard to earn a living in a fickle, unstable industry.

Tony is survived by Carol his wife, also granddaughters Taylor (Cameron), Holly, Ashley, Ayla and his four Great Grandchildren. Tony is also survived by his brother Steve, several Nieces, Nephews and Great Nieces and Nephews and dear friends.

The grandson of a Sicilian fisherman, Tony Anello was 18 years old when he was reunited with Carol Zucca. Their families, both from the Visitacion Valley neighborhood in San Francisco, had been friendly in the previous decade, but fell out of touch after the Anellos purchased a Guerneville campground and moved to the Russian River.

In the summer of '66, the Zuccas drove up for a visit. Carol, still remembers her future husband pulling up to the campground in his truck, horse trailer in tow. "He'd been in some rodeo," she said. "It was funny, I expected to see some little kid."

The next day, Anello walked over to Carol's campsite. "He asked if I wanted to see his horse." From that point on, they spent the rest of her vacation together. Two months later, he proposed, and Carol said yes.

People said, "Oh, she's a city girl, he's a country guy, we give it three months," recalled Carol, her voice catching. "That was 58 years ago."

Carol spoke on the eve of her husband's funeral, which entailed bagpipers, a color guard and vehicles from agencies across the county. "Tony would be so happy, because he loved the fire service, he loved bringing people together. ■

Bodega Bay Grange

CRAB CIOPPINO

featuring ALL YOU CAN EAT fresh local Dungeness crab in our secret recipe...a favorite for over 7 decades!

Sunday February 15, 2026

Reservations begin Friday Nov 7 at noon

$95* includes

ALL YOU CAN EAT
Crab Cioppino
cold-marinated crab
fresh green salad
garlic bread
ice cream & cookies
BYOB beer and wine $10 corkage

Choose your seating time: Noon, 1:45pm or 3:30pm
Safe, secure easy reservations on Eventbrite using the QR code above or https://qrco.de/bgRVZ4
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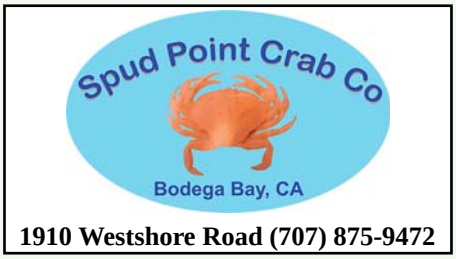

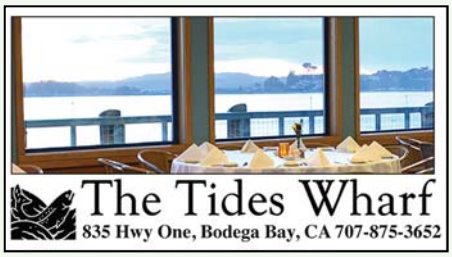

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Bodega Bay's Early Explorer

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Tony Anello 1948-2025

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WINTER EVENTS

TOUR UC DAVIS BODEGA MARINE LAB: 2099 Westshore Road, Bodega Bay CA. Dates: Jan 9, 16, 23, 30, Hours: 2, 3 or 4 pm. These tours are led by our wonderful crew of ocean-loving docents, and visitors will learn about ongoing marine and coastal science research at Bodega Marine Laboratory and its history on the Sonoma Coast. Plus, you'll get to meet a variety of colorful and diverse ocean creatures. https://www.eventbrite.com

BODEGA BAY CHOWDER DAY: Saturday, January 31st. Chowder tasting begins at 10am and ends at 3pm. Please bring your printed ticket from Eventbrite to your designated check in location. Your checkin location can be found on your Eventbrite ticket. Check in locations will be at the Rocker Oysterfeller's Restaurant, 14415 Highway One, Valley Ford and at the Sonoma Coast Visitors Center, 913 Highway 1, Bodega Bay. Ticket fee is $30.00 per person (plus a $3.85 processing fee). You will receive a wristband and a Commemorative Tasting Spoon and Map at check in. https://www.eventbrite.com/

BODEGA BAY GRANGE DUNGENESS CRAB CIOPPINO FEAST: Sunday, February 15, 12:00-5:00 pm. Grange Hall Bodega Avenue, Bodega Bay. Annual gatherings include our Dungeness Crab Cioppino all-you-can eat feasts to sell-out crowds of hundreds of people. Soda may be purchased on site. Bring your own wine or beer and pay corkage of $10 per bottle of wine or six-pack of beer. All proceeds support the Bodega Bay Grange including scholarships for local students. Ticket sales end on February 6 at noon. tickets: https://qrco.de/bgRVZ4

SNOOPY'S ICE SKATING LESSONS: Each eight-week Lesson Set, skaters progress through one Level within a Skating Track. At the end of a Lesson Set, skaters are evaluated to determine whether they pass their current Level or will need improvement and will need to repeat their current Level. The Tracks follow the curriculum set forth by Learn to Skate USA, endorsed by United States Figure Skating. For detailed curriculum, please contact: Snoopy's Home Ice: 1667 West Steele Lane, Santa Rosa, California 95403 or 707-546-7147.

For more local events, visit our website. <http://www.ranchobodega.org/events.html>