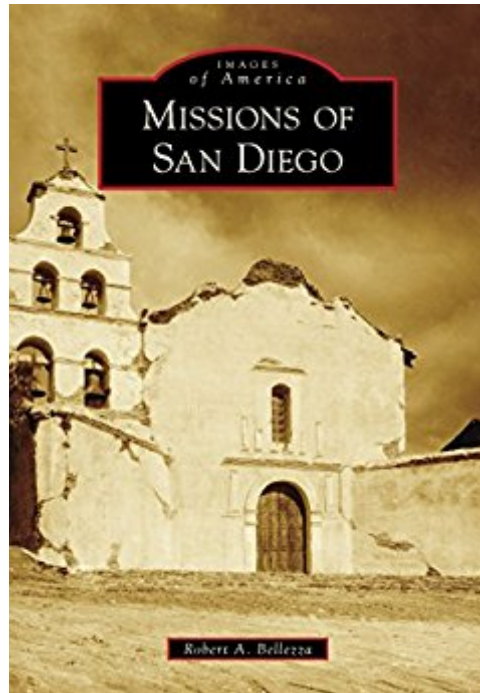




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Synopsis

California's first settlement began on a trail called El Camino Real, or The Royal Road, that was traveled by missionary pathfinders, soldiers, and conquistadors on a dramatic journey into a mysterious land. Monterey was discovered in 1603, leading to the quest. Explorers Don Gaspar de Portola and Juan Bautista de Anza, along with ambitious Franciscan missionaries, founded 21 monumental Spanish missions and several asistencias and chapels for native neophytes, travelers, and visitors to Alta California. Following the initial landing in 1769 at San Diego's seaport, Fr. Junipero Serra founded Mission San Diego de Alcalá, California's first landmark, at the original presidio site. The mission stands today exactly where it was moved, rebuilt, and completed in 1813. The native populations of California witnessed years of change from a sleepy province to the status of US statehood. The Spanish missions forged the powerful underpinnings of the Golden State's earliest settlements 80 years prior to the world's largest migration to California, the 1849 Gold Rush.

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