



## California and the Southwest

As  
You  
Read

### Explore These Questions

- What brought the first white settlers to New Mexico?
- What was life like for Native Americans in California?
- Why did Americans want to expand to the Pacific Ocean?

### Identify

- New Mexico Territory
- William Becknell
- Santa Fe Trail
- Junípero Serra
- Manifest Destiny
- James K. Polk

### SETTING the Scene

In 1819, John Quincy Adams made a bold claim. The world, he said, would have to accept the fact that the United States would one day possess all of North America:

“From the time we became an independent nation, it was as much a law of nature that this would become our claim as that the Mississippi should flow to the sea.”

By the 1840s, many Americans agreed. They, too, believed that it was the mission of the United States to expand all the way to the Pacific Ocean. Americans began to look with interest to the vast, rich lands of California and the Southwest.

### New Mexico Territory

The entire Southwest belonged to Mexico in the 1840s. This huge region was called **New Mexico Territory**. It included most of the present-day states of Arizona and New Mexico, all of Nevada and Utah, and parts of Colorado.

Much of the Southwest is hot and dry. In some areas, thick grasses grow. There are also desert and mountain areas. Before the Spanish arrived, Zuñi Indians irrigated and farmed the land. Other Native Americans, such as the Apaches, lived by hunting.

A Spanish explorer, Juan de Oñate, had claimed the territory of New Mexico for Spain in 1598. In the early 1600s, the Spanish built Santa Fe as the capital of the terri-

tory. Under the Spanish, Santa Fe grew into a busy trading town. However, Spain refused to let Americans settle in New Mexico. Only after Mexico won its independence in 1821 were Americans welcome in Santa Fe.

**William Becknell**, a merchant and adventurer, was the first American to head for Santa Fe. In 1821, Becknell led a group of traders from Franklin, Missouri, across the plains. When they reached Santa Fe, they found Mexicans eager to buy their cloth and other goods. Other Americans soon followed Becknell's route. It became known as the **Santa Fe Trail**. (See the map on page 366.)

### Early Years in California

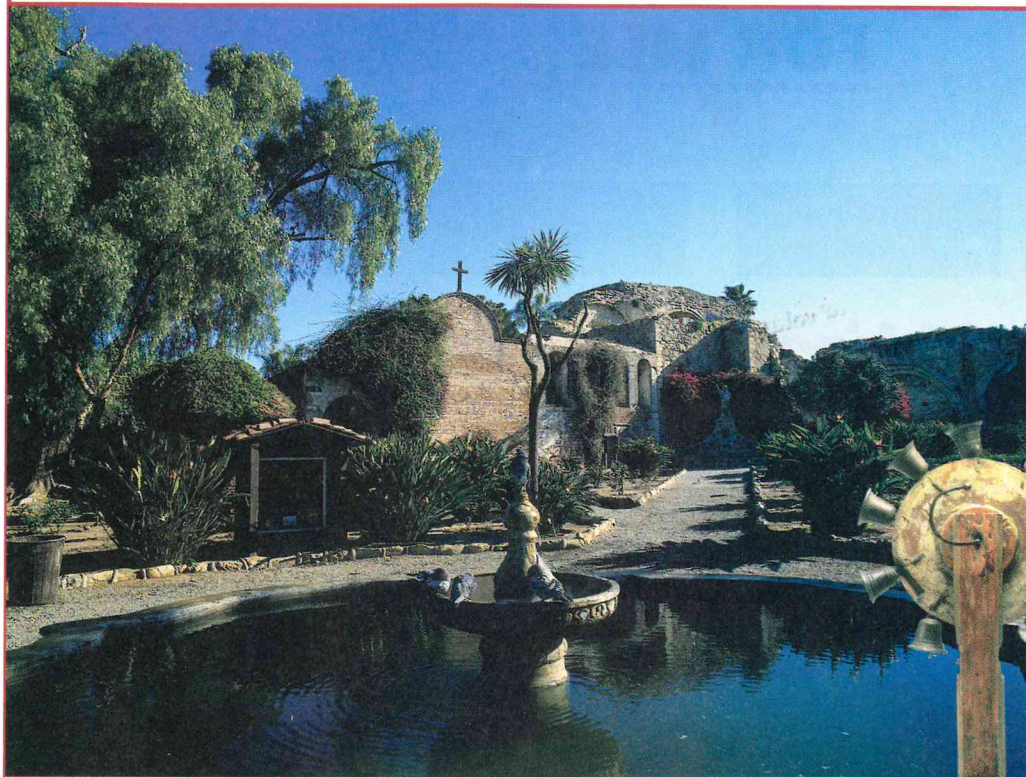
California, too, belonged to Mexico in the early 1840s. Spain had claimed the region 65 years before English colonists settled in Jamestown. In the years that followed, Spanish and Native American cultures shaped life in California.

### Land and climate

California is a land of dramatic contrasts. Two tall mountain ranges slice through the region. One range hugs the coast. The other sits inland on the border of Nevada and Arizona. Between these two ranges is California's fertile Central Valley.

Northern California receives plenty of rain. In the south, though, water is scarce and much of the land is desert. California enjoys mild temperatures all year, except for areas high in the mountains.





## Mission San Juan Capistrano

*In 1776, Father Junípero Serra founded Mission San Juan Capistrano in southern California. Today, you can still walk among its adobe walls, enjoy its peaceful gardens, and listen to its old bells. These mission bells told the priests and Native Americans who lived there when to wake up, when to eat, when to pray, when to work, and when to go to bed.*

★ *To learn more about this historic site, write: Mission San Juan Capistrano, P.O. Box 697, San Juan Capistrano, CA 92693.*



◀ Mission bells

### A string of missions

As you have read, Spanish soldiers and priests built the first European settlements in California. In 1769, Captain Gaspar de Portolá led a group of soldiers and missionaries up the Pacific coast. The chief missionary was Father **Junípero Serra** (hoo NEE peh roh SEHR rah). Father Serra built his first mission at San Diego. He went on to build eight others.

Eventually, there were 21 Spanish missions along the California coast. Each mission claimed the surrounding land and soon was able to take care of all its own needs. Spanish soldiers built forts near the missions. The missions supplied meat, grain, and other foods to the forts.

### Mission life for Native Americans

California Indians lived in small, scattered groups rather than large, organized nations. As a result, they were not able to offer much organized resistance to soldiers who forced them to work for the missions.

Native Americans herded sheep and cattle and raised crops for the missions. In return, they lived at the missions and learned about the Roman Catholic religion. Many Spanish missionaries were truly concerned with converting the Indians to Christianity. However, mission life was hard. Thousands of Native Americans died from overwork and diseases.

Sometimes, Indians did resist mission life. Many were baptized as Christians but continued to follow their traditional beliefs. Others simply ran away. Still, most continued to live and labor at the missions.

After Mexico won its independence, conditions for Native Americans in California grew even worse. The new Mexican government offered mission land to ranchers. On some ranches, Indians faced cruel mistreatment. If they tried to run away, the ranchers hunted them down. An American observer reported that California Indians lived in a state "even more degrading, and more oppressive than that of our slaves in the South."



# Skills FOR LIFE

Critical  
Thinking

Managing  
Information

Communication

Maps, Charts,  
and Graphs

## Distinguishing Fact From Opinion

### How Will I Use This Skill?

A fact is a statement that can be observed or proven. An opinion is a judgment that reflects a person's beliefs or feelings. To get a true picture of events, even in everyday conversation, you must be able to distinguish between facts and personal opinions.

### LEARN the Skill

To tell fact from opinion, follow these steps:

- 1 Identify facts. Look at each phrase or sentence and ask, "Can this be observed or proven?"
- 2 Identify words that express the writer's opinion. Some opinions are clearly indicated with phrases like "I think," or "In my opinion." Others are not so easy to identify. Watch for words that express or inspire emotion.
- 3 Decide whether the facts can support the writer's opinions. (Remember, this does not mean that you must agree with the opinion.)

### PRACTICE the Skill

The excerpt to the right is from an 1846 newspaper article urging the United States to gain possession of California.

- 1 List three facts that are included in this article. What makes them facts?
- 2 (a) What words show that the first sentence is an opinion? (b) Identify two other opinions expressed in this excerpt.
- 3 How do the facts presented by the writer support his opinion about gaining California? Give two examples.

We do regard it as extremely desirable that California—a part, at least, of the province known by that name—should become the property of the United States. Lower California, embracing the long, narrow peninsula between the Gulf and the Pacific, stretching from the 21° to 33° latitude, a distance of about 800 miles, is universally represented by travelers as sterile and hopelessly desolate. It consists, indeed, of a chain of volcanic, treeless, barren mountains of rock, broken only by still more dreary plains of sand. It may well, therefore, be left to Mexico.

The remaining part of Upper California—that which lies nearest the Pacific coast—is not only by far the best portion of the province but one of the most beautiful regions on the face of the earth. Among the highlands which enclose this valley are vast forests filled with the loftiest and finest cedars and pines in the world, with every variety of soil, freshwater lakes, and every element of unbounded agricultural wealth, except a good climate.

Source:  
Adapted from the *American Review*,  
January 1846.

### APPLY the Skill

Choose an article in your local newspaper that includes opinions. Circle facts and underline opinions. Write a paragraph stating whether you think the facts in the article support the opinion.



These harsh conditions had a deadly effect. From 1770 to 1850, the Native American population of California declined from about 310,000 to 100,000.

## Expansion: A Right and a Duty

As late as the mid-1840s, only about 700 people from the United States lived in California. Every year, however, more and more Americans began to look toward the West. The United States government even tried to buy California from Mexico several times. Officials were especially interested in gaining the fine ports at San Francisco and San Diego.

### The nation's destiny

Many Americans saw the culture and the democratic government of the United States as the best in the world. They believed that the United States had the right and the duty to spread its rule all the way to the Pacific Ocean.

In the 1840s, a newspaper in New York coined a phrase for this belief. The phrase was **Manifest Destiny**. Manifest means clear or obvious. Destiny means something that is sure to happen. Americans who believed in Manifest Destiny thought that the

United States was clearly meant to expand to the Pacific.

Manifest Destiny had another side, too. Many Americans believed that they were superior to Native Americans and Mexicans. For these Americans, racism justified taking over lands belonging to Indians and Mexicans.

### Election of 1844

Manifest Destiny played an important part in the election of 1844. The Whigs nominated Henry Clay for President. Clay was a famous and respected national leader. The Democrats chose a little-known candidate, **James K. Polk**.

Voters soon came to know Polk as the candidate who favored expansion. Polk demanded that Texas and Oregon be added to the United States. Clay, on the other hand, opposed the annexation of Texas.

The Democrats made Oregon a special campaign issue. As you read, Britain and the United States held Oregon jointly. Polk demanded the whole region all the way to its northern border at latitude 54°40'N. "Fifty-four forty or fight!" became the Democrats' campaign cry. On election day, Americans showed their support for expansion by choosing Polk as President.

## ★ Section 3 Review ★

### Recall

1. **Locate** (a) Sante Fe, (b) Santa Fe Trail, (c) California, (d) San Diego, (e) San Francisco.
2. **Identify** (a) New Mexico Territory, (b) William Becknell, (c) Santa Fe Trail, (d) Junípero Serra, (e) Manifest Destiny, (f) James K. Polk.

### Comprehension

3. Describe how American settlers first went to New Mexico.
4. How did mission life affect Native Americans?
5. How did belief in Manifest Destiny affect the election of 1844?

### Critical Thinking and Writing

6. **Making Inferences** How do you think missionaries justified forcing Indians to live and work on missions?
7. **Analyzing Ideas** "The irresistible army of [American settlers] has begun to pour down upon [California], armed with the plough and the rifle, and marking its trail with schools and colleges, courts and representative halls, mills and meetinghouses." What does this quotation show you about people's belief in the idea of Manifest Destiny?



**Activity Drawing a Political Cartoon** Draw a political cartoon from the point of view of Native Americans about conditions on California missions or ranches before 1845.