



A Rush to the West



Explore These Questions

- How did the Mormons settle Utah?
- How did the discovery of gold affect life in California?
- Why did California have a diverse population?

Define

- forty-niner
- vigilante

Identify

- Mormons
- Joseph Smith
- Brigham Young
- Sutter's Mill

SETTING the Scene

In 1848, exciting news reached Toishan, a district in southern China. Mountains of gold had been discovered across the Pacific Ocean, in a place called California. It was there just for the digging!

The penalty for trying to leave China was harsh and sure—a swift beheading. Still, tens of thousands of Chinese risked the executioner's axe to cross the Pacific. Like other prospectors from Europe to Boston to South America, they were eager to join the California Gold Rush.

Gold was not the only thing that attracted settlers to the West in the mid-1800s. California, New Mexico, Oregon, and Texas were all now part of the United States. Restless pioneers, always eager to try something new, headed into these lands to build homes and a new way of life.

A Refuge for the Mormons

The largest group of settlers to move into the Mexican Cession were the **Mormons**. Mormons belonged to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The church was founded by **Joseph Smith** in 1830. Smith, a farmer who lived in upstate New York, attracted many followers.

Troubles with neighbors

Smith was an energetic and popular man. His teachings, however, angered many non-Mormons. For example, Mormons at first be-

lieved that property should be owned in common. Smith also said that a man could have more than one wife. Angry neighbors forced the Mormons to leave New York for Ohio. From Ohio, they were forced to move to Missouri, and from there to Illinois. In the 1840s, the Mormons built a community called Nauvoo on the banks of the Mississippi River in Illinois.

Before long, the Mormons again clashed with their neighbors. In 1844, an angry mob killed Joseph Smith. The Mormons chose **Brigham Young** as their new leader.

Brigham Young realized that the Mormons needed to find a home where they would be safe. He had read about a valley between the Rocky Mountains and the Great Salt Lake in Utah. Young decided that the isolated valley would make a good home for the Mormons.

A difficult journey

To move 15,000 men, women, and children from Illinois to Utah in the 1840s was an awesome challenge. Relying on religious faith and careful planning, Brigham Young achieved his goal.

In 1847, Young led an advance party into the Great Salt Lake valley. Wave after wave of Mormons followed. For the next few years, Mormon wagon trains struggled across the plains and over the Rockies to Utah. When they ran short of wagons and oxen, thousands made the long trip pulling their gear in handcarts.



Trails to the West



Geography Skills

In the 1800s, Americans followed a number of different trails to the West. Mountain passes allowed settlers to cross the Rockies and Sierra Nevada.

- 1. Location** On the map, locate: (a) Santa Fe, (b) Santa Fe Trail, (c) Sierra Nevada, (d) Rocky Mountains, (e) San Diego, (f) San Francisco, (g) Salt Lake City.
- 2. Movement** Which trails ended in cities in California?
- 3. Critical Thinking** (a) What would be the best route for a pioneer family to take from Independence, Missouri, to Sutter's Fort, California? (b) What mountains would they have to cross? (c) In which town might they seek shelter along the way?

Prospering in the desert

In Utah, the Mormons had to survive in a harsh desert climate. Still, Young was convinced that, for the Mormons, Utah was Zion, or the promised land:

“We will raise our wheat, build our houses, fence our farms, plant our vineyards and orchards, and produce everything that will make our bodies comfortable and happy and in this manner we intend to build up Zion on the earth.”

To meet his goals, Young planned an irrigation system to bring water to farms. He also drew up plans for a large city, called Salt Lake City, to be built in the desert.

The Mormon settlement in Utah grew quickly. Like other whites, Mormons took over thousands of acres of Native American land, usually paying nothing for it.

Congress recognized Brigham Young as governor of the Utah Territory in 1850. Trouble later broke out when non-Mormons moved to the area. In the end, peace was restored, and Utah became a state in 1896.

California Gold Rush

While the Mormons trekked to Utah, thousands of other Americans were racing to California. These adventurous men and women all had a single objective: Gold!

Sutter's Mill

In 1848, John Sutter was building a sawmill on the American River, north of Sacramento, California. James Marshall was in charge of the job. On the morning of January 24, Marshall set out to inspect a ditch his crew was digging. He later told a friend what he saw that day:

“It was a clear, cold morning; I shall never forget that morning. As I was taking my usual walk, . . . my eye was caught with the glimpse of something shining in the bottom of the ditch. There was about a foot of water running then. I reached my hand down and picked it up; it made my heart thump, for I was certain it was gold.”

In a few days, word of the gold strike at **Sutter's Mill** spread to San Francisco. Carpenters threw down their saws. Bakers left bread in their ovens. Schools emptied as teachers and students joined the rush to the gold fields.

From San Francisco, the news spread across the United States and to the rest of the world. Thousands of Americans caught gold fever. People from Europe, China, Australia, and South America joined the rush as well. More than 80,000 people made the long journey to California in 1849. They became known as **forty-niners**.

In the gold fields

The first miners needed little skill. Because the gold was near the surface of the Earth, they could dig it out with knives. Later, the miners found a better way. They loaded sand and gravel from the riverbed into a washing pan. Then, they held the pan under water and swirled it gently. The water washed away lighter gravel, leaving the heavier gold in the pan. This process was known as “panning for gold.”

Cause and Effect

Causes

- Oregon has fertile land
- Texas is ideal for raising cattle and growing cotton
- Many Americans believe in Manifest Destiny
- Mormons seek a safe home
- Gold is discovered in California

Westward Movement

Effects

- Texas wins war for independence
- United States annexes Texas
- Britain and United States divide Oregon
- United States defeats Mexico in war
- Cotton Kingdom spreads

Effects Today

- United States stretches from sea to sea
- California and Texas are the most populous states
- Mexican American culture enriches the United States

Graphic Organizer *Skills*

Westward movement increased at a tremendous rate in the mid-1800s.

1. **Comprehension** List two attractions that drew Americans to the West.
2. **Critical Thinking** According to this chart, was Manifest Destiny successful? Explain.

Economics



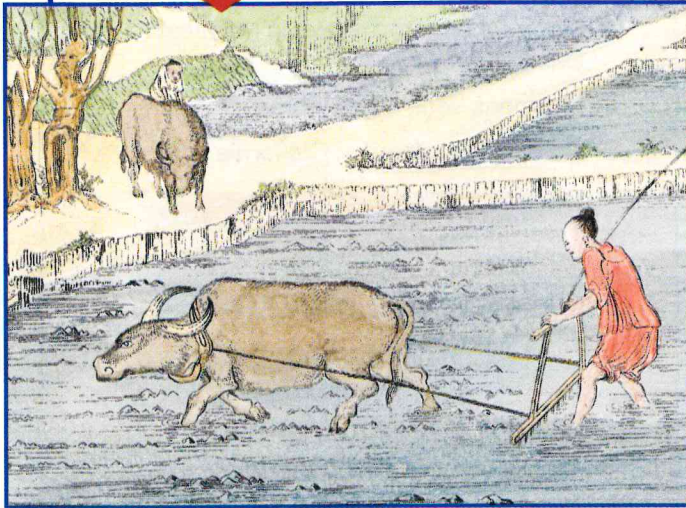
Only a few miners actually struck it rich. Most went broke trying to make their fortunes. Still, although many miners left the gold fields, they stayed in California.



Linking United States and the World



China



United States



From China to the Golden Mountain

Some 25,000 Chinese left their ordered society for the rough-and-tumble world of the California gold fields. Few struck it rich, but their knowledge of farming helped the territory prosper. At left, Chinese peasants tend a rice field. At right, Chinese miners work at a gold claim. ★ **What qualities did the Chinese and other forty-niners need to succeed?**

Women joined the gold rush. Some staked claims and mined for gold. Others took advantage of economic opportunities in the mining camps. Women ran boarding houses, took in laundry, sewed, and ran bakeries.

A new state

The Gold Rush changed life in California. Almost overnight, San Francisco grew from a sleepy town to a bustling city.

Greed led some forty-niners to become criminals. Murders and robberies plagued many mining camps. To fight crime, miners formed vigilance committees. **Vigilantes**

(vihj uh LAN teez), self-appointed law enforcers, dealt out punishment even though they had no legal power to do so. Sometimes an accused criminal was lynched, that is, hanged without a legal trial.

Californians realized they needed a government to stop the lawlessness. In 1849, they drafted a state constitution. They then asked to be admitted to the Union. Their request caused an uproar in the United States. Americans wondered whether the new state would allow slavery. As you will read, after a heated debate, California was admitted to the Union in 1850 as a free state.



Connections With Arts

The California Gold Rush provided the background for the still-popular folk song "My Darling Clementine." The song begins: "In a canyon, in a cavern / Excavating for a mine / Lived a miner, forty-niner / And his daughter Clementine."

California's Unique Culture

Most mining camps in California included a mix of peoples. A visitor to a mining town might meet runaway slaves from the South, Native Americans, and New Englanders. There were also people from Hawaii, China, Peru, Chile, France, Germany, Italy, Ireland, and Australia.

Most of the miners, however, were white Americans. During the wild days of the Gold Rush, they often ignored the rights of other Californians.

Mexican Americans and Indians

California included many Mexicans and Native Americans who had lived there long before the Gold Rush. In many instances, Mexican Americans lost land they had owned for generations. Still, they fought to preserve the customs of their people. José Carrillo (cah REE yoh) was from one of the oldest families in California. In part through his efforts, the state's first constitution was written in both Spanish and English.

Indians fared worst of all. Many Native Americans were driven off their lands and later died of starvation or diseases. Others were murdered. In 1850, about 100,000 Indians lived in California. By the 1870s, there were only 17,000 Indians left in the state.

Chinese Americans

Attracted by the tales of a "mountain of gold," thousands of Chinese began arriving in California in 1848. Because California

needed workers, the Chinese were welcomed at first. When the Chinese staked claims in the gold fields, however, white miners often drove them off.

Discrimination against Chinese Americans and, later, other Asians would continue in California for many decades. Still, many Chinese Americans stayed in California and helped the state to grow. They farmed, irrigated, and reclaimed vast stretches of land.

African Americans

Free blacks, too, rushed to the California gold fields hoping to strike it rich. Some did become wealthy. By the 1850s, in fact, California had the richest African American population of any state. Yet African Americans were also denied certain rights. For example, California law denied blacks and other minorities the right to testify against whites in court. After a long struggle, blacks gained this right in 1863.

In spite of these problems, California thrived and grew. Settlers continued to arrive in the state. By 1860, it had 100,000 citizens. The mix of peoples in California gave it a unique culture.

★ Section 5 Review ★

Recall

1. **Locate** (a) Nauvoo, (b) Salt Lake City, (c) Sacramento, (d) San Francisco.
2. **Identify** (a) Mormons, (b) Joseph Smith, (c) Brigham Young, (d) Sutter's Mill.
3. **Define** (a) forty-niner, (b) vigilante.

Comprehension

4. Why did Brigham Young lead the Mormons to Utah?
5. Describe two effects of the Gold Rush on California.
6. Explain the problems that each of the following faced in California: (a) Mexican Americans,

- (b) Native Americans, (c) Chinese Americans, (d) African Americans.

Critical Thinking and Writing

7. **Comparing** Compare the settling of Utah with the settling of California. How were they similar? How were they different?
8. **Linking Past and Present** In the 1990s, almost 30 percent of immigrants to the United States settled in California. The largest group were from Asia. (a) Why do you think California still attracts many immigrants? (b) Why do so many Asian immigrants come to California?



Activity Writing a Speech There's trouble ahead! You and your friend went to California in the Gold Rush. Now, vigilantes are accusing your friend of a crime he didn't commit—stealing a horse. Write a speech in which you declare his innocence and call upon the vigilantes to wait until your friend can receive a legal trial.