

SECOND EDITION



COMPETING VISIONS

A HISTORY OF CALIFORNIA

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Richard Griswold del Castillo

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Preface

The decision to write this textbook grew out of our experience teaching California history to an increasingly diverse student population. Our classrooms contain an exciting mix of students from a myriad of ethnic, multiethnic, international, gender, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Their levels of academic readiness also differ, and nearly all are products of a visual, rather than print-oriented, culture. In light of this diversity, we, as educators, needed a text geared toward varied learning styles and academic skill levels—one that would stress reading comprehension, critical thinking, and the synthesis and integration of knowledge. Just as important, we needed a more inclusive text that reflects the history of all of our students—one designed to foster active identification with the past, civic engagement, an appreciation of diversity, and cross-cultural communication and understanding. Thus, we wrote the text for our students and ourselves, and with the hope that our colleagues would find it equally useful.

Themes

Three major themes, which run throughout the 13 chapters, highlight continuity over time and provide a common, unifying thread for the narrative. They are also crafted to enhance students' global and cross-cultural awareness. The first, California and its relationship to its region, the nation, and the world, places California within a national, and often global, context. The state, although frequently depicted as a trendsetter or "place apart," has always been influenced by outside demographic, environmental, political, cultural, and economic forces. Its first people came from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and developed complex trade networks that facilitated cultural and economic exchange far beyond the state's current boundaries.

Later, as part of Spain's global empire, California and its people were subject to new influences and pressures. In turn, Mexico's war for independence and America's war with Mexico profoundly altered the state's cultural, economic, political, and environmental landscape. More recently, California's integration into the Pacific Rim economy has created a new set of challenges and prospects. Once again, the state is in dynamic interaction with other geographic entities.

A second theme is cultural richness and diversity. Here we focus on how demographic diversity has created a broad range of cultural expression.

Beginning with California's first people, cultural diversity has been an integral part of the human landscape. Wave after wave of migrants and immigrants, the emergence of ethnic enclaves, and the birth of numerous subcultures have added additional layers of richness, and at times produced interesting cultural fusions. As a consequence, the state's cuisine, music, art, architecture, folklore, cinema, theater, dance, and public spaces all carry the imprint of its incredibly diverse and increasingly complex mixture of ethnic and national groups.

Such diversity has also led to competing visions of the "California Dream," the text's third and final theme. Since at least 1769, Californians have been at odds over the allocation of cultural, economic, and political power. The dream, synonymous with opportunity, not only placed individuals and groups in competition, it also carried different meanings for different people. To some, for example, the state's natural resources represented an opportunity for industrial expansion and monetary advancement. To others, California's natural endowment represented the opportunity to maintain an older, more traditional way of life, a font of physical and spiritual renewal, or a fragile and irreplaceable part of the planet's life support system. In social terms, many equated opportunity with toleration and inclusion, while others saw opportunity in discrimination and exclusion. Politically, many Californians linked opportunity to the progressive or liberal traditions that encouraged a stronger role for government in allocating resources and guiding growth and expansion. Others, however, equated "big government" with the erosion of individual opportunity and initiative.

Consistent with these themes, we have chosen to emphasize some topics more than others. In developing the history of state politics, most chapters stress political challenges from the powerless and disenfranchised, and the competing visions of a diverse electorate. The state's natural resources, and conflicts over their allocation and exploitation, also figure prominently in the text. Finally the experience and contributions of California's multiethnic and multinational constituents are integral to every chapter.

Approach

To enhance learning among a diverse student population, we crafted a text with a chronological and narrative format. This approach, while offering the advantages of clarity and coherence, also reflects a renewed emphasis on synthesis and the big picture among historians and educators. Moreover, the sequential framework helps students follow, connect, and integrate historical knowledge—the foundation of learning to think historically. Within the general narrative we added several other learning aids. Each chapter opens with a vignette about a specific individual whose experience illuminates important developments of the period. This feature, representing the personal side of history, is designed to promote active engagement with the past and a sense of human agency—the

sense that all Californians shape the state's history, present, and future. Every chapter also includes a list of significant dates and events, and a series of study questions intended to enhance reader comprehension and promote critical thinking and debate. Similarly, many of the photograph and illustration captions ask students to look critically at what they are seeing. Concise chapter introductions and summaries reinforce reading comprehension, and synthesize and integrate the material. Suggested readings at the end of each chapter encourage more in-depth research into topics of special interest.

Our individual interests as practicing historians shaped our choices as we constructed the text. Richard Griswold del Castillo, professor of Chicana and Chicano studies at San Diego State University, wrote Chapters 1 through 4. He teaches courses in Chicano history and the Mexican/United States borderlands. His research focuses on the 19th-century Southwest, and Mexican American community history and civil rights struggles. The first chapter, devoted to the history of indigenous people, emphasizes the diversity and complexity of California Indian cultures. Subsequent chapters relate the history of the first Euro-Americans and mestizos who came north to colonize California, stressing the influence of Indian peoples on the culture and economy of the missions, presidios, and pueblos. These chapters present new perspectives on the ways in which the Indians resisted colonial subjugation, as well as the cultural fusion that took place before the American era. They also emphasize the ways in which the emerging Californio culture was a vital and adaptive response to the new environment. The chapter on the Mexican War and Gold Rush reflects the influence of 30 years of new scholarship that challenges the older "triumphalist" vision of American progress and prosperity. The conflicts among Indian, Spanish-Mexican and Anglo-American cultures and an assessment of what was gained and lost in the American conquest of California are important features of this chapter.

Robert W. Cherny, professor *emeritus* of history at San Francisco State University, taught courses on U.S. history between the Civil War and World War II as well as courses on the history of California. His research focuses on American politics between the Civil War and World War I, and politics and labor in California and the West from the Civil War to World War II. His chapters, five through eight, trace the state's history from about 1850 until World War II. There is a special effort to explain economic cycles and their relation to the state's economic development and diversification. Other major topics include the experiences of an increasingly diverse population that included not only the descendants of the first peoples and the Californios but also migrants from other parts of North America, Europe, Latin America, and Asia; changing gender roles for men and women; political development, including political responses to ethnic diversity and to economic issues; and the relation of cultural expression to all these other patterns. There is also attention to urbanization, especially the development of San Francisco in the late 19th century and Los Angeles in the early 20th century.

Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo, professor of history at Saint Mary's College of California and author of Chapters 9 through 12, teaches courses in California and U.S. history, African American history, the history of American women, and U.S. environmental history. Her research focuses on African American migration, 20th century movements for social change, and urban poverty. Her chapters, beginning with World War II and concluding in the late 1980s, cover standard material on population growth, economic expansion, natural resources, environmental degradation, public policy and major political figures and legislation; however, there are many features that depart from the traditional narrative. Racial tensions and discrimination are covered in each chapter, but with an emphasis on civil rights activism and protest. Rather than being portrayed as passive victims, Mexican Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Indians are represented as active agents of social, political, and cultural change. Gender also receives significant attention, including in-depth coverage of women's status and activism, and the emergence of gay, lesbian, and transgender communities and institutions. Her discussion of politics extends to neglected social movements such as the welfare rights, disability rights, eco-feminist, environmental justice, and AIDS action initiatives, along with more familiar ethnic power, anti-war, New Left, countercultural, gay pride, and women's movements. Similarly, discussion of economic policy and expansion is balanced with coverage of labor activism, employment and wage discrimination, class tensions and stratification, capital and white flight, access to social services and affordable housing, and competing liberal and conservative economic visions.

Chapter 13, jointly written by all the authors, covers contemporary issues and events—many of which unfolded as we wrote: the impact of 9/11, the recall of Governor Gray Davis and the election of Arnold Schwarzenegger, the state's escalating fiscal crisis and growing public distrust of both the governor and legislature, and the reelection of Jerry Brown and his proposals for a tax increase. The chapter also covers the state's increasing integration into the global economy, the erosion of California's infrastructure (including public schools), the declining affordability of housing and health care, immigration policy and anti-immigrant hostility, increasing demographic diversity, and recent cultural trends.

New To This Edition

Chapter 13 now discusses current events in California to the present day, including the Oakland Mehserle case and its aftermath, immigration and demographic changes, the 2008 economic crisis, the Occupy movement, and ecological and energy challenges. Based on feedback from the first edition, we have also added new chapter-opening vignettes that spotlight people in California's history, including Mary and Joseph Tape, a Chinese-American

immigrant couple; Katherine Philips Edson, a groundbreaking state politician; Catherine “Kay” Spaulding, an environmental activist; and Jacqueline Nguyen, the first Asian American to serve as a federal appellate judge. Throughout the book, we have revised sentences, added specific information (often in response to suggestions from the reviewers), and worked to make the text more accessible at the same time we worked to emphasize our three central themes. We have also added a concluding section on the relation between California history and civic engagement, challenging students to put to use what they have learned about the state as they exercise their responsibilities as citizens.

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Josh Paddison, now of Indiana University, provided crucial assistance with the initial development of Chapter 13. Several of our California history colleagues carefully read and commented on three separate drafts of the original manuscript. Their knowledge of the subject and attention to detail make it a far more balanced, accessible, and meaningful text. In preparation for the second edition, several more colleagues reviewed the book and made invaluable suggestions for the revision. We extend our deepest thanks to these “readers.”

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California's Origins: The Land and the People, Before Spanish Settlement

Main Topics

- Diversity: Origins of California and Its Native Peoples
- Cycles of Life: The Food Quest, Spirituality, and Rituals
- A Closer Look: Six Regional Peoples
- Significance: The Importance of California Natives and Other North American Native Peoples in Non-Indian History
- Summary

In the beginning on the water that was everywhere, a downy feather swirled and swirled upon a tiny fleck of foam.”

If you were a Yuki Indian child living in what is now Mendocino County in 13,000 BCE, you might have listened enraptured as an elder began to tell this story of creation, one version of many that existed among the earliest of North American cultures.

“Listen closely to the feather,” the elder might have intoned, “and you will hear the singing of Taikomol, the creator of the world, whose name means He-who-goes-alone. Swirling and singing, swirling and singing, Taikomol rose up

Yoki Indian Story, from *Native Ways: California Indian Stories and Memories*, edited by Malcolm Margolin and Yolanda Monijo. Copyright © 1995 by Heyday Books. Reprinted by permission of Heyday Books.

CHAPTER 1		California's Origins: The Land and the People, Before Spanish Settlement
TRIASSIC PERIOD, 250–200 MILLION YEARS BCE		Creation of the present-day continents by the movement of tectonic plates
CENOZOIC PERIOD, 66 MILLION YEARS BCE		Warm-blooded animals populate North America
MIocene PERIOD, 23 MILLION YEARS BCE		Creation of the Sierra Nevada mountains
PLEISTOCENE PERIOD, 2 MILLION YEARS BCE		Cooling and ice age create valleys and present-day coastline of California
30,000 BCE		Estimate of first human settlement in California
900 BCE		Corn, beans, and squash enter Colorado River region from Mexico
100 BCE–700 CE		Introduction of pottery in California
1542 CE		Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo explores California coast
1602 CE		Sebastián Vizcaíno discovers Monterey Bay
1769 CE		First Euro-Americans settle in California

from the water and became a man—but he was not alone. Hanging from his body was another god, the god Coyote, the selfish one of death and pain. With Coyote at his side, Taikomol made a basket from parts of his own body. Reaching deep into the basket, he drew forth a ball of mud, which he molded with pine pitch to make the earth. Jealous Coyote clung to Taikomol as he traveled over the new earth four times from north to south, fastening its four corners with a sky made from the skins of four whales. This earth is good, Taikomol thought, and so he wanted to share all he had created. Reaching deep again into his basket, he found sticks of wood, and placed them in a protected place, a kind of house. Through the night, Taikomol was swirling and singing over this house, with Coyote hovering at his side and peeking sharply into the dwelling with his jealousy growing. When dawn broke the darkness, the sticks walked as people into the morning.

“Taikomol was filled with joy at his creation and wanted people to live forever, but jealous Coyote wanted them to die. When the first son died and was buried, Taikomol offered to bring him back to life, but Coyote said that the dead should remain dead. The other gods agreed, and for that reason people do not come to life again after they die.”

As the elder finished, your young eyes might have shone as you repeated softly to yourself, “For that reason people do not

come to life again after they die." Creative stories such as this one, passed on through the generations, reflect the very diversity of California itself, distinctive from its beginnings in its geographic formations, climate, variety and plenitude of flora and fauna, and the multiplicity of its Indian peoples. The earliest human history of this region shows that in California no single generalization could ever capture reality; it has always been an unusual locale where, because of its lush environment, a large population of diverse peoples could live together and thrive.

Questions to Consider

- What factors explain California's distinctiveness as a place, and how did those factors affect the characteristics of its first settlers?
- What important characteristics did the first settlers share, and what were some salient differences?
- How did the many achievements of the native peoples contribute to the non-Indian history of the North American continent?

Diversity: Origins of California and Its Native Peoples

The land that the Yukis believe was created by Taikomol was located at that time at about the same latitude as 21st-century Cuba. It later became known as California. For millions of years, a large portion of this land would be slowly pushed north as the tectonic plate west of the present-day Sierra Nevada mountains moved with periodic shudders we call earthquakes. The earth's surface is constantly being propelled by the immense forces of the super-heated radioactive solid iron core and the molten layers below the crust. As this movement takes place, the relatively thin rock earth surface has cracked and shifted, forming new land masses and the present continents. These large land masses continued to move. Those places where the crust has broken because of this movement are called the tectonic plates, or earthquake faults, and they have been a significant part of California's history.

Sixty million years ago, ocean waves lapped the western side of the Sierra Nevada mountains, which were then merely well-worn hills. These hills allowed the winds to carry torrential tropical rains eastward, where the ocean's moisture created a tropical forest with great varieties of exotic plants and animals. In some places, the annual rainfall exceeded 50 inches. This area is now known as the Great Basin and includes the present-day states of Nevada, Arizona, and Utah. In Cenozoic California (66 million years ago), the great



Map 1.1 California's Principal Geographic Land Forms

dinosaurs that had once ranged over the land had already mysteriously disappeared and warm-blooded mammals such as lions, giant sloths, and camels roamed the land.

Forty-three million years later, the earth began to move upward, thrust by tremendous volcanic pressures in its crust (Miocene period, 23 million years ago). A series of earthquakes thrust up solid rock formations, including the

Sierra Nevada range—pushed 10,000 feet up in the air—and the coastal mountain ranges. These mountains were massive enough to cut off the flow of rainstorms that had been watering the Great Basin. To the east of these mountains a desert began to develop. Mount Lassen and other now-extinct volcanoes erupted, darkening the skies and layering the earth with a rich ash. Mount Shasta, Mount Whitney, and scores of other enormous peaks reached their present altitudes. Simultaneously the climate began to cool around the world, perhaps because a chain of volcanoes between North and South America filled in the Panama lowlands and stopped water circulation between the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, or perhaps because of the uplift of the great Himalayan mountain ranges, which changed airflow patterns.

After the formation of mountain ranges, a cooling continued for the next few million years (the late Pleistocene period). Enormous glaciers crept slowly south, carrying with them billions of tons of rock and earth, leveling mountains and filling in valleys. Death Valley, the lowest spot in North America (282 feet below sea level), was born of the upward and downward movement of the earth's crust and, between glacier movements, was filled with fresh water. The glaciers cut through the mountains, creating the beautiful Yosemite Valley. As the polar caps grew, the ocean froze and retreated, exposing new land, including millions of acres of valleys and hills west of the mountains, which are now the San Joaquin Valley and southern California.

The retreating water also created a new coastline. The San Francisco, Monterey, and San Diego harbors appeared. About 100,000 years ago, a narrow land bridge connecting the Asian continent with North America was exposed. Animals began to find their way across: The horse, then merely a few feet tall, and the camel wandered north and west from North America into China, and then Africa, where their evolution and eventual domestication changed human history. From Asia to North America came new animals such as the bison and mammoth, followed by human beings.

Most American scientists believe that these humans came as part of a larger migration of people who crossed the Bering Strait from Asia, followed the big game animals south, and reached the southern tip of South America within 10,000 years—perhaps in some cases using oceangoing canoes to travel down the Pacific Coast. Despite the general agreement among American scientists about the Asian origin of these people, European experts are more skeptical of the certainty of the evidence of a Bering Strait crossing, and native people themselves have different versions of their origins. There is a noticeable absence of accounts of migration from a land of ice and snow in the traditional stories of the American Indian peoples. The Hopis, for example, tell of traveling to the north from their warm lands until they reached a land of “perpetual snow.” Some tribes believe that the earth was prepared for them by the gods and that humans did not migrate to their land but were suddenly created there. Still others have no primal origin legend at all but only stories of migration from the east—not the north.

Although radiocarbon tests of human remains located on Santa Rosa Island off the coast of Santa Barbara indicate that these first families arrived 30,000 years ago, these data are also under scrutiny. A number of scholars of Native American history have seriously questioned the dating of human settlement, noting unexplained evidence that could mean human beings lived in North America much earlier. Indeed, anthropologists and archeologists are debating the radiocarbon tests that show evidence of humans in the area as far back as 40,000 BCE.

The native peoples in California were scattered and they spoke more than 100 different languages. Nowhere else in North America, outside of central Mexico, did so many Indian groups congregate in such density with so much diversity. After almost 50 years of scientific scholarship and debate, most historians and anthropologists concede that perhaps as many as 300,000 people lived in California before the first European settlement.

Anthropologists have generally classified these first inhabitants into six groups, based on their common root languages, with their linguistic origins suggesting their movement from different geographic regions. The first, and largest, were the Penutian-speaking peoples, living in numerous bands and clans mostly in central and northern California. They were most closely related to the Indian peoples of the Pacific Northwest and may have arrived by moving down the coast, by boat or on foot. Next were the Hokan-speaking peoples, scattered throughout the state as far north as Shasta County and as far south as San Diego. They appear to have migrated from the Southwest—present-day Arizona and New Mexico. The Uto-Aztecán-speaking people lived along the Kern River and in the Mojave and Colorado Deserts as well as in the Los Angeles basin, and seem to have traveled from the Southwest or perhaps mainland Mexico. Smaller groups included Athabascan-speaking people living in extreme northern California, who probably entered from Alaska, and the Algonquian-stock peoples, including the Yiot and Yurok Indians, who lived along the northern coast in Humboldt County. The Algonquian-stock languages are related to those of the Algonquians in the eastern part of the United States. A small group of Yukian-speaking peoples lived in northern Mendocino County; their language is unique to California and has no relation to any other in North America. They were split into four groups, geographically separated from each other, and each speaking a different dialect of their language. Their origins are uncertain.

At first these various Indians lived in bands, small groups of two or three extended families, whose membership was voluntary and changing. But as the population increased, they began to form lineages, or larger permanent groupings of families, who were forbidden to intermarry because they claimed a common ancestor. Clans developed next, formed by amalgamating several biologically related lineages. Some of the coastal native peoples eventually created larger social and political systems, organizing what could be called towns. The Chumash people, for example, who lived in what later became Santa Barbara and Ventura and on the coastal islands, had large governments and complex



Map 1.2 California Indian Territories

social systems. All of the 100 or so California language groups—which anthropologists call tribelets or village communities—had distinct territorial and spiritual identities, group histories, and destinies.

Politically, the California natives developed two kinds of government, both with a headman assisted by a governing council. The first kind of government

included a lineage group who all traced their descent from a common ancestor, while the second was a band of individuals who were not all related by blood. The lineage-based governments had more institutionalized forms of political decision making, with a stable council and headman. In the band-based government, decisions were made by the headman and council as needs arose. Like the Chumash, the Gabrielino/Tongva people (also in southern California) seem to have evolved complex political governing systems that were able to govern large villages with many different clans and lineages, but anthropologists are not certain as to their exact form of government. Everywhere in California, before the Spanish arrived, Native American government often mixed spiritual with secular authority.

All of these systems grew out of this land of tremendous contrasts: lush valleys and grasslands teeming with game and edible plants; formidable mountains whose deep snows made life nearly impossible in the winters; vast deserts with little water and ferocious heat in the summer; and finally, a coastal littoral whose mild climate and multitudes of fish and wildlife invited settlement. Although its first inhabitants found the desert climates cooler and fresh water more plentiful, Californians today share with them the area's impressive environmental diversity, unique in the United States. In one day a person can drive from a foggy seashore beach through lush, irrigated valleys, past snow-covered mountains, and into a blistering, arid desert.

In the 21st century, we find that the southwestern part of the state, including the Los Angeles, San Gabriel, and San Fernando Valleys, has a relatively arid, semi-Mediterranean climate, with large variations in rainfall from the mountains to the coastal plains. The mild climate has attracted millions of residents and, although the southern mountain ranges surrounding the coastal littoral are high enough (6000–11,000 feet) to have snow in the winter, providing some natural springs and rivers, this is not enough water for the burgeoning population. Water is imported to the south from northern California's rivers as well as from the Colorado River, and the large population has caused water and air pollution, not to mention the decimation of native plants and animals.

North of Santa Barbara, along the California coast, the climate changes as the Coast Range, whose hills and mountains are between 1000 and 5000 feet high, trap the offshore breezes and prevent the reduction of inland heat. The north central coastal mountains and valleys have their own unique environment, cooler than southern California, with more precipitation. Summers are generally overcast and foggy, while winter skies are brilliant, with the rainy season beginning sometime after January. Here one can find some of the most beautiful coastal scenery in California. North from Santa Barbara lies Morro Bay, which is guarded by an impressive rock sentry. Further north along the coast is Big Sur, with its breathtaking ocean vistas, waterfalls, and towering redwoods. Just north of Big Sur, Monterey Bay is one of the richest aquatic wildlife

regions in the world. Inland from here are rolling hills with oak trees, grasslands, and fertile alluvial valleys, the largest of which is Salinas Valley.

Further north is San Francisco Bay, one of the most impressive natural harbors in the world, covering more than 400 square miles. Its entrance—the Golden Gate—is so narrow that the bay is really more like an inland sea, surrounded by low-lying hills rich in vegetation. The extensiveness of the bay and its connection with the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers make water transportation of prime importance. Today it is possible for oceangoing cargo ships to dock at Sacramento or Stockton. The bay gives easy access to the fertile Sonoma and Santa Clara Valleys. The climate in this region of California is always cool, and much wetter than southern California. North from here the terrain changes. From the Russian River to the Oregon border, the coast is rugged, with steep cliffs that hug the ocean. Frequent storms lash the beaches and there are few harbors, the most notable being Humboldt Bay. This region has redwood and pine forests, interspersed with woodland grass and small valleys.

East of this northern coastal region, a tableland—interspersed with mountain ranges and the majestic snowcapped peaks of Mount Lassen and Mount Shasta—provides evidence of a prehistoric volcanic past. Between forests of pine and fir that cover the mountain ranges are the flatlands—the product of ancient lava flows, with an elevation between 3000 and 5000 feet, covered with sagebrush and junipers. Rain and snow define the seasons; lakes and rivers are plentiful.

The most mountainous region of California is the Sierra Nevada, a range running some 400 miles from Mount Lassen in the north to the Tejon Pass in the south. Mount Whitney (14,494 feet in elevation), one of the tallest mountains in the continental United States, resides here with other peaks nearly as high. The Sierra mountains include the awe-inspiring Yosemite Valley and Sequoia National Park, along with breathtaking waterfalls, rapidly flowing mountain streams and rivers, and the largest freshwater lake in the state, Lake Tahoe. The Sierras provide much of the water that the entire state depends upon. On average, more than 50 inches of rain are captured in the mountain snowfall each winter, providing year-round water for the Kern, Yosemite, San Joaquin, Sacramento, Tuolumne, Stanislaus, and other rivers. The discovery of gold here in 1848 changed California forever.

South and east of the Sierras lies a vast desert that harbors a rich diversity of plant and animal life. Sage, cacti, and grasses survive the fierce heat of the desert summer, while juniper and piñon trees grow on the higher plateaus. After a brief rainy season in March or April, the desert explodes in wildflowers, some seeds of which can lie dormant for years. The desert region has the lowest point in the United States—Death Valley (282 feet below sea level)—as well as several lakes of historical importance, notably Mono and Owens Lakes. Imperial and Coachella Valleys in the southern desert are of prime importance today as agricultural centers, thanks to irrigation. The huge Salton Sea receives the runoff of excess irrigation water from the Imperial Valley. It was created in

the early 1900s by a temporary rechanneling of the Colorado River, and today its salinity is greater than that of seawater.

The 450-mile-long Central Valley lies between the Sierra Nevada and the coastal mountains and is on average 50 miles wide. The valley is drained by the San Joaquin River in the south and the Sacramento River in the north, both fed by numerous tributaries flowing from the Sierras. The two great rivers meet near Sacramento and form a delta region. The temperate weather, richness of the soil, and increased availability of irrigation have made this region invaluable farmland. Although this is a major difference from the times of California's first peoples, they, too, experienced a land of many contrasts—contrasts that have led some to say that there are many Californias.

Cycles of Life: The Food Quest, Spirituality, and Rituals

The Food Quest

Imagine bright sunshine and deep blue skies framing a spry old woman as she leads her granddaughter along the path that winds through the fertile hills of the San Joaquin Valley around 3000 BCE. Spying something in the brush, the elder woman stops and kneels, as does the girl, looking carefully at the delicate, green plant her grandmother is grasping in strong, sure hands. “In digging wild potatoes we never take the mother plant,” the grandmother says. “We just select the babies that have no flowers, just leaves. We are thinning out the area so that more will grow next year.” The girl nods as they set about collecting the flowerless young plants. As their baskets fill, her mind drifts to other harvestings the two have shared, of wild onions, tobacco, and various bulbs. She breathes deeply of the clear air, remembering the late summer and early autumn times when it was acrid with the smell of the burnings done annually in the chaparral. Those fires cleared space for the young growth needed for making baskets, and increased the places where edible and medicinal plants could be produced. The girl thinks ahead to when she will help her grandmother broadcast the seeds of grain-yielding grasses and green annuals between trees so they will be able to survive the drought.

This image, based on a 20th-century Yokut description of how the tribe's ancestors passed along knowledge of their natural environment, gives us some idea of how the early peoples managed their environment and dealt with the depletion of larger game that accompanied the population increase of those times. As thousands of years of hunting and gathering gave way to a greater dependence on a variety of grass plants, acorns, and marine life as dietary supplements, the California Indians developed techniques of cultivation, propagation, and preparation to increase their food supply. The burnings this

young girl recalls are the early incarnations of a tradition described to anthropologist Florence Shipek by elders of the Kumeyaay peoples of San Diego County in the 1960s. The elders also reported planting and hybridizing oak tree cuttings to produce more acorns. More recently M. Kat Anderson, in her study of California Indians' management of their natural world, concluded that they practiced a wide variety of techniques including "burning, pruning, sowing, weeding, tilling ..." –that Indians assert were practices to *help nature along*. Other scholars point to the fish management traditions of the coastal Indians, particularly those living north of Monterey bay. When the Chinook salmon had their semi-annual runs up the Klamath River, for example, it was tradition to allow some of them to pass on to the spawning grounds. The weirs that they built to trap them were dismantled at key times to allow the fish to pass, thus conserving the future stock of this important food. All these management techniques were under the spiritual direction of key shamans.

While they worked, these two women might have looked across the hills toward the stand of oak trees near their village, grown from cuttings. Oak trees then, as in the 21st century, could be found throughout California as well as the greater Southwest and northern Mexico. The indigenous peoples of Alta and Baja California developed the techniques that made the highly nutritious fruit of those trees—acorns—into a staple food. Each mature tree of the seven different species of oak could produce up to 500 pounds of acorns annually, but these nuts could only be gathered for a few weeks each year.

To pass the time as they pick greens, the elder reviews with her grandchild how acorns must be leached of their bitter tannic acids to make them edible. She rejects the method of immersing the acorns in mud near a streambed for several months, for there are all sorts of risks involved in leaving anything on its own like that. She prefers to shell the acorns and grind them into a meal, pouring water over it until the acid leaches out through coiled baskets. Stone or sand basins were also used for the leaching process, which was probably an original innovation of the California Indians. The young girl thought of how her mother, taught by her grandmother, organized the long hours of work required by their small family for several weeks to produce the acorn meal. Later, the meal could be boiled into mush or baked into cakes. In a good season, they could gather enough acorns to make meal that would last them until the next gathering. She feels grateful for those bountiful years.

As the sun sinks lower and the sky turns to pinks and purples, the two women might spot the girl's father and brother near the oak trees, returning from a trade journey to the coast. The pair would be laden with fish and game received in exchange for acorns, trading as the Wiot peoples did near present-day Eureka. Trade patterns revolved around the need for food. One of the most important and pervasive items of trade was obsidian, black volcanic glass stone used to make arrow and spear points. Crystal salt, gathered from the Owens Valley and the Colorado River or distilled from seawater, was also commonly traded. The

peoples in San Diego traded acorn meal for melons grown by the Yuman (Quechan) Indians. Abalone shells from the Pacific Ocean have been found in middens (refuse heaps) on the eastern side of Baja California, indicating a trade in shells between the western coastal communities and those further inland.

The stories the two men would surely bring back from their trip might well include tales highlighting the religious significance that the mountains, lakes, rivers, and other natural features had for them. They believed that the land was given to them by the gods and their ancestors, with boundaries established through tradition and warfare. They not only traveled for survival, they also made spiritual journeys. Their concept of the land differed from that of the Europeans both in its relation to the spiritual, and in their belief that land was for the use of families and clans as groups—not as individuals.

Almost every native group had occasion to travel within its territory and occasionally outside it to obtain needed foods or implements, just as this imaginary family did. Given the diversity of California Indian language groups, lineages, bands, clans, and towns, generalizations about them as a whole are difficult to make. We can say that, unlike the peoples living along the Colorado River and further east, they did not develop maize agriculture. Those more eastern tribes cultivated maize, corn, beans, and squash once these plants had spread north from central Mexico after 900 BCE. For the California Indians, however, lush flora and fauna were available to those living near the coast and in the north, so there was no need to develop farming. And in any case, especially in the south, scant rainfall made agriculture without irrigation problematic. Almost all the western groups had territories that crossed two or more ecological food zones, enabling them to draw from different regions in different seasons and thus not remain wholly dependent on any one food source.

California's various Indians were also similar in that they were perhaps the most omnivorous peoples in the Americas, eating practically everything that was not poisonous. Besides acorns, fish, and game, they ate insects, shellfish, grasses, lizards, snakes, cactus, and scores of species of wild plants. Baskets, pottery vessels, bows and arrows, harpoons, nets, grinding and cutting stones, and other practical implements that line the shelves of California's museums today are evidence of the importance of food gathering to all of the state's various historical cultures.

The California Indians actively shaped their natural environment so as to extract its maximum food value. And they passed on their burgeoning environmental management techniques through oral transmission—usually through shamans, or spiritual leaders—from generation to generation. The most common management technique was the use of fire to control brush and tree growth, to create a layer of ash that nourished the seed-bearing grasses of the next season, and to drive game into traps. The annual clearing of brush by fire was an important ecological activity, creating places where grasses could grow and where game could forage. Burning the chaparral regions and grasslands promoted the growth of “burn species” of edible plants and grasses

Many Indian women were accomplished artisans, using local materials to create both utilitarian and ornamental objects.



Athapaskan Hupa woman from Northwestern California. Edward S. Curtis, Library of Congress, public domain, no known restrictions

that normally would not flourish in these areas. Frequent burnings in forested areas also prevented the buildup of dense brush whose accidental burning might have large-scale, disastrous results. Environmental historians believe that land management practices—especially burning—were so significant in maintaining a balance among the land, the flora, and the fauna of pre-conquest California that the decline of the Indian population after European settlement produced a change in the natural environment—a change caused by the unchecked growth of brush and chaparral. As estimated by ethnohistorians, perhaps 10 percent of the plants and 30 percent of the animals common in pre-Columbian California have since disappeared, victims of encroaching European plants and animals. Perhaps as much as 90 percent of all flora and fauna present in California today are not native to the region, but have appeared since the arrival of Europeans in North America.

Many native life forms have almost disappeared in 21st-century California. Before the Spanish, the coastal region hosted thousands of acres of American dune grass and Pacific beach grass. Beginning in the American era, these two grasses were gradually replaced by European beach grasses. These grasses trap more sand and create huge sand dunes, which in turn make it harder for other

varieties of plants to thrive. Similarly, the coastal prairie regions once contained perennial bunch grasses that have been replaced by varieties of European spreading grasses, including Italian rye grass and wild oats and barley.

Spirituality

Although physical nourishment was a time-consuming enterprise for Indian families like the imaginary Yokuts described earlier, the food quest was balanced in their lives with time spent striving to live in harmony with the hidden forces of nature. Spirits inhabited the world of all native peoples in the Americas; communicating with those spirits occupied a good portion of their lives, especially during changes in season and on special occasions such as coming of age, marriage, and death.

Imagine another dawn breaking in the life of another Indian family, among the Cahuilla. The father has spent some weeks instructing his adolescent son in the correct ways to dance, eat, bathe, and participate in one of the most important spiritual exercises of their community, the *toloache* ceremony. (In some Indian groups, girls also participated in this ritual.)

Gently, the father shakes his boy to wakefulness. “Come, my son—the elders are ready,” he says, and the boy shakes off his slumber to hurry outside. There, the boy lines up with his friends, all aged 10 to 15, as the shaman inspects them carefully. “You,” he points to one, then another, continuing down the line. “You, and you, and you. Come.” The boys are escorted to a ceremonial enclosure, where they will remain for a week while the old people dance all night and prepare the jimsonweed potion called *toloache*.

Mixing the crushed roots of the poisonous datura—or jimsonweed—with water created a narcotic potion that produced visions in those who drank it. The Indians believed these visions were a means of communicating with the supernatural. Where the *toloache* cult originated and how it spread is not certain, though some scholars believe it began among the peoples of southern California and diffused north and east, driven by the dislocations caused by the Spanish occupation.

Death can be caused by ingesting *toloache*; it was only used with great preparation and supervision by the Indians, and drunk perhaps once in a person’s life. The process was supervised by the shaman, or religious leader of the tribe, who was also an expert in folk medicine. The shaman (usually male, but sometimes female) was key to the preservation of such rituals as the *toloache* ceremony. Shamans had power by virtue of an animal that came to them in dreams or visions—bestowed upon them by the Great Spirit so they could help people connect with each other and the natural world. It was believed the shaman could change shapes and become the guardian spirit animal.

When the boys are called forth from their hut into a moonless night a week later, a hush falls upon the watching crowd. The father looks proudly at his son who is standing tall, unblinking; he can tell the boy is ready to drink

and become a man. “Tonight and only tonight you taste the toloache that will transport you to the world of the Great Spirit,” the shaman intones, holding high a gourd filled with the sacred potion. Each boy drinks, and the drumming and dancing begin. One by one the boys collapse; as they do, they are carried with great jubilation back into the hut. The father keeps a strong face to squelch any small anxiety he might have as he gently lays down his son, who is muttering now in the throes of his vision. “Go away, Coyote, go away,” the boy cries out suddenly. “I know your tricks and selfish ways.” Later he will tell his father, “Coyote tempted me to jump from the highest cliff into the swirling waters below, saying he would catch me. ‘Drink more toloache,’ he told me, ‘for it will make you powerful like the shaman, look, like me, I am drinking all the time—come, we will fly!’ But I told him no, I know your deceit, for my father told me you are self-destructive and a liar. And Coyote howled as he flew away, hanging his head in shame for his weakness. ‘You are right, wise boy, do not jump, I cannot catch you, I cannot,’ he wailed. Then he faded and I woke up sweating.” The boy’s father nods wisely as his son finishes describing his vision, for everyone knows Coyote is all of these things, both destructive and regretful.

On the next night and the next, the boys are called out of the hut, taught songs, lore, and correct living. They learn the oral myths passed down through generations—stories with many animals, like Coyote, who had human personalities and magical powers. These stories also explained the meaning of life and recorded the tribe’s own history. Coyote was a nearly universal mythic figure who could be the trickster or hero, depending on local interpretations. Among the Maidu, for example, the Coyote and Earthmaker gods were opposed to each other and struggled in the creation of the earth and people. Coyote appeared in many guises: as messenger, transformer, creator, but most often as the divine deceiver of humankind. Often, myths were related to geographical features of tribal territory, such as a mountain peak, lake, or river. Certainly the boys had heard these tales before, as the telling of them was woven into daily life—how the Great Spirit created the world, why death existed, why human society was organized as it was—but now the boys, too, became responsible for keeping this knowledge alive.

An introduction to medicinal lore might also have been included in their training, again supervised by the shaman, who also preserved the tribe’s vast knowledge of medicine, spiritual incantations, and the uses of various herbs. Similar to the *curanderos* (herbal faith healers) among the Mexicans, shamans were practitioners of holistic medicine. Using breath and touch in addition to plants and animals, shamans facilitated true cures in the only way thought possible—by bringing the body and the soul into harmony with the natural world. A Chumash Indian, Fernando Librado, told of many cures that he witnessed after the afflicted one had been given a toloache potion to drink. Once, a man who had been severely beaten and was near death was revived and completely cured within a few days of drinking toloache and being

rubbed over with tobacco. Another who was in great pain from broken bones received almost immediate relief and was eventually healed after drinking toloache.

While these specialized cures were needed in serious cases, knowledge of medicinal plants was part of the cultural heritage of all the people. The boys might learn about the many uses of tobacco, grown or traded by almost all the native groups and thought to have curative and spiritual powers when chewed, eaten, or smoked. They might be shown medicinal plants good for treating many common ailments: from sore muscles, headaches, cramps, and nausea, to common colds, rheumatism, cuts, bites, wounds, and sores. Their sisters, in their own coming-of-age rituals, might learn about other plants useful for contraception, menstrual problems, and childbirth. When the Spanish began to occupy California, they liberally borrowed from native medicinal lore, using special herbs to treat arrow wounds, as well as wild chamomile and manzanilla for respiratory illnesses. A number of our modern medicines derive from the plants used by the North American Indians.

Once taught the ways of the tribe, the boys eat no meat and drink nothing but cold water for the rest of that month. After this they are men. Sitting by the fire, the young man who saw Coyote in his visions contemplates his future. His father smiles softly, careful that his son does not see his pride as he observes the seriousness on that youthful face. Then he breaks the young man's reverie. "Tomorrow you will join us on the hunt. Today we prepare ourselves in the temescal. Come, help carry the rocks."

Together, father and son join the other men of the village placing heated rocks inside the rounded structure made of saplings and covered with grass and hides. This *temescal*, or sweathouse, was another significant part of their spiritual life. Sprinkling water on the rocks, the men gathered inside the steamy hut to chant, sing, smoke, and pray. An hour or two later, they would emerge and immediately plunge into cold water, purified for success in undertakings such as hunting and war.

Rituals

When the sun rises and the stars and the moon go down, then the old man of the house wakens everyone and begins with breakfast which is to eat meat and tortillas (acorn cakes), for we do not have bread. This done, he takes his bow and arrows and leaves the house with vigorous and quick step.... His old woman staying at home makes the meal. The son, if he is a man, works with the men.

These words of Pablo Tac, a San Luis Rey mission Indian in the 1820s, offer a glimpse of their daily life before the Spanish arrived. Although generalizations about the diverse Indian communities are difficult to make, each had its own regional version of rituals surrounding marriage, morals, and leisure—the activities that gave meaning and purpose to life—all drawn from the sustenance of each of their rich and varied environments.



From William H. Emory, Library of Congress, public domain, no known restrictions

In 1854, a U.S. expedition led by Lieutenant Colonel William Emory traveled through the desert regions of California and Arizona to survey the international boundary. Along the way, artists sketched the region's plants, animals, and inhabitants. Arthur Schott created this picture of a Diegueño family in 1854. Do you see any Spanish or Mexican influence?

Common to many of these activities was song of one form or another. Like the initiation rites of the Cahuilla described earlier, young girls of the Diegueño or Kumeyaay Indians participated in a Wakunish, or womanhood ceremony, at puberty. A bed of hot sand was prepared and the girl placed on top of it, surrounded by dancing and singing members of her village. Following this, she returned to her special hut to be instructed in the sacred affairs of the community. A sand painting was used to show the girl her place in the universe, and marriageable girls were tattooed on their chins after a period of fasting.

Song and dance also figured in marriage rituals. Chumash marriage celebrations began with a private ceremony for the family, where invited guests brought presents, according to former mission Indian Fernando Librado. Later there was a feast, followed by what he called a Jealousy Dance, in which five figures performed a burlesque of a love affair and temptations of other men. Pablo Tac remembered another ritual dance, of the Luiseño people:

The dancers in this dance can be as many as 30, more or less. Going out of the house, they turn their faces to the singers and begin to give kicks, but not hard ones, because it is not the time, and when the song is finished the captain of the dancers, touching his feet, cries, "Hu," and all fall silent.

In some groups, boys were married before they were 21, to a suitable bride selected by their parents from outside both the immediate family and the band. The parents gave gifts to the family of the girl, and sometimes the boy went to work for his future in-laws to prove he could provide for the girl. Among some tribelets there was no formal ceremony, merely an agreement among the parents. During the first weeks after the marriage, members of the village visited the new couple to confirm that they were part of the group.

Indian and Spanish morality differed, which was a source of great conflict between them. Though marriage and kinship were usually governed among Indians by strict rules, and patriarchal values held sway, most California Indians did not regard virginity as being of great value; consequently, premarital sex was rarely forbidden, according to the research of historian Albert Hurtado. Adultery and sexual misconduct by women was sometimes punished by payment of indemnities to wronged husbands and by the whipping of errant wives; however, sexual mores among Indian groups varied as greatly as they did between Indians and Europeans, and sweeping generalizations are perilous. In some groups, women as well as men could divorce their spouse if mistreated. Prostitution was almost unknown among Indians, Hurtado thinks, because "marital, premarital, and extramarital associations provided sufficient sexual opportunities."

Along with many other natives in the Americas, the California Indians also valued a *berdache* tradition, in which homosexual transvestites were thought to have special mystical powers. Many villages regarded them as a third sex, highly valued as marriage partners because of their strength and spiritual gifts. This acceptance of homosexuality as well as the native people's casual attitudes towards sex was regarded by Christian missionaries as proof of the Indians' inherent sinfulness.

Many California Indians believed in cremating their dead, another practice that was unacceptable to European Catholics of the time. "Only when everything is burned can his spirit go into the next world and not have to keep coming back after his things," remembers Delfina Cuero, a Kumeyaay Indian woman born in 1900, in her autobiography. The funeral ceremony of her people, the Kumeyaay, involved cremating the departed along with all their worldly possessions the day after they died. Their bones and ashes were preserved in jars. Gifts were sent from

other bands to the family of the deceased, along with “shell money.” Tradition dictated that the shell money was then returned to the band who sent it, along with more gifts. A year later, the other bands were invited to participate in a mourning ceremony, during which everyone sang songs about the eagle and deer all night long, followed by a great feast in the morning. Figurines made of cattails, representing the dead, were burned and food and baskets were given away. Later, the visitors returned the original gifts along with more food. Such exchanges served to promote communication and good will among the villages.

Singing was also featured in leisure time activities. Songs that kept local legends, myths, and history alive were memorized and sung, often directed toward the Great Spirit. Each band had one singer who knew all the songs and stories and who taught them to the others. One Luiseño story, the legend of Takwish, was told through 1050 songs that were sung from sunset Friday until sunrise on Sunday. There were probably hundreds of such stories among the California peoples, each encapsulating the “soul” of the people, transmitting their identity and heritage to the next generation.

A popular gambling and guessing game called *peon* was also accompanied by songs. The Indians also participated with great gusto in many other kinds of games that emphasized both competition and community. Men and boys engaged in mock battles with one another using stones instead of arrows, and children played a game of throwing a stick through a rolling hoop. Pablo Tac remembers a ball game resembling modern football that was played with 30 or 40 men and women on each side. The idea was to unearth a hidden ball using sticks and then to carry it to the goal while the other team sought to prevent a score. Each game lasted three or four hours.

A Closer Look: Six Regional Peoples

Before the arrival of the Europeans, the varied lives of native Californians reflected the diversity of the land they inhabited. A closer examination of six of the many native groups that spread across this land provides greater insight into their similarities as well as their differences. While there were probably more than 500 distinctive tribelets, it is useful to focus on those which were the largest that represent the regional adaptations of these people. From the Gabrielino/Tongva peoples of the south to the Shastans of the north, each group’s development was inseparably woven into the fabric of their environment.

The Gabrielino/Tongva

The Gabrielino/Tongva peoples migrated to southern California from the greater Southwest sometime after 500 BCE. They lived in more than 100 villages scattered throughout the area of present-day Los Angeles and Orange

Counties, as well as the offshore islands (see Map 1.2). Named for the San Gabriel mission constructed near their villages, or *rancherías* (as the Spanish called them), they were a Cupan-speaking people. Part of the Uto-Aztecán family of languages, Cupan is linguistically related to languages of the Pueblo Indians in New Mexico and the Aztecs of central Mexico.

The Gabrielinos worshiped the god Qua-o-ar, also called Chingichngish. According to what is known through Spanish sources, they believed the earth was created by a divine brother and sister, who formed the first human, Wiyot, a male who was self-generating (he had children without a woman). Wiyot was poisoned by his children, but before he died he vowed to return. As his children were cremating Wiyot, Coyote appeared and said that he wanted to die with his captain. Coyote jumped into the fire, while tearing a piece of meat from Wiyot's stomach and eating it. Soon after that, Chingichngish was born, and he then created a new race of people, giving them a body of laws and proscriptions. The reported practice of Gabrielino shamans eating a piece of the flesh of a dead body just prior to its cremation was supposedly a re-creation of the birth of their "all-powerful" god. Eventually Chingichngish was taken up into the heavens, dancing a sacred dance, and he became the stars.

The worship of Chingichngish evolved into a more formalistic religion with special worship places, elaborate ceremonies, and sacrifices to this god as well as to the Sun and Moon, who also had divine status. The Gabrielinos also venerated animals, especially the Eagle, whom they considered to be the soul of a great leader. Their religion was male-centered; only men were allowed primary access to divine powers. The veneration of Chingichngish may have been influenced by Catholicism in a syncretic way, mixing European and native beliefs, but it is unclear to what degree.

The lengthiest Gabrielino rituals involved deceased tribal members. After a three-day mourning ceremony with dancing and wailing, the dead were cremated along with all their possessions. Each year, the family conducted another mourning ceremony in honor of the deceased one, at which the legends of the community were honored. During the eight-day celebration, the longest and most elaborate of the year, newly born children were given their father's names, any remaining possessions of the deceased were burned, and an eagle was ceremonially sacrificed.

Like many California native groups, the Gabrielinos were patrilineal, tracing their descent through the father. Arranged marriages often took place, after which a wife moved into the home of her husband and was then forbidden to visit her family of origin, although they could visit her. Divorce was possible, in which case the families returned the wedding gifts. A wife's infidelity was punishable by death or beating.

Of the tribe's three social classes, leaders and their families were at the top, followed by a middle class of respected families and then by common villagers. Upper- and middle-class families controlled land and marked the boundaries

of their possessions with symbolic figures carved on trees or posts, or painted on rocks. Each village had its own autonomous organization dominated by one lineage and ruled by a male leader who passed on his power through his male heir. If no male heir existed, a related woman might be selected by the family council.

Occasionally, feuds among the various lineages and villages erupted, with villages sometimes allying together to engage in war. Armed and bloody conflicts arose when other tribes trespassed on ranchería lands, when women were taken, or when enemies invoked evil powers. The Gabrielino warriors used heavy wooden clubs, reed armor, and bows and arrows. The whole village took part in battles, with women and children as helpers. Enemy wounded were killed on the field, while captured male warriors were publicly tortured and scalped.

Most of the time, however, peace reigned, fostered by intermarriages and trade within Gabrielino groups and with the Cahuilla, Chumash, and Luiseño. The Gabrielinos' main trade item was steatite, a kind of rock from the island of Santa Catalina used to make carvings of sacred animals. They imported acorns, obsidian, and deerskin from the inland territories and exchanged salt, shellfish, and sea otter pelts. They also traded with the Pueblo Indians of what is now Arizona and New Mexico.

The Chumash

The Chumash people settled in villages in central California around 1000 CE, in the area from San Luis Obispo to Malibu, on the coastal Channel Islands—San Miguel, Santa Rosa, Santa Cruz, and Anacapa—and as far inland as the central San Joaquin Valley (see Map 1.2). They became one of the largest language groups in California and were among the native peoples sighted by the European expedition led by Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo in October 1542.

Expert craftsmen, especially in woodworking and basketry, they constructed planked wooden canoes up to 30 feet long that enabled them to fish far out to sea and to visit the offshore islands. Using harpoons with stone points and ropes made out of yucca fiber, they hunted sea otters, seals, swordfish, and whales. Their large carved oak bowls were the envy of the Europeans; their wooden-handled knives and arrows remain marvels of beauty. California Indian basketry in general is noted for its decoration and workmanship, and Chumash baskets were so tightly woven that when waterproofed with asphaltum or tar, they could be used to carry and store water, as well as for cooking. The tar came from natural pools, which had oozed into a small lake located in the western region of what is today the Los Angeles basin. The women were responsible for weaving these useful works of art. They also wove fishnets, floor mats, storage baskets, and strainers.

Chumash rock art paintings can be found in caves and on rocks and ledges throughout the Santa Barbara area. Many California native groups drew or

inscribed designs and mysterious symbols on rocks, but few of these are as colorful and dramatic as those of the Chumash. The designs are abstract, most probably done in conjunction with the toloache ceremony or with female puberty rites. The drawings may have been meant to sanctify a particularly holy spot—almost all of them are located near water in inaccessible regions, far from the coast.

The permanent villages of the Chumash included well-constructed round homes built of poles and interwoven grass, some up to 50 feet in diameter and able to hold up to 70 persons. Within these homes were beds on wood frames with divisions in between for privacy and a fire pit in the center for cooking. Every village had at least one sweathouse, a number of storehouses, a building used for ceremonies, a cemetery, and a recreation house.

As did many California natives, the Chumash enjoyed a variety of games. A ball game similar to soccer, played with a round wooden ball, was popular with the boys and men; females played a hoop game that involved trying to throw a pole through a rolling hoop. Women also gambled alongside men in various games of chance, especially a dice game using walnut shells filled with tar.

Like the Gabrielinos, this tribe was patrilineal and had a definite class system. Those who owned the large canoes and were the heads of large families enjoyed high status. Wealthy family members dressed accordingly, adorned with semiprecious stones and rare bird feathers.

The area in which the Chumash lived was blessed with many resources. Still, they had extensive trade relationships with surrounding communities. In exchange for deerskins, acorns, obsidian, and precious stones, they traded abalone shells, whalebone, wooden bowls, and asphaltum. They were expert at making fishhooks out of shell and these were valuable trade items. Those who lived on the four offshore islands visited the mainland periodically to obtain food and luxuries, sometimes paddling more than 40 miles in open sea and bringing with them a variety of marine items such as sea lion bristles (used as needles), whalebones, and pelican feathers.

According to early European accounts, the Chumash were a gentle people. In the 1770s, Governor Pedro Fages wrote that they were “of good disposition, affable, liberal, and friendly toward the Spaniard.” Among them, punishment was rare and compensation was the modality of justice. Disputes were settled by referees, and intertribal wars were fought with restraining ritual and little bloodshed. Their friendly and accepting manner made them good candidates for missionization by the Spanish priests. Within a century, however, epidemics, starvation, and displacement reduced the Chumash to near extinction.

The Costanoans

The Costanoan peoples migrated to Monterey Bay and the southern part of the San Francisco Bay area about 500 CE and lived in more than 50 autonomous,

relatively small, permanent villages (see Map 1.2). By the time of their first contact with Europeans, they had a population of more than 10,000, divided into eight language groups and more than 30 different ethnic populations, each with different names and different dialects. Their name derives from the Spanish *costa* (coast), but as was the case with many native California peoples, they did not use this name themselves.

One group of Costanoans may have been the first miners in California, excavating a tunnel near present-day New Almaden to mine cinnabar, a compound based on mercury and used to make colorful paints. Because this was the only deposit of this particular mineral in California, it was a valuable asset and the Costanoans fought with surrounding tribes for the rights to the mine. Indians from as far away as the Pacific Northwest traveled to Costanoan territory to trade for cinnabar.

Like the Chumash, the Costanoans developed boats, but theirs were made of tule reeds and used for fishing in the bays as well as for transportation and trading expeditions. They bartered the products of the bays with the interior Indian groups for piñon nuts, acorns, and decorative stones and shells. Warfare with other groups seems to have been more pronounced among the Costanoan peoples, usually caused by trespassing into their territory. (Territorial boundaries of ethnic groups were well delineated and frequently marked.) In battle, the Costanoans killed male captives and took women; afterward, the decapitated heads of their enemies adorned their villages. Costanoans shared the common religious tradition that included a creation story involving the destruction of the earth by flooding, followed by the rebirth of people. They believed Coyote taught people to hunt and fish, and was the grandfather of Duck Hawk, a god who helped humans by killing monsters and looking after their welfare. They believed in an afterlife in which they went to another land across the sea. On the day of death, the corpse was cremated. During the mourning ceremony, members of the immediate family covered themselves with ashes and beat themselves in sorrow, a practice which sometimes resulted in their own deaths. It was forbidden to speak a deceased's name until it had been formally given to another within the tribe.

Grizzly bears were also venerated as representing important animal spirits and were frequently captured alive and cared for by some tribes. Special shamans dressed in grizzly bear skins and used poisoned claws to kill enemy captives. The Chumash Indian Fernando Librado recalled the ceremonies surrounding the bear medicine man when he was interviewed by anthropologist John P. Harrington in 1914. "To make their bear suits they would first kill a bear and pull its skin off over the head, cutting the paws and skin carefully." Librado remembered that occasionally other Indians would try to kill the bear medicine man (whom they believed to be an evil spirit). But the bear shamans were believed to be protected by the supernatural powers they possessed (they were protected, too, by the many layers of skins they wore).

Hupa man with a ceremonial white deerskin staff and elaborate shell necklace.



Hupa Indian in ceremonial costume, Edward S. Curtis, Library of Congress, public domain, no known restrictions

Costanoan tribal organization was similar to that of the Gabrielino/Tongva and the Chumash. The position of chief was hereditary, but any chief's authority was circumscribed by a strong sense of individual freedom among community members. Their social world revolved around the family of the father and they had large families, perhaps averaging 15 per household. Wealthier men had more than one wife, which made for complex arrangements. Among some Costanoans there were three designations for children, indicating known parentage: man's son, man's daughter, and woman's child (unknown father). Marriage appears to have been rather informal, and divorce was easily accomplished, with the children going with the wife.

The Miwoks and Yokuts

Other Indian groups lived far from the ocean and European settlement. Two of these groups were the Miwoks and Yokuts. The Miwoks inhabited an area running from the north and east of San Francisco Bay to Sacramento and the foothills of the Sierras; the Yokuts lived in the San Joaquin Valley south of Sacramento. Like other groups, these two populations settled in scattered independent villages, the members of each village speaking a different dialect although bound by a probable common ancestry in the ancient past.

In 1769, the Miwok population probably exceeded 25,000. They were noted for their construction of large, round subterranean meetinghouses, sometimes 40 to 50 feet in diameter, in which it was possible to assemble the whole village for important ceremonies and crucial discussions. The Sierra Miwoks built conical homes of bark and wood, insulated by several layers to withstand the cold winters. The Miwoks divided all creatures into two types, the water and land descendants, and their social organization and adoption of animal names followed this dualist system. For example, among the Sierra Miwoks,

the grizzly bear represented the land and the coyote the water. Individuals were given a personal name according to their relationship to the land or water moieties (sides). The Miwoks had three types of leaders: the chief, who arbitrated disputes and administered punishments; the speaker, who organized everyone for ceremonies and work; and the messengers, who acted as representatives to other groups and as announcers during ritual celebrations. Hunters and gatherers, the Miwoks developed a variety of technologies, including seed beaters, dip nets and seines for fish, specialized traps and snares for small game, and deer runs (fenced areas that trapped prey).

The Yokuts shared the same linguistic origin as the Miwoks and numbered some 20,000 people who lived in about 40 independent groups. In the south, the Yokuts lived along the banks of the Kern, Tule, King, and San Joaquin Rivers, and along the shore of Tulare Lake. In this era, the San Joaquin Valley was much marshier than it is now and this created a rich aquatic environment. The Yokut way of life, therefore, revolved around the marshes formed by the many rivers in the valley. The ubiquitous tule plant was used for making everything from baskets to canoes, and it was also used for food. Because their food source was always in one place, these Yokuts built permanent villages using large tule mats for construction, and they perfected freshwater fishing with specialized nets, floating tule mats, spring traps, and decoys. They ate mussels, turtles, geese, and ducks, along with tule and grass seeds, and supplemented this diet with acorns, which they obtained by trade.

The Yokuts who lived along the river edges also had access to acorns as a staple food. Some built their river villages on mounds to protect against floods and had small tule huts for each family, but they also built larger assembly structures and sweat houses. They raised dogs, primarily, it seems, for their meat, and the puppies were an item of trade as far away as Monterey. They had a dualistic family system like that of the Miwoks, whose territory bounded them on the north. Among the foothill Yokuts, plural marriages and divorce were common, and a woman's rights were strongly protected by her family.

The Shastans

Finally, in the Klamath and Scott River Valleys of the mountainous regions of northern California and southern Oregon, there lived about 3000 Shastan peoples, a collection of groups who shared dialects of the same language. Noted for their many feuds and wars within their own group and with other northern groups such as the Modocs, the Shastans fought in retaliation for past insults and injuries as well as for control of territory. Nevertheless, they maintained trade relations with surrounding rancherías in order to obtain baskets, obsidian, beads, and animal skins in exchange for acorn meal, salt, and wolf skins.

The Shastan peoples, too, were patrilineal, with rule by a headman or chief. Often the wife of the chief was an important political spokesperson in resolving conflicts. Settlement of disputes usually required payment in clamshell money, deer

skins, or woodpecker scalps to the aggrieved party. The headman also regulated the ownership of hunting and fishing territory, which could be inherited by families.

Harsh winters impelled the Shastans to build sturdy, warm dwellings, partially excavated, with solid wood logs and boards as walls and roofs. During the summer months, the families lived in temporary camps. They also built large assembly halls for ceremonial purposes, for use as a sweathouse, and for lodging during the winter.

Shastan territory was lush with small game, salmon, trout, eels, and turtles. The women were entrusted with fishing, while the men hunted. Deer meat was a primary food source. They also had a gathering culture, with both men and women seeking acorns and pine nuts. Cultivated tobacco was offered up as a sacrifice to ensure good hunting.

Coyote is a major figure in Shastan belief, as a source of both evil and good. The stories used by the Shastans to pass on their beliefs were preoccupied with the pervasiveness of evil, which had to be combated by manipulation of the spiritual world through the offices of male shamans and female doctors. They also seem to have been preoccupied with status, prestige, and the order of society, which made insults and loss of face great evils and resentments a major theme of cultural life.

Significance: The Importance of California Natives and Other North American Native Peoples in Non-Indian History

Beginning in 1769, with the first Spanish settlement, and lasting until 1848, when California was transferred to the United States, the California Indians vastly outnumbered the Euro-American population. If history were written emphasizing the most demographically important groups, then, until the discovery of gold, California's history would be primarily that of its native peoples, with small attention given to the Spanish, Mexican, and Anglo immigrants. But history reflects political and cultural power and is usually written by the conquerors.

Spanish, Mexican, and early Anglo American settlers in California were almost uniformly critical of the native peoples. The Spanish had mixed views about the Indians, whom they considered "child-like," "indolent," and given to indulge in "brutal appetites," while paradoxically seeing them as innocent and naturally God's children. Some Mexican settlers, or *pobladores*, viewed the native peoples either as dangerous threats to civilization or as lazy *peones* who needed strong guidance. The Anglos called the California Indians "digger Indians," classifying them as the most primitive of all North American Indian peoples for lack of such rudimentary accomplishments of civilization as farming and pottery. Such negative valuation allowed Euro-Americans to justify taking Indian lands and destroying their societies.

Herbert Howe Bancroft, a famous and influential 19th-century California historian, believed that the California Indians were culturally inferior to the whites. Many modern misconceptions about the level of culture attained by the California Indians can be traced to 19th-century positivist scholars, notably Lewis Henry Morgan, one of those who conceived of all human cultural evolution as progressing through stages of savagery, barbarism, and finally civilization. These scholars tended to equate “civilization” with the development of agriculture and technology and relegated food-gathering societies to the level of barbarism, not taking into account that human intelligence is also reflected in successful adaptation to an environment. Such beliefs persisted into the 1960s and even later, with historians and anthropologists usually characterizing the California native cultures as “primitive” and “underdeveloped,” thus reflecting prejudices that are the product of ignorance as well as ethnocentrism born out of racialist ideologies of the past.

These attitudes make it hard to remember that much of the drama of those years of conquest was played out against a backdrop of the extensive, rich, and diverse native culture that existed across the North American continent. The many groups in California were descendants of natives who had migrated from the east and north, and as such they shared cultural patterns with the larger Indian society. Along with other Indian peoples in North America in 1492, the California Indians developed a culture that fit their natural environment. Few natives in what later became the United States relied entirely on agriculture (those who did were mostly limited to New Mexico and Arizona); most shared an economy based on hunting, gathering, and the selective cultivation of plants. Techniques developed by California Indians for maintaining the ecological balance between the population and the natural world of vegetation and animal life make them the first environmentalists. Their periodic burning of brush areas to stimulate the new growth of food crops, decrease insect pests, manage game, and open new country helped maintain an equilibrium that was severely disturbed by the Europeans and Americans. Not until the late 20th century would scientists finally realize the wisdom of native management practices.

Until at least the mid-19th century, the most important workforce in California was composed of its native peoples. The foundation of the livestock industry and of agriculture depended on native labor, as did the construction of early public and private buildings and the first towns. The physical monuments to the Spanish and Mexican eras, the missions and the ranchos, were built with Indian labor. The native peoples contributed elements of their language to hundreds of place names, such as Shasta, Napa, Tuolumne, Yuba, Tehachapai, Tecate, and Ukiah. They shared their knowledge of the use of medicinal plants with the first Spanish and Mexican settlers, and they helped them defend their small settlements against attacks by other Indians. Elements of Indian culture found their way into the mission system set up by the Spanish. The first *vaqueros*, or cowboys, in California were Indians employed by the



Dance of the Indians of St. Joseph in New California, Leitia Byrne (engraver) from a sketch by artist Wilhelm Gottlief Tilesius von Tilenau, Library of Congress, public domain, no known restrictions

In 1806, a Russian ship visited San Francisco Bay, and the artist Wilhelm Gottlief Tilesius von Tilenau traveled to Mission in San José, where he sketched a dance that had been arranged for their entertainment. Compare this picture with those shown in the earlier two photos in this chapter. Which ones seem more realistic?

missions to manage the cattle, sheep, and goats brought by the Spanish. Native cultures, languages, and identities continue to exist within California, making these first people very much part of the history of the state from the earliest times to the present day.

Summary

During the course of millions of years, California evolved into a region of tremendous geographic and natural diversity. The many climates and natural ecosystems helped create the varied ways of life of its hundreds of thousands of first settlers—migrants whose speech derived from six linguistic groups and was expressed in more than 100 dialects. The lush plants and game that flourished in California sustained this large Indian population, who created innovative ways of nurturing their natural resources.

Despite the multiplicity of their origins and languages, the Indian peoples shared certain values, perhaps reflecting their common origin in prehistoric

time. They all managed their natural environment to produce the maximum amount of food, whether by controlled burns, hunting, or scattering of wild seeds. Almost all of them developed techniques for harvesting and grinding acorns into a staple food, and they all traded with other groups. A rich oral tradition of myths, legends, and stories—especially about the character Coyote and the event of the flood—was common to all groups, as was the veneration of animal spirits. Complex ceremonies, songs, and rituals connected them to their natural environment. They all had shamans who organized their spiritual life, and many used jimsonweed or other psychotropic plants as part of their religion, as well as the temescal or sweathouse. Their complex patterns of lineage, relationship, and status, including class systems in some groups, and their relatively small villages, reflected the patterns of all the native peoples on the continent—with the exception of the metropolitan civilizations in central Mexico. Their peaceful and nonwarlike image has some element of truth to it, despite the bloody intertribal warfare that periodically existed. Outside of central Mexico, native peoples rarely engaged in wars of conquest and territorial aggrandizement. The first Californians were neither more nor less sophisticated or warlike than other peoples in North America before the arrival of the Europeans.

A review of some of the most populous indigenous groups in California illustrates their rich heritage and many accomplishments. Their ability to learn how to live with the incredible diversity and richness of California's climate and geography and develop cultures that balanced human and natural resources is an important ideal that seems to be regaining value in the new millennium.

Modern anthropologists evaluate cultures on their own merits, not in terms of a universal model of development that favors European culture, such as the models used by 19th-century historians and positivist scholars. Ultimately, the California Indians must be understood on their own terms, not in comparison to other Indians or to European and American notions of civilization. In this regard, we must remind ourselves that the native cultures that existed prior to their contact with Europeans were neither better nor worse than those who would attempt to control them. Then, perhaps, we can better appreciate the true diversity of California's past and how that diversity may shape the future.

Suggested Readings

- Anderson, M. Kat, *Tending the Wild: Native American Knowledge and the Management of California's Natural Resources* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006). An examination of how the native peoples of California managed their natural environment.

- Fages, Pedro, *A Historical, Political, and Natural Description of California*, trans. by Herbert Ingram Priestley (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1937). An eyewitness account of the native cultures in California, written in 1772.
- Griffin, Paul F., and Young Robert N., *California: The New Empire State, a Regional Geography* (San Francisco: Fearon Publishers, 1957). A good introduction to the geographic diversity of California.
- Heizer, Robert F., ed., "California," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, William C. Sturtevant, series ed. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1978). The best overall survey of the complexities and diversities of the California Indians.
- Kroeber, Alfred L., *Handbook of the Indians of California* (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 78, 1925). A landmark study of the indigenous people done by the most respected California anthropologist of the 20th century.
- Librado, Fernando, *Breath of the Sun: Life in Early California As Told by a Chumash Indian, Fernando Librado, to John P. Harrington*, edited by Travis Hudson (Banning, Calif.: Malki Museum Press; [S.l.]: Ventura County Historical Society, 1979). A glimpse into the daily life of the California Indians during the early 1900s.
- Margolin, Malcolm, ed., *The Way We Lived: California Indian Stories, Songs and Reminiscences* (Berkeley: Heyday Books, 1981). A good collection of the oral tradition.
- Tac, Pablo, *Indian Life and Customs at Mission San Luis Rey* (Mission San Luis Rey, 1958). A rare account of a mission Indian who wanted to be a priest.

The Spanish Colonization of California, 1769–1821

Main Topics

- The Spanish Conquest and Empire
- Demographic and Ethnic Growth of California
- Establishing Presidios and Pueblos
- Gender Relations in Spanish California
- Political Developments in Spanish California
- Summary

Pablo Tac was a Luiseño Indian (Quechnajuichom) born in Mission San Luis Rey in 1822. He came from a family of six children, most of whom had been born at his people's *ranchería* (small settlement) near the mission. In 1832, Father Antonio Peyri chose Pablo and another boy to travel with him to Mexico City to study for the priesthood. They arrived at the College of San Fernando, where Tac lived until 1834, when Father Peyri took both boys to Spain and then to Rome for further education financed by the church. In Rome, the older boy died but Tac finished his education, studying humanities, philosophy, and rhetoric. He took his preliminary vows in 1839, intending to go back to California as a missionary, but he died before he could return.

While in the seminary, Tac was asked to prepare a grammatical description of the Luiseño language and a dictionary. In addition to this document he wrote a history of his people and a

CHAPTER 2	The Spanish Colonization of California, 1769–1821
1519	Cortés conquers the Aztecs in central Mexico
1542	Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo discovers San Diego Bay, named San Miguel
1579	Francis Drake lands on California's coast
1602	Sebastián Vizcaíno lands in San Diego Bay and gives it its name
1769	First Spanish expeditions to settle Alta California
1770	Monterey founded by Father Junípero Serra
1775	First major Indian rebellion at Mission San Diego
1775	De Anza expedition brings new settlers to California
1776	Lieutenant José Moraga founds the presidio of San Francisco; Spain actively supports American revolution with money and supplies
1777	Pueblo of San José established
1781	Pueblo of Nuestra Señora la Reina de los Angeles founded
1781	Yuma uprising closes all travel with Arizona
1784	Chumash uprising against the missions
1792	English explorer George Vancouver visits California harbors
1810	Beginning of wars of independence from Spain
1812	Russians build Fort Ross on California coast
1818	Pirate Hippolyte Bouchard sacks Monterey
1822	News of Mexico's independence arrives in California

description of life in the missions, the only account written by a former neophyte. This rare document gives us an interpretation of history through the eyes of a Christianized California Indian, but we should be cautious about relying too much on his memories of his Indian past—they are in the context of his newly found religion and his probable desire to please his European mentors. At the same time, however, some scholars have analyzed the themes of resistance embedded in his narrative.

Tac recalled his people's history of warfare with the Kumeyaay peoples to the south before the Spaniards arrived. They were always at war with tribes that did not speak their language: "Always strife day and night," he wrote. He also described their war practices. "They would surprise the enemy either when they were sleeping or when the men were

This drawing is one of two done by Pablo Tac and used to illustrate his essay “Conversion of the San Luiseños of Alta California” which he wrote while in Rome. It shows two young painted men performing a traditional dance holding rattles and dressed ceremonially in feathered skirts and head dress. They are identified as “San Luiseño” and appear to be enjoying the occasion.



"Eagle Dancer" by Pablo Tac, original housed in the Biblioteca comunale dell'Archiginnasio, Bologna, Italy, public domain, no known restrictions

leaving the house, the women remaining alone; and they would kill the women, old people, and children. This done, they burned the camp, fleeing to their homes.... In this miserable state they lived until merciful God freed us of these miseries through Father Antonio Peyri, a Catalan, who arrived in our country in the afternoon with seven Spanish soldiers."

Tac related stories about the arrival of the first Spanish in his village and their attempts to speak to the Indian leaders. According to Tac, they were told, "What is it that you seek here? Get out of our country!" Tac continued, "It was a great mercy that the Indians did not kill the Spanish when they arrived, and very admirable, because they have never wanted another people to live with them, and until those days there was always fighting."

Tac remembered that the priest appointed native *alcaldes*, who were more proficient in Spanish; each was given a staff of authority. At Mission San Luis Rey there were seven alcaldes. The priest communicated with the Indians through the alcaldes, who in turn carried the news to their villages. The laborers at the mission were accompanied by a Spanish majordomo and the alcaldes, whose purpose was "to hurry them if they are lazy ... and to punish the guilty or lazy one who leaves his plow and quits the field." And, regarding the priests: "In the

Mission of San Luis Rey de Francia the Fernandino Father is like a king. He has his pages, alcaldes, majordomos, musicians, soldiers, gardens, ranchos, livestock, horses by the thousand, cows, bulls by the thousand, oxen, mules, asses, 12,000 lambs, 200 goats, etc."

Pablo Tac died on December 13, 1841, before he could be ordained a priest; he was not yet 20 years old. His written work is the only account of California mission life written by an Indian, and it is also the first literature published by a California Indian.

Tac's life story dramatizes the major changes that the Indians experienced as they encountered the Euro-American settlers. The goal of the Spanish priests and soldiers was to convert and pacify thousands of native peoples who lived near the California coast. They hoped to make the natives into loyal Spanish Catholic subjects, with the California missions at the core of the Spanish project to settle California. There were some successes, as evidenced in Tac's narrative, but by and large the process of Hispanicization resulted in the introduction of new diseases that decimated the Indian population; however, by introducing the Spanish language, culture, and political system the Europeans added new diversity to an already heterogeneous society. The mixture of cultures would produce a resilient frontier environment—one that prepared California for new challenges.

Questions to Consider

- How and why did the Spanish finally settle Alta California?
- What were the characteristics of the society that they sought to create?
- How can we evaluate the debate over the modern interpretations of the California missions?
- What was the status of women in this colonial society?
- What was the influence of other Europeans on California's history?
- What is the importance of the Spanish era?

The Spanish Conquest and Empire

The Spaniards were the first Europeans to colonize the New World, preceding the English by more than 100 years. From their first settlements in the Caribbean Islands, Hispaniola, and Cuba, they soon began the exploration

and settlement of the American continents. In 1519 Hernan Cortés led an expedition of soldiers from Cuba to confirm rumors of a powerful and wealthy kingdom on the western mainland of present-day Mexico. Cortés led his men in the Spanish conquest of the Aztec empire. The epic adventure took two years and was made possible by the assistance of hundreds of thousands of Indians who resented Aztec tyranny, and by the use of new weapons, animals (such as the horse and dog), and most importantly, by the new diseases brought by the Europeans, such as influenza, smallpox, and a more virulent form of syphilis. By 1521, the Spanish had established a foothold in central Mexico. Almost immediately, Cortés began sending out expeditions to find other wealthy kingdoms.

The Spanish consolidation of political, religious, and military power over the former Aztecs, their vassals, and outlying tribes was rapid and quite remarkable. Within 50 years of the conquest—aided by a rapid depopulation of the Indians due to disease and mistreatment—the Spanish constructed an efficient government to exploit the labor and wealth of this land, which they called New Spain. The cultural transformation of this new colony would take hundreds of years, as the Indian population continued to outnumber the Españosoles. Gradually a *mestizo*, or mixed, culture emerged with various degrees of mixture between ancient Indian and Spanish Catholic life. The complexity of New Spain's evolution in terms of racial and ethnic identity is a point that scholars are now exploring in great depth.

Political control of this cauldron of subjugated people led to the creation of a complex bureaucracy controlled by the Spanish *peninsulares* and assisted by American-born mestizos and *criollos*. At the top was the Spanish king's representative, the viceroy, who was to implement the royal edicts and endless administrative decrees flowing from the Council of the Indies in Spain. Under the viceroy, the military and the church had their complex administrative organizations for the control and conversion of the Indians. The Spaniards occupied all of the positions of power. Soon, converted Indians and the children of the conquest—the mestizos, who were of mixed Indian and Spanish descent—began to serve as lower-level administrators in the army, courts, and town councils. Given the tremendous distances involved, the size and diversity of the indigenous populations, and the relatively small Iberian-born population, the Spanish Empire in the New World was a remarkable achievement—one that lasted more than 300 years.

Spain's Exploration of the Californias

California was one of the last frontiers to be colonized by the Spanish government, as a result of a change in the dynastic rulers in Spain as well as the perception of threats from other European powers. Hernan Cortés, the conqueror of the Aztecs, was an important leader in the early exploration of Baja California. His initiatives began the process of conquest that would lead to

settlement. For almost 10 years, while expanding the empire, Cortés labored to build oceangoing vessels on the west coast of Mexico in order to look for *Otro Méjico*—another golden kingdom—and perhaps to discover a northwest passage, a sea route around North America. In 1532, he sent two ships north but they never returned. In 1533, two more ships left and landed on the Baja California peninsula at La Paz, where they encountered rumors of fabulous pearl fisheries further north. Cortés himself set out in 1534 and named the Baja California peninsula—which he thought to be an island—“Santa Cruz.” He and his men found some pearls but mostly desert lands and inhospitable Indians. In 1539, he sent Francisco de Ulloa with three vessels to search for new kingdoms further north. Ulloa sailed up the Gulf of California, later renamed the Sea of Cortés, to the mouth of the Colorado River.

The name “California” probably derives from a European adventure novel published in 1500 by the Spaniard Garcí Ordóñez de Montalvo. His book, *Las Sergas de Esplandián* (*The Exploits of Esplandián*), tells the story of a mythical island inhabited by Amazons and ruled by Queen Calafia. Literary scholars regard this book as a justification of the triumph of Spanish imperialism. In the book, the Amazons and their queen are dark-skinned women who fight with weapons of gold, the only metal available in their land. To aid in their battles, they trap and domesticate griffins (mythical dragon-like birds) and feed them male captives, as well as their own male children. Queen Calafia, with her Amazons and griffins, appears at the siege of Constantinople and fights on the side of the Muslims. Later on, however, she converts to Christianity, marries a man, and returns with him to her native island of California. The island of Queen Calafia is described in the novel as being “at the right hand of the Indes” and the early explorers, including Cortés, expected to find it within 10 days of sailing off the Mexican coast. Thus the name came to be applied to the Baja California peninsula.

While the Spanish explored Baja California before 1540, more than 200 years passed before Alta California became a Spanish colony. It finally became known to the Western world as a result of the international rivalries of the European powers. Initially, the Spanish king hoped that the exploration of the western coast of the continent north of New Spain would lead to the discovery of a northwest passage. This would enable Spain to outmaneuver its rivals in trade with the Orient. In the late 16th century, the Spanish needed a suitable port on the Pacific coast to provision the valuable Manila galleons as they made their way south to Acapulco laden with riches from the Philippines. In the 17th century, the Spanish monarchy anxiously tried to prevent other European powers from settling in the vast territories that Spain had claimed. In the east, French explorers and trappers threatened to encroach on present-day Louisiana and Texas. In the northwest, the Russians and British showed interest in expansion. As a result, the Spanish crown slowly moved to finance the exploration and settlement of its remotest frontier possessions, Texas and Alta California. Other considerations motivated new settlement on the frontier,



Map 2.1 Missions, Presidios, and Pueblos in Alta California During the Spanish Era, 1769–1821

including a desire by the Spanish Catholic church to expand their missionizing endeavors as far north as possible. By the late 18th century, Baja California had already been colonized with missions and military outposts (called *presidios*) and Alta California seemed to be the next logical step in the conquest of souls.

Early Maritime Exploration and Encounters

In 1542, an expedition led by the Portuguese navigator Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo set sail from Navidad on the northwest coast of Mexico to explore the northern territories. On September 28, he discovered a “very good harbor,” which he named San Miguel because it was the feast day of that saint. Anchoring near the mouth of the harbor, which was later renamed San Diego by Sebastián Vizcaíno, Cabrillo’s men explored the bay with a small boat. A shore party rowed toward a group of curious Kumeyaay Indians but as the Spanish neared land, most of them ran off. Only three natives remained to inspect the strange newcomers. Cabrillo’s men gave these three some gifts, and through hand motions the Indians communicated that they knew of other strange men like them who had been seen inland. This news may have been related to Francisco Vásquez de Coronado’s expedition into New Mexico in 1540.

Cabrillo continued north and a group of sailors who went ashore at Catalina Island were met by local Gabrielino (Tongva) men. The women fled to the interior. Later, the natives paddled their canoes out to the Spanish ship and received beads and other manufactured items. Leaving Catalina and sailing north along the coast, Cabrillo named prominent geographical features as he went. North of Point Conception, the expedition landed at San Miguel Island (which they named Isla de la Posesión). Cabrillo had an accident and broke his arm, but despite this injury he ordered the crew to continue north. Sailing against the current and the prevailing winds, they reached a point near San Francisco without ever discovering the entrance to the great bay, and finally had to turn back due to bad weather and Cabrillo’s failing health. Cabrillo died as they reached San Miguel Island. After burying Cabrillo on the island, the sailors proceeded as far north as the present southern border of Oregon and then, because of severe storms, returned to their home port of Navidad (located near present-day Puerto Vallarta on the west coast of Mexico).

The next European visitor to California was Francis Drake, an English pirate who was later given a royal commission and knighthood for his war against the Spanish. In 1578, Drake’s ship, *The Golden Hind*, raided Spanish settlements in Chile and Peru and sailed up the Pacific Coast so heavily laden with treasure that the ship’s seams began to leak. On June 17, 1579, they put into a harbor probably somewhere near the present-day San Francisco and stayed five weeks while they repaired the ship. Drake named the area Nova Albion, or New England, because the white cliffs reminded him of the white cliffs of Dover in his homeland. While on land, the sailors traded with the native people and Drake wrote brief descriptions of the Indians, probably the Coastal Miwoks.

Following Drake, captains of Manila galleons entered the bays along California’s coast seeking fresh water, food, and wood for repairs. The Spanish had begun their conquest of the Philippines in 1564 and immediately began sending treasure ships laden with silks and spices back to Spain via Mexico.

As the galleons set sail from Manila to New Spain, they followed currents and prevailing winds, traveling north to Japan and then west. The galleons struck the American coast near Mendocino and then sailed south. The first galleon to sight the California coast took 129 days to make the passage, and in the process many of the crew died from scurvy. For the next several hundred years, as regulated by the Spanish crown, a Manila galleon annually passed down the California coast. In 1595, Sebastián Rodríguez Cermeño sailed a galleon along the California coast to map it and to search for possible ports. Landing in Drake's bay, which he named "La Baya de San Francisco," Cermeño stayed a month and traveled inland to trade with the local Miwok Indians for food and supplies. Unfortunately, his treasure ship was wrecked in a storm and his men had to build a small launch to return down the coast to Mexico. Because of this disaster, the Spanish government forbade galleons from use in further coastal explorations.

An intensification of rivalry over the Asian trade and the need to find ports for the galleons along the Pacific Coast led the king to commission an exploration by Sebastián Vizcaíno, a Basque merchant in Acapulco who had sailed on several galleons but was not a professional sailor. Vizcaíno sailed with three ships from Mexico in 1602 and, because he was sailing against the current and winds, took four months to reach California. He entered the bay named San Miguel by Cabrillo on November 10 and, since the name of his flagship was the *San Diego de Alcalá* and the feast day of this saint was on November 12, he renamed the harbor San Diego. The expedition stayed 10 days, during which they refitted their ships, buried crew members who had died from scurvy, set up a tent church, and sent an expedition inland to scout the territory.

Vizcaíno's ships continued north to Catalina Island, and then to a bay he named Monterey, after the Conde de Monterey, Viceroy of Mexico. While anchored in the bay, he noted the ideal conditions for a galleon port. It had tall trees for repairs (unlike San Diego) and plenty of game and fish. His exaggerated praise of Monterey as a fine harbor later convinced the Spanish authorities that it should be the main port of a proposed colony. Vizcaíno continued north as far as Cape Mendocino, when storms and the illness of his crew convinced him to turn back. Although Vizcaíno described the potential ports he had explored in California, changes in galleon design, allowing more space for supplies, meant that the treasure ships bypassed California for the next 165 years.

The First California Colony

In 1769, alarmed by British and Russian interest in their northern frontier possessions, the Spanish government decided to establish permanent settlements there, in order to secure their claims and block any claims by other powers. The energetic new administrator, the Visitor-General José de Gálvez, was

determined to reorganize the northwestern frontier and expand it by settling Alta California. He commissioned two land and two sea expeditions to converge on the harbor of San Diego; all were to be under the command of Captain Gaspar de Portolá, while Father Junípero Serra was to be in charge of the founding of missions. The first contingent arrived on April 11, 1769, when the ship *San Antonio*, commanded by Juan Perez, anchored in San Diego bay. That same day, as remembered in Kumeyaay lore but not noted by the Spanish, an earthquake shook the mountains and the sun was partially eclipsed—portentous signs, perhaps, that the world as they knew it was about to pass away.

A few weeks later a second ship arrived, the *San Carlos*, commanded by Vicente Vila. This early collection of soldiers, sailors, Indians from Baja California, priests, and a doctor brought the colonists to a few more than 100. When they arrived, most of the sailors were sick with typhus, a debilitating disease transmitted by lice and fleas. Within the next few weeks more than half of the men died on shore in a tent camp. On May 14, the first overland expedition of soldiers arrived at San Diego, commanded by Captain Fernando de Rivera y Moncada. Father Juan Crespí and a contingent of Christianized Indians from the southern missions accompanied the soldiers, marching overland up the Baja California peninsula from Loreto. Soon after their arrival, the commanders decided to abandon the beach and find a more permanent settlement. Pedro Fages picked the new location, a hill overlooking the bay and the nearby river. This became the site of the first settlement in California, eventually a fortified presidio with a temporary mission located within the walls.

Finally, on July 1, 1769, the expedition led by Captain Gaspar de Portolá with Father Junípero Serra arrived. Besides a contingent of soldiers, they also brought 44 Christianized natives from Baja California. As Father Serra celebrated his first mass under an outdoor ramada on July 16, 1769, only 126 of the 219 explorers and settlers who had arrived during the past months remained alive. Those who were left had something to celebrate: A few days before Father Serra's mass, Portolá took a group of soldiers north to establish a settlement in Monterey and the *San Antonio* returned to Mexico for supplies, leaving a group of about 40 people in San Diego.

The first report of a Spanish settler's encounter with the native people was written by Miguel Costansó, an engineer and mapmaker. He described his impressions of the Indians when a Spanish expedition set out to find water:

These Indians (the Kumeyaay) stopped every little while upon some height, watching our men, and showing the fear which the strangers caused them by the very thing they did to hide it. They thrust one point of their bows down in the soil, and grasping it by the other end they danced and whirled about with indescribable velocity. But, as soon as they saw our men draw near, they again withdrew themselves with the same swiftness.

Finally, the Spaniards communicated their peaceful intent by burying their own weapons in the dirt and giving gifts of ribbons, glass, and beads. The

Kumeyaay then indicated where to find good water, and the Spaniards began walking up the San Diego river valley. They soon reached another Indian village, where they met with a warm reception. Later, Costansó wrote that the Kumeyaay “are of haughty temper, daring, covetous, great jesters, and braggarts, although of little valor; they make great boast of their powers and hold the most respect for the most valiant.” This evaluation of the character of the local natives presaged the tortured path that Spanish-Indian relations would follow throughout California.

Demographic and Ethnic Growth of California

The demographic and ethnic growth of the new Spanish outpost shows a society composed mainly of unmarried males of diverse ethnicity. Historians have had difficulty determining with certainty who these individuals were. For a decade San Diego was a transient presidio with very few of the soldiers remaining very long—a foreshadowing, perhaps, of the military future for San Diego. The leaders of the founding expedition, Fathers Serra and Crespi and Captain Portolá, were Spaniards. This has led some to suppose that the whole expedition was composed of fair-skinned Spanish conquistadors. Notwithstanding the practical impossibility of determining the ethnicity of the surviving soldiers, there is evidence to suggest that the majority of them were probably of mixed blood—mestizos and mulattos.

The Spanish developed a complex system of classifying various mixtures of European, African, and Indian parentage. A caste system was used to exclude non-Iberians from higher political and economic posts and to create a stratified society along racial and economic lines. On the far northern frontier, however, ethnic distinctions blurred and became more fluid. In California there was a great division between the *gente de razón* (literally, people of reason), meaning those who were Catholic Christians and European in culture, and those *sin razón* (without reason), the nonconverted native people. A great premium was given to those Spaniards who could prove their *limpieza de sangre*, or “purity of blood,” meaning there was no intermarriage with Jews, Moors, or other non-Christians in their ancestry. Often, people with wealth were able to purchase papers certifying that their bloodlines were pure and European, thus elevating them within the caste system.

Hubert Howe Bancroft, a historian of California’s pioneers, thought that most of the settlers in California were “half-breeds.” Nevertheless, in the late 19th century, Americans came to think of the first Spanish-speaking settlers as Spaniards. Los Angeles’s founding families, however, are an example of the importance of the non-Spanish-born settlers. Of the 11 male heads of households who were among the founders of Los Angeles in 1781, only two were

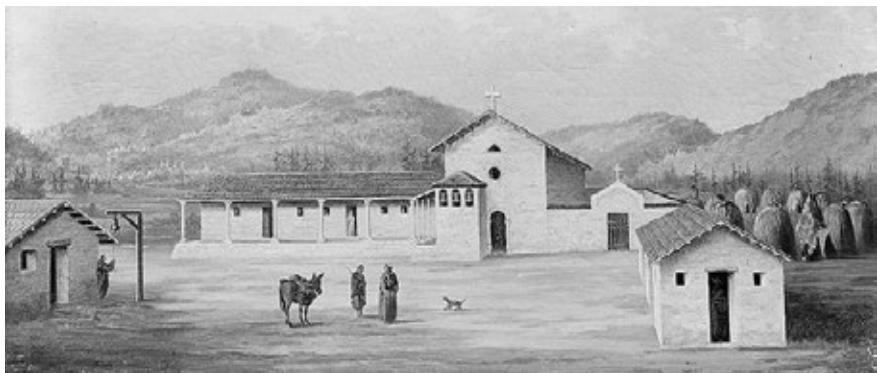
Iberians; the others were a multiethnic group that was predominantly Indian, mulatto, and mestizo. Historians have found that a large number of Spanish-speaking colonists throughout the Southwest were not Iberian Spaniards at all but rather of mixed blood, *castas*, and Hispanicized Indians, most of whom had migrated from adjacent Mexican frontier provinces. The first evidence we have of the ethnicity of the surviving colonists in the presidio of San Diego, for example, is the Spanish census taken in 1790, which counted 190 persons. Of the 96 adults, 49 were *españoles*, but only three of those had been born in Europe. The rest had probably been “whitened” (on the frontier, people could “pass,” depending on their wealth and occupation) to meet Mexico City’s requirements that most of the soldiers be *español*. The census listed the balance of the soldiers as mulattos and *colores quebrados* (some African ancestry), mestizos and coyotes (degrees of Indian-Spanish mixture), and *indios*.

Whatever the ethnicity of the settlers and colonists who came to Alta California from Mexico, their numbers grew slowly. *Mestizaje*, or the mixture of races and cultures, began in Mexico with the conquest and continued on the far northern frontier. Soldiers married local Indian women, and female immigrants who came to California were mostly mestizo or mulatto. By 1800, some 31 years after the initial settlement in San Diego, the total Spanish-speaking population in California, excluding the mission Indians, priests, and soldiers, was probably about 550 people in about 100 families. This small group lived in three pueblos surrounded by perhaps as many as 30,000 mission Indians. Meanwhile, the vast majority of native peoples remained free of the mission system and never accepted Spanish domination.

The Missions

Without a doubt, the most important Spanish institutions in Alta California were the missions, for they changed the way of life for thousands of native people and formed the economic backbone of the province. The object of the missions was to convert the natives to Christianity as well as to Hispanicize them, instructing them in the rudiments of the Spanish language and culture. After a period of time, specified in the Law of the Indies as 10 years, the missions were to be secularized or disbanded and the mission Indians were to form new towns and be converted into loyal farmers and ranchers. In this way, the Spanish hoped to extend their control over all of California. This was the ideal, but in fact, after the 10 years, the mission fathers concluded that the Indians were not able to make the transition and they postponed freedom for their charges again and again. The final objective was to turn the Indian people into Christian laborers, who would be loyal to the Spanish crown and capable of defending themselves against intrusions by hostile Indians and foreigners.

Beginning with the first mission at San Diego, Father Junípero Serra labored to found as many missions as possible. Serra was one of a generation

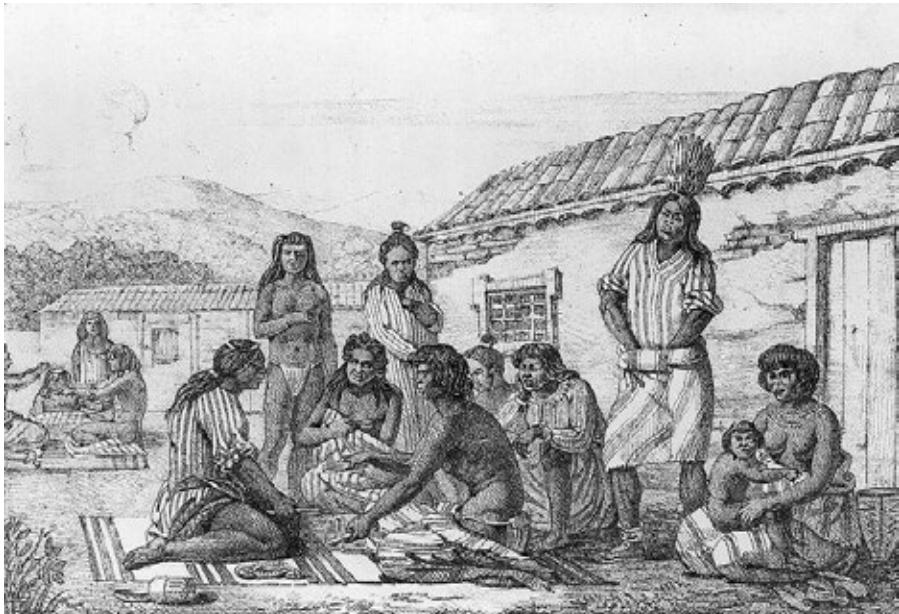


Mission Santa Cruz, Historic American Building Survey, Library of Congress, public domain, no known restrictions

A depiction of Mission Santa Cruz in the late nineteenth/early twentieth century. Note what appear to be traditional Indian dwellings to the right of the mission structure.

of frontier priests who combined extremes of asceticism and self-denial with practical political sense and a fighting spirit. He was born on the Spanish island of Mallorca to poor parents who sent him away to a Franciscan school where, because of his intelligence, he was encouraged to become a priest. When he was only 24, he was appointed professor of theology and for five years he taught at distinguished Spanish universities. In 1749, he gave up his prestigious career to travel to Mexico. Arriving in Vera Cruz, he insisted on walking the hundreds of miles to Mexico City, an act of willpower and commitment that he repeated many times in his life. Serra worked among the Indians in Mexico as a missionary and an administrator of the College of San Fernando. In 1767, the Jesuits were expelled from the New World and Serra was chosen to administer the missions they had built in Baja California. A few years later, despite being an asthmatic and suffering a chronic leg injury, Serra traveled north to lead the founding of new missions in Alta California. For the rest of his life he suffered from scurvy and from exhaustion due to walking hundreds of miles. He also practiced many mortifications of the flesh, such as wearing shirts with barbs, self-flagellation, and self-burning, in order to purify his spirit.

Father Serra established San Carlos Borromeo, the mission at Monterey, which was later moved to the Carmel River. He also founded the missions of San Antonio de Padua, San Gabriel Arcángel, San Luís Obispo de Tolosa, San Francisco de Asís, San Juan Capistrano, San Buenaventura, and Santa Clara de Asís. After Serra's death in 1784, Father Fermín Francisco de Lasuén labored from 1785 to 1803 to complete the construction of nine more missions. The last one to be established in the Mexican era was founded in 1823, after his death. Together, the missions totaled 21, each one about a day's ride apart and strategically located near the coast. Father Lasuén was a gentle and refined man who was wholly devoted to the memory of Father Serra. Besides building



le des Habitans de California, Louis Choris, Library of Congress, public domain, no known restrictions

A group of Indians, possibly Ohlone, playing a game at a mission near San Francisco

new missions, Lasuén expanded and rebuilt older mission buildings, and under his diplomatic guidance the missions system prospered, experiencing less conflict with the military and government than had been true under Serra.

The conversion of the Indians was not easy. From the beginning, the natives who were to be missionized were not willing participants in this project. At first, the harvest of souls was alarmingly meager. After its founding, a year passed at Mission San Diego before the first convert was made. This was followed by several revolts against the mission *padres* (fathers, or priests). At the missions located near a presidio or a pueblo, there were frequent problems between the native people and the soldiers or civilians. The priests often complained of the corrupting influence of Spanish ways. Rapes of Indian women were a frequent source of conflict, causing many of them to flee into the back-country to get away from the Spaniards. As a result, Serra moved two missions, San Diego and Monterey, farther away from their nearby presidios.

Conversions occurred nevertheless, because the Spanish priests offered food and goods that the native people found valuable. Ethnohistorians have argued to what degree environmental factors influenced their conversions; periodic droughts, along with the destruction of native plants due to grazing of

cattle, pigs, and other livestock, pressured some Indian communities to seek the relative security of mission food stores. There were other complex reasons for their baptism. Often, the natives came to the missions out of curiosity and were converted without fully understanding the import of their actions. Once baptized, they were called neophytes and were subject to the authority of the padre, who began to regulate their lives to lead them toward becoming a full member of the Christian community. If they ran away, soldiers were sent to hunt them down, bring them back, and to help in their punishment. Sometimes the soldiers seized any Indians they could find—whether they were runaways or not. Once the mission reached a critical mass, having enough neophytes to farm surpluses and raise cattle, the mission became a magnet for those who needed food, and conversion to Christianity was a way to ensure survival.

In this way, the 21 missions slowly grew in size and economic importance. During the 65 years of their existence, the fathers baptized 79,000 California Indians. The most populous and prosperous of the missions were those in southern California, including San Gabriel and Mission San Luis Rey. The missions produced the bulk of the province's food used to feed the colonists and soldiers. The natives were taught to grow wheat, corn, barley, and other grain crops, to cultivate grapevines and olive orchards, and to raise cattle and other livestock. The mission fathers trained some neophytes as artisans—shoemakers, gunsmiths, carpenters, blacksmiths, and masons. Others learned to weave textiles, make candles, and tan hides. The fathers taught their charges European instruments and music, and Indian choirs and orchestras performed religious music for special masses and fiestas. The mission Indians were responsible for tending the vineyards, fruit orchards, and wheat fields, and for raising thousands of cattle and horses.

The work regime at the California missions followed a strict timetable, including morning and evening prayers and the segregation of workers by sex. Workers were overseen by Indian *mayordomos* (overseers) and *alcaldes* (leaders). Neophytes worked six days a week for five to eight hours a day. Roll call was taken at every meal and those shirking their duties were punished by imprisonment or whippings. As Pablo Tac recalled, the Indian mayordomos were there “to hurry them if they are lazy … and to punish the guilty or lazy one who leaves his plow and quits the field....” At night, the unmarried women and sometimes the men were locked in dormitories. At some missions, neophytes were allowed to return to their villages for short durations to gather supplemental foods, but they were expected to return for mass and for work when needed.

The padres controlled the allocation of food, rationing it according to their judgment of the economic needs of the mission and those of their charges. An *interrogatorio*, or questionnaire, sent from Mexico City in the early 1800s asked the mission fathers a series of questions, one about the diet of the mission Indians. The answers—while allowing for the padres’ desire to make conditions appear favorable—reveal the diversity of the missions. Father Martinez at

Mission San Luis Obispo stated that he gave his workers three meals a day: *atole* (a corn gruel) in the morning, *pozole* (a soup of wheat, grains, and meat) at noon, and at night another serving of *atole*. At Mission San Buenaventura, Father José Señán stated that he gave the Indians one meal a day, “inasmuch as when they work they also eat....” Other missionaries testified that the Indians continued gathering their traditional foods, which supplemented the mission food supply.

Neophyte Resistance

For many native Californians, the missions were not a positive experience. They were coerced into working and staying against their will, fearing punishment if they ran away. The most dreadful consequence of their stay was their exposure to European diseases, which often proved fatal. They had no resistance to chickenpox, measles, smallpox, and influenza, and deaths mounted with each passing year, even in areas far from Spanish settlements. Venereal disease was especially deadly; thousands of mission neophytes died from syphilis and gonorrhea, and the epidemic spread to non-mission Indians as well. The strict regulations, humiliation, punishments for minor offenses, and rapes of women by soldiers engendered a smoldering resentment of the Spaniards. Often, a chief grievance was the lack of food. The strict discipline of the mission fathers and the destruction of the indigenous food sources by cattle, sheep, and horses created levels of starvation at some missions. Conditions were such that the numbers of runaways increased and in some cases there were rebellions.

The first uprising was at Mission San Diego only six years after its founding. On November 4, 1775, around midnight, an estimated 1000 Kumeyaay Indians attacked the mission and burned most of it to the ground, killing Fathers Luis Jayme and Vicente Fuster, who became California’s first martyrs. The survivors of the first attack took refuge in an adobe storehouse, where they held off the Indians until dawn. They were finally rescued by a group of loyal neophytes and Baja California Indians. The uprising apparently came at the instigation of two brothers, Carlos and Francisco, both newly baptized neophytes who had been punished for stealing a fish from an old woman. Carlos was the chief of the local ranchería. Resenting their treatment by the padres, they ran away from the mission and began to organize an uprising of the surrounding rancherías. When they learned that about half the presidio garrison had been sent north to San Juan Capistrano, they saw this as their chance to wipe out the Spaniards once and for all. In the Spanish investigation that followed, some accused the resident neophytes of helping the attackers, but they denied it, insisting that they had been forced to go along with the uprising.

In the years that followed, there were other rebellions. In 1781, Quechan (Yuman) Indians attacked the two missions that had been built on the California side of the Colorado River. The attack occurred when Captain Fernando de

Rivera y Moncada and a party of colonists bound for California were passing through. Rivera's troops had abused some of the Quechan peoples, and the distribution of gifts was considered inadequate. The natives attacked, destroying both missions and killing four friars, 30 soldiers, and Rivera himself. The massacre ended all further land travel between Mexico and California during the Spanish period.

In 1785, at Mission San Gabriel, a woman named Toypurina, along with three other native men, planned to lead a group of *indios bárbaros* (non-mission Indians) from six surrounding villages and join with neophytes to overthrow the Spanish authorities. The soldiers learned of the planned rebellion, however, and arrested the leaders. Put on trial, Toypurina explained her motivations saying, "... I am angry with the padres, and all of those of the mission, for living here on my native soil, for trespassing upon the land of my forefathers and despoiling our tribal domains." Toypurina was banished to Monterey, where she eventually was baptized and married a presidio soldier.

During the Mexican period, a major rebellion took place among the Chumash peoples on the eve of the secularization of the missions, in 1824. The cause of this rebellion was the mistreatment of the neophytes by the soldiers and the strict work regime. Thousands of neophytes allied with *gentiles* (unbaptized Indians) from the interior and took over La Purísima and Santa Ynez missions for more than a month, and briefly occupied Mission Santa Bárbara. After a battle in which the padres tried to prevent needless slaughter, the rebels fled to the interior. Later, Father Vicente Sarría, accompanied by troops led by Pablo de la Portilla, convinced remnants of the Santa Bárbara rebels to return.

In October of 1828, with the permission of the priest, Padre Duran, an Indian alcalde named Estanislao led scores of his fellow kinsmen away from Mission San José to the interior to help his community harvest acorns, nuts, and other foods. Once there, Estanislao notified the Spanish authorities that they were in rebellion. He was soon joined by hundreds of other runaways from the northern missions. Estanislao's success in resisting the Spanish government was undoubtedly due partly to the fact that natives from many different groups could now communicate with each other using a *lingua franca*—Spanish. For a time, Estanislao defeated the expeditions that were sent to subjugate him, until he finally succumbed to Lt. Mariano G. Vallejo's expedition. Eventually Estanislao escaped, returned to Mission San José, and received a pardon for his rebellion. He died a few years later, working as an auxiliary soldier who hunted runaway neophytes. The Estanislao rebellion created tremendous fear among the Spanish settlers in Alta California. As a result of his movement, a network to assist runaway mission Indians grew up and Indian raids on settlements from San Gabriel to San José increased.

Historian James Sandos has noted that there were a variety of other forms of resistance to the mission system, ranging from graffiti secretly scrawled on mission walls, to reports of sacred visions urging natives to renounce their

Indian artisans produced the wall and decorative art at Mission San Miguel and other Alta California missions, incorporating their own cultural aesthetic into their creations. Can you find evidence of this in the photograph?



Mission San Miguel Arcángel, San Miguel, CA. Carol Highsmith, photographer. Library of Congress, public domain, no known restrictions

Christian baptism. George Harwood Phillips, an expert on California Indian resistance, has noted that the stations of the cross painted by neophytes at Mission San Fernando depicted Indian alcaldes as the tormentors of Christ—a subtle message of protest. Other methods of resistance included running away, abortion, and secret retention of traditional customs, such as the use of the temescal. In a few cases, the mission Indians were moved to kill the mission priests, as in the assassination of Father Andrés Quintana at Mission Santa Cruz in 1812.

Evaluation of the California Missions

In the 1980s, devoted Catholics intensified a campaign to canonize Father Junípero Serra as a saint. Immediately, a debate ensued over the record of the treatment of the natives in the missions. Native American activists, in particular, felt outrage that people wanted to honor the man who, they argued, led in the enslavement, mistreatment, and death of their people. They assembled evidence of mistreatment in the form of oral testimony by native peoples. Tribal councils passed resolutions opposing canonization, and academics wrote position papers buttressed by historical quotes and evidence arguing that Serra should not be honored. The issue of the California Indians' encounter with the Spanish is heated, provoking spirited and emotional defense of Serra by non-Indian scholars and Catholic leaders. Beatification is a long process, and Serra has advanced through the preliminary steps. The uproar over this issue demonstrates that the mission period is still very controversial in the lives of people today.

The treatment of native peoples is a major point of debate about the Spanish colonization of the Americas. A wide range of historians and anthropologists as well as Indian activists agree that the mission system throughout the Southwest, whatever its rationale at the time, resulted in the deaths—nearly all unintentional—of thousands of native Americans. The mission system in California was perhaps the most extensive, long-lived, and destructive of all those established in the Spanish and Mexican frontier. The missions in Texas were abandoned after a short period. The ones in New Mexico provoked a violent, successful rebellion in 1680 that curtailed missionary activities until the Spanish reconquest in 1692. In Arizona, the missions were few and scattered. But in California, the 21 missions and their *asistencias* (branch missions) significantly changed the economy and lifestyle of those who were mission laborers as well as the way of life of those who lived far from the missions.

The Indian population declined. The natives were concentrated in missions, exposed to new and fatal diseases, and deprived of their traditional foods. The extent of the decimation can only be estimated. In California, the missions grew to include about 20,000 neophytes at their peak. The mission annals from 1769 to 1834 recorded 62,600 deaths but only 29,100 births. Anthropologist Sherburne Cook and historian Albert Hurtado have estimated that the Indian population of California decreased by more than 150,000 during the mission period. In the region where missions were established, the decline of the population was more noticeable; almost 75 percent of the native peoples died.

Defenders of the missions point out that the mission fathers did not intend to expose their wards to fatal diseases and that their attitudes toward crime and punishment were a product of the age, not especially cruel for that time. Some martyred friars willingly sacrificed themselves rather than kill natives who attacked them. Father Serra and other priests advocated forgiveness and pardons for those who ran away, although the military frequently exacted their own punishments for this offense. The priests, however, were not saints and even Father Serra was willing to admit that “in the infliction of the punishment … there may have been inequalities and excesses on the part of some Fathers.” Yet the mission priests’ religious devotion to the task of conversion and the spiritual welfare of their flock was beyond question. Their attitudes and beliefs were a product of their historical culture, in which the soul was considered more important than the body and severe punishments were the norm. Taken as a group, the mission fathers were not vicious for the times in which they lived. The tragedy was that they were helpless to prevent the deaths of the very Indians they sought to save.

The missions accomplished a great deal in developing the first agricultural economy in California. The first citrus trees, grapevines, corn, beans, wheat, barley, and oats came with the mission fathers. They promoted the raising of horses, cattle, pigs, goats, and sheep. The mission economy became the backbone for the development of large ranchos in the Mexican era and farms in the

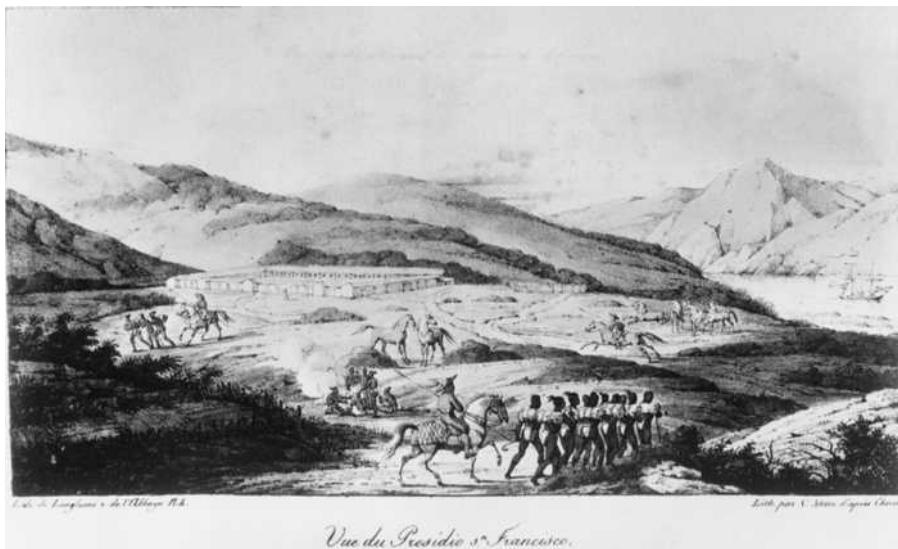
American era. The mission fathers trained the Indians to be *vaqueros*—farmers and skilled workers. As a result, the Indian work force became crucial to the development of California’s economy through much of the 19th century.

Nevertheless, we must also consider the missions from the point of view of the native Californians. The mission records themselves help us appreciate their grievances. Large numbers of neophytes ran away from the restrictive controls of the padres—an obvious indication of their dissatisfaction with the mission. By 1817, Mission San Diego had 316 runaways, the second largest number in the system, topped only by Mission San Gabriel, with 595. Running away was often provoked by hunger and by the corporal punishments that were administered by the mayordomos under the direction of the padres. Despite glowing reports of mission prosperity chronicled by the mission padres, death, disease, and hunger were daily realities of mission life. Deaths from disease were often hastened by malnutrition. Despite the abundance, the neophytes who worked to make it possible were badly fed. The hunger of the Indians was not limited to the missions. The introduction of European livestock and plants soon took over key hunting and gathering grounds and there were severe punishments for poaching. Hunger drove non-mission Indians to seek employment and food by working for the pueblo dwellers and for the presidio garrisons.

Establishing Presidios and Pueblos

Throughout the western hemisphere, the Spanish king and his advisers laid down the policies and directions that guided conquest and colonization. The underlying premise was that the unsettled lands were the property of the king and that the native peoples were his subjects. Individual Spaniards were not entirely free to explore or settle where they wanted. The settlement of towns and military outposts was subject to approval, planning, and regulation. Guidelines were articulated in a number of decrees and laws, the most influential being the *Recopilación de Leyes de las Indias* in 1680. Despite these regulations, the frontier settlers often did not follow the laws to the letter.

Captain Gaspar de Portolá, commander of one of the first expeditions sent to colonize California, had specific orders to found a presidio at Monterey Bay. In 1769, he marched north from San Diego into new territory with only 12 soldiers and a contingent of Baja California Indians. The ship *San Antonio* was to meet them in Monterey with Father Serra and others. As they passed through southern California, the natives were friendly and curious. In July, they experienced a violent earthquake near the Santa Ana River and noted the richness of the grasslands in the Los Angeles basin. Portolá’s land expedition stayed along the coast but had to cross the coastal range north of San Luis Obispo. They finally saw Monterey Bay, but Portolá did not recognize it from



A lithograph of the San Francisco presidio, made from a watercolor drawing by Louis Choris, an artist who accompanied a Russian voyage around the world. The farthest northern presidio in California, San Francisco had yet to develop as a civilian settlement.

previous descriptions, so he pushed further north. Finally, a group led by Sergeant José Francisco de Ortega, Portolá's scout, stumbled upon San Francisco Bay, viewing it for the first time from a hill. A few months later, in May, Portolá founded the presidio of Monterey, south of San Francisco, and built a wooden stockade and shelters for the troops. Father Serra, who had arrived in Monterey by ship, organized the construction of a mission called San Carlos Borromeo near the presidio and on June 3, 1770, they formally dedicated both structures.

As was true throughout Latin America, the mission and the presidio were the first undertakings in the Spanish colonization of new territories. These were soon followed by the founding of civil settlements or pueblos, forming a three-pronged strategy for settlement policy. In California's first settlement in San Diego, the most immediate need was for more provisions and for reinforcements. Due to diligent lobbying by Father Serra, who returned to Mexico City after the founding of the presidio at Monterey, the government sent other expeditions to California to strengthen the tiny settlements. The new viceroy, Antonio de Bucareli, was receptive to pleas for more support because he had evidence of Russian and British interest in California. In 1773, he issued a *reglamento*, a statement of how the new colony should be administered. This document was later slightly modified and reissued by Felipe de Neve, the newly appointed governor of California. Known as the Neve Reglamento, this document served as the guide for the administration of the colony until the end of the Spanish period (1821). It emphasized the importance of the conversion of the natives and the establishment of missions, of careful planning in laying out

towns, of careful record keeping, and of regular supply ships from Mexico. Bucareli suggested the secularization of the missions and foresaw that they would become the center for towns.

The same year that he issued the Reglamento, Bucareli gave permission for Captain Juan Bautista de Anza, an important frontier soldier and explorer, to open a trail between Spanish settlements in southern Arizona and California and ordered him to establish a presidio on San Francisco Bay. The next year, Anza succeeded in leading an expedition of 20 soldiers and 200 livestock over the desert trails from Tucson to the mission at San Gabriel and then north to Monterey. In 1775, Anza led another expedition with more than 240 colonists making the 1500-mile journey, during which eight babies were born and there was only one death—a woman who died in childbirth. Most of the settlers went on to Monterey and a contingent helped establish a new presidio. Unfortunately, due to political conflicts with Lieutenant Governor Fernando Rivera y Moncada, Anza was not able to lead the final expedition to settle San Francisco himself. So, on September 17, 1776, Lieutenant José Moraga and Fathers Francisco Palou and Pedro Cambón founded the presidio and the mission of San Francisco.

The Spanish government decided to found civil towns in California primarily as agricultural centers to provide food for their presidios. The mission fathers had resisted having the presidio depend on the mission for supplies. Three official pueblos were eventually founded in California during the Spanish era: San José de Guadalupe (San José), El Pueblo de Nuestra Señora la Reina de los Angeles del Río de Porciúncula (Los Angeles), and the Villa de Branciforte (Santa Cruz). Following long-established Spanish customs of town planning, the viceroy allowed the settlers certain rights, among them the right to elect a town government to regulate matters of daily life and the right to hold private property or town lots. Each pueblo was given a grant of land to be administered by the local government for the common good. Usually this grant approximated four square leagues, or nearly 20 square miles, a size that included not only a village but also surrounding agricultural lands.

The civil settlements in California were populated by settlers drawn from the local presidios as well as from special colonizing expeditions. In 1777, the California governor, Felipe Neve, authorized 14 men and their families to leave the presidios of Monterey and San Francisco to found the pueblo of San José. And in 1781, Neve authorized a colonizing expedition of 12 settlers and their families from Sinaloa to settle near Mission San Gabriel in southern California near Yangna, an Indian village. This was the pueblo of Los Angeles, founded on September 4, 1781, by a group composed mostly of mulatto and mestizo families. Branciforte was the last town founded in the Spanish period, and the least successful. In 1796, the government tried to recruit retired soldiers from Mexico to live in the new town, but no one wanted to go north to the forbidding lands of Alta California. Finally, the government recruited convicts and their families and forced them to settle the new town, but it did not flourish.

It may seem strange to us today that more Mexican colonists did not go north to California during the Spanish and Mexican periods. This lack of large-scale movement was attributable to a number of factors. First, there was a cultural predisposition to prefer urban life to life in the hinterland. The vast majority of the Mexican population was not free to move about and live where they wanted. Spain and then Mexico tried to control and regulate the movement of people away from the metropolitan center. Second, most people in Mexico had developed deep ties to their extended families and regions and were reluctant to abandon their homes for the dangerous unknown territory to the north. There was widespread ignorance of the resources and climate of the north in addition to stories of Indian attacks, gruesome deaths, and massacres on the northern frontier. Finally, it was not easy to travel to California overland from Mexico. Settlers had to traverse the Sonora and Mojave Deserts, which were controlled by unfriendly Indians. The cost of travel for most Mexicans was prohibitive unless the government subsidized the expedition. Similar barriers worked to prevent a large-scale migration of settlers to other regions north of Mexico.

Spain gave fewer than 20 land grants to individuals during its rule of California—all to ex-soldiers, as a reward for their services. Most of the good land was reserved for the missions, and it was not until the Mexican period (after 1821) that private land grants became common.

The civilian settlers in the three Spanish towns relied primarily on agriculture and stockraising for their living. To assist them in their labors, they borrowed Indian neophytes from the nearby missions and also employed local *gentiles*, or unbaptized Indians. The government tried through regulation to limit exploitation and corruption, but this was largely ineffective. The employment of mission Indians in the towns was so popular that it seriously threatened the mission fathers' conversion efforts. Without California Indians working in the fields of the town lands, the Spanish pueblos probably would have failed.

Gender Relations in Spanish California

The first expeditions of explorers and settlers to San Diego in 1769 did not include women, but it was evident to Spanish authorities that women would be essential for the long-term success of the colonization effort. Antonia I. Castañeda, Gloria Miranda, Rosaura Sánchez, and others have written about the important role women played in this period of California's history. In general, they have reported that Spanish and Mexican women were severely limited by the patriarchal values of their society, but they also retained a degree of protection and autonomy. Indian women, however, were more likely to be victims of



Een Waterplaats in Neder California. William Redmond Ryan, 1850. Library of Congress, public domain, no known restrictions

Mestizo women washing clothes and carrying water jars on their heads as a well-dressed male stands by watching them. What does this image suggest about the intersection of class/caste and gender roles in Alta California?

the early male-oriented exploration and conquest of California than Spanish and Mexican women were.

Following their experience in central Mexico, the mission padres sought to eliminate Indian customs and attitudes toward sexuality that conflicted with Catholic doctrine and morals. Accordingly, the priests severely punished women for sexual misconduct. For example, at Mission San Diego, one native woman miscarried, and then was charged with infanticide and forced to endure humiliating punishments. The priests encouraged neophyte women's fertility, since all children were to be born into the Christian faith. At the same time, however, the priests outlawed Indian dances, ceremonies, and songs that were part of their fertility ritual. Women who refused to comply were sometimes accused of being witches.

Males in the secular population, especially the soldiers, often raped Indian women. This became a source of conflict between the Spanish and the native Californians. Rape, as analyzed by historian Antonia Castañeda, was more than a personal act of lust. It also was a means of subjugating the native population and expressing the power of the male colonizer over the colonized, both male and female. It served to humiliate and subjugate the Indian men and families.

A few Spanish colonists settled down and established families with Indian women. Initially, a small number of soldiers married native women at the encouragement of the priests. Castañeda found that, in the 1770s, 37 percent of the Monterey presidio soldiers married local Indian women, but, for the entire period, the intermarriage rate was just 15 percent. In order to reproduce the culture of the mother country, women from Mexico were necessary, and it therefore became a priority to import female colonists.

Non-California Indian women either came with their husbands from Mexico in the various expeditions or alone, as was the case with María Feliciana Arballo, who traveled to California with her two children in the Anza expedition of 1775. Additionally, in 1800 the government sent a group of 10 girls and nine boys who were orphans to California, where they were distributed among families already there. The girls, with one exception, were married within a few years. Gloria Miranda has studied women in Spanish Los Angeles. She found that almost all the marriages were arranged, and at a tender age—13 was the youngest age at marriage, while the average age in the pueblo was 20. Very few adult women remained single due to the overall scarcity of women. The more affluent families tended to have lots of children as befitting their means. Ignacio Vicente Ferrer Vallejo, an early settler in Monterey, had 13 children. His son, Mariano Vallejo, fathered 16 children, and José María Pico, a soldier in San Diego, fathered 10 children.

Spanish colonial society was patriarchal, with the ethic of honor deeply ingrained. A man's honor depended on his ability to control others, in particular the women within the family. The church's doctrines and hierarchy supported notions of male domination and superiority. Yet women were able to carve out niches of respect, in part because, under colonial laws, they had property rights within marriage. The notion of community property for women was part of the Spanish codes. The idea was to protect the honor of a woman and her family of origin within a marriage.

Rosaura Sánchez has studied the narratives of Mexican California women collected by Hubert Howe Bancroft in the 1870s. Several illustrate the ways in which mestiza women in Spanish California related to male authority. One narrative is the story of Apolinaria Lorenzana, a woman who came to California as one of the orphans in 1800. She grew up in San Diego but refused to marry, working instead as a schoolteacher and then as a nurse and teacher at the mission. She earned the nickname "La Beata" (the Pious One) because of her devotion to helping Indians. During the Mexican period, she received two rancho land grants from the governor as a reward for her services. She bought a third

rancho and lived an independent life from the revenues. Lorenzana's life reveals her independence, strength of character, and dedication to her work.

Another account is that of Eulalia Pérez, who worked as a *llavera*, or keeper of the keys, at mission San Gabriel. Among other things, Eulalia was in charge of making sure that the girls were locked in at night in their dormitory. She also supervised and directed many of the routines of mission life: the rationing of food, the training of women as weavers, and the catechizing of the neophytes. Eulalia's story shows a complete acceptance of the mission as a humane institution whose primary mission was to teach. Neither Pérez nor Lorenzana was critical of the treatment given to mission Indians, but rather they saw themselves as humanizing the process of acculturation.

We also have the story of Eulalia Callis, who was the wife of California governor Pedro Fages. She desperately wanted to leave the desolate California frontier and return to Mexico City. In 1785, she publicly accused her husband of infidelity and filed a petition for legal separation. She refused to accept a compromise mediated by the priests and continued slandering the governor. The authorities arrested her and, because she was a woman, kept her locked up inside Mission San Carlos Borromeo for two months. During that time she began proceedings for a divorce, but before they were completed the couple reconciled. A year later, she persuaded Fages to resign and the family returned to Mexico. Contemporary historians see Eulalia's story as evidence of female independence and outrage in the face of patriarchy, but it also reveals that women had the right to divorce, even in colonial New Spain.

Spanish Californian Culture

During the Spanish administration of California, the military and the church were the dominant powers enforcing discipline according to the law. Civil culture existed primarily in the towns, where people were freer from authoritarian rules. Because Spain granted very few private ranchos in this period, the hacienda lifestyle had not yet developed. Spanish society was decidedly male, primarily governed by the military and the church.

The culture that the Spanish settlers brought with them from central Mexico and the adjacent northern frontier settlement was one that made family the core of society—a family that was, in theory, strictly governed by the father. Many of the families were related by marriage or by *compadrazgo*, godparentage. Thus the idea of family was not limited to the nuclear one—but to an extensive network of individuals scattered throughout the province. In Hispanic cultures, godparents frequently acted as surrogate parents and they expected the same respect and obligations from their godchildren as they did from their children. Hospitality was also an important value and fact of life, given the scarcity of the population and the common religion, Catholicism.

Despite the many rules governing behavior, challenges to authority were inevitable. Sexual misconduct by both men and women was punished. In the

1790s, Sebastián Alvitre of Los Angeles and Francisco Ávila of San José were punished with sentences of forced work, prison, and exile for fornicating with Indian and married women. The provincial records are full of warnings from officials about the evils and punishments of adultery and sexual impropriety. Likewise, the authorities tried, with mixed success, to regulate gambling and the consumption of alcohol.

There were no formal schools in Alta California before 1800, when Governor Borica established the first school. The school was in a public granary in San José and was taught by retired sergeant Manuel Vargas. Funding for the school came from a compulsory tax of 31 cents per pupil. Eventually Vargas was lured to teach in San Diego, where the citizens raised 250 dollars for his pay. Several other schools sprang up in San José and Santa Barbara. The primary subject was *La Doctrina Cristiana*—the catechism and doctrine—followed by reading and writing.

By 1820, there were approximately 3270 Spanish and mestizo settlers in California, many of them children from large families. Most of the population growth until this time had been through natural increase rather than immigration. The kind of culture that evolved was one that was deeply influenced by the native Indians. The missionized Indians did almost all the work in constructing the presidios, missions, and public works. Most of the Spanish male adult population consisted of soldiers, priests, or administrators. Intermarriage with native women and with women who came north from Mexico produced many children. The spirit of the culture remained that of a frontier outpost whose survival still depended on the authoritarian institutions of the military and the church.

Political Developments in Spanish California

As noted earlier, the first government in California was a military one, headed in 1769 by Governor Pedro Fages. Power was shared with Father Serra, the father-president of the missions in charge of ecclesiastical affairs. From the start and continuing thereafter, conflicts arose between the two authorities. Serra fought with Fages over where to build the missions and over the sexual misconduct of the soldiers toward Indian women. For the next 40 years, clerics occasionally criticized the military government for the lack of protection of the missions or for the misbehavior of soldiers. In 1771, Felipe de Neve became the military governor and he energetically set about founding new pueblos and presidios by recruiting more colonists from Mexico. Accordingly, secular authority within the province became more important. The three pueblos were given forms of self-government, including the right to elect officials and to make local ordinances. Neve ordered that mission Indians be allowed the same rights and that certain prerogatives of the clergy be reduced.

The Spanish town government established in California was a type of local democracy. The system underwent some changes in the Mexican era, but its basic character was that of a Spanish institution. Each male head of household of the pueblo was given a small grant of land from the community lands granted by the king. These landholders had the right to vote in elections, which were held yearly. Historian Michael Gonzalez summarized the town government in Los Angeles in the 1830s. Although changed slightly in structure in the Mexican era, the town government election system reflected the Spanish traditions. At nine in the morning the property-owning *pobladores* were summoned to the plaza by a drumroll. After hearing nomination speeches for the various offices, they voted by a show of hands for electors, called *compromisarios*. These electors then selected the members of the town council, or *ayuntamiento*. These included one *alcalde*, or administrator/judge; two *regidores*, or councilmen; the *sindico*, or town attorney; and an *escribano*, or secretary. During the Spanish era, the military governor appointed an additional member, the *comisionado*, in lieu of an *alcalde* when no literate person was available. The *comisionado* had veto power over actions taken by the council. Members of the *ayuntamiento* were limited to two terms in office. The town council met weekly to hear petitions for land, listen to accusations of domestic strife, rule on violations of public ordinances, and decide on action in times of crisis.

In the Spanish era, the military government had more control in the town councils than was true in the Mexican period. The exact composition and duties of the members varied from pueblo to pueblo. But essentially the *ayuntamiento* allowed the Spanish colonists a form of self-government and free expression. Among the missionized Indians, the missionaries allowed the *alcaldes* to have authority to mediate minor disputes and to exercise some authority as a leader during times of war. The mission fathers relied on the Indian *alcaldes* as intermediaries whose authority could be countermanded by the *padre*.

The town records of the pueblos provide a glimpse into the realities of daily life. The pueblo of Los Angeles was the largest of the Spanish towns, with more than 615 settlers in 1820. About a third of the *vecinos* lived in surrounding ranchos and had homes in the pueblo proper. Los Angeles was known as a settlement where there were conflicts between the local officials and the general population. The annals of the Spanish period are full of disputes, complaints, petitions, and grievances directed against the government by the *vecinos*. Pío Pico remembered that upon his arrival in Los Angeles from San Diego, he was ordered by the local *alcalde* to work on the new aqueduct. But Pico refused because he considered the *alcalde* a “brutish ignorant man.” José Sánchez complained that an *alcalde* put him in irons because he refused to copy some documents without pay. The pueblo did not have a church until 1822 and, in order to comply with the law of attending mass, one had to travel to Mission San Gabriel. The *pobladores* built their homes around the plaza area with streets running roughly in a grid pattern.

A *zanja madre*, or main irrigation ditch, ran through the center of the town and was used for washing, bathing, and drinking.

Other small civilian settlements, ruled by military officials from the local presidios, appeared in San Diego, Monterey, and San Francisco. Their growth would increase during the Mexican period. The civilian settlers were dependent on the missions for surplus food and skilled and unskilled workers and on the presidios for protection. The church and military authorities sought to control the settlers' lives but, with the increase in population and with political changes brought about by independence from Spain, this control diminished.

The Wars of Independence in New Spain

In 1810, the colonists living in New Spain began a lengthy rebellion and civil war that eventually resulted in independence in 1821. The precipitating causes of the rebellion in New Spain, soon to be called Mexico, were the exclusion of many *criollos* (the children of Spaniards who were born in the New World) from important political and ecclesiastical posts, and the long-term oppression of the Indian population. In a complex series of events—involving the overthrow of the Spanish government by a French revolutionary army in 1809 and a struggle among the Creoles and Spaniards over who would be the caretaker of royal authority in the Americas—millions of Indians, mulattos, and mestizos came to question the legitimacy of the royal government. Eventually, Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, a priest in the small town of Dolores, emerged as the leader of an insurrection. Although he was captured and executed a year later, the rebellion continued with new leaders, lasting more than 11 years and ravaging Mexico's economy and population. In the process, California became even more isolated from the central government of Mexico as resources were used by the king to fight both the rebels in the New World and the French in Europe. This lack of resources created an economic crisis throughout the borderlands, which weakened the missions as well as the presidios.

News traveled slowly and the Californians did not learn of the rebellion until 1811. Most clerics were loyal to Spain, since many of them were Spanish peninsulares. The military commanders similarly owed allegiance and their careers to the established monarchy. A few young Californios decided to join the rebellion. In 1811, Francisco María Ruiz, the comandante of the presidio at San Diego, discovered a "seditious" paper being circulated among some of the troops. This was probably propaganda from the Hidalgo rebellion in Mexico. Ruiz found that 60 men had formed a conspiracy to overthrow Spanish authority and he promptly arrested five of the ringleaders, including José María Pico, the father of the future Mexican governor of California, Pío Pico. Two of the San Diego conspirators were eventually released, but three others died in irons within the presidio jail.

Years passed without incident until the fall of 1818, when news came that the French pirate, Hippolyte Bouchard, was working his way down the

California coast, ravaging Spanish settlements. He raided Monterey and torched the presidio in November, then sailed down the coast and landed a party at Dana Point to get supplies from Mission San Juan Capistrano. News of an impending attack on San Diego made for sleepless nights, but Bouchard bypassed the harbor. The only result of this agitation was to motivate the government to send more troops and money to San Diego.

The California garrisons remained loyal to Spain, as did the mission fathers. The idea of a social rebellion of Indians led by Creole liberals was anathema to the Spanish-speaking residents of the pueblos. Everyone knew that in California the natives outnumbered the colonists by more than 10 to one. There would be no revolution in California, at least not yet.

On April 20, 1822, news of the proclamation of Mexico's independence from Spain arrived by ship in San Diego harbor. Throughout the province, the officers, soldiers, and civilians were required to take oaths of allegiance to the newly independent government. The friars and neophytes were required to take a similar oath. There were no reported protests to this change of allegiance. A few Spanish priests left California, but most stayed. Within a few months the *de razón* (Spanish and mestizo) male population of the province began involving themselves in the politics of the new government. While Mexico's independence seemed to make no apparent immediate difference in the daily lives of the Californios, profound social and economic transformations were on the way that would radically alter the lives of natives and Californios alike.

Foreign Interest in Spanish California

One of the motives for the founding of a Spanish colony in Alta California had been to preempt other European powers from encroaching on the Pacific Coast. During the 52 years of Spanish control, Britain, France, and Russia launched exploration expeditions to the coast of California. These European rivals threatened the Spanish monopoly in the Pacific and were of great concern to the Spanish king and his advisers.

In 1786, the French Comte de la Pérouse visited Monterey for 10 days during a voyage around the world. He surveyed the mission system, pronounced it an abject failure, and made notes about the cultural and military weaknesses of the Spanish settlement. This, of course, was to justify and encourage a possible French takeover of Spanish California. Later, he published his impressions along with some of the first European sketches of the California natives and countryside.

Another explorer who made known the resources of the Pacific Coast was Alejandro Malaspina, an Italian commissioned by the king of Spain to visit his American possessions and search for the Northwest Passage. Malaspina had artists and scientists on board to report on the local environments and cultures. In 1792, his ships visited Monterey, where he stayed for two weeks making observations on the flora and fauna as well as the local inhabitants.

The English explorer George Vancouver visited California ports three times between 1792 and 1794. He later published his observations about the deficiencies of the Spanish settlements. Secretly, he reported the weaknesses of the Spanish defenses in California to the English king, an indication of England's interest in acquiring this territory.

In 1796, the first American ship, the *Otter*, commanded by Ebenezer Dorr, visited California. Dorr's visit was noticeable mainly because he left behind 11 Australian convicts who had stowed away on his ship. For a year, they worked as skilled artisans in Monterey but then the governor sent them by ship to Spain. Following this first visit, other American otter-hunting ships navigated off the coast and illegally traded manufactured goods with the locals.

One of the most memorable foreign visits to California was made by Nikolai Rezanov, a representative of the Russian-American Fur Company. In 1806, he visited San Francisco ostensibly to obtain supplies for the Russian fur outpost at Sitka, but more probably to investigate the fur-trading prospects in California. The California governor was initially opposed to giving aid to the Russians since that would strengthen their colony, which was in territory claimed by Spain. During his stay, Rezanov met and fell in love with Concepción Argüello, the 16-year-old daughter of the comandante of the presidio at San Francisco. The family agreed to the marriage, with Concepción's approval. The governor also granted permission for a cargo of food to be sent to Sitka. Promising to return after he was granted permission by the czar to marry, Rezanov returned to Russia. Unfortunately, while crossing Siberia on his way to St. Petersburg, he died. Meanwhile, Concepción waited in vain for the return of Count Rezanov; her vigil lasted 35 years until she finally received news of Rezanov's death. For the rest of her life she refused all suitors and took on the robes of a *beata*, a holy woman, devoting herself to acts of charity. In later years, this tragic love story became the subject of poems and novels, part of Spanish California's romantic past.

Following the Rezanov visit, other Russian ships visited California ports seeking sea otter pelts, sealskins, and provisions. In 1812 the Russian-American Fur Company, after negotiating with the Pomo Indians, built a wooden stockade fort 18 miles north of Bodega Bay. They called it Fort Rossiya, an archaic name for Russia. (Americans later called it Fort Ross.) The purpose of Fort Rossiya was to provide a base to grow food for the fur-hunting colonies located farther north in Kodiak and Sitka. Eventually, the colony grew to more than 400, a mixture of Aleuts, Russians, and local Indians, and intermarriages between the Aleuts and the local natives promoted peace. The Russian priests were not very active in trying to convert the Indians. Soon the Russians established a seasonal settlement at Bodega Bay as well.

Through the writings of la Pérouse and Vancouver, in addition to the visits of the Russian and American fur hunters, the richness of California's natural resources became more widely known. The recurring observation that the Spanish authorities were not very successful in exploiting this wealth and that

their colony was poorly defended and underpopulated was also of great interest. In subsequent decades, after Mexican independence, California's mythic name, as an island of unknown wealth, magnetized the imaginations of increasing numbers of non-Spanish speakers.

Summary

The Spanish colonization of California left its imprint for subsequent generations. Beginning in 1769, the Spanish-speaking colonists struggled to survive in the midst of hundreds of thousands of native Indians. While Spanish in the political sense, the first California settlers were mostly mestizos, various mixtures of European, Indian, and African ethnicities. They transplanted their culture to this remote corner of empire. To protect themselves and control the Indians, they built military outposts, presidios, and constructed missions. In this they were marginally successful while assimilating tens of thousands of natives. But their colonial strategies also provoked periodic uprisings, many runaways, and the spread of deadly diseases. The California settlers were more successful in transplanting their political and material culture, the first town governments, cattle ranching, and agriculture.

The Spanish era lasted less than 60 years, but it forged a path that Californians can still see. During the next few decades, the surplus of cattle in California's economy and the reliance on Indian labor were the very foundations of the Mexican and early American eras. The importance of family loyalty and Catholic piety, community life, and the ethic of gracious hospitality all continued without interruption among the Spanish-speaking residents. The most visible remnants of Spain in California today are the rebuilt and reconstructed missions, most of which still serve as houses of worship. As symbols of a distant era, they have been romanticized in novels and movies. Most are tourist attractions whose tranquil atmosphere suggests a peaceful, pastoral past. For some, however, they stand as symbols of an oppressive regime that began the destruction of a way of life. Spain succeeded in transferring her language and culture to Alta California. Place names echo this heritage: La Jolla, Santa Ana, San Joaquin, Sacramento, Sierra Nevada, San Francisco, and many more. The layout of towns, Spanish-style architecture, the patio, the plaza, the rancho, all survive in altered forms as elements in California's built environment. The Spanish settlers introduced European plants and animals that forever changed the flora and fauna of California.

Some elements of Spanish town government and statutory law survive to this day. The lands owned by the municipalities of San Diego, Los Angeles, and San José are based on the generous Spanish government grants to the pueblos. The Spanish law concerning water rights as a communal rather than a private

resource continues to influence California's legal history. So too does the Spanish legal doctrine of community property.

Increasingly, the Spanish language is an important second language in California, as Latinos—whose roots extend into Mexico and Latin America—continue with a second chapter in the Spanish colonization project. The language spoken by Father Serra, the presidio soldiers and settlers, as well as many mission Indians, can be heard in the streets and fields of California in the 21st century. Thus the profound changes begun in 1769 continue to echo into the present.

Suggested Readings

- Bolton, Herbert Eugene. One of the most prolific scholars in Spanish California studies. Students should consult his book-length studies on Father Juan Crespi, De Anza, and especially his translation of Father Francisco Palou's *Historical Memoirs of New California* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1966).
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- Gutiérrez, Ramón A., and Orsi, Richard J., eds., *Contested Eden: California Before the Gold Rush* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California

- Press, 1998). An anthology of the most recent interpretations of California's history before 1848. New essays on the ecological consequences of conquest.
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Mexican Californios: Conflict and Culture, 1821–1846

Main Topics

- A New Political Order
- The Rise of the Ranchos
- Social Relations in Mexican California
- California and the World
- Summary

In 1877, a Californio ranchero named José del Carmen Lugo recalled life during the Mexican era for Thomas Savage, one of historian Hubert Howe Bancroft's research assistants. His memory about the work routine provides important details about the reality of rancho life in Mexican California—specifics that contradict the vision of an idyllic, lazy, pastoral existence that has often been depicted in literature and film. The romance of the rancho has become a staple for California promoters and writers. Seldom do people consider the mundane and harsh realities that surrounded rancho life in the Mexican era.

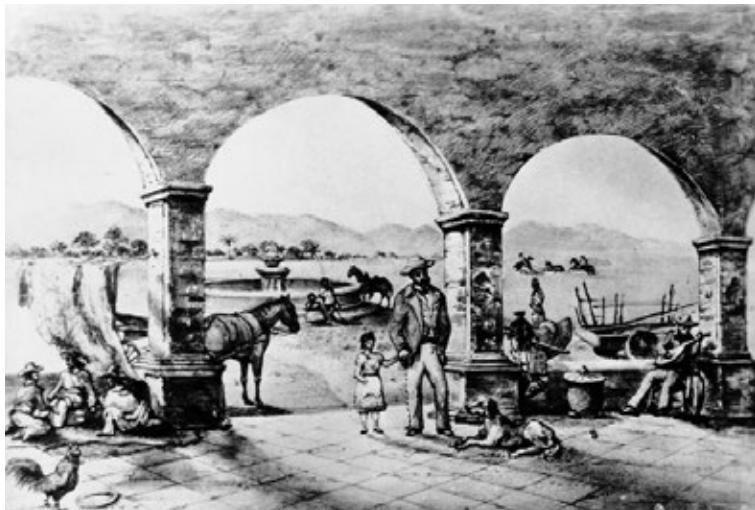
The Californian way of life in my early years was as follows: at eight o'clock in the evening the entire family was occupied in its prayers. In commanding themselves to God, they recited the rosary, and other special prayers which each one

From José Carmen del Lugo, "Vida de un Ranchero," Quarterly of the Historical Society of Southern California, Vol. 31, No. 1 (September 1950), p. 21. Reprinted by permission of the Historical Society of Southern California.

CHAPTER 3	Mexican Californios: Conflict and Culture, 1821–1846
1822	Luis Argüello elected as <i>jefe político</i> , or governor, of newly independent California
1824	Chumash rebellion against missions ends
1825	José María Echeandía selected as California's governor; unofficial capital in San Diego
1826	Beginning of secularization of the missions; American fur trapper Jedediah Smith enters California; partial emancipation of mission Indians.
1831	Rebellion against Governor Manuel Victoria by southern Californians (sureños)
1833	José María Padrés and José María Hijar recruit 204 settlers to go to California
1834	Governor José Figueroa continues secularization of the missions
1836	Norteños led by Juan Bautista de Alvarado rebel against Governor Mariano Chico
1838	Civil war: sureños and norteños battle for control of the province
1839	Governor Juan Bautista de Alvarado and the norteños win
1840	John Sutter obtains land grant at junction of Sacramento and American Rivers
1841	Bidwell-Bartleson overland expedition enters California
1842	Governor Manuel Micheltorena appointed; Americans led by Commodore Thomas ap Catesby Jones occupy the port of Monterey
1843	Andrés and Pío Pico obtain grant to Rancho San Onofre y Margarita, largest rancho in California
1846	Donner expedition ends in tragedy

addressed to the saint of his or her name or devotion. Husband and wife slept in the same room, and nearly always in the same bed. The children—if there were any, and the dwelling had conveniences and separate apartments—slept, the men in the galleries outside in the open-air, and women in an enclosed quarter of which the parents kept the key, if there was the key, a thing that was not very common.

At three o'clock in the morning the entire family was summoned to their prayers. After this, the women betook themselves to the kitchen and other domestic tasks, such as sweeping, cleaning, dusting, and so on. The men went to their labor in the field—some to the cattle, others to look after the horses. The milking of the cattle was done by the men or the Indian servants. Ordinarily some women had charge of the milking, to see that the milk was cleaned and strained. The women and the Indian servants under them made the small, hard, flat cheeses, the cheese proper, butter, curds, and a mixture made to use with beans.



A California Magistrate in his Home, by Edward Fisher is licensed under CC BY by the University of Southern California Library and the California Historical Society, public domain, no known restrictions.

General Don Andres Pico (1810-1876) of Los Angeles standing in the corridor of one of his farm buildings which was formerly the property of Mission San Fernando. The “neighboring” Lugo family lived in a two story adobe in Los Angeles, and held title to several large land grants stretching from San Diego to Sonoma. By 1870 the Lugo’s vast holdings had dwindled to less than 400 acres.

The women’s labors last until seven or eight in the morning. After that they were busy cooking, sewing, or washing. The men passed the day in labor in the fields according to the location—some preparing the ground for sowing the seed, bringing in wood, sowing the seed, reaping, and so on. Some planted cotton, some hemp, some planted both. This was done by those who had facilities for it; they planted and harvested in the things they needed most for the benefit of their families, such as rice, corn, beans, barley, and other grains, squash, watermelons, and cantaloupes.

The lands in the immediate vicinity of Los Angeles were set to fruit trees such as grapes, pears, apples, pomegranates, here and there an olive, cactus fruit, peaches, and other minor fruits. The owners of fields who could not obtain seeds of oranges, lemons, or producing fruits were found at the missions because the Padres selfishly refused to allow them to grow elsewhere than at their missions.

In José del Carmen Lugo’s memory, the Mexican era of California’s history was one in which industry and labor were transforming the land. Prosperity seemed to be less an automatic result of climate than the result of family and individual efforts. Indeed, this was a major change from the Spanish era. The mission no longer had a monopoly on the land and labor. Now, private rancheros rather than mission friars shaped the economic and the political destiny of California. To be sure, there was

much continuity in everyday life, but the older order was passing away and in its place a Mexican Californio way of life emerged.

Questions to Consider

- What were the main characteristics of Mexican political life in Alta California?
- How did the creation of the ranchos change the social and economic development of the province?
- How did secularization of the missions affect the California natives?
- To what degree did these changes lead to greater foreign influence?
- What kind of impact did these foreigners have on the Mexican and Indian peoples?

A New Political Order

In the decades following Mexican independence from Spain, the European settlers of Alta California became more independent in spirit as they developed a stronger regional identity. They began to call themselves “Californios,” Spanish-speaking inheritors of a frontier society that had an intense loyalty to family and to place. Ironically, the landholding Californios of this era owed their prosperity and independent spirit to the policies of the central government of Mexico, whose policies led to the redistribution of the mission lands and the creation of new wealthy families. The Mexican government enacted secularization laws designed to end the Catholic Church’s tutelage of native people and to create a nation of independent farmers. Under these laws, the Christianized natives who had worked for the missions were supposed to be emancipated and given small tracts of land. But the land hunger of the Californios and the failure of the missions to fully assimilate the natives resulted in the former mission Indians becoming a landless, exploited, and homeless class. Upon the departure of the mission padres, most of the neophytes left the missions and soon their lands were declared abandoned and open to petition for a land grant from the government. Ultimately, the mission lands passed to the hands of several hundred Californio families who became the new leaders of Alta California. For the native people, who outnumbered the Mexican population, sporadic resistance against the settlers and ranchers continued.

Early Self-Government: Solá and Argüello

With independence from Mexico, California’s political situation became much more complicated as a succession of Mexican governors who attempted to

administer the affairs of the province provoked conspiracies and rebellions. The end result of the many Californio uprisings was a greater local independence and a tradition of opposition to centralized control. In many ways, the controversies in California during the Mexican era mirrored the struggle going on in Mexico, where the federalists and centralists battled one another over the degree of authority the central government should have. The Californios learned of the liberal ideas flowing from the American and French Revolutions and the Spanish liberal Constitution of 1812—ideas of democracy, secularism, and freedom of expression, all concepts that had been banned under the Spanish regime. These ideas, mixed with strong ties to family, an identification with and loyalty to the region, and a geographic isolation from Mexico City, shaped the distinctive path of Californio politics.

California's new republican politics began in 1822, with news that Agustín Iturbide had proclaimed himself emperor of Mexico. Soon, a commissioner from Mexico City arrived with instructions on how to proceed. A *diputación*, or provincial legislature, was to be elected by the *ayuntamiento* (town council) and army officers, and this local body, in turn, was to elect a new governor. Accordingly, a group of Californios elected native born Luis Argüello, from San Francisco, as the new governor.

Argüello's two-year term as governor was marked by revolts of the mission Indians at Santa Barbara, Santa Inés, and Purísima Concepción, and by conflict with the mission administrators over the relocation of Mission San Francisco. The Indian rebellion was ultimately put down (see Chapter 2), and Argüello compromised with the church authorities to allow Mission San Francisco to remain where it was and to allow the founding of the last mission, San Francisco Solano, near present-day Sonoma. Finally, in 1824, news came of Iturbide's abdication and the creation of a Mexican Federal Republic governed by a constitution. While this seemed to promise more home rule for the Californios on paper, the immediate consequence, ironically, was to deny the local population the right to elect their own governor.

The Governorship of José María Echeandía

In 1825, the Mexican government selected José María Echeandía as the new governor of the territory of Alta California. Traveling by ship to the port of San Diego, Echeandía decided to remain in the presidio there because he preferred the mild climate compared to that of the designated capital, Monterey. With Echeandía's residence in San Diego, a rivalry developed between north and south. The politicos of the north resented the south's emergence as the de facto seat of government. Nevertheless, for the next few years San Diego was the unofficial capital of the territory and the governor carried out all of his official business there. Occasionally he would venture forth to Los Angeles and even to Monterey for short periods.

For the next five years, Governor Echeandía sought to implement policies that reflected the changing direction of the Mexican government. One of those

policies was to ensure the loyalty of the former-Spanish subjects to the Mexican Republic. The missionary priests, most of whom were Spanish, had refused to take an oath of loyalty to the new Mexican government. On April 28, 1826, the governor met in San Diego with a group of padres and, after some discussion, the priests agreed to take the oath if it was “compatible with our religion and profession.” Finally, all five of the padres of the San Diego district and those in the other missions agreed to take the oath. Several of the older priests returned to Spain to retire. In all of Alta California there were about 36 mission priests who were affected by this new change of government.

The Mexican government passed a series of secularization laws that mandated the dismantling of the remnants of Spain’s power in Mexico. This meant breaking up the mission system and converting the lands to private property. Echeandía began to implement this secularization of mission lands. On April 28, 1826, he began discussions with the padres to determine how best to carry this out. They suggested that Indians “of good conduct and long service” could form independent towns near the missions. In the spirit of this discussion, Echeandía issued a decree of partial emancipation on July 25, 1826. Indians could leave the mission if they had been Christians since childhood or for 15 years, were married, and had a means of earning a living. They had to apply to the comandante of the local presidio and get a written permit in order to travel from place to place. The proclamation initially applied only to the San Diego, Santa Barbara, and Monterey districts, but it was later extended to other missions. Only a very few mission Indians could meet the requirements, and only a small number participated. Governor Echeandía brought his secularization plan before the territorial assembly on July 20, 1830, and it was approved.

Rebellion Against Centralism: Governor Victoria

In 1830, the Mexican central government appointed Lieutenant Colonel Manuel Victoria to succeed Governor Echeandía as the *jefe político* of Alta California. Before Victoria could assume office, a group of San Diego’s most prominent families, in league with other Californios, sought to influence Echeandía to carry out a more rapid secularization policy, so that they might take possession of the mission lands, properties, herds, and Indian labor. The young reformers included the Bandinis, Carrillos, Vallejos, Picos, and Alvarados—men who were enthusiastic about republicanism and the possibility of obtaining new rancho lands. They persuaded governor Echeandía to carry out the secularization of more mission lands before the new governor took over. As soon as Victoria assumed office, however, he overturned Echeandía’s decrees. He represented the centralists, a more conservative political faction that opposed ideas of liberalism.

One of the themes that developed in the Mexican era—and continues today—was the rivalry between the northern and southern Californians. Each



Map 3.1 Confirmed Mexican Land Grants in California

side competed for the location of the customs house and territorial government. Under Mexico's laws, all foreign vessels had to pay duties at the port of entry in Monterey before being allowed to engage in trade. Whoever controlled the customs house would thus have the economic benefit of being first in line for trade. Similarly, there was pride in being the capital of the territorial government and local families would have greater influence over decisions affecting land grants as well as trade. Pride was mixed with politics and economics

in the various struggles between the *sureños* (southern Californians) and the *norteños* (northern Californians). This competition would intensify in the American period.

Thus, from the start, Governor Victoria was not popular with many *sureños*. He removed the territorial government from San Diego and went to live in the official capital, Monterey. Victoria represented the centralist, anti-democratic, pro-church factions then resurgent in Mexico. Despite a request from a group of delegates from the San Francisco presidio, Victoria refused to convene the territorial diputación and announced his intention to restore military rule and abolish all elected government. The governor then ordered the execution of several persons who were convicted of minor offenses and suspended the ayuntamiento of Santa Barbara. He exiled several influential *norteños*, including José Antonio Carrillo, without a trial. Carrillo then began agitating for a revolt against the governor.

For the next few months, the *sureños* secretly and then openly led a movement to remove Victoria from office. Juan Bandini, a Peruvian immigrant who had come to San Diego in the 1820s, was perhaps the most active leader of the anti-Victoria movement. On November 29, 1831, Pico, Bandini, and Carrillo, with “about a dozen” companions, took over the San Diego presidio and issued a *pronunciamiento* (a statement justifying a rebellion). The Pronunciamiento de San Diego was California’s first written declaration of political independence. Probably penned by Juan Bandini, in the florid literary style of the day, it set forth the reasons for people to join the rebellion against Victoria. It accused Victoria of “criminal abuse” and of breaking the law, while claiming that the pronunciamento signers were motivated by “love of country” and “respect for the laws.” It listed as grievances the governor’s suspension of the government of Santa Barbara, the execution of several people in violation of the procedures of law, and the banishment of several prominent Californios. The document called Victoria a despot.

The Victoria rebellion was ultimately resolved when a military force of *sureños* from San Diego and Los Angeles met Victoria’s small group of only 30 men near Cahuenga Pass in December 1831. After a short skirmish, two men were killed and Victoria was wounded. His army retreated to Mission San Gabriel, where he finally agreed to resign his governorship. The following month, he traveled to the port of San Diego and on January 17, 1832, he left for Mexico.

Secularization of the Missions: José Figueroa

After the rebellion against Victoria, the political struggles among Californios, between families, and between the *norteños* and *sureños* complicated things for many months. Agustín Zamorano led a *norteño* faction that claimed to be the legitimate government of the territory north of Santa Barbara, while Echeandía claimed jurisdiction over the south. Zamorano, who later imported

the first printing press in California, served until the arrival of José Figueroa, the new governor appointed by Mexico City. Although Figueroa felt that the sureño Californio leaders were a “clique of conceited and ignorant men,” the Californios eventually benefited through his implementation of the final secularization of the mission lands.

During the 1830s, the intention of the Mexican government was to convert the California mission properties into Indian pueblos. This policy, which had envisioned free settlements of Hispanicized natives, ultimately was subverted by the local Californios, many of whom regarded the Indians as incapable of self-government or property ownership. The secularization of the mission lands and the emancipation of the neophytes, however, proceeded rapidly under Governor Figueroa, and subsequent Mexican governors completed the legal process.

The secularization of the missions affected about 18,000 Christianized natives in California. At the beginning, Governor Figueroa took the unusual step of traveling to some of the missions to explain the benefits of emancipation to the natives in person. In San Diego he spoke to 160 families; however, only 10 families agreed to accept their freedom, which was not enough to form a pueblo. So Figueroa appointed Santiago Argüello as the *comisionado*, or commissioner, in charge of Indian properties at San Diego. Eventually, enough ex-neophyte families accepted their changed status and established the Indian pueblo of San Dieguito, near the mission. Others near Mission San Luis Rey moved to an already existing native pueblo at Las Flores. Another Indian pueblo grew up in San Pascual, near present-day Escondido. Each of these new pueblos was instructed to select its own *alcalde*, or mayor. Thus, the Kumeyaay Indians, not the Spanish-speaking descendants of the founders of the presidio, elected the first self-government in the San Diego district. Those natives who agreed to live in these pueblos were informally allowed to use the lands they needed for dwellings and agriculture. The remaining ex-mission lands were declared abandoned and thus open to petition for ownership by the Californios.

Many mission Indians did not embrace the idea of living as free farmers. Most left the mission lands and returned to their former lives, thus rejecting further supervision and control by Mexican authorities. Moreover, many had maintained contact with relatives and extended families outside the mission lands, and they wanted to go home. Others, whose villages had disappeared because of disease or war, were now homeless, lacking the protection of the mission padres. Traditional lands that had been the homeland of native peoples were now controlled by rancheros. As a result, thousands of homeless Christianized Indians sought to eke out an existence by hiring themselves out to the Spanish-speaking population as vaqueros, domestic servants, mistresses, and indispensable laborers within the Mexican pueblos and presidios.

By 1834, six missions in California had been secularized and the rest would soon follow. The wealthiest and most populous, Mission San Luis Rey, was

administered by Pío Pico. At Mission San Diego there were more than 5000 neophytes, and most of them departed after the priests left. An estimated 2000 moved closer to the newly constructed town of San Diego (as yet not officially a pueblo), where they found occasional work as servants and laborers. For the remainder of the Mexican period, the Christianized ex-neophyte native population greatly outnumbered the Mexican mestizo population within the San Diego district. For many Mexican settlers, Indian allegiances were suspect, and frequent raids and rumors of impending attacks always raised suspicions of alliances between the local Indians and the *indios bárbaros*.

During the decade that followed, the Californios petitioned the Mexican government, eager to claim hundreds of ranchos formed out of lands that had been declared “abandoned” by mission administrators. Many of these same administrators ended up owning the very lands they supervised. Who benefited from this era of rancho creation? Rancho grantees were those who, because of political influence or because of long service to the mission or presidio, were in a position to claim the land and the cattle on it. To be successful, individuals had to do more than claim the lands. They also had to have the interest and ability to manage a cattle ranch. Eventually, more than 700 private land grants were approved by the Mexican government. A portion of the grants went to foreigners—mostly to naturalized American citizens.

Governor Figueroa died before seeing the final result of the Mexican government’s secularization laws. These included: (1) the dispossession of the missionized Indians of the lands they had depended upon for food and shelter, (2) the creation of a new floating class of homeless, exploitable Indian laborers, and (3) the birth of a new aristocracy of landed families who increasingly asserted their rights over those of the Mexican governors and the Indians alike.

Rebellion, Revolution, and Home Rule

Governor Manuel Victoria was succeeded by a series of temporary governors who inspired contempt and rebellion on the part of the Californio families, many of whom were related to each other and who competed for political control. José Castro, from northern California, served briefly as a temporary governor, followed by Nicolás Gutiérrez. Gutiérrez was quickly replaced in 1835 by Mariano Chico, from Guadalajara, a representative of the newly emergent centralist faction in Mexico City. The centralists believed in reducing the autonomy of the state government, removing local controls, and substituting that of military authorities from Mexico City. The centralists threatened the new autonomy of the Californio rancheros. The subsequent Californio revolts against the Mexican governors occurred at about the same time as rebellions in the Mexican states of Queretaro, Zacatecas, Yucatán, New Mexico, and Texas. All were sparked by reactions against the centralist ascendancy in Mexico City, which was led by General José Antonio Lopez y Santa Anna. The central government’s military forces suffered a disastrous defeat in Texas in 1836, leaving

them less able to enforce their will on the far-flung northern territories. Accordingly, the Californio rebels escaped punishment at the hands of General Santa Anna.

In 1836, Juan Bautista Alvarado led a norteño rebellion against governor Chico, calling for California's independence from Mexico until the federal system was restored. In reaction to the prospect of the dominance of Monterey, the sureños in San Diego and Los Angeles joined forces to offer an alternative to Alvarado's rebellion. The last effort by the sureños to salvage their regional pride and political influence began in the spring of 1837, when an anti-Alvarado group from San Diego gathered about 40 men and persuaded the ayuntamiento to endorse "El Plan de San Diego." This document, written by Juan Bandini, formally recognized the official Mexican government and rejected Alvarado's rebellion. The sureños proposed that they organize a loyalist government to rule the territory, now reorganized as a department, until the Mexican government approved a legitimate governor.

The leaders of "El Plan de San Diego" were Bandini, Santiago E. Argüello, and Pío Pico. Together, they traveled north to get the Los Angeles ayuntamiento's endorsement of El Plan. By June 1837, the sureños had assembled an army of about 150 men and were prepared to meet Alvarado on the field of battle to decide who would rule California. The expected struggle did not take place, however. Before any fighting occurred, news from Mexico arrived confirming the establishment of a new centralist government and everyone, including Alvarado, accepted it. In July 1837, Alvarado took an oath to support the constitution, and the provincial diputación selected him as governor until a new Mexican appointee arrived.

The civil war between the north and the south continued when the replacement governor, Carlos Carrillo, arrived. Carrillo sided with the sureño faction, named Los Angeles the new capital of the department, and moved the customs house to San Diego. Shortly thereafter, Alvarado refused to recognize Carrillo until he was officially ordered to relinquish the governorship. Meanwhile, Alvarado sent representatives to Mexico City to plead his case as the legitimate governor, and he prepared to challenge Carrillo with force of arms.

In the spring of 1838, the sureños and norteños assembled for battle near Mission San Buenaventura. About half of the soldiers on the sureño side were from San Diego. They exchanged shots and one person was killed before the southerners were outmaneuvered and retreated to Los Angeles. Remnants of the army, led by Carrillo, continued fleeing to San Diego, where they prepared for a last stand. Before further bloodshed, the two governors met in April 1838 near Mission San Luis Rey. They signed a "treaty" that called on Mexico City to determine who was the legitimate governor. A formal notification arrived in August and, to the bitter disappointment of the sureños, the central government named Alvarado as the legitimate provisional governor. Carrillo left for Mexico.

Alvarado was a native-born northern Californio who, as governor of the territory, led his compatriots in democratic revolutions and protests against Mexico City's high-handed leaders. He championed legislative initiative, public schools, government improvements, and many other projects to improve the economy and political health of the department. He presided over the most momentous economic change in the history of California, the breakup of the mission lands and the distribution of these lands to the native Californians, foreigners, and Indians.

Alvarado was related by marriage to another powerful California figure, General Mariano Vallejo. Together, they lived through the American takeover of their territory, and both authored multivolume histories that remain unpublished and untranslated in the Bancroft library. Under Alvarado's regime, in 1827 the diputación at Monterey voted to change the name of California to "Moctezuma" in honor of the Aztecs, a move that was overturned by the national government. As a young man, Alvarado and his friends secretly purchased books that were on the Catholic Church's Index of Forbidden Books list, and for that they were threatened with excommunication. Alvarado, along with many other prominent Californios, had a mistress and several children to whom he gave his name. In his maturity, Alvarado became an alcoholic whose periodic binges were embarrassing, causing him to miss his own wedding and his inauguration as governor, and to panic when the Americans mistakenly invaded Monterey in 1842.

Despite these weaknesses, Alvarado was a capable leader and politician who enjoyed the respect of many native Californians. He participated in most of the crucial turning points of the territory's history—the revolts against Nicolás Gutiérrez and then against Micheltorena made Alvarado the longest-termed governor of Mexican California.

Micheltorena and the Catesby Jones Affair

In 1842 Mexico again attempted to impose another non-Californio governor, General Manuel Micheltorena. He arrived with 300 troops termed *cholos* (meaning low-class mestizos and Indios) by the status-conscious Californios, who accused them of petty thievery and disorder. It is true that many of the troops were unpaid ex-convicts who were encouraged to forage for their sustenance. An additional cause for the disaffection of the norteños was their desire to regain local political power.

During Micheltorena's first year as governor, an American naval officer, Commodore Thomas ap Catesby Jones, occupied the port of Monterey on the mistaken notion that war had broken out between Mexico and the United States. This mistake gave Mexico a preview of the warlike intentions of the United States and made any negotiation over the peaceful acquisition of California by the United States impossible. Jones was the commander of the Pacific squadron, and he had secret orders to occupy Monterey in the event that

Profile portrait of Commodore Thomas ap Catesby Jones, who mistakenly believed that the U.S. and Mexico were at war, entered the harbor at Monterey, and demanded that the town surrender to his troops.



Thomas ap Catesby Jones by Auguste Edouart, National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution; gift of Robert L. McNeil Jr.; is licensed under CC0

Mexico decided to cede California to Britain. While in the Peruvian port of Callao, he received false information that the United States and Mexico were at war and that the British naval commander in the Pacific was sailing toward California with plans to occupy it. Jones's two ships, the *United States* and the *Cyane*, raced toward California and, on October 18, 1842, entered the harbor at Monterey. The following day, Jones demanded the surrender of the town to his troops. Alvarado, the military commander, received the message and reluctantly surrendered, fearing bombardment of the town by the Americans. Jones's men lowered the Mexican flag that flew in front of the governor's house. Later that day, one of Jones's men was reading through the government archives and discovered recent newspapers indicating that there was no war between the two countries. In the meantime, the local population had fled the town.

Governor Micheltorena was visiting Los Angeles when he heard the news of the mistaken capture of the capital. Commodore Jones decided to sail to San Pedro to meet with the governor and offer his formal apologies. The governor held a formal dinner in Los Angeles in honor of his guests, and apologies flowed with the wine. That night, however, reports of strange ships sighted off the coast led Governor Micheltorena to fear a full-scale American invasion; daylight brought assurances that it had been a false alarm. After appropriate formalities and typical Californio hospitality, the Americans returned to their ships and sailed away.

A few years later, in 1845, Alvarado and José Castro led a rebellion in Monterey against Micheltorena that resulted in another “battle” at Cahuenga Pass. Though only a mule and a horse were killed, the governor was forced to depart for Mexico. As a compromise between the regional factions, Pío Pico assumed the title of governor and Los Angeles became the capital. José Castro became the military comandante in charge of the northern district, including the customs house in Monterey.

The last Mexican governor was a Californio. Pío de Jesús Pico was born in San Gabriel Mission of mixed African and mestizo ancestry. He grew up in San Diego and moved to Los Angeles in the 1830s, where he became important in local politics. During his short tenure as governor, he completed the secularization of the missions and confirmed a flurry of land grants to his friends as he saw the approaching threat of the Anglo Americans. As he said in a speech: “They are cultivating farms, establishing vineyards, erecting mills, sawing up lumber, building workshops, and doing a thousand other things which seem natural to them, but which Californians neglect or despise.” He was helpless to prevent the American takeover of his beloved land during the U.S.-Mexican War. On the eve of that conflict, the Californios continued to be divided into northern and southern factions, and this weakened their ability to respond to a foreign invasion.

The Rise of the Ranchos

A review of the political history of Mexican California shows that Californios increasingly asserted their self-confidence in their ability to control their own society. This was based on the creation of a native California landholding class whose prosperity grew with each season as the cattle and livestock multiplied beyond count. The Mexican government encouraged private landholding, and the land was free for the taking, providing the claimant met the necessary conditions. The newly independent Mexico liberalized the Spanish trade restrictions, opening California to trade with Americans, the British, and Russians. Thus the prosperity of the ranchos during this era was a product of political decisions made in Mexico. An unintended result, however, was the creation of a new spirit of independence and rebellion.

Under Mexican laws, the usual way an individual obtained a rancho grant was to file a written petition with the governor of the territory requesting a defined piece of land, described in very general terms and accompanied with a crude map, or *diseño*. If the governor approved, he would order the local officials to investigate the lands to determine whether they were actually vacant and that there were no conflicting interests. The results of the investigation, called the *informe*, were then returned to the governor and, if he approved, a formal grant was made. All of the paperwork attached to the grant was called

the *expediente*; however, the grant was not considered final until the territorial assembly approved it. The final act of possession then took place with a formal ceremony involving the local officials.

Mexican officials approved more than 700 private land grants following these procedures. One of the largest, Rancho San Onofre y Margarita, was 89,742 acres, granted to Andrés and Pío Pico in 1841. Many of the grants were more modest in size. For example, in 1843, the government granted Rancho La Cañada de los Coches (Glen of the Hogs), which amounted to only 23.39 acres, to Apolinaria Lorenzana, "La Beata." In 1845 Guajome Rancho (Home of the Frog), consisting of 2,219.41 acres, was granted to Andrés and José Manuel, two Luiseño Indians. Women as well as Indians were eligible to receive land grants. Historian Gloria Ricci Lothrop found that 55 ranchos—or 13 percent of the total of 700 grants—were given to women, many of whom were the sole managers of their estates.

The land itself was not worth much without livestock, but the cattle that roamed virtually wild on the grasslands were usually inherited from the missions as part of the grant. Disputes over the ownership of these herds became matters for the local *juez de campos* (judge of the plains), or for the alcalde. As elsewhere in the Mexican Southwest, brands were registered and periodic rodeos were required to sort out the herds. In the Los Angeles district, for example, rancheros were required by law to have rodeos in January and April, and the general public was required to assist in the roundup. During these rodeos, the vaqueros sorted out vast herds of cattle that had intermingled on the open range, branding the newborn calves and castrating the young bulls. They were paid with food and the fiesta that followed each day of labor.

The Californio men prided themselves on their horsemanship and had many opportunities to display this talent during these events. It was considered manly to be able to lasso and kill a cow, using a horsehair lariat and long lance, without dismounting from one's horse. Horseracing was a passion, as was the sport of *correr el gallo*, which involved plucking a buried chicken from the ground while galloping at full speed. Many of the vaqueros were Indians who had learned these skills at the missions. The Californios distinguished themselves from these common laborers by their elaborate dress, fine mounts, and, for the very rich, ornate saddle and livery.

As was true throughout all of northern Mexico, cattle raising created a unique culture, with its own vocabulary and independent spirit. The vaqueros taught the American immigrants who entered the Mexican frontier the basic techniques of stock raising in a semi-arid environment. Law, brands, and customs regarding the open range are of Spanish-Mexican origin, and much of the mystique of the American cowboy arises from these Mexican roots.

In Mexican California, stock raising was more a way of life than an industry, which it later became under the Americans. The meat of the cattle was of little value, since it had to be eaten immediately, unless preserved as jerky.

Instead, the hide and the fat of the animal—the tallow—provided value to the daily life of the settlers and later to the Yankee clipper ships that came to California. If an occasional cow was killed mysteriously, it was of no consequence as long as the “California dollar” (the hide) was left behind. Hence the poor had a ready source of food. The Indians who lived on the ranchos farmed small plots and helped raise sheep, goats, pigs, horses, mules, and cattle. They were paid in kind, with foodstuffs and the right to build an adobe or *jacale* (brush) hut on rancho land.

It is probably wrong to characterize the Californio ranchos as similar to the haciendas in mainland Mexico, because they were more informal in their organization. The Indian vaqueros and farmers were not bound by the rules of peonage that prevailed in central Mexico. The Indians who worked on the ranchos were not paid in money but with food, clothing, and shelter. A sense of paternalism prevailed, with the rancheros as the patrons and the Indians as servants and workmen. The Californios sought to create a lifestyle and mystique surrounding their class. While the Mexican government had abolished the system of official ethnic distinctions, known as the *casta* system, the Californios maintained pretensions about their racial purity as *gente de razón* and insisted on deference from the natives. They justified their ownership of the Indian lands by arguing that the Indians had abandoned them and that the Californios had thus inherited the Indians’ sovereignty over the land.

The most prominent of the 700 families who became landholders in Mexican California emerged as the political leaders in this period, as described earlier. In the far north, Mariano Vallejo, owner of Rancho Petaluma, was the powerful comandante of the region, placed there to defend the north from British and Russian encroachments. In Monterey, Juan Bautista de Alvarado and his family periodically controlled local politics. The Santa Barbara district was led by Pablo de la Guerra; Los Angeles by the Pico brothers, Andrés and Pío; and San Diego by Juan Bandini and José Antonio Carrillo. There were other notables who contributed to the Californio legend, and some of them were Anglo Americans who slowly began to discover the richness of the soil and married the Californio daughters.

The expansion of the ranchos, particularly the growing number of cattle and horses, put a severe strain on the native population. The grazing animals consumed vast amounts of grasses, nuts, and roots, which had been staples in the diet of many Indian communities. In order to eat, many began to slaughter the free-ranging cattle and to raid settlements. This, in turn, provoked reprisals from the rancheros. Although the end of the mission system freed thousands of Indians from required labor, many were forced to hire themselves out to the rancheros as vaqueros (cowboys) and farmers. Many worked without wages but at least were able to gain food and shelter for their families. The natives became the mainstay of the Mexican labor force in these years.



Portrait of Governor Pío Pico with his wife and nieces. University of Southern California Libraries and California Historical Society, public domain, no known restrictions

Pío Pico, his wife, and nieces, probably in the 1850s. Pico was the last Mexican governor and one of the largest rancho owners in California. What evidence is there that Mexican Californios had different attitudes toward race than did most Americans of this era?

Environmental Changes

Environmental historians such as William Preston have noted that the introduction of livestock by the Spanish and Mexicans began to change the ecosystem of the state. The proliferation of cattle and horses led to periodic overgrazing as well as to the creation of well-worn trails on hills and in the valleys. On Santa Catalina Island, goats introduced by the Spanish multiplied so greatly that they drove more than 48 animal and plant species to extinction. Adding to the pressures on the grasslands, native wild animals began to proliferate, mainly because the Indians who had previously hunted them were now either living on wild cattle or living in the missions or pueblos. Periodic large-scale slaughters of cattle and even horses by the Mexican rancheros led to an explosion in the grizzly bear population, which fed off the carcasses and refuse. Other changes during the Spanish and Mexican eras were wrought by foreign hunting. Otters, fur seals, sea lions, beavers, and minks were increasingly slaughtered by Russian, British, and American hunters. The great demand for their pelts in Europe led to their near decimation. Finally, the introduction of European food crops led to environmental changes. Roughly 10,000 acres of land were under cultivation by 1834, watered by irrigation systems that drew from dammed rivers and creeks. Along with corn, wheat, oats, and other grains came the introduction of European weeds that quickly spread and competed

with native plants. California's declining Indian population, caused by the introduction of European diseases, led to an increase in wild game and the proliferation of European plants and livestock. This changed the ecosystem, forcing Indians as well as native species to adapt to a new environment.

Social Relations in Mexican California

Political independence from Spain did not radically change the cultural and social patterns of Spanish California. Patriarchy continued to hold sway in social relations and the family continued to be the primary social and political unit. Indians were still at the bottom of the hierarchy. Major changes in the 27 years of Mexican administration included the creation of a landed class that had pretensions of aristocracy and the opening up of California to increased trade with foreigners. Both factors would undermine the older Spanish colonial conventions and ideals.

The Growth of Town Governments

Town governments grew in the Mexican period as former soldiers and their families settled near the presidios where they had once served. Spain had given the civilian population living in Monterey a pueblo government and lands in 1794. Monterey's municipal government was occasionally overshadowed by the territorial government, as in the period from 1839 to 1840, when the centralist governor abolished the local town council. The population surrounding the presidio of Monterey was more numerous, including seven missions and the Spanish villa of Branciforte (Santa Cruz), with a total of about 1600 gente de razón by 1840. By the time of the U.S.-Mexican War, about 550 people lived in the town.

San Diego's civilian settlement was located just downhill from the site of the first presidio. By 1834, the town finally had a sufficient population—400 people—to qualify for pueblo status, with the right to elect local officials and to obtain a grant of land from the government. This lasted until 1838, when the declining population and political competition with Monterey resulted in the loss of their local government. In 1845, Governor Pío Pico confirmed San Diego's ownership of 48,000 acres of former mission lands, including water rights. It was the largest such concession ever given to a Mexican town in California.

San Francisco also was established as a pueblo government in 1834 after achieving a sufficient number in population, probably about 200 individuals between the peninsula and Contra Costa. The settlement of Yerba Buena, the nucleus of modern-day San Francisco, grew as town lots were sold by the pueblo government out of its four square leagues of public lands, which had

been granted by the Mexican governor. From the beginning, the settlers of this new town were multiethnic and multinational, including Americans, Englishmen, Frenchmen, Spaniards, Mexicans, and native Californios. By 1840, Yerba Buena had 50 residents; 16 of them were foreigners.

In 1835, the military garrison at San Francisco was transferred north and thus Sonoma, another Mexican-era pueblo, was founded. In the town itself there were probably not more than 200 people, a mixture of Hispanicized mission Indians and former soldiers and their families. Nearby was the Petaluma hacienda of Mariano Vallejo, the comandante whose energetic policies of pacification of the northern Indians through alliances made it possible for more than 80 ranchos to be established.

Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo was born in Monterey on July 4, 1807, and became a professional soldier during the Mexican regime, rising in rank and authority to become comandante-general of California by 1838. Vallejo was in charge of the colonization of the *frontera norte*, the region north of San Pablo Bay and the Sacramento River. Vallejo was skilled at forming lasting alliances with the local Indians, and more than 50 of the presidio soldiers in Sonoma were native California Indians. He was instrumental in helping to organize the town governments of San Francisco and Sonoma. Much of the time he paid for the expenses of the Mexican military out of his own pocket. He opposed the Russian settlement at Fort Ross as well as the growth of Sutter's Fort in Sacramento. Vallejo also opposed Governor Juan Bautista Alvarado, who he thought was incompetent and lacking initiative. Partly because of his public dissatisfaction, Micheltorena was sent to replace Alvarado. In 1844, Vallejo disbanded the military forces in Sonoma because he could no longer afford to pay them. Thereafter, he supported annexation by the United States even after being imprisoned by the Bear Flag rebels in 1846.

Californianas: Mexican Californian Women

Indian and Mexican women were largely responsible for the growth of a domestic Hispano-Indian culture and society in California. Under Mexican government, the established patriarchal forms of life continued. The government and men considered women's reproductive capacities most important for the success of the colony. Accordingly, women were expected to bear large families. Teresa de la Guerra, for example, had 25 children; Francisca Benicia Vallejo had 16 children; and Angustias de la Guerra Ord had 11 children. Unfortunately, infant mortality was quite high, as was death from childbirth. Mexican culture accorded a woman status through her production of children and women were thus valued within the family for their role as childbearers.

In addition to childbearing, women played a key role in the Californio economy. They worked in the domestic production of clothes, soap, candles, and other household items. The wealthier Californianas supervised scores of

domestic servants and worked alongside them. Californianas, moreover, were trained to ride horses from an early age. Some of the stereotypes about Mexican patriarchal society have to be modified when considering the female rancheras of California. On small ranchos, women and men worked side by side in the many labors associated with farming and ranching. Fermina Espinosa, for example, was the owner of Santa Rita rancho. Because her husband was not so inclined, she ran the ranch—riding, roping, and branding—in addition to bearing many children. On Rancho Sal-Si-Puedes, the four daughters of Vicente Ávila dressed like men and rode about the rancho doing the work of livestock raising—in addition to weaving blankets, churning butter, and making cheese.

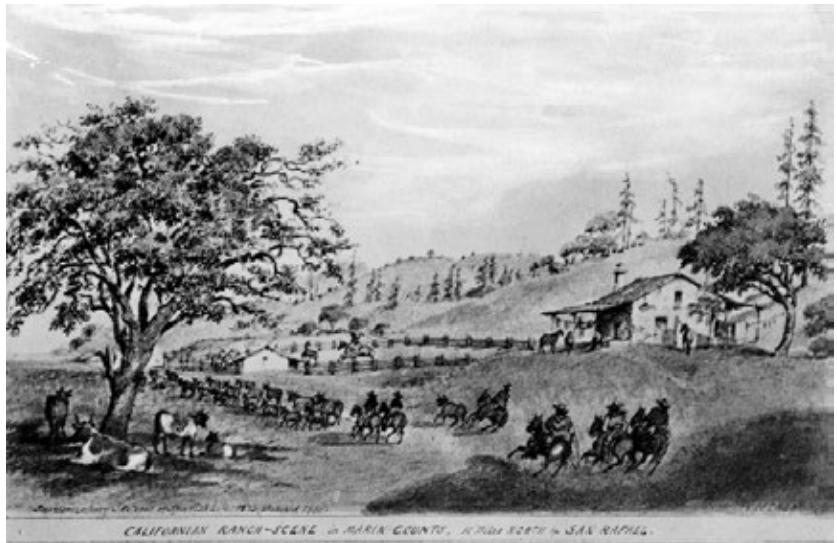
Historian Rosaura Sanchez has studied many examples of female independence and agency in Mexican California and has warned against overgeneralizing. Women were still subject to male authority. Arranged marriages were the norm, especially among the wealthier classes. Single women were not free to choose their own suitors, and elaborate rituals regulated courtship. The first communications of love may have found their way around the watchful eyes of the parents, but their approval was necessary for meetings and marriage. Women were generally considered male possessions to be protected and controlled. Although women did have property rights and the right to divorce and file lawsuits against their husbands, these rights were not commonly exercised.

One story that illustrates the many complexities of women's status in Mexican California is that of Josefa Carrillo, daughter of Joaquin Carrillo of San Diego. In 1829, she eloped with Henry Delano Fitch, an American merchant sea captain, thus becoming one of the first Californianas to marry a foreigner. While the account of this affair has been told a number of times by California historians, the narration she gave in 1875 at the age of 65 gives her version of events.

When Captain Henry D. Fitch made a call on the port of San Diego in 1826, he was introduced to Josefa and fell in love. Within a year, he requested her hand in marriage and her parents approved. Several years passed before Captain Fitch agreed to become a Catholic and a Mexican citizen so the two could be married. The marriage was scheduled for April 15, 1829, the day after his baptism. Halfway through the marriage ceremony, a message arrived from Governor Echeandía ordering the rites to cease, because the marriage was in violation of a law prohibiting non-Catholics from marrying Catholics.

Henry and Josefa decided to elope, sailing south and eventually marrying in a Catholic ceremony in Valparaiso, Chile. A year later, Captain Fitch's ship returned to the San Diego harbor, and Josefa learned that her father considered the family dishonored by the elopement and had "promised to kill her on sight."

Nevertheless, courageously, and determined to be either reconciled or killed, Josefa went to beg her father's forgiveness. Entering his study, she threw herself on her knees and "in a humble tone begged for pardon, reminding him that if she had disobeyed him it had been only to cast off a hated tyranny [Governor Echeandía] who overturned the laws and customs." Her father responded, saying, "I pardon you daughter, you are not to blame if our



Ranch Scene in Marin County, Edward Fischer, University of Southern California Libraries and California Historical Society, public domain, no known restrictions

California vaqueros rounding up cattle. Widely praised for their skills as horsemen, the Californios rarely dismounted.

governors are despots." Josefa and her husband eventually went to Monterey, where Captain Fitch faced charges of forcible abduction, and he was sent to Mission San Gabriel for three months. As a penalty for his crime, he was given a penance of donating a 50-pound bell to the church at the Los Angeles pueblo, and the couple was commanded to hear high mass with lighted candles for three *días festivos*, or special days.

This love story involved family honor, governmental intervention, and paternal power. Josefa threw herself on her father's mercy and cleverly politicized her actions so he could accept her return with honor. She succeeded in manipulating the patriarchal system. The most important part of Josefa's 1875 narration, rendered in the most detail with the greatest passion, was not the interrupted marriage, the elopement, or the trial, but rather her confrontation with her father. Josefa may have been subject to male authority, but she knew how to manipulate it to her advantage.

Mexican-Indian Relations

With the secularization of the missions, thousands of native Californians tried to return to the lives they had once known, fleeing inland and into the foothills to join with remnants of their peoples or with other native groups. They soon

found that things had changed, even for tribes far from the missions. Numerous diseases had decimated their numbers, and the ecology of traditional gathering grounds had been forever changed by the grazing of Mexican livestock and the introduction of European plants. The cattle and even horses were tempting targets for hungry natives who had grown used to mission food. Consequently, native groups periodically raided outlying ranchos, and military retaliation inevitably followed.

Aside from the mission revolts (see Chapter 2), the most notable periods of Mexican-Indian violence took place in the 1830s in southern California, following secularization. One memorable incident was an Indian attack in 1837 on Rancho Jamul, located east of San Diego, and owned by Doña Eustaquia López, who lived at the rancho with her two unmarried daughters and young son. A band of Kumeyaay assisted by some servants attacked the rancho, killing the foreman, his son, and several others. The Indians carried off both daughters, Tomasa and Ramona, aged 15 and 12. They were going to kill the mother and her little boy but, because of their pleadings, the Indians spared them. Instead, they stripped them naked and left, taking with them the livestock and other valuables and burning the ranch houses. Several expeditions went out from San Diego to try to recover the girls. Ransoms were offered but refused, and rumors later flourished that the girls had married Indian chiefs.

Later that year, in 1837, other bands of Kumeyaay planned to attack the pueblo of San Diego with the assistance of local servants. The plot was foiled when a loyal Indian told her mistress of the plan. Immediately, the military officer in charge, Alférez Macedonio Gonzalez, rounded up the named conspirators, all of whom worked as house servants for the local pueblo families, and forced them to confess. The following day, he took them to a nearby cemetery and executed five of them by a firing squad. In the years that followed, fear of Indian servants and the possibility of revolt from within colored the nightmares of many Californios.

A large and uncounted number of former neophytes lived in quasi-peonage. In Los Angeles, Father Duran noted that 200–300 Indians lived as virtual slaves, paying off debts that had been advanced to them for food, goods, or liquor. Every Mexican settlement had its floating population of natives who survived on the margins, working as occasional laborers or prostitutes, and sometimes even selling their children in order to eat. The lucky ones worked on the ranchos as servants, farmers, or vaqueros. They too were debt slaves and had to endure the racial pretensions of their masters. These Indians were bound to the land by their indebtedness just as many Mexican peons on the haciendas in Mexico during a later era. By custom, the natives had to remain at the rear of the church during mass, and they were buried in plots separate from the Californios. The Los Angeles ayuntamiento passed laws to ensure that the local Indians did not live too close to the pueblo or pollute the water of the local irrigation ditches.

At the same time, almost every Californio family could point to a servant who had been raised with their own children and who was considered a member of the family or could, if they chose, remember how cousins and nieces were related to the local Indian tribes by blood. As long as the Hispanicized Indians accepted a Californio paternalism and knew their place, they were accepted within the patriarchal rancho system. There were real friendships and occasional bonds of marriage and *compadrazgo* (godparentage) between some Californios and the Hispanicized Indians. General Mariano Vallejo's Indian ally, Chief Solano, lived with Vallejo's family in his old age, and the two were compadres, sharing their mutual misfortunes well into the American era.

Immigrants and Foreigners

Alta California's population grew slowly, but not nearly enough to challenge the native Indians' demographic dominance. In 1820, at the beginning of the Mexican period, there were perhaps as many as 3000 of Hispano-Indian stock, excluding the mission Indians. By 1848, at the end of the Mexican era, there were probably about 7000 who considered themselves Californios. At the same time, although the native population was declining due to deaths from diseases, they numbered probably more than 100,000 in 1846, most of them not Hispanicized.

As David Weber pointed out in his study of this era, the Mexican government was losing its ability to defend its northern territories because of the lack of northward migration. Political instability in Mexico City made for changing policies regarding the frontier. Mexicans could not be induced to leave family and town for the uncertainties of life on the frontier. Many were economically unable to afford such a journey, and many others were peons who were not free to move even if they so desired. Moreover, the Spanish administrative mentality had endured, making it difficult for individuals to strike off on their own without governmental approval. Additionally, California was isolated from Mexico by the forbidding Sonora and Mojave Deserts, lands inhabited by Indians who had proven their dislike of Spanish and Mexican interlopers.

The Mexican government made one major effort to send new colonists to California, but it ended in disaster and discouraged further attempts. The Mexican government regarded the Russian colony at Fort Ross as a threat to its political control of Alta California. Beginning in 1812, the Russian government had established several small agricultural settlements some 90 miles north of San Francisco. Fort Ross (Rus or Russia) was the hub intending to supply growing seal and otter stations that the Russian-American Company had founded along the coast as far north as Alaska. To counter this threat, in 1833, the government authorized José María Padrés and José María Hijar to recruit 204 Mexican settlers to go to California. The plan was for these newcomers to take possession of vacant mission lands. This, of course, antagonized

the Californios, who wanted those lands for themselves. The Californios were in luck, however, because en route, a change in the central Mexican government revoked the Padrés-Híjar commission. The expedition continued to California nevertheless and upon arrival, Governor Figueroa, a native Californio, refused to let them have the lands they had been allocated and ordered them to return to Mexico. Most of the colonists ignored this order and settled throughout California, in the pueblos and on some lands in the Sonoma Valley given to them by General Vallejo. Members of the Padrés-Híjar expedition brought much-needed skills to California and were responsible for many improvements in local life, especially in the pueblos.

The Mexican government did not encourage foreign immigration to Alta California. After a decade of encouraging American immigration into Texas in 1836, the foreigners revolted against the national government. This seemed to be ample proof that this was an unwise policy. Nevertheless, foreigners did make their way to this remote territory, many for commercial purposes. By the 1830s, the ranchos were developing a thriving trade in hides and tallow with Yankee clipper ships, and hundreds of thousands of hides found their way east to make shoes for the Anglo Americans and the English. Some of the sailors on the American and English ships chose to stay behind. Alfred Robinson, for example, stayed behind and married into the de la Guerra family in Santa Barbara. His book *Life in California* (1846) described the native Californios in a sympathetic light. This was not the case for Richard Henry Dana, who also came on a clipper ship and later wrote his immensely popular account, *Two Years Before the Mast* (1840), in which he deprecated the Californios as an “idle, thriftless people” who were “proud, and extravagant, and very much given to gaming.” Dana did, however, praise the lush environment and urged others to come to develop it. He wrote: “In the hands of an enterprising people, what a country this might be!” Dana’s views had wide circulation in the East and helped shape sentiments of Manifest Destiny.

The Americans were slow to find their way overland to California and the first ones who came entered illegally. In 1826, the fur trapper Jedediah Smith came overland from Salt Lake into southern California. He was subsequently jailed in San Diego, Mission San José, and Monterey before being expelled for lacking a passport. Smith was the first American to cross the Sierra Nevada Mountains and open a trail to Salt Lake. He was also the first American to open the coastal trade route from California to Fort Vancouver on the Columbia River. Among his greatest exploits, Smith blazed a trail across the deserts of the American West—the first American to enter California by crossing the Mojave Desert and the first to traverse the vast Great Basin Desert to return east.

In 1828, Sylvester and James Ohio Pattie, father and son, also fur trappers, arrived in San Diego after an exhausting overland trek from the Colorado River. Governor Echeandía believed them to be spies for Spain and had them imprisoned. The father, Sylvester, died in prison but James, who had brought

with him a supply of smallpox vaccine, was allowed to leave the San Diego jail to inoculate the local population. Eventually, he traveled up the California coast and vaccinated 22,000 people. He returned home to New Orleans via Mexico in 1830. Later trappers such as Ewing Young and Joseph R. Walker found new ways of entering California from the east, developing trails that later immigrants found useful.

By 1830, fewer than 100 foreigners were living in California, most of British or American nationality. Under the Mexican Colonization Laws of 1824 and 1828, territorial governors were allowed to grant lands to non-citizens. The regulations governing the procedures were sporadically—and not very effectively—enforced. Despite the availability of free lands, few foreigners took advantage of these laws in California. Most of the best lands were tied up in the missions until the secularization of the mid-1830s. Thereafter, the Californios used their family influence to gain most of the desirable properties.

In spite of their small numbers, the foreigners' influence was felt to a degree that was out of proportion to their numbers. Many had settled in California because of their recognition of the rich opportunities for hunting, trapping, trading, and land acquisition. Others simply sought adventure or had fallen in love with a beautiful Californiana. Most became partially Mexicanized, learning to respect the culture and the language and marrying the daughters of important Californio landholders. As sons-in-law of large extended families, they had a stake in California's future. One prominent example is William E. P. Hartnell, an Englishman who came to California as a merchant in 1823, married into the powerful de la Guerra family in Santa Barbara, became a naturalized Mexican citizen, and received a large rancho land grant. In the 1830s, he won appointments to a number of official posts as a customs officer, a teacher, and a translator. In the American era, he served as the official Spanish-language translator for the California constitutional convention.

Other foreigners participated in rebellions. In 1836, Isaac Graham, an American settler, gathered a company of American riflemen to help Juan Bautista Alvarado in his successful revolt against the government. Later, in 1840, Graham and a few British settlers were arrested by Governor Alvarado on charges of treason but were later sent to Mexico, where they were released. John A. Sutter was a Swiss immigrant who became important in the California Gold Rush. He came to California after having traveled to Santa Fe, Oregon, and Hawai'i. In 1840, he received an 11-square-league (48,000 acres) grant of land from the Mexican governor, and he set about building a fort at the junction of the Sacramento and American Rivers. He employed local Indians as well as Hawaiian Kanakas and purchased the movable property of Fort Ross from the Russians, including more than 40 cannon, to build his fort. Sutter's Fort became a mecca for the foreign community in California, particularly the Americans, who began to enter California in larger numbers. Sutter began developing local industries such as fur trading, wheat farming, and weaving, providing employment to anyone who wanted to work.

In 1837, a merchant named John Marsh immigrated to California from Independence, Missouri, after he had become bankrupt. Marsh claimed to be a medical doctor, having an A.B. degree from Harvard. This was sufficient, however, for him to get a license from the Los Angeles ayuntamiento. Marsh traveled north to San Francisco, and eventually purchased four square leagues of land in what is now Contra Costa County, where he settled down to become a ranchero. Marsh was active in writing letters back home urging more Americans to come to California, suggesting that they could easily “play the Texas game” and take over the Mexican province. As a result of these publicity efforts, Marsh’s friends in Missouri formed the Western Emigration Society in 1841 and set about encouraging settlers to go to California. One of those who began organizing a wagon train of immigrants was 22-year-old schoolteacher John Bidwell.

Bidwell encouraged some 68 Midwesterners to join the first overland wagon train of Americans to California. They set out from Sapling Grove, Kansas, on May 18, 1841. The elected captain of the group was John Bartleson, and the expedition became known as the Bidwell-Bartleson party. They were guided by a Jesuit priest, Father DeSmet, who was going to Oregon, and by an experienced mountain trapper who knew the route. In Idaho, about half the group chose to continue on to Oregon instead of to California. One member of the expedition mortally wounded himself with a gun and four others turned back. They had to abandon their wagons in the Sierra mountains and were reduced to eating mules and coyotes until they reached the California coast. After six months, 32 men, a woman named Nancy Kelsey, and her baby staggered onto Dr. Marsh’s rancho. The Americans in the Bidwell-Bartleson party were illegal immigrants, lacking passports, but Mariano Vallejo, the comandante of the region, was convinced that they did not need this formality and he allowed them to stay. Roughly five years later, some of these same Americans repaid this kindness with insult when they supported Vallejo’s imprisonment and backed an American military conquest of California.

The Bidwell-Bartleson expedition opened the door for other overland immigrant wagon trains. The same year, a group of 134 Americans left Santa Fe, New Mexico, under the direction of John Rowland and William Workman. They followed a route called the “Old Spanish Trail” from New Mexico to southern California, a route that had been partially used by the Spanish and Mexican traders and was well known by the 1830s. After reaching Los Angeles, some of the Americans decided to become permanent residents. Workman, Rowland, and several other members of the expedition became rancheros in the Los Angeles region, and they, too, later supported the American acquisition of California.

Bidwell’s written account of the 1841 overland trip to California found its way into the papers in the Midwest. Other accounts of California also enjoyed wide circulation, encouraging more immigration. California, however, had to compete with Oregon as a destination, and, until the publication of Bidwell’s

journal in 1842, California was losing the publicity campaign. This was due to the negative views of Thomas J. Farnham, an American who had briefly visited California in 1840 and whose published letters criticized the Mexican government's efforts to control immigration. Nevertheless, in 1843, several more American wagon trains found their way west to California. Joseph B. Chiles led 59 people into Sacramento via the northern route, and Lansford W. Hastings set out with 53 more from Missouri, although most of them decided to go to Oregon instead. In 1844, Andrew and Benjamin Kelsey brought 36 settlers overland following the by-then well-known trail, and Elisha Stevens and a large family of Murphys entered California with more than 50 settlers. The latter expedition was notable in that, for the first time, wagons were able to cross the Sierras. The next year, more than 250 Anglo American settlers made the crossing or entered the San Joaquin Valley via Oregon.

The most famous of the overland expeditions to California before the U.S.-Mexican war was the Donner party. In early 1846, 87 men, women, and children left Springfield, Illinois, for California, following the established route. Instead of taking the trail that would have led them north of the Great Salt Lake, they chose a shortcut. This route slowed them down, however, because they had to clear a trail for their wagons, and they lost some oxen in the process. Because of this delay, they arrived at the California mountains late in the fall and that year the snows came early. Soon, the Donner party found themselves caught in the mountains without supplies for the winter. At a lake near the summit (later named Donner Lake), they camped in 10 feet of snow, without adequate firewood or food. Faced with sure death, a small group of 15 set out to try to reach Sutter's Fort to get help. Only seven reached the San Joaquin Valley after having killed and eaten their two Indian guides and several other companions. When the rescue parties finally reached the stranded pioneers, they found more evidence of cannibalism. Only 45 of the original 87 had survived the ordeal. The Donner expedition became a macabre reminder of the perils of crossing the Sierras in the winter.

The same year as the Donner disaster, another group of immigrants entered California by sea. These were 200 Mormon settlers led by Sam Brannan. They had been sent by Joseph Smith to colonize the western outposts of Desert, the proposed Mormon national state, which was expected to stretch from the Great Salt Lake to southern California. Earlier settlers had been sent to San Bernardino, near the Mexican settlement of San Salvador, to establish a colony. The Mormon settlers who came in 1846 increased the presence of English-speaking residents, laying the foundation for an eventual American conquest.

Among the foreigners, one of the most influential was Thomas O. Larkin, who came to California in 1832 and established himself as a leading merchant in Monterey. Unlike other Americans who settled before the 1840s, Larkin did not marry into a Californio family and become a ranchero. He married an American woman and remained a U.S. citizen while learning Spanish and



Crossing the Plains, by H.W. Hansen, University of Southern California Libraries and California Historical Society, public domain, no known restrictions

As this image illustrates, the overland journey to California was fraught with peril. In the left foreground a party comes across a ruined wagon, a dead ox or horse, and its equally unfortunate owner.

slowly amassing a fortune as a merchant. Later, he was appointed the U.S. consul general and acted as a confidential agent for President James K. Polk, reporting on British interest in California. He also secretly worked to convince influential Californios to secede from the Mexican Republic and join the United States.

It is estimated that by 1846, on the eve of the U.S.-Mexican War and the American acquisition of California, there were about 1300 foreign-born settlers in California. About three-fourths of them were Americans, and European nationalities were represented as well. Except for those who had become Mexican citizens in order to receive land grants, most were immigrants who had entered without due authorization from the Mexican government. Local officials were only too glad to have new skilled workers, and they ignored the letter of the law. They did not fully realize that many of the new immigrants had no intention of assimilating into the Californio society. They did not learn Spanish, rejected the Catholic faith, and brought their own families with them instead of intermarrying with the Mexican population. This contrasted with the scores of Mexicanized Americans who had settled prior to the overland migrations of the 1830s, men like Don Abel Stearns in Los Angeles, Henry

Delano Fitch in San Diego, John B. R. Cooper in Monterey, and Alephs B. Thompson in Santa Barbara. These men had married into Californio families, become Mexican citizens, and accepted Mexican society. But these individuals were also of lukewarm loyalty to the Mexican Republic, and most sided with the Americans during the war that resulted in the conquest of California by the United States.

California and the World

Alta California took its first steps toward becoming a participant in the world's economy during the Mexican era, from 1821 through 1848. Trading ships from the United States, England, and France regularly called at California ports. The hide and tallow trade with the eastern United States and Britain increased. Beginning in 1813 and slowly increasing every year, ships plied the California coast laden with merchandise to trade for California hides and tallow. Most of the ships probably avoided paying port duties in Monterey, which amounted to a percentage of the cargo. Southern California led in the production of goods for export and San Diego, because of its port and climate, became the largest trading area in California. Once on board, the tallow was traded in Mexico and Peru and the hides found their way to New England's shoe and boot factories. The British attempted to compete with the Americans, establishing a trading store in Yerba Buena (San Francisco) run by the Hudson's Bay Company. But this outpost could not begin to challenge the Yankees, whose clipper ships regularly pulled into port. Visits by Russian, British, and American whaling ships also added to the Californio economy. These ships visited the California ports in search of food supplies, for which they traded manufactured goods.

Compared with other Mexican frontier regions, such as New Mexico and Texas, California had greater contact with other nations because of the relative ease of ocean communication and trade. Within a generation, the Californios had established themselves as a province of private landholders—haciendados and rancheros—where 500 landowning families dominated the Mexican society. In New Mexico, by contrast, very few private land grants were given during the Mexican era. Most people continued to live on Spanish land grants where title to the land was vested in the community, not in the individual. Alta California's Indian population was a ready source of cheap labor for the development of the thriving cattle industry, whereas the New Mexicans and Texans did not have this benefit. For the most part, the Californios did not have to endure the perils of hostile Indian attacks, which were more common in both Texas and New Mexico. Politically, the Californios enjoyed the same kind of regional democracy as their frontier cousins through the ayuntamiento and alcalde systems; they also had similar internal rivalries and factions based on family and region. Texas had separated from Mexico after the Anglo American immigrant

revolution in 1836, and thereafter the English-speaking Americans controlled the former Mexican province. New Mexico and California, while leading successful challenges to Mexican centralism, escaped the violence and racism of the Texas rebellion. They remained part of the Mexican Republic and in control of their own society.

Summary

In 1846, Mexican California was a pastoral society that was rapidly changing because of the changes set in motion by the secularization of the mission lands and the opening of the province to foreign trade and settlement. Few could have foreseen that within a few years, even more profound changes were to catapult California into an entirely different era. On the eve of the American conquest, differing cultural traditions and visions competed for control of California's future.

The oldest customs were those of the native peoples, who had been decimated by disease and challenged in their customary territories. Those who lived away from the coastal regions and avoided contact with the Spanish and Mexican colonists continued to live as they had for thousands of years. Even while their physical environment changed, through the introduction of new plants and animals, they continued in their spiritual beliefs about the correct ways to live. Others adapted to Mexican Catholic society by mixing their traditional ways with those of the newcomers. They became acculturated to and dependent on their conquerors.

The Mexican, Spanish-speaking mestizos in California inherited a culture that emphasized family honor, community and regional pride, and ethnic-racial hierarchy. For them, the land was less for profit than for possession and dominance, a mark of the prestige of being an *hidalgo*, or nobleman. The younger Mexican Californians grew up nourished on ideas of popular democracy, free trade, and rationalism, inheriting an ideology of the American and French Revolutions as it was translated through Mexico. Progressive Mexicans believed that they could benefit from political and marital alliances with the Anglo Americans and had a positive view of the Americans' contribution to California.

The English-speaking settlers in California were divided over their views of the future. Mexicanized Americans, like Don Abel Stearns, thought that Mexicans and Americans could and should coexist in harmony for their mutual profit, and that the Californios were willing students in the development of the region. The newer immigrants, those who had come overland by wagon train in the 1840s, considered the Mexicans to be a lazy, thrifless people with few redeeming graces. The Californios who owned the ranchos were obstacles to progress, they thought, and the Californios' Catholic faith was an anathema

to these Protestant families. Many of them had absorbed a sense of Manifest Destiny, a belief in the inevitable expansion of the United States across North America, often linked to a faith in the superiority and inevitable triumph of the Anglo American race over native peoples and Mexicans. The future, the Americans thought, belonged to them.

Suggested Readings

- Chávez-García, Miroslava, *Negotiating Conquest: Gender and Power in California, 1770s to 1880s* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2004). An in-depth examination of racial and gender relations in Mexican California.
- Haas, Lisbeth, *Conquests and Historical Identities in California, 1769–1936* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990). A scholarly yet readable analysis of the changes in ethnic identities among Indians and Californios in southern California.
- Langum, David J., *Law and Community on the Mexican Frontier: Anglo-American Expatriates and the Clash of Legal Traditions, 1821–1846* (London and Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987). The most thorough analysis of the Mexican legal system.
- Monroy, Douglas, *Thrown Among Strangers: The Making of Mexican Culture in Frontier California* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990). A new attempt to synthesize the new social history with California's early history.
- Osio, Antonio María, *The History of Alta California: A Memoir of Mexican California* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996). One of the first survey histories of California written by a native Californio, and finally published after more than 100 years.
- Pico, Pío, *Don Pío Pico's Historical Narrative*, Arthur P. Botello, trans. (Glendale, CA: Arthur Clark Co., 1973). An eyewitness account of many of the major events of Mexican California, written by the last Mexican governor.
- Rosenus, Alan, *General M. G. Vallejo and the Advent of the Americans* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995). An important study of one of the key Mexican political figures of this era.
- Weber, David J., *The Mexican Frontier, 1821–1846: The American Southwest Under Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982). One of the best surveys to place California's Mexican period in the context of Mexican history.

War, Conquest, and Gold: The American Era Begins, 1845–1855

Main Topics

- The War Between the United States and Mexico
- The Gold Rush
- California Transformed
- Summary

In the 1870s, Hubert Howe Bancroft, a publisher in San Francisco, set out to write a multivolume history of California and dispatched assistants to interview the Mexican residents of the state, who had important memories of the region's history. Thomas Savage, one of Bancroft's helpers, interviewed Doña Felipa Osuna de Marron. At the time, she had been a widow for 25 years. She had lived in California as a Spanish and as a Mexican subject and vividly remembered the American conquest of her native town, San Diego.

In 1846, at the beginning of the war, she was married to Juan María de Marron, a rancher who had been appointed the administrator of Mission San Luis Rey properties. Felipa was at the former mission in the summer of 1846 when General John C. Frémont and the American troops arrived, hoping to capture California political leaders. The Americans questioned her about where her husband was and who else was at the mission. Don Matias Moreno, the secretary to the California government, was with Doña Felipa when the Americans appeared.

CHAPTER 4	War, Conquest, and Gold: The American Era Begins, 1845–1855
1842	Francisco Lopez discovers gold in southern California
MAY 11, 1846	United States declares war on Mexico
JUNE 10, 1846	The Bear Flag Rebellion
JULY 2, 1846	American forces arrive in Monterey
AUGUST 13, 1846	Commodore Stockton occupies Los Angeles
SEPTEMBER 22, 1846	Successful rebellion against American occupation forces in Los Angeles
DECEMBER 8, 1846	Battle of San Pascual; Mexican victory over General Kearny
JANUARY 13, 1847	Surrender of Mexican forces at Cahuenga Pass
JANUARY 24, 1848	John Marshall discovers gold in Coloma
FEBRUARY 2, 1848	Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ends U.S.-Mexican War
JULY 4, 1849	Outbreak of anti-foreign violence in mining camps
SEPTEMBER 1, 1849	State Constitutional Convention meets at Colton Hall, Monterey
1850	Mariposa War begins; Humboldt Indians killed
APRIL 1850	California legislature passes the Foreign Miner's Tax law
SEPTEMBER 9, 1850	California admitted as a state to the Union
1851	Joaquín Murrieta is reported killed by the California Rangers
1852	Antonio Garra leads rebellion and is executed in San Diego

Even though she “greatly feared the Americans who were not disciplined soldiers,” Felipa had the courage to quickly disguise him as a sick cousin, fooling the Americans, who then left. Once they had departed, Don Matias, who had recognized his good friend Don Santiago Argüello who had been riding with the Americans, sent a messenger to catch up with Argüello to tell him to return, so that he could join him. So Don Matias changed sides because his friend had done so.

After this incident at the mission, Felipa went with her husband to their rancho in the backcountry; later, her husband sent her alone to San Diego for safety. She recounted that in San Diego, Don Miguel de Pedrorena, Don Pedro C. Carrillo, and Argüello, along with others, were allied with the Americans. The Californios who remained opposed to the Americans asked her husband to join them and he did so. Hoping to be reunited with his family, he joined Felipa and their children in the pueblo of San Diego, which was then occupied by the U.S. Army. Soon

they secured a safe conduct pass to leave town and they fled back to their rancho. There they found the Californios “furious” with her husband, accusing him of working as a courier for the Americans. They threatened to shoot him, but instead confiscated the family’s horses and took the family as prisoners to another rancho. Almost every day, the Californio partisans descended on the rancho to take what they needed, driving Doña Felipa and her family to the verge of starvation. As she recalled, “most of what we had was taken from us, including the cattle that had been given to us by the mission fathers.”

When the war ended, the Californios continued to accuse Felipa and her husband of being pro-American, though they had never fought with the Americans. Their own countrymen finally forced the Osunas to ask for protection from the American commander of San Diego. Felipa and her husband journeyed from the rancho to town, and when they reached the outskirts her husband raised a white flag. They entered the pueblo, leaving their few remaining livestock outside. Felipa reported that some Americans in San Diego were angry at the return of these Mexicans, whom they regarded as enemies, but the Americans did not punish them.

These episodes, recalled by Felipa Osuna in an interview to Thomas Savage in 1878, reveal some of the schisms among the Californios over the American conquest. As evidenced in her testimony, the conquest of California was more than a military one, extending to a struggle between friends and families. The real conquest—the transformation of the economy and society—began a few months after the end of the war with the discovery of gold. Within a year, thousands of immigrants from the United States, Latin America, Europe, and Asia overwhelmed the native peoples and the Californios. Virtually overnight, they created a new society—one that was entirely alien to Felipa Osuna and her family.

Questions to Consider

- What was the role that Californios played in the war between the United States and Mexico?
- How are we to evaluate the Gold Rush as a social, political, and moral event, given its mixed effect on the traditional cultures of California?
- What has been the legacy of the Gold Rush on people of various ethnic and racial backgrounds?
- What is the larger meaning for California’s history of the economic and social changes brought about by the U.S.-Mexican War and the Gold Rush?

The War Between the United States and Mexico

On the eve of the war between the United States and Mexico, the northern states and the provinces of the Mexican Republic were increasingly being influenced by American commercial interests. The opening of the Santa Fe Trail in the 1820s and the increase in Yankee hide and tallow ships in California created new economic ties with the Mexican upper classes. In 1836, the Anglo Americans in Texas had waged a war of independence from Mexico and declared themselves a sovereign state, the Lone Star Republic. The Texans longed to join the United States but were prevented from doing so until 1845 because of opposition from northerners, who feared adding another slave state. In the interim, the Texans carried on a thriving trade between their ranches in central Texas and Louisiana. In 1842, they unsuccessfully tried to conquer New Mexico to add its lands to their new republic. Finally, in 1845 the United States admitted Texas to the Union as a slave state, with the Texans asserting that their southern boundary was the Rio Grande. Mexico, on the other hand, pointed out that the historic boundary between Texas and the province of Coahuila had always been the Nueces River. The friction between these two claims provided the spark that eventually led to an armed conflict between U.S. and Mexican troops in 1846.

There had been other rebellions in Mexico's northern provinces. In 1837, the lower classes in New Mexico led a rebellion against the Mexican government's centralizing administration, seeking more autonomy for their village governments. The Mexican upper classes soon crushed this rebellion. But they too had their grievances with the Mexican government, primarily its strict trade regulations. The merchants and other wealthy people of northern New Mexico grew to depend on the manufactured goods brought to them over the Santa Fe Trail. The value of goods brought overland from St. Louis increased every year, and Hispano trading families in Santa Fe grew rich. Meanwhile, the upper classes knew from past experience that the unstable Mexican government would not be able to preserve their interests.

The Californios were also dissatisfied with the Mexican government (see Chapter 3) and had deposed several Mexican governors, replacing them with their own native-born *hijos de país*. The rebellion of 1836, which placed Juan Bautista Alvarado in power, increased the self-confidence of Californio landholders that they could control their own affairs. They were growing wealthy from the hide and tallow trade, much of it illicitly conducted with American, British, and French ships, and some of them talked openly about separating from Mexico and joining the United States.

Though the upper classes in the Mexican north were growing more and more economically dependent on the Americans, and some of them were contemplating political separation, the vast majority of the more than 100,000 Mexican citizens who lived on the frontier, including Hispanicized Indians,

were opposed to being forcibly annexed by the United States. They valued their independence and cherished their culture. When the war came, most realized what was being lost, and they fought back.

Manifest Destiny

In May 1846, the United States declared war on Mexico. Though the causes of this conflict were many, perhaps the most important was the spirit of expansionism called Manifest Destiny. Thousands of Anglo Americans believed it was God's will that they move west and north across the entire North American continent, occupying the lands of the Mexicans and Indians and casting them aside in the process. As John O'Sullivan, editor of the *Democratic Review* and popularizer of the term "Manifest Destiny" wrote in 1845, "the Anglo-Americans alone will cover the immense space contained between the polar regions and the tropics." For most, however, Manifest Destiny had an economic dimension, justifying a more efficient use of natural resources by the industrious Anglo-Saxons. Mixed in with this sentiment of justifiable economic conquest were attitudes of the racial superiority of the Anglo American people. Walt Whitman, the poet, expressed this view in 1846 when he wrote, "What has miserable inefficient Mexico—with her superstition, her burlesque upon freedom, her actual tyranny by the few over the many, what has she to do with the peopling of the new world? With a noble race? Be it ours to achieve that mission." Or, as a writer for the *New York Evening Post* put it in 1845, "The Mexicans are *Aboriginal Indians*, and they must share the destiny of their race."

Beginning with Andrew Jackson's presidency in the 1830s, successive American administrations had offered to purchase California from Mexico in order to give the United States a window on the Pacific and to fulfill the nation's destiny. Mexico had repeatedly refused these offers. In 1845, President James K. Polk sent John Slidell to make yet another offer to purchase California and to settle a dispute over the boundary between Texas and Mexico. The Mexican government refused. President Polk offered as justification for his declaration of war on Mexico the fact that the Mexican government rejected Slidell's offer of \$40 million for the purchase of California. There were other, more immediate, causes as well. Texas had been annexed as a state in 1845, but the Mexican government did not accept the Rio Grande as the southern boundary of Texas. In the spring of 1846, Mexican troops attacked Zachary Taylor's troops on what they believed was their own country's soil. President Polk claimed these skirmishes were proof of a Mexican invasion of the United States. On May 13, 1846, he asked Congress for a declaration of war. In his war message, he recalled the failed attempts at negotiating grievances between the two countries and blamed Mexico for starting the war. "As war exists," he argued, "and, notwithstanding all our efforts to avoid it, exists by the act of Mexico herself, we are called upon by every consideration of duty and

patriotism to vindicate with decision the honor, the rights, and the interests of our country." Though the declaration of war passed by a large vote in the Congress, there were opponents. Some southerners, including John C. Calhoun, feared that a war with Mexico would result in renewed conflict over slavery in the territories and would admit to the Union a new class of non-white citizens—a dangerous precedent for the slaveholding south. Some northerners opposed the war because they viewed it as a conspiracy of slave owners trying to acquire new lands to expand their "peculiar institution." Some of them, including Henry David Thoreau and Abraham Lincoln, also opposed the war on moral grounds, since, in their view, the United States was clearly the aggressor nation.

An important factor in the agitation for war was the desire of many American expansionists to annex California. The value of California harbors for the China trade and the threat of possible British or French occupation of this area combined to heighten interest in acquiring not only California, but all of the territory between California and Texas—the present-day states of New Mexico and Arizona and parts of Nevada, Utah, and Colorado—as well. In 1844, presidential candidate Polk had listed the acquisition of California as one of the objectives of his presidential administration.

The Californios had been aware for some time of the expansionist designs of the Americanos. The mistaken capture of Monterey by Commodore Thomas ap Catesby Jones in 1842 sounded a clear warning of the expansionist objectives of the United States. The U.S. consul in Monterey, Thomas Larkin, had been sending letters to Washington discussing the possibility of annexation with the cooperation of progressive Californios and American émigrés who shared the belief that their political and economic independence would best be guaranteed by the United States. In 1845, President Polk commissioned Larkin as a secret agent to convince the Californio leadership to break away from Mexico and join the United States. Larkin noted that both Mariano Vallejo and General José Castro were predisposed toward independence from Mexico and union with the United States. But, in the spring of 1846, Polk's strategy of acquiring California through peaceful intrigue disintegrated, a casualty of agitation for war and the violent actions of Americans in California.

Frémont and the Bear Flaggers

John Charles Frémont, whose father was a French émigré and whose mother was the daughter of a prominent Virginian family, grew up with a burning desire to be famous. He married Jessie Benton, daughter of Thomas Hart Benton, a powerful U.S. senator. Frémont, like his father-in-law, sought to advance his career by promoting western expansion. In 1842, 1843, and again in 1845, Frémont led expeditions across the Rockies into California and Oregon, earning for himself the name "Pathfinder." In the winter of 1845–46, Frémont, by then commissioned as a lieutenant in the Army Corps of

Topographical Engineers, entered California with a group of 62 men and a howitzer cannon. They camped near Monterey. Ostensibly, he was on a mapping expedition, but even today the real purpose of his mission is unclear. Historians have debated whether Frémont was on a secret presidential mission to accomplish the conquest of California. No hard evidence, however, has ever been found to prove that he was part of a plot to separate California from Mexico. Perhaps his actions in California during the early months of 1846 were his own initiatives and not directed by secret orders. In any case, his subsequent actions did assist the American military conquest of California.

When Frémont arrived in California in the spring of 1846, he told General Castro, the military commander of the north, that he was on a scientific expedition. Castro, however, suspected otherwise and ordered Frémont and his men to leave the province. For three days Frémont hesitated. He had his men fortify their positions atop Gavilan Hill near Monterey and defiantly raised the American flag. But after several days of consulting with Oliver Larkin, the U.S. consul in Monterey, and seeing the Mexicans prepare for an attack, Frémont wisely decided to remove his troops from the area and to heed Castro's orders. He and his men slowly withdrew from California, marching toward Oregon. Upon their reaching Klamath Lake, Lieutenant Archibald Gillespie arrived from Washington, D.C., bringing letters from Senator Thomas Hart Benton. Some historians suspect that Gillespie may have also brought oral instructions from President Polk himself, namely, to assist in the impending conquest of California by arms. We will never know what was said, but soon after Gillespie's arrival Frémont ordered his men to march back to California. In May, he camped near present-day Marysville, a short march from Sutter's Fort. In the days that followed, small groups of Americans came to Frémont's camp and told him of rumors that General Castro was preparing an army to expel all Americans from California.

On June 8, acting on rumors of a possible Californio military action against the American settlers at Sutter's Fort, Frémont sent a message to William Ide, one of their leaders, suggesting that they come to his camp for protection. On June 10, some 12 or 14 Americans led by Ezekiel Merritt launched a revolt against the Mexican government, capturing approximately 170 horses that were being driven from Sacramento to Santa Clara for use by General Castro's troops. They now had a choice—either be horse thieves or revolutionaries. They chose the latter. They released the Mexicans who were leading the horses, telling them to tell Castro that the Americans were in possession of Sonoma and New Helvetia (Sutter's Fort), and then they returned to Frémont's camp with the horses. Ide remembered that Frémont had encouraged the horse raid and presented to the American settlers a “plan of conquest,” which he would support but not participate in directly. The horse thieves then set out for Sonoma, the residence of General Mariano Vallejo, one of the most powerful Californios and a man who had already voiced his support for American annexation.

In the early morning hours of June 14, 1846, 33 rough and dirty men descended on Vallejo's home and forced their way into his parlor, demanding the surrender of his command of the Mexican military forces in the region. Jacob P. Leese, Vallejo's brother-in-law, acted as an interpreter. The mob slowly learned that Vallejo was actually an ally, but they wanted a surrender nevertheless. Negotiations dragged on and Vallejo, with typical Californio hospitality, broke out the *aguardiente* (brandy). The mob proceeded to get drunk, and after a while someone put together a homemade flag, a grizzly bear with a red star on a white field. William Ide declared their intention to break away from Mexican despotism and establish a republic, along the lines of Texas in 1836. With their flag, the proclamation of independence, and a surrender document, the Bear Flaggers marched to Frémont's camp with their prisoners—Vallejo, his brother Salvador, Leese, and Victor Prudon, a French resident of Sonoma. Then, with Frémont's men as an escort, they proceeded to Sutter's Fort, where Frémont assumed responsibility for the prisoners. In the few days after the capture of Sonoma, the Bear Flaggers had also killed three Californios in a skirmish near San Rafael, and the Mexican army had executed two Americans near the Russian River. Frémont, by his words and then through his actions, joined the rebellion. Within a few weeks, his unofficial actions gained the approval of the U.S. government, as news reached California of the declaration of war with Mexico. The Bear Flaggers were then incorporated into the U.S. Army.

Occupation and Resistance

Congress declared war against Mexico on May 13, 1846, but news of the war traveled slowly. Commodore John D. Sloat, in charge of the U.S. Navy's Pacific Squadron, had orders to occupy the California harbors in the event of war. Upon hearing of the war declaration, he ordered his ships to sail into Monterey Bay, on July 2. He did not immediately capture the town, however, remembering the earlier embarrassment of Commodore Jones. He waited five days, until learning of the Bear Flag Rebellion. Fearing a British move to seize California, he raised the American flag over the customhouse and announced to the startled populace that "henceforward California will be a portion of the United States." Sloat reassured the Californios that they would benefit from being part of the United States, and he called on General Castro and Governor Pío Pico to surrender. On July 23, because of ill health, Sloat turned over his command to Commodore Robert F. Stockton, a politically ambitious naval officer. Stockton immediately commissioned Frémont and Gillespie as officers in the newly formed California Battalion, composed of Frémont's company of engineers plus a contingent of former Bear Flaggers.

The bulk of the fighting in the conquest of California took place in the south. In the summer of 1846, General Castro and Governor Pico joined forces in Los Angeles to await the American advance, but they soon concluded that

they were hopelessly outnumbered and outgunned. Both leaders departed for Mexico to seek reinforcements. Meanwhile, Frémont and Gillespie sailed for San Diego and on July 29, after some brief resistance, occupied the town. Californios still controlled the surrounding countryside and continued to harass the occupiers.

Commodore Stockton marched south from Monterey, and following a skirmish his troops occupied Los Angeles, on August 13, 1846. After issuing another proclamation stating that California was now officially part of the United States and promising to respect Mexican political institutions and laws, Stockton and Frémont returned north and left the occupation of Los Angeles in the hands of Gillespie and about 50 soldiers.

What followed was a wave of Mexican Californio resistance against the American invaders. In Los Angeles, the American troops entered private homes and took household goods. Gillespie enforced a strict curfew and forbade Californios to meet in groups. Resentment grew until finally an uprising took place on September 22, 1846, led by José María Flores and Serbulo Varela. Several hundred Californios surrounded the American fortified position and Californio leaders issued El Plan de Los Angeles, calling on all Mexicans to fight against the Americans who were threatening to reduce them to “a condition worse than that of slaves.” Gillespie, with only 50 men in his command, saw that his situation was hopeless, and on September 29 he signed the Articles of Capitulation. The Americans were then allowed to leave the Los Angeles district and march to San Pedro. Soon after that, the new Californio governor, José María Flores, declared California in a state of siege, secured loans to pay for a war, and began to recruit more troops.

For the next four months Los Angeles remained in Californio hands, and their military forces also managed to reoccupy San Diego, Santa Barbara, Santa Inés, and San Luis Obispo. From Los Angeles, Flores sent Francisco Rico, Serbulo Varela, and 50 men to recapture San Diego; this was done without firing a shot in October 1846. They held the town for three weeks until October 24, 1846, when the Americans recaptured the town after a brief battle. According to one eyewitness, the Americans hauled down the Mexican flag, but before it could touch the ground, María Antonia Machado, wife of a local ranchero, rushed into the plaza to save it from being trampled. She clutched it to her bosom and cut the halyards to prevent the American flag from being raised.

In their military forays against the American troops, the Californios had the advantage of knowing the terrain and of being superior horsemen. The Americans had superior weapons and formal military training, but the Californios used guerrilla tactics and effectively won several victories. The Californio lancers won battles at Chico Rancho (September 26 and 27, 1846), Dominguez Rancho (October 8), Natividad (November 29), and finally at San Pascual (December 8).

The Battle of San Pascual was the bloodiest battle fought in California and was both a victory for the Californio forces and evidence of their determination

After orchestrating the Bear Flag capture of Sonoma, John C. Fremont led attacks against Californios in San Diego and along the coast from Monterey to San Luis Obispo.



"John Charles Fremont (1813-1890)" by Political Graveyard is licensed by CC BY 2.0

to resist the American conquest. Early in December, Andrés Pico and a force of 72 Californios lay in wait for the Americans, who were rumored to be approaching from the east. A large body of American troops under General Stephen W. Kearny had, in fact, entered California after marching overland from New Mexico. Kearny's men numbered 179, including several Delaware Indian scouts led by Kit Carson and a few African American servants of the officers and mule drivers.

Early in the morning of December 6, 1846, the American force attacked the Californio camp in the Indian village of San Pascual. During the charge, the Americans became strung out in a long file, with those on stronger mules and horses far outdistancing those on tired mounts. The few gunshots exchanged were in this first charge, as the Californio troops met the early arrivals some distance from their camp. The Californios raced away, allowing themselves to be chased for about three-fourths of a mile. They then turned and charged the Americans with their lances. It had been raining occasionally for several days, and the Americans' gunpowder was damp and unreliable, forcing them to fight with their sabers. The Californios were armed with long lances and were expert at using them to slaughter cattle. In the hand-to-hand combat, the Californios had the advantage of superior mounts, weapons, and battle preparation.

Only about half of the American force was actually involved in the battle. The others were in reserve, guarding the supplies and baggage. The Americans were unfamiliar with their newly issued carbines and had trouble loading these guns in the dark and cold. The two groups fought most of the battle—about half an hour—in the dim light and fog. During the battle, the Californios captured one of the American cannons. Finally, the Americans

brought up another howitzer, firing at the Californios and causing them to retreat.

Nineteen American soldiers were dead on the field of battle. Two more died later from their wounds. Kearny himself suffered three lance wounds and temporarily relieved himself of command. The Californios had 11 wounded, and one of their group, Pablo Véjar, was taken prisoner. Some of the American deaths may have been from friendly fire in the dim light and confusion. Only one American was killed by a bullet.

General Kearny later wrote that the battle of December 6 had been a “victory” and that the Californios had “fled from the field.” One U.S. soldier, however, wrote that the Americans had been saved from decimation by the Californios’ capture of the American howitzer—an act that made the Californios “consider themselves victorious, which saved the balance of the command.” Later, at the court-martial of General Frémont, Kearny admitted that a rescue party from San Diego had saved them from disaster. Generally the Navy officers, headed by Stockton, considered the Battle of San Pascual a defeat for the U.S. Army. Of course, the Californios considered this engagement a victory, and news of it spread throughout the district.

A month later, on January 29, 1847, another overland army arrived in San Diego. This was the Mormon Battalion, commissioned by the U.S. Army to survey a wagon road between Santa Fe and San Diego. The 350 soldiers traveled more than 1000 miles on foot but arrived too late to participate in the final battles of the war in California. Their numbers augmented a small contingent of Mormons who had settled in southern California near San Bernardino.

California Indians and the War

During the Mexican War, some California Indian groups increased their raids on the Californio ranchos, taking advantage of the weakened defense of the Mexican settlements. The Californios thought the Americans were behind the increased Indian depredations, but the majority of the attacks were probably the work of opportunists who took advantage of wartime chaos. In the early months of the war, though, California Indians did join the Americans. When Commodore Stockton organized his march in San Diego to recapture Los Angeles from the Californio insurgents, more than 100 Indians formed his rear guard to protect the U.S. Army from possible attack. Frémont recruited a small number of local Indians to join his men as he marched from Monterey to San Luis Obispo. And Edward Kern, the American commander at Sutter’s Fort, recruited 200 California and Oregon Indians to help secure the north and to prepare for the reconquest of southern California.

A major tragedy involving the natives and the Californios during the war was the Pauma massacre in southern California. A few days after the Battle of San Pascual, 11 Californio men and youths took refuge in an adobe house on Rancho Pauma, owned by José Antonio Serrano. While they were there, they

were tricked into allowing themselves to be captured by Luiseño Indians led by Manuelito Cota. The Indians took the men as prisoners to Warner's Ranch. There they consulted with a Mexican named Yguera and William Marshall, an American who had married the daughter of a local Indian chieftain. After a short captivity, the captives were tortured to death by thrusts of red-hot spears. Later rumors strongly implicated Marshall in the murders; he hated one of the prisoners, José María Alvarado, who had successfully courted Doña Lugarda Osuna, once the object of Marshall's affections. Marshall may have suggested that the Indians would be rewarded by the Americans for disposing of the Californios.

Not all Indians supported uprisings against the Mexicans. Within days of the capture of the Californios, a force of natives from San Pascual who were loyal to the Mexican cause set out to rescue the captives, but they arrived too late. After learning of the massacre, a punitive force of 22 Californios immediately set out with a force of friendly Cahuilla Indians. They ambushed a Luiseño force, killed more than 100, and took 20 captives, who were later killed by the Cahuillas. The massacre of the Californios at Rancho Pauma illustrated both the persistence of native animosities toward the Mexicans and the possible manipulation of Indian hatreds by the Americans. News of this massacre, along with memories of previous uprisings and knowledge that the Indians vastly outnumbered the Californios and Mexicans, may have worked to demoralize the California resistance movement.

Peace

Despite the Californios' valiant though somewhat hopeless resistance against the American invaders, the American forces had recaptured all of southern California by the winter of 1847. Following the defeat of the last Californio army near Los Angeles, Andrés Pico signed a surrender agreement at Cahuenga Pass on January 13, 1847. Elsewhere in the Southwest, however, resistance continued. In New Mexico, the Taos Indians, in alliance with some of the Hispano families, rebelled against the American occupiers, killed the American military governor, Charles Bent, and recaptured some of the towns in northern New Mexico. On January 24, 1847, a Hispano-Indian army of 1500 met the Americans at La Cañada near Santa Fe, New Mexico, and were defeated. The Americans marched on the town of Mora and destroyed it, then marched south to surround Taos Pueblo, where the remnants of the resistance had entrenched themselves. In the days that followed, more than 150 defenders were killed and their leaders were captured. Fifteen were tried and convicted of conspiracy, murder, and treason in a display of mock justice. This marked the end of armed resistance in the Southwest.

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo

In Mexico, the fight against the American invaders killed tens of thousands of soldiers and civilians in massive clashes of armies, at first in the north, near Monterrey, Mexico, and then in the Valley of Mexico. By January 1847, the

General Andrés Pico, brother of Pío Pico, commanded the Mexican troops at San Pascual. He later signed the Treaty of Cahuenga in 1847 ending the hostilities in California. After the war, he became a successful politician serving the California state Senate in 1859. What does this 1855 portrait reveal about Andrés Pico's Mexican identity?



Photographic portrait of Andrés Pico. University of Southern California libraries and the California Historical Society, public domain, no known restrictions.

U.S. Army, commanded by General Winfield Scott, occupied Mexico City and waited to hear the results of peace negotiations. Pressed by European creditors, lacking money to pay their own troops, wracked by internal rebellion, and facing the occupation of their principal cities, the Mexican government had little choice but to sign a treaty of peace, giving in to the Americans' territorial demands in exchange for the removal of troops from their homeland. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, ending the war, was signed in a town near Mexico City, across the street from the shrine to the patron saint of Mexico, Our Lady of Guadalupe, on February 2, 1848. Among the provisions in the treaty were those specifying the new boundary between the two nations as starting "one marine league due south of the southernmost point of the Port of San Diego" and running east to the Colorado River, then east following the Gila River and an as yet undefined latitude line to the Rio Grande. The Mexican provinces of California and New Mexico now lay within the United States. Articles VIII and IX of the treaty gave assurances regarding the property and citizenship rights of the Mexicans in the newly conquered territories. Article VIII specifically promised to protect the rights of absentee Mexican landholders and to give U.S. citizenship to all Mexicans who wanted it. Article IX promised that Congress would give citizenship "at the proper time" and that the Mexicans "in the meantime shall be maintained and protected in the free enjoyment of their liberty and property, and secured in the free exercise of their religion without restriction." Finally, the treaty transferred more than 500,000 square miles of Mexican territory to the United States.

The final ratified version of the treaty omitted Article X, which had contained stronger language protecting land rights, namely, that "all grants of land

made by the Mexican government or by the competent authorities, in territories previously appertaining to Mexico ... shall be respected as valid, to the same extent if said territories had remained within the limits of Mexico." The deletion of this article proved fatal to the future of the Mexican landholders in California. In lieu of the deleted article, the final treaty included the Protocol of Queretaro promising to respect land grant titles, but the United States Supreme Court ultimately invalidated it.

The U.S.-Mexican War awakened new nationalist impulses within Mexico and eventually produced a reform movement led by Benito Juárez in the 1850s. In the United States, the Mexican cession provoked a new and heated debate over slavery in the newly acquired territories. This played a major role in the outbreak of the U.S. Civil War in 1861—the bloodiest conflict in American history.

Within the conquered territories, there were competing visions regarding the future of the territory. The California tribes outnumbered the whites despite the influx of hundreds of American soldiers. Most natives remained unaffected by the war, particularly those living on their traditional homelands away from the settled coastal regions. A few had joined the Americans as scouts and guides during the conflict. Even fewer capitalized on the war to settle old grievances against the Mexicans. Native peoples who had become Hispanicized and who worked on the ranchos and in the pueblos now found themselves with more aggressive masters, the Americans. Indian laborers were still the backbone of the agricultural and ranching industries, and the new American masters inherited a dependence on this labor force.

The Divided Mind of the Californios

On the eve of the American era, the Spanish-speaking Mexicans in California were divided in their attitudes about their status as Americans. Some, like Mariano Vallejo or Juan Bandini, were optimistic about their future under an American regime that they thought would bring political stability and increased commercial opportunities for all. It was impossible for them to envision how much their traditional way of life would change. For now, they saw what seemed to be a new opportunity for their enrichment. Others, like Pío Pico, who had been allowed to return to California, or Felipa Osuna de Marron in San Diego, viewed the American occupiers with great suspicion. They felt sure that the conquest meant more than just the transfer of political sovereignty, for they were aware of the differences between the two cultures and knew that they could not coexist easily. Finally, there were the young men who had fought against the Americans in various battles or who almost immediately felt the outrages of racism as the Americans took over their houses and lands. Serbulo Varela, leader of the recapture of Los Angeles in 1847, along with Salomon Pico, Juan Flores, and scores of other ex-soldiers, became outlaws rather than submit to the Americans. In subsequent decades, their violent actions in response to the American occupation became the source of legend.

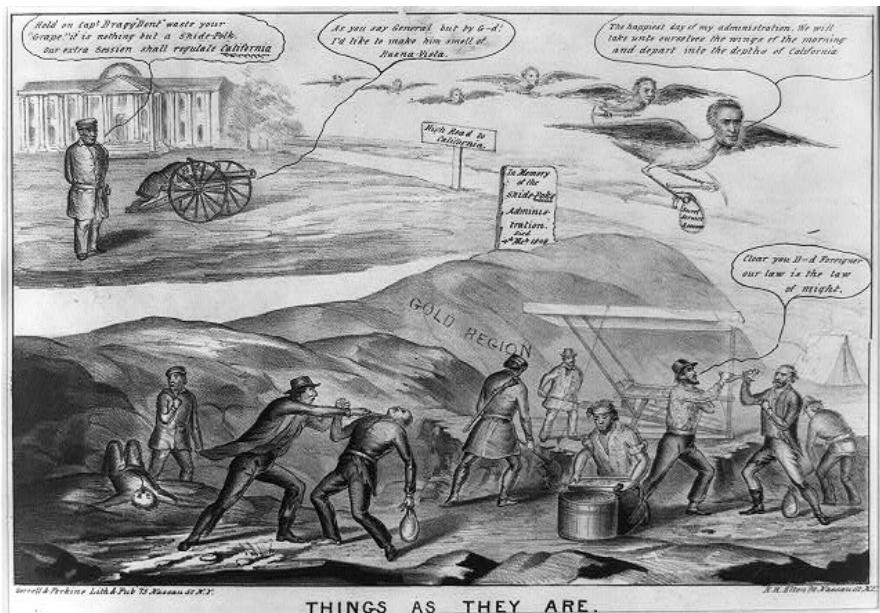
It soon became apparent to the Californios that the new American masters believed in their own racial and cultural superiority and that they regarded the mestizo landless classes as little better than Indians. The conflicts between these two groups became evident as thousands of new immigrants began flooding northern California, attracted by the discovery of gold near Sacramento.

The Gold Rush

In 1842, Francisco Lopez discovered gold in San Francisquito canyon in southern California. For several years, hundreds of gold miners trekked north from Sonora to work the mines there. They scoured the riverbanks in a 20-square-mile area. Mining the deposits depended on water, which diminished in quantity as the number of miners increased. By 1843, about 2000 ounces of gold had been taken out of the canyon. While gold continued to be mined in subsequent years, eventually it played out. This first California Gold Rush paled in comparison to the impact of the discovery of gold on January 24, 1848.

Gold! The Discovery of 1848

James W. Marshall, an employee of John Sutter, was building a sawmill on the American River at a place called Coloma. Sutter had employed about 50 former members of the Mormon Battalion, who had drifted north from San Diego, along with a group of Indian laborers. While they were cutting a ditch to provide water for the mill, Marshall noticed a few gold-colored flecks. He collected them over a four-day period, then hurried to Sutter's Fort to consult with Sutter. Together, they read an encyclopedia entry on gold and performed primitive tests to confirm whether or not it was the precious metal. Sutter concluded that it was, in fact, gold but he was very anxious that the discovery not disrupt his plans for construction and farming. At the same time, he set about gaining legitimate title to as much land near the discovery as possible. Although Sutter sought to keep his discovery a secret, word leaked out when he sent Charles Bennett to Monterey to secure title to the land and its mineral rights. Bennett traveled as far as Benicia, where he bragged about the discovery of gold at a local store. Then, in San Francisco, he confided with acquaintances who had experience in gold mining. Meanwhile, Samuel Brannan, a former Mormon leader who owned a store near Sutter's Fort, found out that local workers were paying for supplies with small quantities of gold dust. The Mormon workers gave him a tithe in gold and when Brannan returned to San Francisco he publicized the news, running through the streets with a bottle of gold dust in one hand and waving his hat shouting, "Gold! Gold! Gold from the American River." Nevertheless, the importance of this discovery was not immediately appreciated. As late as May 1848, San Francisco newspapers were blasé



A grim view of conditions in the California goldfields and a critique of the Polk administration that led the U.S. into war with Mexico.

Things as They Are, Henry Serrall & Lee Perkins Lith & Pub, 1849, Library of Congress, public domain, no known restrictions

about the possibility of a gold field somewhere on the American River. By June, however, the fever caught hold.

Hundreds of Californios and American settlers quit their ranchos and jobs and raced to the new diggings. San Francisco, San José, and Monterey became ghost towns overnight. Stores selling pans, picks, shovels, and other mining implements did a tremendous business, and prices rose accordingly. Luzena Stanley Wilson, who came with her husband and family to the Gold Rush country, remembered selling her freshly made biscuits for five dollars each. Soldiers, prisoners, politicians, ministers—young and old—all abandoned their families and occupations to set out for the diggings.

As fate would have it, the Mexican government had ratified the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo a few months before the confirmation of a gold strike in California. News of the discovery reached northern Mexico in the summer of 1848, and hundreds of Sonoran miners immediately headed for Alta California. They had experience in gold mining, unlike the Anglo Americans and foreigners. In the fall of 1848, roughly 6000 miners, many of them Sonorans, entered California and set up mining camps along the American River. The first



Map 4.1 Principal Mining Towns During the Gold Rush

American miners to arrive knew nothing about gold mining and learned their mining techniques from the Mexicans. At first, life in the diggings was generally orderly and peaceable. Alonzo Delano, one of the so-called 48ers, remembered that at that time “property was safer in California than in the older states.” Bancroft, the publisher and historian from San Francisco, could

only find two cases of robbery in all of the mining camps in 1848. But this soon changed.

The Argonauts

News of the gold strike in California rapidly spread, first to Hawai‘i, Oregon, and Utah, and then to South America, Australia, China, the eastern seaboard of the United States, and Europe. By December 1848, President Polk publicly delivered a speech to Congress confirming the gold discovery and interpreting it as a confirmation of God’s favor for the war against Mexico. During 1849, about 100,000 immigrants from all over the world, but especially from the eastern United States, flooded northern California, forever changing the destiny of the state. Overnight, it seemed, San Francisco was transformed into an international city, a transfer point for miners and mining supplies. The pastoral life of the Californios in the north declined while the rancheros of the south enjoyed a brief flare of prosperity, as their cattle increased in value with the demand for food from the mining camps and the growing population of the north.

By 1850, fully one-quarter of California’s population was foreign-born; many were Latin American or Mexican. The Gold Rush was an international affair, attracting people from around the world. Chinese immigrants came, mostly after 1849. They were young men from southeastern China—from big cities like Hong Kong and Canton as well as from the countryside. In order to pay for their trip to the “Gold Mountain,” as they called California, these men indentured themselves to Chinese companies that, in turn, sold their labor to Chinese mining operations. Laboring long hours, with very low pay, the Chinese miners were virtual slaves until their debt was repaid, which often took years. By 1852, more than 25,000 Chinese were living in northern California, in the mining camps and in San Francisco.

Two-thirds of the new population attracted to California during the Gold Rush came from the eastern United States and were a multiethnic group of Scottish, French, Irish, German, and British descent. They called themselves the Argonauts, after the mythical Greek adventurers who traveled to the edge of the known world in search of a fabled golden fleece. In 1849 and subsequent years, they came to California by boat and wagon, on horseback, and even on foot, enduring grueling and dangerous passages.

This mass migration to California is one of the most documented population movements in world history, with hundreds of letters, diaries, and reminiscences penned along the way and after arrival at the mines. Those who chose to travel by boat had to pick between two routes. One was by ship from New York to Panama, and then by smaller ship up the fever-infested Chagres River, and then by mule over the mountains to the Pacific port of Panama. There they transferred to another ship bound for San Francisco. This voyage could last from two to three months depending on connections. The longest delays were usually on the Pacific side of the Panamanian isthmus,

where, in the early years, there were rarely enough ships to carry the numbers who thronged the port seeking passage.

The other route to California by sea involved going around Cape Horn, the stormy southern tip of South America. The demand for travel “around the horn” stimulated a boom in the construction of clipper ships. Built for speed, these remarkable vessels were long and thin and carried huge amounts of sail on three tall masts. Accommodations were small and narrow, with ceilings so low that many had to bend over when moving about. One of the most notable clippers was the *Flying Cloud*, which on its first voyage took only 89 days to sail from New York to San Francisco. Those choosing one of the sea routes had to contend with shipwrecks, shipboard diseases of all kinds, and, if they selected the Panama route, death by yellow fever or malaria.

The overland route was the cheapest way to get to California, costing between \$100 and \$200. Nevertheless, it was still relatively expensive. (For comparison purposes, the daily wage of a New York City laborer in 1850 was less than one dollar.) Anthony Powers of Green Spring, Wisconsin, borrowed \$125 to finance an overland journey to the gold fields. Another group from Monroe, Michigan, collected \$2500 to pay for 10 people to make the journey. Though it was the most time-consuming route, it was the one that most of the American migrants chose.

The California immigrants of the 1840s had already blazed several trails, and others had been in use by the Spanish and Mexicans for centuries. The southern route—the Santa Fe Trail—ran from the Missouri River through what is now Kansas, to New Mexico, and then followed the Spanish trail from New Mexico to southern California. This route had the advantage of avoiding the snows of the Sierras. A more direct way was the northern route, the choice of most because it was better known to English speakers due to guidebooks that had been published. An estimated 25,000 immigrants followed the northern route, leaving towns along the Missouri River as soon as the spring grasses were long enough to provide food for their oxen and horses. They followed the Platte River west into what is now southern Wyoming, crossed the Rocky Mountains through a series of passes, and came down in the Great Basin near Salt Lake. From there, they went west to the Humboldt River Valley, across the desert to the Sierras, and, once over those forbidding peaks, to Sacramento. The entire journey from Missouri to California lasted from four to five months, depending on the route selected and the luck they encountered.

The dangers faced by the 49ers going to California on the overland trail included death by cholera and mountain fever and by starvation and dehydration. Very few died from Indian attacks, which were rare. For the most part, the native peoples were content to watch in bemusement as wagon after wagon of “white eyes” drove themselves westward with fanatic zeal, abandoning many of their prized possessions in the process, in order to lighten their load. Milus Gay, an overland Argonaut, described one scene: “Such destruction of property as I saw across the Desert I have never seen. I should think I passed the

carcasses of 1200 head of cattle and horses and a great many wagons—harnesses—cooking utensils—tools—water casks.... We also saw many men on the point of starvation begging for bread." The phrase "seeing the elephant" described the excitement of new adventure but also referred to the delusional state that many experienced on the trail.

Once in California the 49ers, as they called themselves, began trying to strike it rich. They labored to separate sand from gold along riverbeds by sloshing gravel in a pan filled with water, knowing that the heavier gold dust settled to the bottom. The miners soon developed more elaborate systems, but all of the techniques still involved washing sand or dirt with water and permitting the heavier gold to settle out. Wooden cradles rocked gravel and water back and forth to separate the gold. Sluices ran a stream of water over a long wooden trough partially filled with gravel. Using such methods, miners took out more than \$200 million worth of gold between 1848 and 1852. To put this into perspective, this amount of gold was roughly equal to the total value of all gold and silver money in circulation in the entire nation at the beginning of the Gold Rush, and is equivalent to almost \$2 billion dollars today.

By mid-1850, the most easily available gold was gone. The miners continued to use pans and long toms (sluices), but they found less and less gold to



Gold Miners in El Dorado, California between 1848 and 1853. Library of Congress, public domain, no known restrictions

As illustrated by this image, even placer mining had negative environmental impacts including water diversion, soil erosion, and the siltation of streambeds.

reward their labor. Some fortune seekers began to return home or to follow the lure of quick riches to new gold strikes elsewhere. Others turned to more elaborate methods of mining. By one estimate, a typical gold seeker averaged 20 dollars of gold in a day in 1848 but only two dollars' worth by 1853. As miners moved farther and farther from streams, and as streams diminished in late summer, miners found they had to expend greater efforts diverting water to their claims. By 1855, miners or water companies had built more than 4000 miles of artificial waterways, mostly wooden channels called flumes.

One technique to get more gold was to use water diverted from rivers and streams for hydraulic mining. Reasoning that the gold dust in the riverbeds had washed there from the mountains, gold seekers began to look for gold in the foothills. Rather than digging through tons of soil and gravel over the prehistoric streambeds, gold seekers began to use water under pressure to blast it away. They developed huge water cannons that could blast away fully grown trees and giant boulders and reduce an entire hillside to bedrock. After bombardment by water cannons, sand and gravel were suspended in water and run through sluices, permitting the gold to settle to the bottom and the tailings (small rocks of no value) to flow into nearby rivers. This hydraulic method was far more expensive than placer mining, but by 1870, 22 percent of all gold produced in California was obtained by hydraulic mining.

As thousands and then tens of thousands of gold seekers converged on the Gold Country, they found a region far removed from traditional structures of law or political authority. The military governor was far away, and Mexican political authority had never extended into the foothills of the Sierras. Gold seekers formed their own political authority, first by developing rough guidelines regarding claims. A gold seeker could pre-empt a likely spot by “staking a claim,” but the consensus was that the claim was valid only if the area it covered could be worked by a single person and only if someone was actually working it. Most mining camps elected someone to arbitrate their differences; this person was often called by the Mexican term, *alcalde*.

Such people functioned as unofficial justices of the peace, trying wrongdoers and prescribing punishment for crimes. Few such magistrates had much training in the law, if any, and many gained reputations for eccentric decisions or for blatant discrimination against foreigners, Californios, or Indians. If someone were accused of a serious crime, most mining camps carried out a semblance of a jury trial, though usually with little reference to established legal principles. Without sheriffs or jails, sentences for theft were usually either banishment (often with a shaved head), flogging, branding, or mutilation (such as cutting off the thief's ears). Murder and horse theft were usually punished by hanging. One of the first such hangings came in January 1849, in a camp thereafter known as Hangtown (later renamed Placerville). Though some punishments resulted from a process much like a jury trial, others were simply a lynching in which a mob, sometimes drunken, acted as judge, jury, and executioner in one.

Though such rough-and-ready justice may have seemed appropriate in the absence of legally constituted political authority, some mining camps continued in such fashion even when a properly authorized judge or sheriff was present. In 1851, in the town of Sonora, for example, a mob overpowered the sheriff and lynched a self-confessed thief. Soon after, the miners formed a vigilance committee. Unlike a lynch mob, which was by definition spontaneous and poorly organized, a vigilance committee was organized, claimed to represent leading citizens of the community, and justified its existence by claiming that the officials responsible for punishing wrongdoers were either corrupt or incompetent or both. Members of such a committee were called *vigilantes*. Led by their committee of vigilance, Sonorans banished an American thief and a French counterfeiter, and flogged and banished four Mexicans (two for counterfeiting, one for horse theft, and one for stealing a pistol) and one Australian (for theft of a mule). Committees of vigilance sprouted in a number of other mining camps in the early and mid-1850s. Lynch mobs also continued to take justice into their own hands. In 1855, for example, in Columbia, a mob took an accused murderer out of the hands of the sheriff and hanged him. Such actions were not limited to mining communities—both Stockton and Sacramento experienced lynchings in 1850.

The new society that was emerging spread outwards from the gold fields of the north, which encompassed an inland area in the San Joaquin Valley, bounded by the Sierra Nevada Mountains on the east, and joined by the rivers that drained into the San Francisco Bay. Hundreds of settlements sprang up overnight with names that reflected their cultural tenor: Hangtown, Placerville, Spanish Diggings, Sonora, and El Dorado (see map on page 112). The town of Sacramento grew up to provide food and supplies to the mining district. Similarly, the port city of Stockton, almost 100 miles from the Pacific Ocean but located on the navigable San Joaquin River, grew to feed the new population. San Francisco, of course, owed its sudden urbanization to the Gold Rush migrants and economy. Overnight its population went from a few hundred souls to more than 40,000 in the last months of 1848. Within a short time it would become the cultural and economic capital of the state.

Camp Life

The rough-and-tumble life in the mining camps that sprang up along the banks of the rivers in northern and central California challenged the morals and standards of living that many miners brought with them from the east. Boredom and homesickness typified the early months in the camps, as the miners began to miss the creature and family comforts of home. Edmund Booth of Iowa wrote in 1850 that “Cal. is a world upside down—nothing like home comforts and home joys.” He was referring to the fact that in the gold fields the normal relations between genders, races, and classes were all mixed up: Indians, Africans, and Mexicans shared tents, food, and amusements with Australians,

Frenchmen, and Yankees. Men did the cooking and washing, and the boundaries between respectable women and prostitutes seemed irrelevant. Men who had never cooked or done domestic work before found themselves planning their menus around trips to the distant store. They worried about infestations of lice and fleas and feared diseases such as scurvy and dysentery. New Yorker Howard Gardiner recalled that he and his fellow miners “lived more like pigs than human beings.” Those few miners who were fortunate to have a woman in their dwelling bragged to the others about their food and comfort.

To relieve the monotony of camp life, the miners created leisure activities that they might have avoided back home. Sometimes it seemed that everyone was eager to, in the words of Charles Davis, “join the ranks of Satan and spend their Sabbaths with little or no restraint.” Leisure activities associated with sex, liquor, gambling, and other amusements filled the gaps in miners’ lives. In these activities—in the fandango hall, the bordello, and the saloon—the mixture of races and classes prevailed. Gold Rush diaries describe the moral anguish miners felt, mostly after the fact, of drunken sprees and of sexual adventures with Indians and prostitutes. In the southern mines where the Latin Americans and Frenchmen worked, the mining camps had a more normal balance of the sexes and morals. Yankees from the northern mines frequently went south for a visit just to see women dancing. Other Sunday amusements included bull and bear fighting, where the two animals were chained together and prodded to fight to the death. Most mining camps had arenas built to accommodate the crowds who assembled for the blood sport. Occasionally, bullfighting took place when a brave individual ventured into the ring. In Sonora Camp, Enos Christian recalled seeing a female matador who turned out to be a man dressed as a woman for the amusement of the crowd.

A few sought out the comforts of religion, although churches were few and far between. In the southern mines, rude Catholic churches sprang up in which a diversity of nationalities and classes gathered. For the Protestant miners, the occasional preacher and denominational church provided the chance to share the Christian gospel and, perhaps, view a member of the opposite sex.

Historian Susan Lee Johnson called the Gold Rush the “most demographically male event in human history.” By 1850, California men outnumbered women by more than 10 to one. Two years later, the ratio fell to seven to one and by 1860 it was two to one. It was not until the turn of the century that a balance between the sexes was achieved. The first women to live and work in the mining camps were California Indians who worked as prostitutes or held other jobs in the saloons and temporary brothels that sprang up. They were followed by Sonoran Mexicans such as Rosa Feliz, companion of the legendary Joaquín Murrieta, or Latin Americans such as Chilean Rosario Améstica, a prostitute who sailed north with a shipload of men. Some women were reformers. Elizabeth Gunn, who was married to the editor of the *Sonora Herald*, wrote home about the evils of the fandango and prostitution, and soon her husband’s paper published criticisms along those lines. Lorena Hays wrote and published under the pen name Lenita, to criticize the immorality of the

mining camps, even while identifying with the Mexican and Chilean miners. Wives and prostitutes thus were uneasy companions in the mining camps. Single entrepreneurial women also found their niche. Gold dust acted as a lure to women such as Rose Cartier, a Frenchwoman who owned a saloon in the mining camp of Sonora, where she employed other women who had emigrated from France and Europe.

Married women who traveled to the gold towns and settlements with their husbands endured many hardships and sufferings. Mrs. John Berry arrived in the camps in 1849 with her husband and lived in a wagon and then a tent through the cold, wet winter. She wrote: "The rains set in in early November, and continued with little interruption until the latter part of March.... Sometimes on a morning I would come out of the wagon (that is & has been our bedroom ever since we left the States) & find my utensils lying in all directions, fire out & it pouring down...." Women tried to set up housekeeping among the dirt, fleas, dust, cold, and wet. Louisa Clappe came to California with her husband in 1850 and then traveled to the mines with him and wrote a series of 23 letters to her sister, which she signed "Dame Shirley." These "Shirley Letters" were published serially in 1854 and again in 1933 and are perhaps the most vivid and detailed firsthand description of women's daily life in the diggings. She wrote of the log cabin that they called home and of the few other women who lived nearby. Her detailed observations of the people she met and the mining camps are a classic in Gold Rush literature. Through it all, Louisa remained indefatigable and optimistic. Sometime in 1852 she wrote, "My heart is heavy at the thought of departing forever from this place. I like this wild and barbarous life; I leave it with regret."

A characteristic of the gold camps noted by Dame Shirley was the toleration of prostitutes, which she termed "compassionated creatures." Most of the men of the Gold Rush were white men and most of the prostitutes were Mexican, Chinese, Chilean, or Indian. Historian Al Hurtado found that more than three-fourths of the prostitutes in Sacramento were women of color and more than half of them were Chinese. The southern mines, especially, had a multiracial, multinational female population including African Americans and Indians.

One of the most infamous tragedies of the Gold Rush era was the hanging in 1851 of Josefa, the only woman ever lynched in California. Josefa, also known as Juanita (her last name is not known), lived in Downieville with her boyfriend, José, a Mexican gambler. During the night of a Fourth of July celebration, a miner named Fred Cannon drunkenly fell into the couple's humble shack and broke the door. The following day, when José and Juanita demanded payment for the damage, an argument ensued and Cannon called Josefa a prostitute. Soon after, in a rage, she killed him with a bowie knife. That afternoon, a mob assembled demanding that she be hanged and voting to execute her at four o'clock. Before she died, Josefa calmly arranged the noose around her neck so that it would not tangle her hair and coolly told the assembled rabble that she would do it all over again. She had defended her honor. Cannon had called her a prostitute.

Women worked for high wages doing domestic chores for the miners, including cooking, sewing, and laundry. Other women owned and operated stores, restaurants, saloons, and gambling and boarding houses. Some unmarried women lived with miners in an attempt to avoid the violence and insecurity that was a constant fact of female life. But respectable women did not stay unmarried for very long. And those who came to the mines as married women were under great temptation to find new husbands among the wealthy, or to seek less abusive, more attentive mates.

Because of the scarcity of women, divorce statutes drafted by the California legislature were more liberal than elsewhere. Divorce became more common for women than for men and, beginning in the 1880s, California led all other states in the proportion of divorced to married couples.

Nativism and Racism

One of the negative legacies of the Gold Rush was the wave of anti-foreign sentiment that emerged, directed especially toward non-European immigrants. The Latin Americans, especially the Peruvians, Chileans, and Mexicans, along with the French and Chinese, became favorite targets of political agitation and violence in California. Most Mexican and Latin American miners established themselves in the southern mines, including the California counties south of the Sacramento River. Most of the anti-Mexican violence occurred here. Mexican, Californio, and Latin American miners helped teach the newly arrived Americans how to extract the metal from streambeds and ore deposits. But the gratitude they received for these lessons was short-lived. Resentments about the presence of these foreigners soon erupted into violence, especially in 1849, when the Americans arrived in larger numbers. Americans were angry that many of the best claims had been staked out already by the “Sonorans,” as they called all Mexican miners. The fact that many of the mining towns, like Sonora, Hornitos, and Stockton, had become multilingual in business dealings grated on the English-speaking Americans, who regarded this development as unpatriotic. On July 4, 1849, acts of violence broke out against the foreigners, beginning with attacks on Chilean merchants and neighborhoods in San Francisco and then spreading to the mining camps. In the camps near Stockton, Yankee miners ousted the Chileans by creating an impromptu code of laws forbidding foreigners from mining. Intimidation and violence followed, and the Anglos confiscated the Chileans’ property and sold it at public auction. In November 1849, a vigilante group attacked Mexican miners along the Calaveras River, ousted them from their claims, and “fined” each miner an ounce of gold. A few days later, 16 Chileans were rounded up and accused of murder. They were given a summary trial, and then three were lynched. Similar acts of violence occurred throughout the diggings during the first few years of the Gold Rush.

Many native-born Mexican Americans, who were now citizens of the United States under the terms of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, fell victim to these anti-foreign prejudices and laws. One estimate places about 1300

Californios (formerly Mexican citizens, now U.S. citizens) in the gold regions in 1848, with a similar number returning in 1849. In 1849, the military governor of California, General Persifor Smith, responded to nativist fears that foreigners were taking all of the gold out of the mining regions. He announced his “trespass” orders, prohibiting non-citizens from mining gold on public property. He appealed to Americans to help him enforce his policy. Using this order as a pretext and with some protection from the military, Anglo American miners robbed and harassed foreigners. After one riot, French immigrant miners were driven from the gold camps. Irish and Australians became targets of vigilante violence in San Francisco and elsewhere in the diggings. Chinese miners attracted more and more attention by nativists and many were driven out of the gold camps by late 1851.

In April 1850, the California legislature responded to the pressure from the 49ers and passed the Foreign Miner’s Tax, which required all non-U.S. citizens to pay a tax for the privilege of mining gold. The cost was \$20 per month—an amount so high as to be prohibitive to all but the most successful. The law applied to all non-citizens, but tax collectors enforced it most consistently for miners whose language or race made them distinctive—Chinese and Latin Americans especially, but also the French and Germans. The tax was repealed the next year, due partly to complaints by gold country merchants that it was destroying their businesses. In 1852, the legislature passed a new Foreign Miner’s Tax of four dollars per month, later changed to three dollars. Another amendment, in 1855, exempted from the tax all those who declared their intention to become citizens. This meant that the tax was limited almost entirely to Chinese miners, because they alone could not qualify for an exemption—California’s constitution limited citizenship to whites only. Until a law in 1870 voided the tax, it provided a major source of state revenue. Of the \$5 million collected over 20 years through this tax, Chinese miners paid an estimated \$4.9 million. Leaders of the Chinese community voiced their opposition to these discriminatory laws and others that were proposed, but as non-citizens they had little political influence in Sacramento. Nevertheless, members of the Chinese community protested by writing letters to the governor and to San Francisco’s newspapers. They also hired a lobbyist, a Presbyterian minister named A.W. Loomis, to fight against discriminatory laws, in particular the one restricting their testimony in court. By hiring lawyers and collectively funding court challenges, the Chinese won court victories challenging the Foreign Miner’s Tax and other prejudicial laws.

The Legendary Life of Joaquín Murrieta

One of California’s first folk legends was Joaquín Murrieta, a person whose life is a subject of controversy, speculation, and myth. According to the story, Murrieta was a Sonoran miner in Murphy’s Camp whose brother was lynched and whose wife was raped and murdered. What followed was Joaquín’s war of revenge against the Americanos. For a year, Joaquín and a band of Mexicanos

and Californios terrorized the state. As a result, the state of California created the California Rangers, a special mounted police force, modeled on the Texas Rangers. The state government placed a price of \$1000 on Murrieta's head.

In 1851, after several months of searching the foothills for Murrieta, Captain Harry Love and the Rangers surprised a group of Mexican vaqueros in Cantua Canyon. The Rangers killed several Mexicans, and Captain Love claimed that one of them was Joaquín. To prove his claim, he chopped off Murrieta's head and brought it back for identification. Even though Love gathered a number of testimonials certifying that the head was indeed Joaquín's, some doubted that Murrieta had been killed. To this day, many believe that Joaquín escaped and returned to his home in Sonora, Mexico.

Thus, Joaquín Murrieta became one of California's first legendary figures. The first fictional interpretation of his life, based on some historical fact, was *The Life and Adventures of the Celebrated Bandit Joaquín Murrieta*, by John Rollins Ridge, published in 1854. Ridge was a Cherokee Indian whose native name was Yellow Bird. In Ridge's hands, Joaquín became a vicarious avenger, a Robin Hood of the Sierra. Joaquín's adventures soon reappeared in other novels and histories and rapidly became an international legend. As late as the 1960s, Joaquín Murrieta's story was an inspiration for resistance against American cultural and economic control. In revolutionary Cuba and Communist Russia, Murrieta appeared in textbooks and in life-size statues as an example of the revolt of the Third World against imperialism. The world-famous Chilean poet Pablo Neruda composed an epic poem in which Murrieta was a Chilean who stood for the struggle of all Latin American people to be free of North American hegemony. At the same time, however, Anglo American novelists, history buffs, and some academics treated Murrieta as an overly romanticized, bloodthirsty, bandit-murderer, or as a fictitious character whose life is more properly a topic of literary study. This contradictory and ambiguous legacy springs from Gold Rush California.

California Transformed

The military conquest of California took less than six months but the social, economic, and cultural conquest was propelled by the Gold Rush and the subsequent economic development of the state. The cultural and social conquest of California's oldest inhabitants continued over several decades as the newcomers asserted their dominance over the people and the land.

Conquest of the Californios

The Californio landholders also paid a price for the development of California during the Gold Rush. In 1846, roughly 10,000 Mexicans, including Hispanicized Indians, lived in California. Within a few years, they were

overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of newcomers, most of whom had little love for dark-skinned peoples with their strange language and culture. The Californios swiftly lost control of the courts and the government and soon their land.

Within a generation, the Mexican Californians lost political influence and became an impoverished minority, victimized by racist attitudes and laws. In 1855, for example, the state legislature passed laws to control the Mexican population. A Sunday Law imposed fines ranging from \$50 to \$500 for engaging in “barbarous or noisy amusements,” which were listed as bullfights, cockfights, horseraces, and other traditional Californio amusements. At the same time, they passed what was widely called “The Greaser Law” to fine and jail unemployed Mexicans who were considered vagrants.

Conquest of the Indians

The modernization of California’s economy came at a cost, largely borne by the native and Mexican peoples, whose way of life was seen by the new immigrants as standing in the way of progress. The California Indians, who had been subject to the Spanish and Mexican attempts to change them, now fell victim to the new immigrants, most of whom thought of Indians as laborers, obstacles to settlement, or dangerous savages. During the early years of the Gold Rush, retaliatory massacres occurred when Indians occasionally killed whites—even though such killings may have been provoked by outrages against Indians. At Clear Lake in northern California in 1849, for example, 135 Indians were killed in retaliation for the killing of two white men who had enslaved local Pomo Indians. Indian massacres took place sometimes just because the Indians were living in the vicinity. In 1850, more than 60 Humboldt Indians—men, women, and children—were killed as they slept in their village because they occupied property thought to be rich with gold. The state legislature appropriated millions in funds to pay for militia operations against Indians.

When the Indians fought back, their resistance was termed “war” by the American settlers. In 1851, the so-called Mariposa War resulted when the Indians of this northern California band fought to preserve their land and succeeded in defeating the local militia until reinforcements arrived from outside the region. During that conflict, American settlers first entered Yosemite Valley when they pursued the Indians into their stronghold. That same year, a rebellion broke out in southern California. This uprising was the result of an alliance between several Indian bands, perhaps protesting the American taxation of their lands and resenting the treatment of the Cupeño Indians by Juan José Warner. Their leader was Antonio Garra, an ex-neophyte Indian who sought an alliance with disaffected Californios. The Californios did not support his rebellion, however, and the state militia captured Garra with the help of rival Indian bands. He and six of his associates were tried and executed.

Economic Transformation

Without a doubt, the Gold Rush was one of the great turning points in California's history, redefining the demographic, economic, and social future of the state. The lure of precious metal drew hundreds of thousands of immigrants to California and assured the rapid domination of the English-speaking peoples. By 1850, the population of California exceeded 150,000, allowing the territory to apply for admission as a state. California gold helped finance the north in the U.S. Civil War, stimulated the construction of the first transcontinental railroad, and encouraged the rapid agricultural and commercial development of the state. It is estimated that in the 25 years following the discovery at Coloma, miners extracted more than one billion dollars' worth of gold from the mines—the equivalent of more than \$100 billion at the end of the 20th century.

The mining industry stimulated demand for food and materials, which in turn stimulated home industry and the creation of new cities and towns. Sacramento and Stockton owed their creation to the Gold Rush, and San Francisco became a major international metropolis. The newcomers and their exuberance created a boom mentality within the state. The expectation of quick riches, opulent displays of wealth, a fluid and open society, and colorful and eccentric individuals all became early hallmarks of California's American era. California became the western leader in banking, agriculture, stock raising, industrial development, and trade—a lead that has lengthened over the decades.

The Golden State

During the hectic first two years of the Gold Rush, the military governed California, but the American residents protested this situation and held mass meetings to demand that a civil government be organized. Bowing to public pressure, military governor General Bennett Riley issued a proclamation calling for the election of delegates from 10 districts. These delegates were to assemble in Monterey on September 1, 1849, to work on constructing a state government for California. They were elected by popular vote on August 1, 1849. The result was a group as diverse as the territory. Of the 48 men who assembled in Colton Hall that fall, eight of them were native Californios, six were foreign-born European immigrants, and 13 had been living in California less than a year. Deliberations were in English, with translators available for the Spanish-speaking delegates. Votes on many of the issues split along north-south lines. The southern delegates wanted territorial status or, if that were not possible, to split California in two. They lost on both counts. The delegates were unanimous in wanting to exclude slavery from California and also to exclude free African Americans from the state. Many ex-slaves feared the threat of having to work as indentured servants in the mines. Finally, the provision specifically excluding them was deleted in order to get Congress to speedily approve



"California Bear Flag" by Wayne Hsieh is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

This Bear Flag was designed by William Todd, one of the original Bear Flaggers and part of the group of Americans who took over Sonoma on June 14, 1846. The star was in imitation of the Texas lone star. The original was destroyed in the San Francisco fire of 1906. What is the significance of its similarity with the present-day flag?

statehood. In dealing with this issue, delegates relied on the precedence of free states in the east.

With regard to citizenship rights, native Californios were aware that many Mexican Californios who looked like Indians faced the prospect of racial discrimination. Ultimately, they argued for the protection of their people even though it meant endorsing the racist views of their Anglo colleagues toward Indians and persons of African descent. Mexico had granted citizenship to “civilized” Indians and to blacks, and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo clearly stated that former Mexican citizens were to be given the opportunity to become citizens of the United States. Following the biases of the time, the framers of the state constitution sought wording that would exclude African Americans and Indians while including Mexicans. Eventually, the first section of the state constitution limited the suffrage to “every white, male citizen of Mexico who shall have elected to become a citizen of the United States.” The convention agreed that Indians and African Americans might at some future date be given the franchise but that, because voting was not an absolute right of citizenship, they could be excluded. The constitution left open the question of Indian citizenship, stating that “nothing herein contained, shall be construed to prevent the Legislature, by a two-thirds concurrent vote, from admitting to the right of suffrage, Indians or the descendants of Indians....”

Ultimately the Mexican Californios became full-fledged citizens, at least in theory, when the Congress of the United States admitted California as a state in 1850. Under the provisions of the treaty, those who did not want to become U.S. citizens had a year to declare this intention; they were also free to go to Mexico. No one knows how many Mexican Californios returned, but during the early 1850s there were several colonization expeditions that went south and settled in Sonora and Baja California.

Of course, the main issue in California was possession of the land, but the proposed constitution was silent in this regard. The former Mexican citizens had to trust their fate to the courts and their interpretation of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. As Chapter 5 explains, their trust was quickly betrayed, as the U.S. government established complicated and lengthy procedures for verifying legitimate title to the land. Thus, most Californios had to mortgage or sell their lands to pay for litigation costs. Within a generation, most of the Californio rancheros joined the impoverished ranks of their former vaqueros.

The Constitutional Convention also debated where to set the eastern boundary of the state. Mexican maps had never specified an eastern boundary, and some argued that California included the present states of Nevada and Utah. The southern delegates argued that this territory would be too difficult to administer and might prevent ratification by Congress. The final agreement established the present eastern boundary, roughly following the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

Several sections in the state constitution showed Mexican influence. One provision, for example, required that all laws be published in both Spanish and English, in recognition of the Mexican minority. California also adopted the concept of community property, wherein married women had joint ownership of property along with their husband, as they had under Mexican laws. Mariano Vallejo, one of the Californio delegates, protested that the state flag and seal should not show a grizzly bear, a reminder of the Bear Flag Rebellion and his own personal humiliation, but his objections did not win a sympathetic hearing.

California's constitution was accepted by the U.S. Congress after a lengthy debate that resulted in the Compromise of 1850. The state government that was established by the admission of California on September 9, 1850, promised to bring some degree of law and order to the politically ambiguous situation created by military government, but the lawlessness engendered by the Gold Rush continued in many areas.

Summary

The U.S.-Mexican War in 1846 marked the end of the Mexican era of California's history. This conflict produced notable military resistance and while some died to prevent the American takeover, others welcomed the change of sovereignty. They had hopes that their economic prosperity and political liberties

would be secure under the American constitution and guarantees of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. These hopes would soon give way to the realities of massive immigration of Americans into California during the Gold Rush.

The Gold Rush influenced the fortunes of millions of men and women, from the lowly miners who never struck it rich and who abandoned their families back east, to the fabulously wealthy entrepreneurs such as William Ralston, George Hearst, and Leland Stanford, who helped shape the economic future of the state. The Gold Rush changed the world's supply of gold so drastically that silver quickly became devalued as a currency and the gold standard became the norm of industrialized countries into the 20th century. As can be surmised by the history of this period, the Gold Rush inaugurated a large-scale exploitation of the natural environment in America. As forests were devastated, rivers polluted, and mountains leveled, Americans were slow to realize that they were ravaging a non-renewable resource. This realization did not come until the last part of the following century. Contemporary historians believe that the Gold Rush was important primarily because of its consequences for families and social values. The tens of thousands of Anglo Americans who left their families in the east created broken homes and, for many, broken lives when their husbands did not return or came back beaten and impoverished. In California, the Gold Rush had a mixed effect on morality. For some, it reinforced values of hard work, democracy, and community. For others, it created a "get rich quick" mentality of speculation, lawlessness, and isolation. For the Indians, the Mexicans, and the Chinese, the Gold Rush created an inhospitable society that had to be negotiated with great care.

Ultimately, the U.S.-Mexican War and the California Gold Rush were watershed events, not only in the development of the West but in the history of the United States more generally. Coming together, they shaped the future of the nation and created new directions for California. New economic forces and the blending of cultures and peoples begun in these years provided the dynamic energies that would have a worldwide influence.

Suggested Readings

- Griswold del Castillo, Richard, "Joaquín Murrieta: Life and Legend," in *With Badges and Bullets: Lawmen and Outlaws in the Old West*, Richard Etulain and Glenda Riley, eds. (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Press, 1999), pp. 106–123. A review of the many conflicting sources of the Murrieta story, along with the legend's contemporary meanings.
- Griswold del Castillo, Richard, *The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo: A Legacy of Conflict* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990). The best single-volume study of the political and international importance of the treaty that ended the war with Mexico.

- Harlow, Neal, *California Conquered: War and Peace on the Pacific, 1846–1850* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1982). The best single source for studying the U.S.-Mexican War in California.
- Johnson, Susan Lee, *Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold Rush* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000). An excellent source for understanding the lives of women during the Gold Rush.
- Robinson, Alfred, *Life in California During a Residence of Several Years in That Territory* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1969). A firsthand account of Californio life before the conquest, written by a sympathetic participant.
- Rohrbough, Malcolm I., *Days of Gold: The California Gold Rush and the American Nation* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1969). A very thorough study of the social and cultural effect of the Gold Rush on the Anglo American migrants.
- Sanchez, Rosaura, *Telling Identities: The Californio Testimonios* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995). An analysis of the oral histories of the Californios gathered by Hubert Howe Bancroft in the 19th century.
- Starr, Kevin, *Americans and the California Dream, 1850–1915* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973). A sweeping cultural history of this important era written by the official state historian.

California and the Crisis of the Union, 1850–1870

Main Topics

- Crisis and Conflict in the 1850s
- Californians and the Crisis of the Union
- Economic Growth in a Time of National Crisis
- New Social and Cultural Patterns
- Summary

In 1857, Charles Stovall arrived in California from Mississippi. Archy Lee, a slave who belonged to Stovall's father, was with him. Upon arriving in Sacramento, Stovall followed the Southern practice of hiring out Lee to work for others, and he took a job himself. California's state constitution prohibited slavery, however, and by 1857 Californians who opposed slavery, black and white alike, had become practiced in freeing slaves in their state. When Stovall learned of this, he tried to send Lee back to Mississippi, but Lee asserted his freedom and hid in a hotel run by an African American family. Stovall then had him arrested as a fugitive slave. Several white abolitionist lawyers defended Lee. When the judge ordered Lee released, Stovall had him rearrested on a new warrant, issued by David Terry, a state supreme court justice known to support slavery. In an astounding decision, the California Supreme Court ruled that, because Stovall had been ignorant of the law regarding slavery in California, he

CHAPTER 5		California and the Crisis of the Union, 1850–1870
1848		Discovery of gold
1850		California becomes a state
1851		Vigilantes take control in San Francisco
1852–56		Adjudication of claims to land granted by Spain or Mexico
1856		Vigilantes again take control in San Francisco
1859		Senator David Broderick killed in a duel
1861–65		Civil War
1862		Pacific Railroad Act
1869		Joining of Central Pacific and Union Pacific tracks at Promontory Summit, Utah

This woodcut is from the cover of a book about Archy Lee, by Rudolph Lapp, published in 1969. There is, apparently, no photograph of Archy Lee. Why do you think that is?



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should not be penalized by the loss of his father's slave. The court ordered Lee to return to Mississippi with Stovall.

When the two arrived in San Francisco en route to Mississippi, black and white abolitionists were prepared. They had Lee arrested to keep him in the state, and they accused Stovall of holding a slave illegally. San Francisco's small African American community sought funds throughout the state,

alerting opponents of slavery to the case. Some of the most prominent Republican lawyers in the state, led by Edward D. Baker, represented Lee in his third court hearing. They pointed out the absurdities in the supreme court's ruling and secured a new ruling that Lee was a free man. Stovall, too, was prepared, however, and a federal marshal arrested Lee for violating the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. Lee went to trial a fourth time, now before a federal commissioner who had come from the South and was presumably pro-slavery. Crowds of whites and blacks argued over the case on the streets as sidewalk orators harangued the crowds. Lee's lawyers, led by Baker, argued that the 1850 law applied only to slaves who fled from a slave state into a free state, pointed out that Lee had been brought into California with his owner's permission, and concluded that no federal law had been violated. The commissioner agreed and set Lee free. Soon after, Lee moved to British Columbia, out of the jurisdiction of American law. The experience of Archy Lee dramatically indicates that California, separated by a continent from the center of the controversy over slavery, could not escape the political crisis that slavery engendered in the 1850s.

In 1850, however, the delegates who sat in Colton Hall writing a constitution for the new state of California were separated by a distance of some 1,500 miles from the nearest state. They probably had no idea that their request for statehood would contribute significantly to the emerging national crisis. Yet a crisis had long been approaching and was now hastened by the annexation of Texas and the territories acquired under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. California's application for statehood compounded that crisis. Many sought to stem the conflict but failed, as the sectional crisis over the extension of slavery into federal territory grew to include the institution of slavery everywhere and eventually raised fundamental questions about the nature of the Union and the meaning of American citizenship. The crisis escalated to civil war, and the war brought the abolition of slavery, the redefinition of American citizenship, and the transformation of the federal Union. Though far removed geographically from the debates in Congress and the battlefields of war, California figured significantly in the crisis of the Union, and that crisis brought important changes to California. In 1850, California seemed to be separated by vast distances of unsettled territory from the rest of the United States. Over the next 20 years, California came to be bound much more tightly into the federal Union. At the same time, the state was rapidly changing from a booming mining frontier to an economically and socially diverse society.

Questions to Consider

- How did national political issues affect the new state of California?
- How did federal policy affect Californios and California Indians?
- How did sectional issues, especially slavery, affect Californians in the 1850s?
- What changes came to California as a result of the Civil War?
- How did the state's economy change in the 1850s and 1860s?
- What role did the federal government play in the development of improved transportation between California and the eastern United States?
- What was the relation between socially defined gender roles and the creation of new social institutions in the 1850s and 1860s?
- Why did California acquire a reputation for religious toleration?
- How did Californians influence national literary development?

Crisis and Conflict in the 1850s

The new state was born in the midst of crisis and conflict—a national political crisis over slavery, a local crisis of political legitimacy, and conflicts within the state over land, labor, race, and ethnicity.

California Statehood and the Compromise of 1850

Some Americans who opposed the extension of slavery saw the annexation of Texas (1845), the war with Mexico (1846–48), and the acquisition of vast new territory under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848) as part of a slaveholders' conspiracy to expand slavery. From the Missouri Compromise (1820) onward, new states had entered the Union in pairs—one state that banned slavery along with one state that permitted it—so that the numbers of slave states and free states remained equal. Similarly, from the Missouri Compromise onward, slavery had been banned from all of the Louisiana Purchase territory north of 36°30' north latitude (the southern boundary of Missouri). This seemed to cut off any expansion of slavery because nearly all remaining unorganized territory lay north of 36°30'. Opponents of slavery feared that

annexation of Texas and the acquisition of territories from Mexico might open new regions to slavery. When Californians requested entry into the Union as a free state, there was no prospect of a slave state being admitted to maintain the balance between free states and slave states in the Senate. Defenders of slavery took alarm, and some prepared to fight against California statehood.

Once the constitutional convention (see Chapter 4) completed its work, California voters approved the new constitution and elected state officials. The legislature met and, amidst other business, elected John C. Frémont and William Gwin to the United States Senate (senators were elected by state legislatures at that time). Frémont and Gwin, along with newly elected members of the House of Representatives, hurried to Washington to press for statehood and to take their congressional seats once that occurred. They found a raging controversy centered in the Senate. Some of the most powerful political leaders of the first half of the century participated in the debate, including Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, and John C. Calhoun.

In the end, a relative newcomer to Congress, Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois, cobbled together a complex compromise based on Clay's proposals. In addition to California statehood, the Compromise of 1850 included separate laws that created territorial governments for New Mexico and Utah, pledged federal authority to return escaped slaves from the North, and abolished the slave trade in the District of Columbia. Most southerners opposed California statehood and abolition of the slave trade in the District of Columbia. Most northerners voted against the Fugitive Slave Law and territorial status for Utah. All the bills passed, but only because several moderates, led by Douglas, joined sometimes the northerners and sometimes the southerners to create a majority. California became the 31st state, but the Compromise of 1850 failed to ease sectional tensions.

San Francisco's Crisis of Political Legitimacy: Vigilantism in the 1850s

During the 1850s, California experienced a crisis of its own, a crisis of political legitimacy. Political legitimacy in a republic means that a very large majority of the population agrees that the properly elected and appointed governmental officials should exercise the authority specified for them by law. Paying taxes, obeying laws, participating in elections, and accepting a judge's decision are all ways in which individuals denote their acceptance of the political legitimacy of their government. During the 1850s, however, the United States faced a crisis of political legitimacy as abolitionists denied the legitimacy of laws protecting slavery, and defenders of slavery denied that the government had constitutional authority to ban or limit slavery. California in the 1850s also faced a crisis of political legitimacy, as many Californians denied the authority of governmental officials and instead took the law into their own hands. This happened in the gold-mining regions when vigilantes acted as judge, jury, and executioner. But

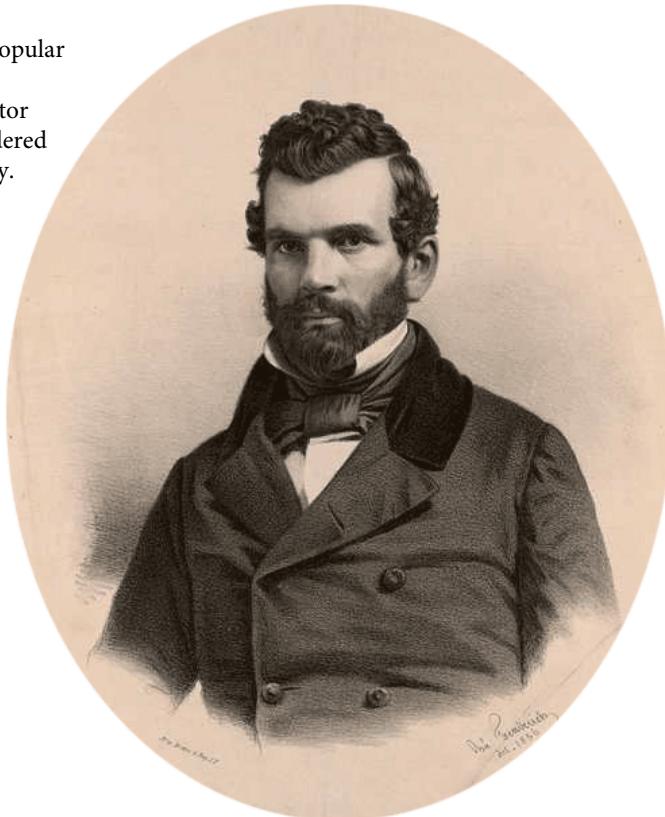
remote mining camps were not the only places where Californians spurned law enforcement officials and turned to vigilantism. San Francisco, the largest American city west of St. Louis, also experienced vigilante versions of justice.

From the raising of the American flag in July 1846 until the first legislature after statehood, San Francisco functioned largely under its Mexican governmental structures. The alcalde (mayor) possessed wide powers, both judicial and administrative. Nonetheless, many San Franciscans felt that the city's rapid growth had not been accompanied by corresponding growth in the protection of life and property. In 1849, Sam Brannan and other businessmen formed a citizens' group to suppress ruffians, known as "Hounds." The citizens' group—more than 200 strong—sought out and held some Hounds for trial before a special tribunal consisting of the alcalde and two special judges. This tribunal convicted nine men and, because there was no jail, banished them. This procedure did not circumvent the established authorities—the alcalde was centrally involved—but it was a step toward vigilantism as businessmen took the lead in apprehending those they considered the most flagrant wrongdoers.

The first session of the state legislature created a city government for San Francisco, and the city acquired a full range of public officials to enforce the law and dispense justice; however, a series of robberies, burglaries, and arson fires increased San Franciscans' anxiety over the city's growing number of Australians, who were often stereotyped as former convicts. A group of merchants and ship captains, led by Sam Brannan, formed the Committee of Vigilance. Almost immediately, they were presented with an accused burglar—an Australian, purportedly a former convict. Committee members constituted themselves as an impromptu court, convicted the accused man, and—despite rescue efforts by public officials—hanged him. Then, claiming support from 500 leading merchants and businessmen, the Committee of Vigilance seized more accused criminals, turned some of them over to the legally constituted authorities, banished others, whipped one, and hanged three more, all Australians. The vigilantes could not imprison their victims because the jail was controlled by the legally constituted authorities, whom the vigilantes were ignoring or openly flaunting. The committee functioned from June to September, although it drew opposition from most lawyers, public officials, and political figures.

The fullest development of vigilantism came in 1856, when Charles Cora, a gambler, killed William Richardson, a U.S. marshal. Soon after, James Casey, a member of the board of supervisors, shot and killed a popular newspaper editor, who had revealed that Casey had a criminal record in New York and had also announced in his newspaper that he was always armed. Casey claimed self-defense. The Committee of Vigilance was revived with William T. Coleman, a leading merchant, as its president. After hanging Cora and Casey, the committee constituted itself as the civil authority in the city and established a force of nearly 6000 well-armed men, drawn mostly from the city's merchants and businessmen. They hanged two more men and banished about 20. The committee provoked a well-organized opposition that included the mayor, the sheriff, head

James King of William, the popular San Francisco newspaper editor who was murdered by James Casey.



James King of William, 1856 by Charles Fennerich/Edward Mugridge publisher, Library of Congress, public domain, no known restrictions

of the state militia (William T. Sherman), chief justice of the state (David Terry), and other prominent political figures, most of them Democrats. The governor, 30-year-old J. Neely Johnson, tried to reestablish the power of law, but the vigilantes simply ignored him. They eventually established a political party and yielded power only after elections in which their candidates won convincing victories. This party and its successors (under various names and with shifting patterns of organization) dominated city politics for most of the next 20 years, institutionalizing government by merchants and businessmen.

California's experience with lynching and vigilantism in the 1850s came at a violent time in the nation's history. Many male Californians routinely armed themselves when in public. An observer noted that more than half the members of the first session of the legislature, in 1850, "appeared in the legislative halls with revolvers and bowie knives fastened to their belts." Chief Justice Terry carried both a gun and a bowie knife. San Francisco experienced 16 murders in 1850 and 15 in 1851, not counting the men hanged by the vigilantes—a murder rate of between 50 and 60 per 100,000 inhabitants. (There is little

comparative data from other American cities for the 1850s: Boston had seven *arrests* for murder per 100,000 inhabitants in the late 1850s, and Philadelphia averaged four *indictments* for murder per 100,000 inhabitants in the mid-1850s. San Francisco's homicide rate was less than six per 100,000 in 2010.)

The violence of the era provides a necessary context for understanding the lynchings and vigilantism. Even so, the question remains: Are the vigilantes best understood as outraged citizens taking matters into their own hands and cleansing their community, or as an organized effort to overthrow the legally constituted authorities? Josiah Royce, an early historian writing in 1886, called the events of 1856 “a businessmen’s revolution”—that is, he considered it an illegal action in defiance of the law. Nearly all subsequent historians have agreed that action outside the law was unnecessary and that the businessmen who made up the Committee of Vigilance scarcely pursued—much less exhausted—legal courses of action. They were too preoccupied with business to bother with politics, and then, when they took action, they took a shortcut. Nonetheless, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, most popular accounts of the vigilantes glorified them, treating them as saviors of the city. And, from 1856 until at least the 1930s, in times of community crisis, there were usually some who invoked the spirit of the vigilantes and urged extralegal action.

Violence and Displacement: California Indians in the 1850s

For most California Indians, the 1850s and 1860s were years of stark tragedy. Of the estimated 150,000 Native Americans in California in 1848, only 31,000 remained by 1860, after 12 years of the Gold Rush and a decade of statehood. Even so, the censuses of 1860 and 1870 showed California with the largest Indian population of any state.

Long before the Gold Rush, California Indians had become the major part of the work force on the ranchos along the coast between San Francisco and San Diego and inland from San Francisco Bay. Many of them continued some traditional ways, including gathering acorns for food, dancing, and the sweat lodge. At the same time, they adopted practices from their Mexican employers and priests. Some (nearly all women) intermarried with Mexicans, many of whom were themselves *mestizos*—of mixed Spanish, Indian, or African ancestry. Many other Native Americans were familiar with European practices, traded with the ranchos, and occasionally worked for wages. Sometimes they traded with the Californios; other times they raided the Californios, stealing cattle and horses.

John Sutter’s settlement near the present site of Sacramento was built largely by Indian laborers. Sutter also maintained a hired Indian army to protect his land and livestock and to wage war on Indian raiders. Other whites who entered the Central Valley in the early 1840s emulated Sutter and sometimes contracted with him for Indian labor. Thus, on the eve of the American conquest, many whites looked to California Indians as an important source of paid labor. This expectation was a direct outgrowth of the Spanish and

Mexican approaches to converting and “civilizing” the Indians and turning them into laborers on the missions and ranchos. By contrast, in the eastern United States, the usual practice in new white settlements was to push Indians further west rather than integrate them into new settlements.

In the earliest stages of the Gold Rush, Mexican patterns prevailed, as Indians were hired to work in mining operations. They learned the value of gold and of their labor and expected to be paid accordingly; however, a flood of Americans who knew the eastern practices but not the Mexican ones soon descended on California, expecting that part of “subduing the wilderness” would include expelling the Indians. Some of the newcomers objected to competing with Indian labor, especially when the Indian laborers worked for Californios. Others, with no real evidence, viewed Indians as dangerous and sought to have them removed from the mining regions because they were considered a threat to white miners.

At the same time, many Native Americans suffered from severely reduced access to traditional food sources. Cattle ate the grass that formerly had produced seeds for food. Large-scale hunting to feed hungry miners decimated the deer and elk herds. Thus, Indians were increasingly barred from wage labor in the mines at the same time that they were deprived of many traditional foods.

Violence soon flared. In a continuation of patterns from Mexican California, some Indians raided white settlements and stole food, cattle, and horses. Others forcibly resisted when white men made advances toward Indian women. Thefts by Indians often brought the burning of the village thought to be responsible. If an Indian killed a white, local militias or volunteers often destroyed the nearest village and killed its adult males and sometimes women and children. Undisciplined volunteers often struck out at any Indians they found, whether or not they had any connection to a crime. Some local authorities in the 1850s even offered bounties ranging from fifty cents to five dollars for Indian scalps.

The killing of individual Indians and even the massacre of entire villages were repeated over and over, sometimes by groups of miners, sometimes by local or state authorities. More than one historian has suggested that *genocide* is the only appropriate term for the experience of California Indians during the 1850s and 1860s. Only rarely did anyone seek to punish white men for beating or killing Indians. On the contrary, state power was more often used against the Indians. In 1851, Governor Peter Burnett announced his view that it was inevitable that war be waged against the Indians until they became extinct, and he twice sent state troops against them. His successor, Governor John McDougal, authorized the use of state troops in 1851 in what was called the Mariposa War. In these instances, state troops engaged in the brutal killing of Indians and destruction of Indian villages. When local authorities presented the state with bills for their often undisciplined forays against Indians, the state routinely paid them.

Both the state and federal governments attempted to regulate relations between California Indians and whites. The previous practice of federal authorities, who had exclusive constitutional authority to deal with Indian tribes, had

been to negotiate treaties by which Indians yielded their traditional lands in return for other lands, almost always to the west of white settlements. In California, however, it was no longer possible to move Indians west. In California in the 1850s, federal authorities negotiated with Indians to surrender title to large parts of their lands in return for promises that they could retain small tracts, or reservations. Federal policymakers envisioned the reservations as places where Indian people could live and be protected from the dangers of the surrounding white society, taught to farm, and educated. This new approach owed a good deal to the violence visited upon the California Indians in the Gold Rush regions.

In 1851, federal commissioners began to negotiate with representatives of Indian groups. They eventually drafted 18 treaties that set aside 12,000 square miles of land in the Central Valley and the northwestern and southern parts of the state. When the treaties went to the Senate for approval, however, they were rejected due to opposition from Californians. New federal agents were then appointed, and the process started over, even as violence against Indians mounted. In the mid-1850s, a few small reservations were finally created, some embracing only a few square miles. Some Indians from the Central Valley were moved north, to live on the new reservations in northern California. Most, however, continued instead to live in the midst of white settlements, working for wages on ranches and farms and following some traditional practices. A few moved into the mountains, avoiding white settlements as much as possible.

As federal authorities stumbled toward creating reservations, state officials also asserted their authority over California's Indian peoples. In 1850, the first session of the state legislature approved the Act for the Government and Protection of the Indians. The law permitted Indians to remain in the "homes and villages" that they had long occupied. The law also provided for the indenturing of Indian children, either with consent of their parents or if they were orphans. As a result, many Indian children became "bound labor"—obligated to work without pay in exchange for food, shelter, and necessities—until age 18 for boys and 15 for girls. Adult Indians not employed for wages were subject to arrest for vagrancy and could then be hired out by the courts. Burning of grasslands (see Chapter 1) was made a crime. Penalties were established for anyone who compelled an Indian to work without wages, but Indians were prohibited (under a different law) from testifying in court against whites, so violations were difficult to establish. The historian Albert Hurtado concludes that "the 1850 Act for the Government and Protection of the Indians protected them very little and governed them quite a lot."

The Politics of Land and Culture

When the news of gold first became known, Californios were among the first to rush to the gold country. Thousands of immigrants from Mexico, especially Sonora, and others from elsewhere in Latin America, especially Chile, soon

joined them. Whether citizens or immigrants, Spanish-speaking miners found themselves derided as “greasers,” harassed, assaulted, and sometimes lynched. Eventually violence and harassment, along with the Foreign Miner’s Tax of 1850 (see Chapter 4), drove many Latinos from the gold country. Some of the immigrants returned to their homes, but others took up permanent residence in the existing pueblos, especially San José, Santa Barbara, and Los Angeles.

The Gold Rush, however, was good for some rancheros, who prospered because of the increased demand for cattle to provide food to the massive influx of gold seekers. Cattle prices tripled between 1849 and 1851, and 50,000 head of cattle from southern California went north for slaughter. Los Angeles, still with a Mexican majority, boomed both from cattle sales and from sale and distribution northward of horses and mules brought from northern Mexico to be sent to the mining regions.

Nearly all Californio landowners found themselves struggling to retain their land. Though the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo guaranteed existing landownership, those who poured into California from the eastern United States brought significantly different expectations regarding landownership. In the eastern states, land was carefully surveyed, and each plot was precisely located. Under the Preemption Act of 1841, settlers could select a parcel of undeveloped land, build a home on it (often called “squatting”), farm the land, then buy the land from the government for \$1.25 per acre. The intent of federal land policies, though not always the reality, was to encourage family farms and to discourage land speculators. For would-be squatters, land that was apparently not lived on or actively farmed was often considered available for squatting.

In Mexican California, there had never been any formal land surveys. Land grants were large and vaguely defined, often based on natural markers (streams or boulders, for example) rather than precise survey lines. For the largest California ranchos, much of the land seemed unused, at least by the standards of the eastern United States. Even before the United States acquired California, some Americans had squatted on land in California. After the war, many more did the same. Some did so in the expectation that the Preemption Act would be applied in California. Some did so on the assumption that, having won the war, they could claim what they desired. Some did it with full knowledge that Californios already owned the land.

One of the most important tasks in integrating California into the American legal system was to verify and record land titles—the official record of landownership. Earlier experiences in Louisiana and Florida (both previously Spanish possessions) suggested that the process invited manipulation, fraud, and litigation. When Frémont and Gwin took their seats in the U.S. Senate in 1850, they immediately proposed federal legislation to clarify land titles. That law, the Gwin Act (1851), created a board of three commissioners, appointed by the president. Those claiming land presented their evidence of ownership to the commissioners. If others claimed the same land, they too introduced

evidence. If the commissioners accepted the evidence of ownership, the title was considered valid. If the commissioners rejected the evidence, the land passed to federal ownership. A federal agent participated in the hearings to challenge dubious evidence. Either the person claiming the land or the federal agent could appeal a decision, first to the federal district court and then to the U.S. Supreme Court. Of several proposals that went before Congress for clarifying land titles, the Gwin Act was probably the most cumbersome, time-consuming, and potentially costly for holders of Spanish and Mexican land titles.

The commissioners worked from early in 1852 until 1856, hearing more than 800 claims. Some were unquestionably fraudulent, but more than 600 were confirmed. Of those confirmed, nearly all were appealed through the courts, and the court proceedings dragged on interminably. Success came with a high price: travel to San Francisco to present arguments and documents, more travel to court hearings, and attorneys' fees at every step of the way. One historian estimated that the average land-grant holder spent 17 years before securing final title to the land. Another historian estimated that attorneys' fees involved in defending the Mexican land grants constituted 25 to 40 percent of the value of the land.

During the hearings, squatters often moved onto the most attractive lands, especially in northern California. The squatters formed a large and influential political group and found many public officials receptive to their pleas. Some desperate rancheros sold their claims for whatever they could receive—but such sales could not be final until after the final court decision on the title. Unscrupulous lawyers sometimes saddled their clients with impossible debts, requiring land sales to pay off the mortgages. All in all, most historians who have studied the implementation of the Gwin Act have endorsed the judgment of Henry George, a San Francisco journalist who, in 1871, called it a “history of greed, of perjury, of corruption, of spoliation and high-handed robbery.”

If the northern rancheros found themselves flooded with squatters and lawyers, southern rancheros faced devastating tax burdens. South of the Tehachapi Mountains, Californios remained in the majority. There, they won elections as local officials and members of the state legislature. One Californio, Pablo de la Guerra, was elected president of the state senate in 1861 and was first in line to succeed the governor.

At the constitutional convention, Californio delegates from the south had raised the possibility of dividing California into a northern section, which would become a state, and a southern section, which would become a territory. Though defeated in the convention, the idea of dividing the state persisted. The 1850 session of the legislature created a tax system based on land and other possessions, including cattle, but not wealth, which included gold. These taxes fell disproportionately on the ranchos of southern California, which provided southerners both a reminder that they were dominated politically by the northern part of the state and an incentive for separation. Though southern

Californios' motivation for dividing the state stemmed largely from their desire to separate themselves from northern domination and regain control over their taxes, some, especially white newcomers from the slave-holding South, also saw it as a way to create a new slave state.

Throughout the 1850s, the state legislature received proposals to divide the state. In 1859, the legislature approved a popular vote in the southern counties on the issue of division. The vote was two to one in favor of division, and the results were forwarded to the federal government for action, but nothing was done in Congress in 1860. The next year found the nation preoccupied with civil war. This effectively ended the possibility for creating a separate state or territory in which Californios and other Latinos might be numerically dominant. And, within a short time, English-speaking Americans soon outnumbered those who spoke Spanish in southern California as well as in the north, and political power slowly passed from the hands of the Californios.

The effort to create a separate state or territory in southern California marked one attempt by Spanish-speaking Californians to retain their culture and political autonomy. Political efforts to secure bilingual schools in Los Angeles (unsuccessful), to insist on implementation of the constitutional provision requiring Spanish translations of official documents (a losing struggle), and to serve on local political bodies represented other examples. Such efforts came largely from members of the old, landowning Californio families. Most elite Californios, at least in the south, were accorded a level of respect and even honor by their new, English-speaking neighbors. Some historians have suggested that, in fact, many of them were co-opted into the emerging English-speaking power structure and that, despite their attempts to secure recognition for their language and culture, they made little serious effort to protect the large numbers of landless Mexican laborers and farm workers from economic exploitation.

Californians and the Crisis of the Union

As Californians struggled with issues of land, labor, and ethnicity, national politics moved rapidly toward the ultimate crisis of secession and civil war. Though far removed from Washington, California was never immune from the sectional conflict.

Fighting Slavery in California

Throughout the decade of the 1850s, slaveholders brought enslaved African Americans to live in California—some 300 in 1852, by one estimate. Some mined gold and others worked as domestic servants. The Gold Rush also attracted significant numbers of free African Americans, some of whom

hoped to gain enough gold to purchase freedom for their families. By 1860, more than 4000 African Americans lived in California—the largest black population of any western state or territory other than Texas and Indian Territory (now Oklahoma). In California, African Americans encountered southern whites, most of whom brought their pro-slavery attitudes, and some of whom brought their slaves, as well as northern abolitionists, both white and black, who brought their hatred of slavery.

When slaveholders brought their slaves into California and continued to hold them in slavery, they seldom attracted attention from state or local officials, despite the state constitution's prohibition of slavery. Some officials had pro-slavery attitudes. Others seem to have been willing to tolerate slavery. As a result, enforcing the ban on slavery often fell to individuals outside government. As the state's free African American community grew and prospered, its members took the lead in identifying slaves, urging them to claim their freedom, and organizing assistance for them. A German immigrant wrote that "the wealthy California Negroes ... exhibit a great deal of energy and intelligence in saving their brothers." They could usually count on white abolitionists for financial assistance, political pressure, and legal representation in the courts.

One such court case arose in the Mormon settlement of San Bernardino, in southern California. Robert Smith was a Mormon from Mississippi who brought several slaves first to Utah and then, in 1852, to California. Bridget "Biddy" Mason, one of the slaves, made friends with a free black family in Los Angeles. In 1855, as Smith was preparing to move to Texas, free African Americans persuaded the Los Angeles county sheriff to take Mason and the other slaves into protective custody. Mason then sought freedom through the Los Angeles District Court and succeeded, not just for herself, but for 13 others as well.

California's developing African American community and their white abolitionist allies could claim some notable victories through court cases such as those that freed Biddy Mason and Archy Lee (see pp. 129–131). Other times they failed, either because they could not mobilize in time or because they could not persuade a judge. Black Californians had other struggles as well. Though some white Californians strongly opposed slavery and discrimination against free African Americans, the California legislature during the 1850s passed laws that discriminated against African Americans in ways similar to midwestern and mid-Atlantic states. Black Californians were prohibited from voting, serving on juries, marrying whites, or testifying in state courts. The prohibition against testifying in court was especially troublesome, as it restricted the ability of African Americans to defend themselves in court in the event of challenges to their property, savings, or even their freedom. In 1852, the state legislature passed the California Fugitive Slave Law, designed to assist slave owners in capturing slaves who fled within California, and the law remained in force until 1855.

To organize against such discrimination, black Californians drew upon eastern precedents to hold several statewide conventions. Meeting in Sacramento in 1855 and 1856 and in San Francisco in 1857, the conventions demonstrated black Californians' continuing connection with events in the East as well as their determination to secure the repeal of discriminatory legislation in California. One convention led to the establishment of the state's first black newspaper. All three conventions called upon white Californians to recognize the contributions of African Americans to the state's economy and its tax rolls and to repeal discriminatory laws. Discouraged by their lack of success, some 400 black Californians (including Archy Lee) moved to British Columbia in 1858.

Sectional Issues and California Politics

The prospect of a new state, with many elective offices, attracted politically ambitious men. William Gwin, for example, was a slaveholder and a Democrat from a prosperous and prominent family. He had served one term in the House of Representatives from Mississippi. Stymied in his hope for a U.S. Senate seat, he headed to California. Like Gwin, David Broderick came to California to pursue a political career when he found his political prospects blocked in New York. Largely self-educated, a Catholic and son of an Irish immigrant stonemason, Broderick had entered Democratic Party politics in New York City and supported the faction that spoke for workers and opposed big business. Gwin arrived in California in time to win election to the constitutional convention, then won election to the U.S. Senate. Broderick came to California a bit later, jumped into Democratic Party politics, and won election to the state senate. His ambition, too, was to sit in the U.S. Senate. Both Broderick and Gwin were Democrats, but the conflict between them came eventually to mirror the nation's conflict over slavery.

Within the California Democratic Party, Gwin led a faction called the Chivalry Democrats, including many from the South or border states. Tall, with a shock of gray hair, Gwin moved easily through the corridors of power. Though a slaveholder, he voted in the constitutional convention to ban slavery from California. In the U.S. Senate, he did not criticize slavery and usually voted with the southern Democrats. As senior senator and close to the administration, Gwin controlled most federal patronage (appointments to federal jobs) in California, and he steered bills through Congress that established important federal agencies in the Bay Area, including the mint and the customhouse. (The customhouse was one of the most important federal agencies in any port city, providing many federal jobs.) Through organization and patronage, Gwin and his Chivalry Democrats dominated the Democratic Party in much of California.

Broderick built a strong Democratic organization in San Francisco using techniques learned in New York City, and he soon dominated the state

This formally posed photograph of David Broderick was probably taken after he had become a member of the United States Senate. How does Broderick's political career in California reflect larger political patterns in the nation?



Hon. D.C. Broderick of Cal., Library of Congress, public domain, no known restrictions

legislature through his influence over the San Francisco members. As a political leader, he consistently defended the laborers from whom he had sprung and whose votes kept him in office. He opposed the Fugitive Slave Law and defended the rights of free African Americans, becoming an outspoken opponent of slavery.

Just as in California, the sectional conflict over slavery disrupted politics nationwide during the 1850s. When congressional Democrats, led by Stephen Douglas, passed the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854, they changed long-standing rules to permit slavery in the new territories. One result was the emergence of a new political party, the Republicans, who opposed any extension of slavery into the territories. The Whig party fragmented over slavery and soon disappeared.

In the mid-1850s, some voters, at least temporarily, chose another new political party, the American Party, which appealed to American nationalism and opposed immigrants in general and Catholics in particular. The American Party grew out of a secret anti-immigrant society; their opponents called them Know-Nothings because, when asked about the organization, they were supposed to say that they knew nothing about it. In southern California, Californios called them *Ignorantes*. Divisions within the state Democratic Party led some southern, Protestant Democrats to support the Americans in 1855, and they probably got the votes of many former Whigs as well. They elected the governor and many members of the legislature; however, anti-Catholicism did not figure as prominently in the Know-Nothings' victory in California as it did in eastern states. They soon died out.

The other new political party of the mid-1850s was the Republican Party. Many of the most outspoken Republicans were abolitionists, who sought to eliminate slavery everywhere. In 1856, the new party chose John C. Frémont, California's first U.S. senator, as its presidential candidate. But Frémont did not do well in California—he placed third, after both the Democrat and the candidate of the Know-Nothings. Gwin and Broderick had patched over their differences to support the Democratic candidate, James Buchanan, and to regain a Democratic majority in the state legislature. The Republicans did little better in California elections over the next few years.

Gwin and Broderick forged a temporary alliance again in 1857, when Broderick used his control over the state legislature to win election to the U.S. Senate. Promising to relinquish federal patronage to Broderick, Gwin secured Broderick's backing for his own reelection to the Senate. Soon after, however, Gwin and Broderick staked out strongly opposed views over admitting Kansas to the Union as a slave state. Pro-slavery and anti-slavery forces had poured into the new territory of Kansas, and they fought with words and with guns to secure the majority there. When pro-slavery forces met at the town of Lecompton and drafted a slave-state constitution, the Buchanan administration tried to force it through Congress. Gwin led the pro-Lecompton forces in the Senate. Broderick joined Stephen Douglas and a few other northern Democrats who broke with their party and joined the Republicans to defeat the proposal. The bitter dispute between Gwin and Broderick carried over into the California state election of 1859. California Democrats divided into two camps. The Broderick faction, calling themselves Douglas Democrats, cooperated with the new Republican Party, but the Gwin faction won most of the state elections.

Shortly after the election, David Terry, a former Texan and former justice of the state supreme court, and a leading member of the Gwin faction, challenged Broderick to a duel, claiming Broderick had insulted him during the campaign. Though illegal in California, dueling was still practiced. Broderick's gun discharged prematurely, permitting Terry to take deadly aim. Broderick's death made him a martyr to the anti-slavery cause, as his supporters widely quoted his supposed dying words: "They have killed me because I was opposed to slavery and a corrupt administration."

Within a year, the national Democratic Party divided into northern and southern wings, each of which ran its own candidate in the 1860 presidential election. Gwin supported John Breckinridge, candidate of the southern Democrats. California's voters, however, chose Abraham Lincoln, the Republican candidate, as did most northern states. Lincoln's election prompted southerners to secede from a union that they now rightly understood to be in the hands of the enemies of slavery. Gwin and a few other Democrats urged that the South be permitted to leave in peace, but Lincoln and his party considered the Union to be indissoluble. The nation plunged into four years of bloody civil war.

California and Civil War

Far removed from the arena of conflict, Californians nonetheless played a significant role in the war.

When the Union called for volunteers, Californians formed eight regiments of infantry, a regiment of cavalry, a battalion of mountaineers, and a battalion of cavalry commanded by Californios and made up of Californios, Mexicans, and other Latinos. These forces were assigned to defend the mail and transportation routes between California and the North. When the Confederate army sent troops into New Mexico Territory, the California Volunteers were sent to block its advance. The Californians helped to drive the Confederates back into Texas, then spent the remainder of the war in campaigns against the Navajos, Apaches, and other Indian peoples of the Southwest, gaining a reputation as ruthless, even vicious, in their tactics.

Some Californians fought with the Union army in other units. Early in the war, Edward Baker—Archy Lee’s attorney—had raised a regiment in the East that included a number of Californians and was known initially as the 1st California. Several hundred Californians volunteered and made their way east, forming the “California Battalion” of the 2nd Massachusetts Cavalry. Henry Halleck, a West Point graduate and prominent San Francisco lawyer, led all Union armies from mid-1862 to early 1864, but failed to make much progress against the Confederate forces. William Tecumseh Sherman, another West Point graduate, was more successful. He had passed through California in 1847 while serving in the war with Mexico; he returned as a civilian in 1853 and opened a bank. He was appointed major general of the California militia in 1856, shortly before the vigilantes hanged Cora and Casey. Opposed to the vigilantes but unable to use the militia to restore the lawful authorities, he resigned his commission. Sherman left California in 1858. By the end of the Civil War, his contributions to Union victory put him second only to Ulysses S. Grant.

In all, nearly 16,000 Californians served in the Union army—about one in every five males between the ages of 15 and 30—but most Californians contributed to the Union in other ways than by bearing arms. Thomas Starr King, pastor of the San Francisco Unitarian Church, undertook grueling speaking campaigns around the state to promote the Union cause. Spurred in part by King’s oratory, Californians made their most impressive contribution to the Union in gold, especially as donations for the Sanitary Commission, a voluntary organization formed to care for wounded soldiers. Only two percent of the Union’s population, Californians donated more than a quarter of all funds raised by the Sanitary Commission. California’s contributions, furthermore, were in gold, which had greater purchasing power than the depreciated greenbacks that the Lincoln administration was issuing to help cover the cost of the war. California gold, sent regularly to New York, also played a significant role in helping to stabilize Union finances.

With the Republican victory in the 1860 Republican election, a new group of political leaders emerged in California. Prominent among them was Leland Stanford, a Sacramento merchant who had been the Republicans' unsuccessful candidate for governor in 1859 and who won the governorship in 1861. In the 1864 presidential election, Lincoln easily carried California.

Though most Californians were loyal to the Union, there were exceptions. David Terry became an officer in the Confederate army, and other Californians also joined the Confederate ranks, some 250 just from Los Angeles County. Though Gwin hoped that the South might be allowed to leave in peace, he did not take up arms against the Union. He left California in 1861, returning only well after the end of the war. A few Confederate sympathizers schemed to separate southern California or to disrupt the shipment of California gold to the Union, but nothing came of such plans. A few Californians briefly nourished hopes that California might secede and join Oregon as a Pacific Republic. A few Confederate sympathizers were arrested when they became too outspoken, but were not jailed for long.

Completion of the telegraph early in the war meant that news of battles was known in California as soon as in New York. Whether they were firm supporters of the Union, critics of the war, or Confederate sympathizers, Californians closely followed the major military engagements of the war, even though they were separated from them by great distances. In the end, the war experience seems to have brought many Californians to feel more connected to the rest of the Union.

Reconstruction and New Understandings of Citizenship

During the war and afterward, events far away in Washington brought important changes in the legal status of African Americans and, ultimately, Asian Americans and others. At the end of the Civil War, the victorious Republicans pushed through three amendments to the U.S. Constitution as a way of making permanent the momentous changes they had created. The Thirteenth Amendment (1865) abolished slavery. The Fourteenth Amendment (1868) defined federal citizenship and the rights of American citizens. The Fifteenth Amendment (1870) specified that the right to vote could not be denied based on race. These constitutional changes had implications not only for the defeated South, but also for California.

The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments meant, immediately, that African Americans could no longer be denied voting rights in California. Even before the Fourteenth Amendment, California Republicans in the state legislature had passed legislation that removed the limits on court testimony for African Americans. There were also some changes in the laws governing education in the late 1860s, requiring school districts to provide schooling for students of color and permitting, though not requiring, students of color to attend the same schools as white children. In 1872, given the language of the Fourteenth

Amendment, the legislature repealed the law that prohibited Asians from testifying in court against whites. The Fourteenth Amendment was potentially far-reaching in its provisions and its implications; however, just as was true for the state constitution's prohibition of slavery, the amendment was given meaning only as individuals appealed to the federal courts for protection of "equal protection of the laws."

Economic Growth in a Time of National Crisis

As the hundreds of gold seekers in early 1848 became tens of thousands in 1849 and after, the vast majority hoped to make their fortunes by finding gold. Some, however, sought wealth by selling goods to the miners or by investing in other ventures. Thus, the Gold Rush prompted the rapid development of other aspects of the new state's economy, from merchandising to agriculture to lumbering. Civil war in 1861 failed to slow the state's growth, and the new Republican Party quickly took action to subsidize a railroad to tie California to the Union. These developments, like the military and political events of the period, also helped to integrate California more closely with the rest of the nation.

The Transformation of Mining

The first miners found their gold by placer mining—panning or using sluices. The easily available gold was soon gone, however. By 1852 or so, it was often Chinese miners who remained to mine the less productive diggings, rework tailings, and work for wages in the increasingly capital-intensive mining industry. By 1860, 35,000 Chinese immigrants had come to California, most from Guangdong province in southern China, a region that had suffered from war with Great Britain in the early 1840s, from economic depression and internal strife in the 1850s, then again from war with Britain and France in the late 1850s. By 1860, nearly three-quarters of all Chinese Californians worked in mining, accounting for nearly a third of all those making their living by mining in California. By 1870, more than half of California's miners were Chinese.

New forms of mining were also coming into use, including hydraulic mining (see p. 116) and quartz mining. By 1870, quartz mining produced 42 percent of all gold mined in California. Quartz mining involved digging quartz out of rock, often through the sinking of shafts into the face of a mountain, pulverizing the quartz, and then extracting the gold through chemical reactions. Like hydraulic mining, quartz mining was expensive, involving deep-shaft mines and powerful stamping mills to crush the quartz. By 1858, California's stamping mills alone were estimated to be worth more than \$3 million. Within another 10 years, some mine shafts had reached more than 1000 feet in length, requiring elaborate timbering to stabilize the shafts,

artificial lighting, cable systems to haul out the ore, and sometimes powerful air pumps to force fresh air to the depths.

Throughout much of the 1850s, California had produced about \$50 million in gold each year, even more in 1851 and 1852, with 1852 the high point of more than \$80 million (equivalent in purchasing power to more than \$2 billion in 2010). Gold production declined in the 1860s, to about \$24 million in 1864 and some \$7 million by 1870, but gold continued to be mined for many years afterward. Some gold seekers in the 1880s and 1890s showed great ingenuity. They built dredging boats that plied the rivers of the Central Valley, scooping up the sand from the bottom and separating out whatever gold it contained. Other gold seekers even diverted the course of rivers, enabling them to mine the riverbed directly.

By the early 1860s, many miners had abandoned California for the newest mining region—the Washoe region of Nevada, 20 miles east of the California border. There, in 1859, gold seekers found a silver bonanza. The discovery was called the Comstock Lode, after Henry Comstock, who had established an early claim. Just as the news of gold had spurred a great rush of prospectors into the Sierra Nevada foothills in 1848 and 1849, so news of silver discoveries brought thousands into the dry mountains east of Lake Tahoe. But Comstock silver, like gold quartz, required the expensive, up-to-date technology of deep-shaft mining and crushing mills.

Deep-shaft mining, hydraulic mining, and crushing mills necessitated capital investment on a massive scale, transforming mining into a big business. Companies sought to raise the necessary capital by selling shares (stock) in the company. In 1862, the San Francisco Stock Exchange opened to formalize the process of selling stock, nearly all of it in mining companies, many in the Washoe. Within a year, nearly 3000 mining companies were issuing stock as a way to raise capital. Speculation in mining stocks soon came to rival mining as a source of quick wealth—or financial disaster.

Most of the wealth of the Washoe, like that of California mines, flowed as if through a giant funnel to the banks in San Francisco. This made the economic development of California unlike that in almost any part of the United States to that time. As Americans had moved west with dreams of economic development—farming, ranching, lumbering, mining—their enterprises had usually been dependent on capital from more developed areas to the east and across the Atlantic. Many California enterprises were also dependent on eastern and foreign capital, but the enormous amount of gold and silver meant that California's economic development was different from most other frontier experiences—it soon became, as one historian aptly put it, "a self-financing frontier."

Economic Diversification

The large numbers of gold seekers in 1849 and later stimulated a wide range of other economic developments, for they needed shirts and biscuits, tents and transportation. From the beginning, some made their fortunes by mining the

miners—trading hardware, dry goods, and food for gold dust. One woman, in 1852, claimed to have earned \$11,000 by baking pies in a skillet over a campfire and selling them to hungry miners. Levi Strauss earned lasting fame when he realized that trousers made of canvas would hold up better than those worn by most miners. By 1870, the durability of Levi's pants—soon dubbed Levis—had made their inventor a millionaire.

The miners were hungry for meat, and the ranchers of southern California rapidly expanded their cattle herds to meet the huge demand. By 1860, California stood third among the states in the number of cattle being raised for meat. Cattle raising expanded too fast, however, and supply soon exceeded demand. During the extremely wet winter of 1861 to 1862, many cattle drowned in flooding in the San Joaquin Valley, and more died during a drought in 1863 and 1864. The number of beef cattle fell by half between 1860 and 1870.

Production of other agricultural goods also expanded. During the early 1850s, flour had been the largest single import into California. By the late 1850s, Californians were producing a surplus of wheat and flour and began to export it. In 1860, California stood second among the states in winemaking and by 1870 held first place, producing well over half of the nation's wine. Sheep raising also boomed, and by 1870 California ranked second in the production of wool.

Much of this early agricultural development was not in the central valleys that eventually became crucial to California agriculture. Most of the leading wheat-growing counties in 1860 were around San Francisco Bay, and the leading wool-producing and cattle-raising counties were mostly along the coast between Monterey and Los Angeles. Los Angeles was the leading wine-producing county in 1860. By then, however, Agoston Haraszthy, an immigrant from Hungary, had begun to experiment with viticulture (the growing of grapes for winemaking) in the Sonoma Valley. In 1861, he traveled to Europe and returned with 100,000 grapevine cuttings representing more than 300 varietals.

California agriculture was distinctive by the size of its farms and ranches, a holdover in part from the days of the huge ranchos. Throughout the 1850s and 1860s, the average farm in California was in excess of 450 acres, more than double the national average.

The Gold Rush and the expansion of agriculture stimulated the development of manufacturing. Californians developed new forms of mining equipment, some of which were among the most technologically sophisticated in the world. By the 1860s, foundries and machine shops in the Bay Area, especially in San Francisco, were producing not only technologically advanced mining equipment but also farm machinery, ships, and locomotives. As wheat farming expanded, so did flour milling. By 1870, flour ranked as the state's most valuable single product. Mining, agriculture, and the growing cities all needed construction material, and lumbering soon became an important industry. Loggers quickly cut the redwoods along the central coast and began to

move into the larger stands of trees along the northern coast. By the mid-1850s, Humboldt County was emerging as a major source of lumber.

San Francisco rapidly developed as a commercial center, based on its port and on the federal customhouse and mint. By 1860, the city had become the nation's sixth largest port and a major center for banking and finance.

Transportation

Throughout the 1850s and early 1860s, California remained remote from the eastern half of the nation, accessible only by difficult and dangerous routes. The major overland routes soon became well-beaten roads. By the late 1850s, the firm of Russell, Majors, and Waddell dominated freighting along the Platte River route to Salt Lake City and the Pacific coast, eventually operating 3,500 wagons drawn by 40,000 oxen. When traveled by oxen, however, the overland route could occupy most of a summer. When Congress offered to subsidize any company that could deliver mail between the Mississippi River and San Francisco in 25 days or less, Butterfield Overland Mail secured the subsidy and in 1858 ran its first stagecoaches along a southern route, carrying both mail and up to nine passengers on a bouncing, three-week-long journey. Eventually, a few other stage routes were added, also with federal subsidies for carrying mail. Though faster than ox trains, stagecoaches were prohibitively expensive for most. Freighting operations and stagecoaches required regular stations along the route, staffed by company agents, where stagecoaches could change their teams and travelers could get a meal. In 1860, Russell, Majors, and Waddell launched the Pony Express, a mail delivery system based on relays of individual riders, each of whom was to ride at full speed, with changes of horses every 10 miles and changes of riders every 70 miles. The first Pony Express riders left San Francisco and St. Joseph, Missouri, on April 3, 1860, and the mail arrived at the other end 10 days later. This fast mail service became obsolete 18 months later, when the first transcontinental telegraph line was completed.

The other route to California was by sea, either around Cape Horn, at the tip of South America, or to Panama, over the isthmus, and then up the Pacific coast. Fast clipper ships could make the journey from New York around Cape Horn to San Francisco in 130 days or less. The trip over the isthmus was faster. By the late 1850s, a rickety railroad was completed over the isthmus, and the trip to New York via Panama took about the same time as the Butterfield stage and its rail connections to the Atlantic coast.

Nearly everyone agreed that only a direct railroad connection could improve transportation between California and the eastern half of the nation. Nearly everyone agreed, too, that the cost of building a rail route was so astronomical that only massive federal subsidies could tempt entrepreneurs to undertake the construction. Such agreement, however, ended over the proper route for the rails. Stephen Douglas, senator from Illinois, led a group who

wanted to connect San Francisco to Chicago. Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri, father-in-law of John Frémont, thundered his support for a route west from St. Louis. Southerners pointed to New Orleans as the logical terminus for a route through Texas and New Mexico Territory. Gwin tried to satisfy everyone by proposing a railroad with three eastern branches, for Chicago, St. Louis, and New Orleans, but the costs were prohibitive. The issue remained deadlocked throughout the 1850s.

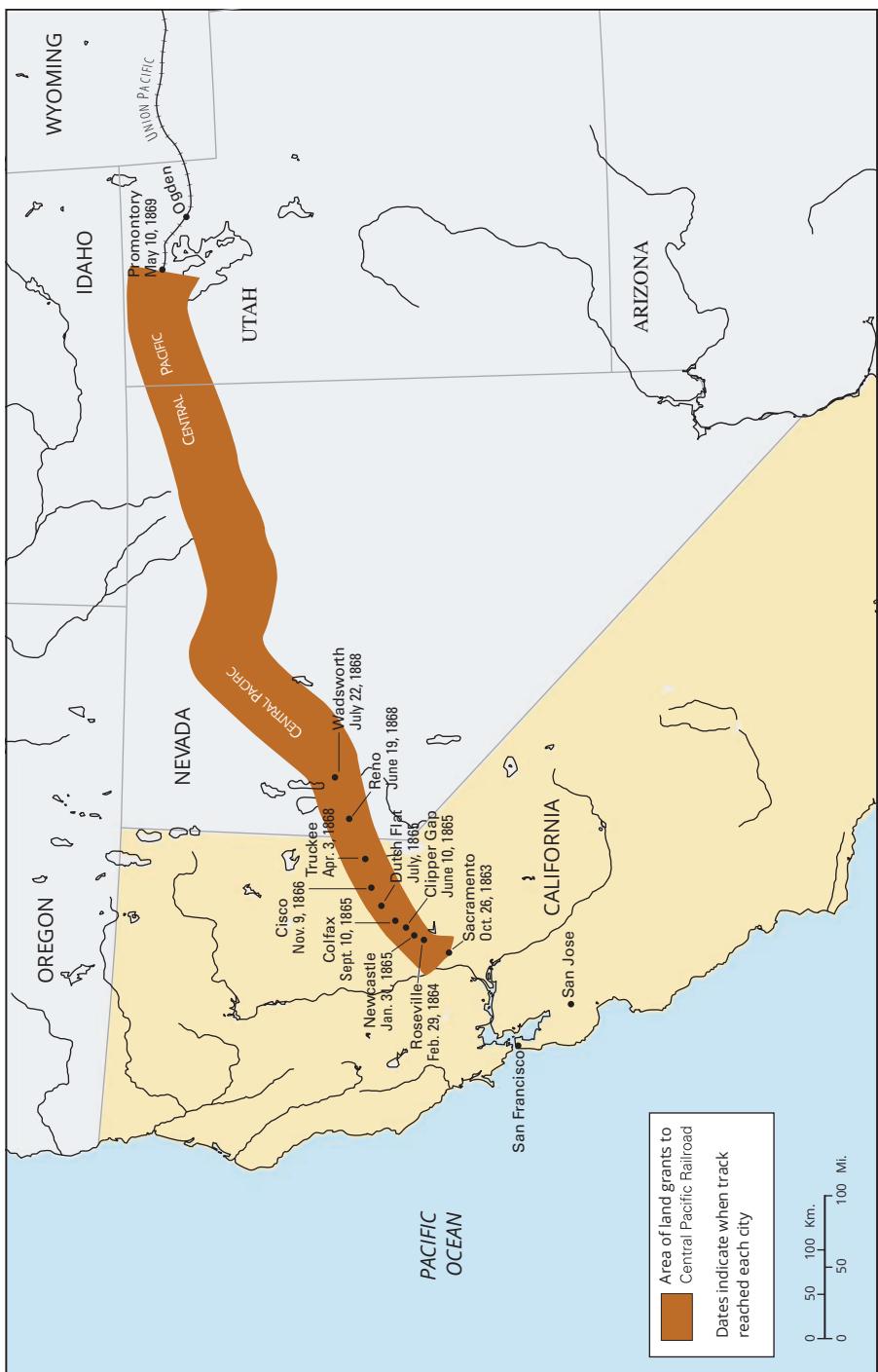
Tying Together the Union With Iron

When Republicans took power in Washington in 1861, they faced secession and then war. As Lincoln and his party raised troops and amassed supplies, Republicans moved quickly to use the power of the federal government to encourage economic growth and development. Among the development measures they passed was the Pacific Railroad Act of 1862.

As the new, Republican Congress assembled late in 1861, Theodore Judah arrived in Washington with plans for a railroad over the Sierra Nevada. Judah's experience and abilities as an engineer had combined with his enthusiasm for a transcontinental line to attract support from several Sacramento merchants, all Republicans: Leland Stanford, Collis P. Huntington, Mark Hopkins, and Charles Crocker (whose brother, Edwin, was a prominent abolitionist as well as a leading Republican). As merchants, they may have been persuaded less by a vision of a railroad to the east coast than by the prospect of a railroad to the silver-mining regions of Nevada. Regardless of their motives, they joined Judah in mid-1861 and put up the initial capital to create the Central Pacific Railroad Company. By then, Stanford was the Republican candidate for governor.

With crucial support from the California congressional delegation, Judah tirelessly lobbied for federal support. Signed into law on July 1, 1862, the Pacific Railroad Act incorporated the Union Pacific Railroad Company (UP) to build and run a railroad from Nebraska Territory to the western boundary of Nevada, and authorized the Central Pacific Company (CP) to build track to meet the UP. The companies were to receive federal land for their tracks, stations, and other buildings, and, as a subsidy, every other square mile of land for 10 miles (later increased to 20) on each side of the tracks. The remaining land within this checkerboard pattern was to be offered for sale by the federal government at double its usual price, so that the land grant, in the long run, would cost the government almost nothing. Finally, the act provided for a loan of \$16,000—later increased substantially—for every mile of track completed.

A symbolic first shovelful of earth was dug early in 1863 by Stanford, now both president of the railroad and governor of the state. Initial preparations got underway that summer. By the fall, however, Judah had fallen out with his partners and returned to the East to seek financial support against them, but he contracted a fever en route and died shortly after reaching New York. Huntington took over as the railroad's chief lobbyist. Amendments to the



Map 5.1 This map shows the route of the Central Pacific from Sacramento to Promontory Summit, Utah, and also the outer boundaries of the land grant that the company received from the federal government. Land was awarded in a checkerboard pattern, 10 square miles (later increased to 20) for each mile of track completed. Note how long it took for the railroad to be built from Sacramento across the Sierra Nevadas, and then how quickly construction proceeded across Nevada and Utah.

original act in 1864 substantially increased both the amount of land and the amount of loan funds provided by the federal government.

Even with generous subsidies, the CP faced huge difficulties, beginning with finding a sufficient labor force. The Civil War had drained males from the work force, and the lure of Nevada silver took many more. Charles Crocker—in charge of construction—employed a few Chinese laborers as an experiment. The Chinese crews proved to be so capable that Crocker quickly hired more. From then on, the construction crews, including the foremen, were almost all Chinese, though supervisory jobs were held by whites. By mid-1866, 6000 Chinese laborers were at work on CP construction, and their numbers reached nearly 10,000 before the job was done.

The construction crews faced formidable obstacles as they entered the Sierra Nevada. The CP was anxious to build as rapidly as possible, because subsidies were awarded for track actually in place and because the UP was competing for those subsidies. The sooner the CP crews could reach Nevada and begin to build across relatively flat regions, the more of the subsidy would go to the CP. The winters of 1866–1867 and 1867–1868 were severe, but Crocker pushed his crews to work despite the ice and snow. The solid granite of the mountains also slowed progress; one tunnel took an entire year to build, as construction crews chipped out only eight inches of rock per day. In other places, Chinese laborers were lowered down sheer cliffs in baskets to chip away at the rock or to drill holes for blasting powder. Such work was highly dangerous, and many died in falls, explosions, avalanches, and accidents.

Not until June 1868 did the tracks reach Nevada. Though the UP started well after the CP, its initial construction had been through the flatlands of Nebraska and eastern Wyoming. By June 1868, the UP had built twice as many miles of tracks as the CP. Desperate to push their tracks to eastern Utah to capture the business to and from Salt Lake City, the CP partners pushed their crews even harder. In the last year of building through the mountains, the crews completed only 40 miles of track. In 1868, building through Nevada, they completed 362 miles. Competition between the CP and UP grew ever more intense, as both sought to maximize their tracks as a way to maximize their federal subsidies. UP construction crews, by then, were largely Irish, and ethnic rivalry also became frenzied. In the end, however, Crocker's Chinese crews set the record of 10 miles of track in a single day.

A grand ceremony was organized to dramatize the joining of the Union Pacific and Central Pacific rails at Promontory Summit, Utah, just outside the city of Ogden. On May 10, 1869, two giant locomotives from each line moved forward to face each other. Ceremonial spikes of precious metal from western territories and states were tapped into place, and Stanford used a silver mallet to drive in a final spike of California gold as telegraph lines carried the blows to the nation.

The driving of the golden spike did not unite California with the rest of the nation by rail, as the UP section of the track had some gaps and the Missouri River was still unbridged. Much of the track had been laid so rapidly that it required

almost immediate repairs. Nonetheless, the nation celebrated with fireworks and flowery speeches from Boston to San Francisco. The Liberty Bell was rung in Philadelphia. New York City heard a 100-gun salute. The nation, so recently divided by a bloody war, seemed determined to celebrate a new symbolic unity. The long trip between California and the Missouri valley had been cut to six days.

New Social and Cultural Patterns

During the 20 years following the discovery of gold, the state was transformed in many ways beyond the economic changes. California acquired new social institutions, especially educational and humanitarian institutions, and developed a reputation as a literary center.

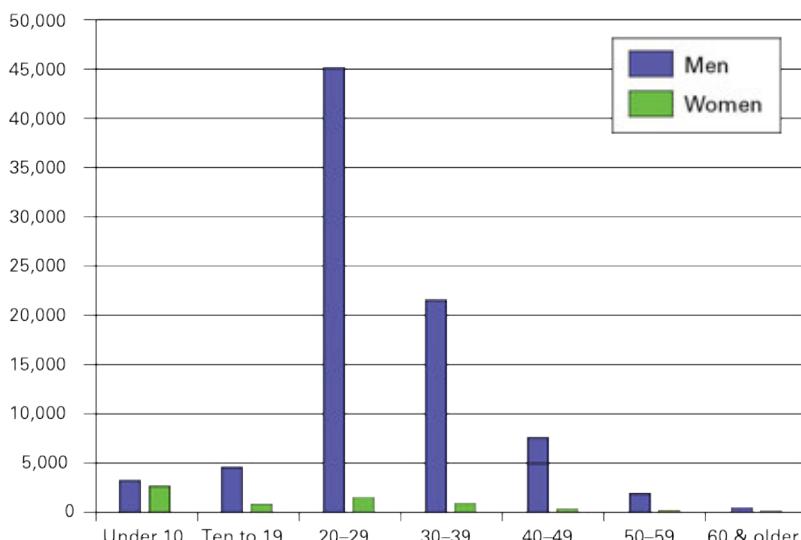
Gender Roles and New Social Institutions

The thousands of gold seekers gave the population of the new state a peculiar composition—the state's population in 1850 was composed overwhelmingly of young men. As seen in Figure 5.1, more than half the population was male and aged between 15 and 30. But the imbalance between men and women persisted

Figure 5.1 Numbers of Men and Women by Age, 1850

This figure vividly shows the extreme demographic disproportions by age and sex that were created by the Gold Rush. What do these data suggest regarding the nature of life in the mines?

Source: Statistical view of the United States: being a compendium of the seventh census (Washington, 1854).



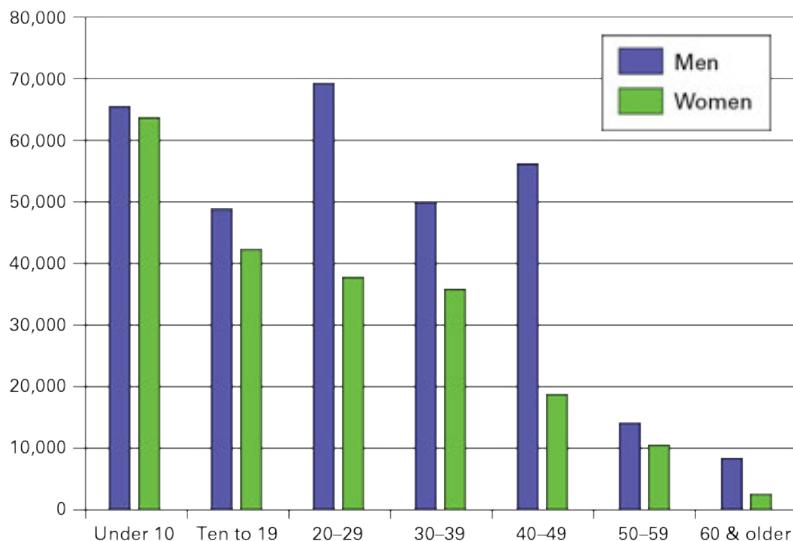


Figure 5.2 Numbers of Men and Women by Age, 1870

Note how men continued to outnumber women long after the initial stages of the Gold Rush had passed. Such demographic disproportions are typical of frontier economies dependent on the exploitation of raw materials, for example, through mining, lumbering, or ranching. What does this suggest about the California economy?

Source: The statistics of the population of the United States compiled from the ninth census (Washington, 1872).

after many gold seekers returned to their homes in the East or left for other mining regions. Figure 5.2 presents data for 1870, indicating a continuing, though not so extreme, disproportion between men and women aged 20 to 50. This ratio between men and women, characteristic of frontier societies, carried implications for other social patterns.

Many Americans in the mid-19th century had sharply defined expectations regarding social roles for men and women. Domesticity was the notion that the proper place for a woman was in the home as wife and mother, and that as wife-mother she was guardian of the family, responsible for its moral, spiritual, and physical well-being. As moral guardians and protectors of children and families, women also assumed important roles in the church and the school and in voluntary organizations devoted to caring for women, children, and the less fortunate. Beyond this, moreover, many Americans believed that women ought not experience much of the world, for fear that business or politics, with their sometimes lax moral standards, might corrupt women. The best choice, it was widely argued, was for women to occupy a separate sphere, immune from such dangers. Though widely advocated in the pulpits and journals of the day, the concepts of domesticity and separate spheres proved most typical of white middle-class and upper-class women in towns and cities, and often held little relevance for farm women, working-class women, and women of color.

Many 19th-century Americans also accepted the notion that men naturally tended to be materialistic where women were spiritual and that men tended to be adventurous or even hedonistic where women were restrained and refined. “Nothing is better calculated to preserve a young man from contamination of low pleasures and pursuits,” stated one guidebook for young men, than frequent contact “with the more refined and virtuous of the other sex.” In California in the 1850s, however, the extreme imbalance between the numbers of men and women made such contact unlikely for many young men. Thus, few Americans were surprised that, without the restraining presence of women, the largely male mining camps seemed to be given over to adolescent-like excesses of vice, violence, and greed.

As women arrived in California during the 1850s and 1860s, many brought with them the middle-class expectations of their day, and they quickly set about constructing social institutions intended to convey morality, educate the young, and care for the unfortunate. They did not do so by themselves, of course, for many men also understood the value of such institutions. In 1850, there were only two public schools and seven teachers in the entire state. By 1870, Californians had created 1,342 public schools, taught by more than 2,400 teachers, of whom 1,400 were women. The 28 churches of 1850 expanded to 643 in 1870. Californians also organized other social institutions—orphanages, benevolent societies, libraries, reform associations—and many of them relied for their continuation on the voluntary labor of middle- and upper-class women.

Not all women who migrated to California accepted the prevailing social definitions of domesticity and separate spheres. Some came to California to get rich, a few by panning for gold, more by selling meals and lodging to miners, and probably the largest number by prostitution. Others challenged prevailing gender roles in other ways. Ada Clare, a San Francisco journalist, urged women to take advantage of a new gymnasium and to build themselves up physically, to dispel the prevailing social view of women as frail and sickly. Laura de Force Gordon delivered the state’s first public lecture on woman suffrage in 1868 and helped to form a state woman suffrage association early in 1870. Another early proponent of woman suffrage was Emily Pitts Stevens, a former schoolteacher who launched the state’s first newspaper committed to women’s rights in 1869.

The Growth of Religious Toleration

California in the 1850s was rife with ethnic hostility and conflict, but it differed little in that regard from other parts of the nation. Discrimination against free African Americans and mistreatment of American Indians could be found nearly everywhere to the east. California and the West were unique, however, in the diversity of their ethnic groups. In the eastern part of the country, racial relations usually involved blacks and whites, or sometimes whites and Indians,

Table 5.1 RACE, ETHNICITY, OR NATIVITY FOR CALIFORNIA POPULATION, 1852, 1860, 1870

Race, ethnicity, or nativity	1852		1860		1870	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Asian	not available		34,933	9.2	49,310	8.8
African American (including mulatto)	1,678	0.7	4,086	1.1	4,272	0.8
American Indian*	31,266	12.3	17,798	4.7	7,241	1.3
Foreign-born	54,803	21.4	146,528	38.6	209,831	37.5
• Ireland	not available		33,147	8.7	54,421	9.7
• German states	not available		21,646	5.7	29,699	5.3
• Great Britain	not available		12,227	3.2	17,685	3.2
All others (mostly whites born in the U.S.)	167,375	65.6	176,649	46.5	289,593	51.7
Total	255,122		379,994		560,247	

*Described as “civilized” or “domesticated” by the census, meaning those who lived in the midst of the larger society and followed at least some social and economic patterns of the larger society.

Source: U.S. Census Office, *The Seventh Census of the United States: 1850* (Washington, 1853), which included the special census of 1852; U.S. Census Office, *Population of the United States in 1860* (Washington, 1864).

or, rarely, blacks and Indians. Racial and ethnic relations in the West, however, involved not just American Indians and Americans of European and African descent, but also Mexican Americans (many of them mestizos) who had become citizens under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, and immigrants from Asia, Europe, Australia, the islands of the Pacific, and Latin America. (Table 5.1 presents data on groups included in census tabulations for 1852, 1860, and 1870.)

The Gold Rush attracted many European immigrants, some of whom came from intermediary points including the eastern United States and Australia. The influx included groups subject to discrimination and hostility in the eastern United States. Irish immigrants, for example, were depicted in some eastern newspapers as whiskey-swilling ignoramuses. Anti-Catholicism was as old as the Reformation, and anti-Semitism was older. The Know-Nothing movement of the mid-1850s drew support all over the country by criticizing immigrants, especially Catholic immigrants.

Californians, particularly in the gold-mining areas, seem to have developed an unusual toleration of religious differences. One historian carefully surveyed

all available records and found only two clear instances of anti-Semitic discrimination in the mining regions during the 1850s. In 1850, the California constitutional convention alternated its daily opening prayer between Protestant and Catholic clergymen. Students in the Catholic school in Los Angeles in 1859 included not just Catholics but also Protestants and Jews. A few years before, Protestants in San Francisco had contributed generously to help build a new Catholic church.

Despite the victory of the Know-Nothings in the state elections of 1855, a similar religious toleration seemed to characterize most of the new state's politics. When he was active in New York Democratic politics, Broderick had understood that the state's Democratic leaders were unwilling to permit Irish Catholics to rise too far. In California, Broderick won a seat in the U.S. Senate in 1857. The Irish-born and Catholic John Downey became governor in 1860 after being elected lieutenant governor the year before. San Franciscans elected an Irish Catholic mayor in 1867, and two Irish Catholics followed Broderick into the U.S. Senate from California before 1870. Catholic Californios were elected to local offices in some parts of northern California as well as in the south, and José Estudillo was elected state treasurer, serving from 1875 to 1880. Jews were also elected to local offices in the mining regions in the 1850s, and Solomon Heydenfeldt, who was Jewish, won election to the state supreme court in 1851.

One key to understanding this toleration of Catholics and Jews may be found in the Gold Rush, when respect went to those who prospered most. By 1870, San Francisco had 27 Irish bankers; at the same time, Philadelphia (much larger) had 18 and Boston (also much larger) had only four. Another part of the reason is undoubtedly the sheer numbers of Catholics—half the church-goers in the state by one estimate in 1860. Recent historians suggest that the presence of significant numbers of African Americans, American Indians, Chinese, and mestizos may have led whites—whether Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish, Irish, German, British, Californio, or old-stock American—to focus on their “whiteness” rather than their religion or national origin. Whatever the reasons, by 1860 California was developing a reputation for religious toleration. That reputation, however, was limited to religion and failed to extend to race.

Chinese immigrants were barred from American citizenship. Congress approved the first federal law on naturalization in 1790 and, although amended occasionally, the law provided that only white immigrants might become naturalized citizens. State laws also discriminated against immigrants from China. In a court decision in 1854, the law that barred African Americans and American Indians from testifying in court against whites was extended to the Chinese. Though local school boards first created racially separate schools for black students, local officials soon mandated segregated schools for Chinese students as well. The state legislature in 1863 directed the state superintendent of instruction to withhold funds from school districts that did not create separate schools for “Negroes, Mongolians, and Indians.”

Writing the Gold Rush

Among those who came to California in the 1850s and 1860s were young writers, some of whom created new patterns in American literature. Life in the mining districts stimulated the creative imagination of some who mined the excitement and turbulence there for a wealth of literary plots. Writers published articles, poems, essays, and short stories in the new newspapers and literary journals. By the late 1850s, San Francisco could choose among more than 10 daily newspapers and a larger number of weekly or monthly publications. Every mining town had at least one local paper, and often two. Among the many firsthand accounts of the Gold Rush that appeared in such publications, perhaps the finest were the 23 letters written by Louise Clappe under the pseudonym Dame Shirley and published in the *San Francisco Pioneer* in 1854 and 1855.

Bret Harte arrived in California in 1854 and tramped through the mining country before taking a newspaper job in Humboldt County. He scathingly condemned local ruffians for the brutal slaughter of 60 Indians, mostly women and children, then fled when he was apparently threatened with lynching. He made his way to San Francisco and soon became editor of the *Overland Monthly*. In its pages, he presented accounts of life in the diggings, drawing both on his own experience and on other firsthand accounts. Through stories such as “The Outcasts of Poker Flat,” Harte contributed significantly to the development of local color and realism in American fiction. Other California journalists also began to develop similar themes.

The most famous and influential of the Gold Rush authors was Samuel L. Clemens, a Mississippi River steamboat captain who fled from the strife of the Civil War and arrived in Nevada Territory in 1861. There he mined, speculated in mining stock, camped through the Sierra Nevada, and began to write humorous essays for the Virginia City newspaper. He began to use the pen name Mark Twain and quickly became the most popular humorist in Nevada. In May 1864, he moved to San Francisco, where he developed his humor into satire. His short story “The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County” was published in a New York journal in 1865. A San Francisco newspaper, the *Alta California*, commissioned him to travel to the Mediterranean and the Holy Land (then part of the Turkish empire). His book on his travels, *Innocents Abroad* (1869), established his national reputation and he moved to the East.

Ina Coolbrith arrived in California with her mother and stepfather in 1851 and grew up in Los Angeles. Her first poetry was published when she was 11. After her marriage to an abusive husband ended in divorce, she moved to San Francisco in the early 1860s. There she soon received national attention for her poetry and joined Harte in running the *Overland Monthly*. She seems to have dazzled Harte, Twain, and other emerging literary figures with her poetry, literary advice, conversation, and beauty. When Harte, Twain, and the others left California to pursue fame in the East or in Europe—they were all gone by

Ina Coolbrith is shown here as an established, celebrated poet.

Coolbrith, in keeping with the moral conventions of her time, tried to conceal her divorce. She also tried to conceal her family background—that her mother had fled to Salt Lake City and that Coolbrith was the niece of Joseph Smith, the founder of the Mormon Church.



Portrait of Ina Coolbrith. University of Southern California libraries and the California Historical Society, public domain, no known restrictions

1870—Coolbrith remained. She worked as city librarian in Oakland for many years, encouraged a new generation of writers, including Jack London, and, in 1915 at the age of 74, was named poet laureate of California.

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Summary

California's application for statehood produced the Compromise of 1850, by which congressional leaders sought to stave off sectional crisis. Sectional issues affected California politics in the 1850s, however, as transplanted southerners struggled with transplanted northerners to control California's two Senate seats. In California, as in the eastern states, the growing sectional crisis precipitated the emergence of a new political party, the Republicans. At the same time that national politics was rupturing over the issue of slavery, California experienced a crisis of political legitimacy with the rise of vigilantism, reaching its apogee when vigilantes overthrew the city government of San Francisco.

The federal government was slow to create reservations for California Indians, many of whom fell victim to violence. Californios who held Spanish or Mexican land grants found it expensive and time-consuming to prove title to their land, and many lost their lands. Throughout the 1850s, the full

meaning of the state constitution's ban on slavery had to be determined through court actions, most initiated by abolitionists, black and white.

With the presidential victory of Abraham Lincoln in 1860, the nation plunged into civil war. Far from the scene of battle, the war nonetheless affected California in important ways. Some Californians participated in the war itself, and others raised funds for the Union cause. Reconstruction, and especially the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, altered the meaning of citizenship, and California law was amended to remove many of the laws that discriminated against African Americans and others.

The economy grew and diversified in the 1850s and 1860s, with growth fueled by the continued development of mining. Throughout the 1850s, California remained remote from the eastern United States because of poor transportation. With the victory of the Republicans, however, came federal subsidies for construction of a railroad to tie California to the North.

With the continued growth of population, sex ratios in California began to move toward a more normal distribution. At the same time, partly through the prompting of women, new social institutions began to emerge. Catholics and Jews in California experienced less religious discrimination than their counterparts in the eastern United States. California, and especially San Francisco, acquired a reputation as a literary center.

Suggested Readings

- Berglund, Barbara, *Making San Francisco American: Cultural Frontiers in the Urban West, 1846–1906* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007). A deeply researched study of the social and cultural evolution of California's largest city.
- Chen, Yong, *Chinese San Francisco, 1850–1943: A Trans-Pacific Community* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000). A recent treatment that emphasizes the continuing contacts between San Francisco's Chinatown and China.
- Clarke, Dwight L., *William Tecumseh Sherman: Gold Rush Banker* (San Francisco: California Historical Society, 1969). Incorporates long excerpts from Sherman's detailed letters, especially interesting for the vigilantes of 1856.
- Dame Shirley, [Clappe, Louise A. K. S.], *The Shirley Letters* (1854–55; Santa Barbara and Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, Inc., 1970). The letters of "Dame Shirley" provide a wealth of information on life in the gold fields.
- Griswold del Castillo, Richard, *The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990). The best single treatment of this crucially important document for the history of California and the Southwest.

- Hurtado, Albert L., *Indian Survival on the California Frontier* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988). An insightful and comprehensive treatment of this important topic.
- Lapp, Rudolph M., *Blacks in Gold Rush California* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977). A pioneering work in African American history.
- Lotchin, Roger W., *San Francisco, 1846–1856: From Hamlet to City* (1974; Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997). An excellent treatment of this crucial decade in the history of the city.
- Matthews, Glenna. *The Golden State in the Civil War: Thomas Starr King, the Republican Party, and the Birth of Modern California* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011). A new treatment of the topic, especially good on the role of Thomas Starr King.
- Quinn, Arthur, *The Rivals: William M. Gwin, David Broderick, and the Birth of California* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1994). A well-written and balanced account of the key political rivalry in California in the 1850s.
- Rawls, James J., Orsi, Richard J., and Smith-Baranzini, Marlene, eds., *A Golden State: Mining and Economic Development in Gold Rush California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999). One volume of a series, all of which are excellent, developed by the California Historical Society on the occasion of the state's sesquicentennial.
- Rohrbough, Malcolm J., *Days of Gold: The California Gold Rush and the American Nation* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997). A highly acclaimed treatment of the Gold Rush itself and its impact on California and the nation.
- Senkewicz, Robert M., *Vigilantes in Gold Rush San Francisco* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985). An excellent overview of San Francisco's vigilantism for the decade of the 1850s.
- Starr, Kevin, Orsi, Richard J., and Smith-Baranzini, Marlene, eds., *Rooted in Barbarous Soil: People, Culture, and Community in Gold Rush California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000). Another of the excellent volumes published to mark the state's sesquicentennial.

California in the Gilded Age, 1870–1900

Main Topics

- The Economic Transformation of California and the West
- New Social Patterns
- Politics
- Cultural Expression
- Summary

Born in China in 1857, the young orphan took the name Mary McGladery when she lived in the orphanage run by the San Francisco Ladies' Protection and Relief Society. There, Mary learned English, other school subjects, how to play the piano, and how to be a proper middle-class lady. In 1875, she married Jeu Dip. Born in China in 1852, he came to San Francisco in 1869, learned English, lived mostly outside Chinatown, operated a successful business as a drayman and bondsman, and Americanized his name to Joseph Tape.

The Tapes moved to a house outside Chinatown where their first child, Mamie, was born in 1876. Three more children followed. In 1884, the Tapes tried to enroll Mamie in the school nearest their home, but the San Francisco school board had long denied admission to children of Chinese descent. The Tapes filed a lawsuit to permit Mamie to attend school, and the

CHAPTER 6	California in the Gilded Age, 1870–1900
1859–1880	Most productive period of Comstock silver mining
1864	Ralston opens the Bank of California
1870	Wheat surpasses gold as California's most valuable product
1871	Anti-Chinese riots in Los Angeles
1872–1873	Modoc War
1877	Workingmen's Party of California formed
1878	Constitutional Convention
1879	Publication of Henry George's <i>Progress and Poverty</i>
1882	Chinese Exclusion Law approved
1884	Publication of Helen Hunt Jackson's novel <i>Ramona</i>
1884	Southern Pacific Corporation chartered in Kentucky
1884	<i>Woodruff v. North Bloomfield Gravel Mining Company</i>
1885	<i>Tape v. Hurley</i>
1886	George Hearst becomes U.S. Senator
1886	<i>Yick Wo v. Hopkins</i>
1887	New state law encourages irrigation
1888	First California fruit travels to New York in refrigerated railroad cars
1897	Phoebe Apperson Hearst becomes Regent of the University of California
1899	Publication of Frank Norris's novel <i>McTeague</i>

court ruled in their favor, as did the state supreme court. However, the San Francisco school superintendent persuaded the legislature to amend state law to permit separate schools for children of Chinese descent. Mamie was again denied admission to her neighborhood school. In turning to the courts, the Tapes were among the significant numbers of Chinese Americans who sought judicial redress when local or state laws violated their legal and constitutional rights, and who helped thereby to break down racial segregation and discrimination.

In a letter published in the newspaper, Mary Tape angrily accused the school board of "Race prejudice" and asserted that Mamie "is more of an American than a good many of you." Mamie and her brother were the first to enroll at the new Chinese school. Later they moved near Chinatown, where

Mamie and her siblings learned Cantonese and other Chinese cultural patterns. In 1895, the Tapes moved to Berkeley, where the younger children could attend the regular public schools, including high school. While still in San Francisco, Mary had become an award-winning and technologically innovative amateur photographer. In Berkeley, Joseph's businesses continued to prosper, and the Tapes invested in real estate and eventually owned two ranches, where Joseph enjoyed hunting.

Mary and Joseph Tape provide examples of those whom historians of immigration have called "rapid assimilators"—those who quickly learn English and adopt many aspects of the majority lifestyle. Joseph's successful business enterprises permitted them to live in middle-class, white neighborhoods. Mae Ngai, a historian who has researched the Tape family, describes them as "highly unusual" among the immigrants of their time, but as "archetypical members of the first Chinese American middle class."

Mamie Tape grew up during what historians call the "Gilded Age," the years roughly from 1870 to 1900. A period



Children were the pride, joy, beauty, and chief delight of the quarter, Chinatown, San Francisco, Arnold Genthe, photographer, Library of Congress, public domain, no known restrictions

Children, in the wake of the Chinese Exclusion act, were all too rare and thus highly valued in California's Chinese enclaves. Like Mamie Tape, they confronted discrimination in public education.

of rapid industrialization and urbanization, large-scale immigration, and swift economic development in the West, it was an age of great fortunes and urban poverty, of powerful new technology and rampant child labor. *The Gilded Age* was, in fact, the title of the first novel by one-time Californian Mark Twain, coauthored with his Connecticut neighbor, Charles Dudley Warner. In it, they satirized the materialism and corruption of their day. Although most histories of the Gilded Age focus on the industries, entrepreneurs, cities, immigrants, and workers of the East and Midwest, California shared in all these experiences, although sometimes with unique variations. And Californians were often at the forefront during this era of rapid and far-reaching change.

Questions to Consider

- Why were railroads and water so important to the economic development of California during this time?
- What made San Francisco the metropolis of the West?
- How was education transformed during this period?
- In what ways did gender roles change during these years?
- How would you compare the experiences of California Indians, Latinos, and immigrants during the late 19th century?
- What was the significance of third parties in California politics during the 1870s and 1890s?
- What were the similarities and differences between the constitutional conventions of 1850 and 1878?
- In what ways did writers and artists draw on California as inspiration for their work?

The Economic Transformation of California and the West

Railroad construction was important to economic development throughout the United States after the Civil War. In California and the West, railroads were even more crucial because of the great distances and the dearth of navigable waterways. Mining continued to be a major element in the western economy. At the same time, agriculture emerged as California's leading industry. And, increasingly, water stood out as indispensable for mining, agriculture, and urban growth.

Railroad Expansion

For a quarter of a century after Leland Stanford placed the golden spike, the Central Pacific Railroad and its successor corporation, the Southern Pacific, dominated rail transportation in California and other parts of the West. Even before 1869, the railroad's "Big Four"—Leland Stanford, Collis Huntington, Mark Hopkins, and Charles Crocker—had begun to buy out potential rivals and block possible competitors.

San Francisco entrepreneurs organized the Southern Pacific Railroad to build a line from San Francisco to San Diego, and in 1866 Congress gave the Southern Pacific a generous land grant. The Big Four gained control of the Southern Pacific (SP) and plotted a route through the Santa Clara and San Joaquin Valleys—giving them not only a transportation monopoly there

Map 6.1 This map shows the extent of the Southern Pacific's transportation system as of 1894. The Southern Pacific dominated railroad service in California and nearby areas and connected California to New Orleans, the Pacific Northwest, and the Midwest (via the connection in Utah with the Union Pacific). Southern Pacific water routes connected New York and other major eastern cities to New Orleans, making it possible to travel cross-country entirely on Southern Pacific facilities. Does this map help you to understand why the Southern Pacific was sometimes called "the octopus"?



but also a great deal of potentially valuable agricultural land as part of their land grant. In 1870, the SP reached Los Angeles, then a country town with fewer than 6000 people.

By the mid-1870s, the Big Four controlled 85 percent of all railroad mileage in California and had ambitious plans for expansion. Eventually, they operated a line across Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas to New Orleans. Another line ran north, through the Sacramento Valley, then to Portland, Oregon (See Map 6.1). They acquired fleets of ships that carried passengers and freight along the Pacific coast, between California and Japan, and between New Orleans and New York. In 1884, they merged all these operations into the Southern Pacific Company, a holding company for which Huntington secured a corporate charter in Kentucky after the California legislature balked at approving such a powerful corporation. By 1884, the Big Four claimed that the SP was the largest transportation system in the nation, with more than 9000 miles of rails, 16,000 miles of water lines, and a virtual monopoly within California and other parts of the West.

The SP was also the largest landowner in California. While other land-grant railroads sold much of their lands, the SP held most of its land, arousing opposition from would-be farmers. On occasion, conflict over land erupted into violence. The most famous conflict was the “battle of Mussel Slough,” a struggle between the SP and farmers near Hanford, in what is now Kings County. Residents of the area had filed lawsuits over the SP’s land grant, and many farmers hoped to purchase land from the federal government for \$2.50 per acre, rather than from the SP. The SP prevailed in court, however, and enforced prices of \$10 to \$25 per acre. In 1880, a federal marshal set out to evict a farm family, but a group of armed farmers blocked his way. Seven men died in the shootout that followed.

Leland Stanford served as president of the Central Pacific and then the SP. A founder of the Republican Party in California and the state’s first Republican governor (1863–1865), Stanford won election to the United States Senate in 1885. He and his wife, Jane Lathrop Stanford, had one child, Leland Jr., who died of typhoid at the age of 16. They created a magnificent memorial to their son: Stanford University.

Collis P. Huntington was the shrewdest, coldest, and perhaps most ambitious of the Big Four. He represented them in the East and soon considered New York City his home. Huntington invested in other railroads, and by 1884 he could ride in his personal rail car over his own companies’ tracks from the Atlantic to the Pacific! He also invested in railroads in Latin America and Africa, urban transit in Brooklyn, land in southern California, shipbuilding in Virginia, and a host of other companies. True to his opposition to slavery in the 1850s, he insisted that his companies pay African Americans the same as white workers and that African Americans be hired on an equal basis with whites. His few charitable contributions included funds for schools for African Americans.

No other railroad challenged the SP's dominance until the 1890s, and the company acquired a reputation for charging "all the traffic will bear," that is, charging for freight and passengers at the very highest possible rate. Such behavior was typical of most railroad companies at the time. More than one entrepreneur reported that, upon his complaining about high freight rates, SP officials asked him to produce his account ledgers so that they could determine the highest level of freight rates he could pay without going bankrupt.

Most Californians understood the SP to be the most powerful force in state and local politics. All of the Big Four had taken part in Republican politics in the 1850s, before their investment in the railroad. Stanford served as governor and U.S. senator. Huntington was the SP's lobbyist in Washington, dedicated to preventing political restrictions on the SP and to gaining whatever advantages could be realized through the political process. In the early 1880s, the widow of David Colton, a high-ranking official of the SP, released letters that Huntington had written to her husband in the 1870s. In one of the most notorious, Huntington wrote about one California congressman: "He is a wild hog; don't let him come back to Washington." Another letter dealt with the U.S. Congress: "It costs money to fix things . . . with \$200,000 I can pass our bill."

Competition for the SP arrived in 1885 in the form of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad, known as the Santa Fe, which completed its line into Los Angeles in 1885. By 1888, passengers could take the Santa Fe from Chicago to San Diego, and a fare war broke out between the Santa Fe and the SP as each tried to undercut the other's fares. In the meantime, several San Francisco merchants formed the Traffic Association to consider alternatives to the SP and to encourage the legislature to regulate freight rates. Eventually, these efforts produced a new railroad company to build a line through the San Joaquin Valley to compete with the SP. Construction began in 1895, and by 1898 a line ran between Stockton and Bakersfield. The Santa Fe then bought the new line, linked it to the Santa Fe in southern California, and, in 1900, completed an extension to San Francisco Bay. The SP's monopoly had finally been broken.

Despite complaints about railroad rates and political influence, rail lines were enormously important to the economic development of the West. Without the railroad, most goods moved by water—up and down the coast and along the few navigable rivers of central California. The railroad permitted mining in remote regions and the shipping of heavy, technologically advanced mining equipment. Additionally, the railroad encouraged the development of specialized agriculture, especially fruit growing, that required fast trains and refrigeration equipment to carry produce from California to markets on the other side of the nation. By making travel from the eastern United States to California both easy and cheap, railroads also contributed significantly to the growth of the tourist industry and the state's population boom.

Mining and Finance

Mining continued to be centrally important to the state's economy, not only within California, but also for the activities of California companies in developing mines throughout the West. Many aspects of mining required a high degree of expertise, technologically advanced equipment, and large amounts of capital. By the 1870s, California, and San Francisco in particular, were providing all three of these elements for mining throughout the West. In the process, the initiative in mining shifted from prospectors and mining engineers toward well-capitalized mining companies and investment bankers.

Nevada's Comstock Lode (see p. 149) made some Californians wealthy. Between 1859 and 1880, a third of a billion dollars in silver (equivalent to about 6 billion dollars in 2010) was taken out of the Comstock Lode. Comstock mining required digging deep shafts and installing complex machinery to move men and equipment thousands of feet into the earth and to keep the tunnels cool and dry. By the mid-1870s, the Comstock mines used some of the most advanced mining equipment in the world.

The career of George Hearst illustrates the role of Californians in western mining. Born in Missouri in 1820, Hearst came overland to California in 1850 and acquired extensive mining experience. In 1859, he bought a one-sixth interest in the Ophir mine in the Comstock. The Ophir proved extraordinarily profitable. Hearst invested his profits in mining and in agricultural and timber lands throughout the West and Mexico. A Democrat, he served in the United States Senate from 1886 until his death in 1891. Though Hearst became wealthy from his mining investments, his fortune did not place him in the top ranks of San Francisco's financial elite. Those positions were held securely by the Big Four and others who were even more successful than Hearst in coaxing profits from the Comstock.

The first Californians to rake in extraordinary profits from the Comstock were William Ralston and William Sharon. Ralston had organized the Bank of California in 1864 and soon set up agencies in the Comstock region. Sharon, Ralston's representative there, established control over many mines in the region, and he also centralized decision making, financed deeper operations, and discovered new ore bodies. He vertically integrated the industry, combining ownership of mines with ownership of a crushing mill, a timber company for shoring up the deep tunnels, water for the mills and for cooling the mines, fuel, and, after 1872, a railroad connection between the Comstock and the Central Pacific. In 1873, he was elected to the United States Senate from Nevada.

Nevada silver earned large profits for Ralston's Bank of California. He invested some of this capital in manufacturing, mostly in San Francisco, including foundries and iron works, a refinery for Hawaiian sugar, and woolen mills to make cloth from the wool of California sheep. Other investments included shipping, hydraulic gold mining, insurance, irrigation canals, and the Palace Hotel, modeled on the great luxury hotels of Europe. He also loaned

funds to the Central Pacific. In 1875, however, Ralston faced a financial crisis. Some investments had been hit hard by the nationwide economic depression that began in 1873, and some factories were suffering from competition with the products of eastern factories, now shipped to California over the railroad that Ralston had helped to finance. His back to the wall, Ralston sold his half of the Palace Hotel to Sharon, disposed of other stock as best he could, and resigned from the bank. He died the same day. Sharon took his place as head of a reorganized Bank of California.

By the time Sharon took over the Bank of California, he and the bank had already been displaced as the dominant factors in Nevada silver mining. They lost out to four partners, James G. Fair and John W. Mackay, both experienced mine operators, and James C. Flood and William F. O'Brien, San Francisco saloon keepers turned stockbrokers. These four—all Irish—wrested control of one large mine from Sharon in 1868, and the mine almost immediately began to produce large profits. They soon struck the richest vein of silver ore in American history. Like Sharon before them, they vertically organized operations, investing in a reducing mill and in timber and water companies, all of which profited so long as the mines remained productive. Like others of the era, they invested their profits widely. Flood took the lead in creating the Nevada Bank of San Francisco in 1875 and served as its president. For a brief time, the Nevada Bank claimed the largest capitalization of any bank in the world.

San Francisco was the financial center of the Nevada silver boom and of mining throughout the West. The city's merchants sold supplies to the miners, and most stocks in mining companies were bought and sold at San Francisco's Mining Exchange, scene of quick profits and devastating losses. Initially, some San Francisco bankers, like Ralston, relied for capital on California merchants who had prospered during the Gold Rush. San Francisco bankers used their access to capital not just to invest in the Comstock but to centralize economic decision making there and to introduce more productive technologies. San Francisco bankers financed much of the West's mining operations, and the profits helped to develop California industries, as well as to build lavish mansions for the fortunate few. The process not only confirmed San Francisco as the financial capital of a self-financing frontier, but also reinforced the speculative mentality of the Gold Rush.

Agriculture

The 1870 census recorded that wheat had surpassed gold as California's most valuable product. Wheat remained one of California's most valuable products for the next 30 years, a period historians call the Bonanza Wheat Era. This massive increase in production occurred largely because of the expanding industrial work force of Britain, which required the importation of food. California's weather in the central valleys was conducive to the production of hard,

dry wheat suitable for the long sea voyage and highly prized by British and Irish milling companies.

The high demand for California wheat and the relatively flat and dry California terrain led to mass production. Agricultural entrepreneurs carved out huge wheat farms—the largest extending over 103 square miles—and came to rely on machines to a greater extent than wheat farmers anywhere else, particularly on larger and more complex machines. Relatively flat terrain and large fields encouraged California wheat growers to use huge steam-powered tractors and steam-powered combines, which cut the standing wheat and separated the grain from the stalk in one operation. Not for another 20 years or so was such equipment widely used elsewhere.

Other agricultural entrepreneurs also operated on a large scale. Henry Miller and Charles Lux were German immigrants, both butchers. They formed a partnership and quickly moved to meatpacking (selling meat wholesale) and to cattle raising. Their company became the largest meat-packing firm in the West and the largest landowner in the San Joaquin Valley, where the company undertook massive drainage and irrigation projects to transform the landscape into fields and pastures. Eventually, Miller and Lux owned or leased thousands of square miles of land in three states. By 1900, the firm was the nation's largest vertically integrated cattle-raising and meat-packing company, and the only agricultural corporation ranked among the 200 largest industrial corporations nationwide.

The bonanza wheat farms required a large force of laborers, especially at planting and harvesting times, as did the mammoth cattle ranches of Miller and Lux. Such operations gave a unique character to California agriculture—the farms and ranches were on a scale virtually unknown elsewhere in the country, and they relied on both technologically up-to-date equipment and an army of wage laborers, many of whom could only count on seasonal employment. By 1900 or so, the Bonanza Wheat Era had passed, partly because expansion of wheat growing elsewhere in the world drove down prices, and the Miller and Lux empire also dissolved after Miller's death in 1916.

Viticulture—the growing of grapes—had been well established in southern California by the Spanish missions. In the 1860s and after, grape growing for wine shifted northward, and the valleys around San Francisco Bay—Sonoma, Napa, Livermore, and Santa Clara—became the center of the California wine industry. There the climate, terrain, and soil produced grapes that could be made into high-quality wines. By 1900, California was making more than 80 percent of the nation's wine. Grape growers, especially in the San Joaquin Valley, discovered another market for their products in the form of raisins, and by 1900 almost half of the California grape harvest was used for raisins.

During the 1880s and 1890s, fruit growers began to expand and diversify, especially around San Francisco Bay and in parts of the San Joaquin Valley. Climate and soil conditions gave California fruit growers a great advantage over other parts of the country, and new techniques in preserving fruit meant

that dried and canned fruit from California could easily be shipped to the eastern states and elsewhere in the world. The development of refrigerated railroad cars greatly increased the ability of California growers to sell fresh fruit. The first refrigerated shipment of California fruit arrived in New York in 1888, leading to a major increase in demand. Refrigeration technology was soon applied to ships, and by 1892 fresh fruit from California was available in Great Britain. By 1900, Santa Clara County led the state in fruit production by a wide margin, followed by Fresno, Sonoma, and Solano Counties. In the 1870s, the U.S. Department of Agriculture introduced California growers to a navel orange from Brazil that was superior to previous varieties. Orange growing expanded rapidly in southern California once refrigerated railroad cars opened markets in the eastern states. In the 1880s and 1890s, California also became an important producer of vegetables and nuts.

The transition to fruit, nut, and vegetable crops brought important changes in many other aspects of California agriculture. The enormous wheat ranches and the vast cattle ranches yielded to smaller farms that relied more on human labor than on machinery. Raisin, peach, plum, and pear growers averaged between 10 and 75 acres per farm, as opposed to the thousands of acres that had composed some wheat or cattle ranches. In many cases, a single family ran these small operations, although harvesting usually required additional labor.

The agricultural work force in central California in the 1880s and 1890s was ethnically diverse, including immigrants from Europe and whites whose families had been in the United States for generations. Cattle raising often employed Latinos, including both descendants of Californios and more recent immigrants from Mexico. Chinese farm workers contributed to the development of specialty crop agriculture out of proportion to their numbers. By the 1890s, there were also increasing numbers of agricultural workers from Japan and India.

Water

Water was key for the success of fruit, nut, and vegetable growing. Miners had developed elaborate water systems almost immediately and continued to require large amounts. Burgeoning urban areas required more and more water. Demands for water came up against legal systems that had been devised for different conditions. As a result, conflict over water often led to protracted legal battles and produced, in the end, new legal definitions of water rights and one of the first court orders protecting the environment.

Hydraulic mining had been used since the early 1850s (see p. 116). By 1880, some hydraulic mining operations operated around the clock, lit by giant electrical floodlights and drawing water from large reservoirs constructed by damming rivers. Unfortunately, hydraulic mining was highly destructive not only to the terrain where the water cannons were directed, but also to the environment downstream. The water from the blasting drained into rivers, carrying

with it debris that killed fish and made the water unsuitable for drinking. Mining debris filled river channels and created serious flooding. Those floods scattered mining debris over a wide area and damaged agricultural land. Urban residents far downstream from hydraulic mining had to build elaborate dikes to keep rivers from flooding their cities. The mining debris in the river channels also threatened the use of rivers for shipping.

Finally, in 1884, Federal Circuit Judge Lorenzo Sawyer issued an order in the case of *Woodruff v. North Bloomfield Gravel Mining Company* prohibiting the dumping of debris in the rivers on the grounds that it was “a public and private nuisance,” and inevitably damaged the property and livelihood of farmers. It was, perhaps, the first federal court order restricting a business in order to protect the environment. The SP backed those challenging hydraulic mining because debris caused problems for the railroad too, by fouling its tracks and damaging its land. The Sawyer decision, which ended nearly all hydraulic mining, symbolized the transition from mineral extraction to crop production.

The legal system that Californians adapted from the eastern states was ill suited to the West. Eastern water law emphasized riparian rights, that is, the right of all those whose land bordered a stream to have access to the full flow of water from the stream, less small amounts for drinking. Irrigation removed water from the stream permanently, violating the riparian rights of those downstream from the irrigator. A different practice had emerged in the gold country, where the principle of appropriation was used to argue that the first person to take water from a stream gained the rights to that water. Both systems received some legal sanction by the California legislature.

This confusing state of affairs came under increasing challenge as more and more farmers began to use streams for irrigation. Eventually, in 1887, the legislature approved a law that permitted residents in a particular area to form an irrigation district with legal authority to take water for irrigation regardless of downstream claims. By then, California led the nation in the amount of irrigated farmland. By 1889, 14,000 California farmers (a quarter of the total), most of them in the San Joaquin Valley, practiced irrigation on more than a million acres, about eight percent of all improved farmland in the state.

As irrigation was transforming parts of the Central Valley previously too dry for many crops, wetlands were being drained to make them, too, available for farming. In the middle of the 19th century, the southern end of the San Joaquin Valley held the largest freshwater lake west of the Mississippi River. Tulare Lake was broad—covering as much as 790 square miles—but shallow, and ringed by wetlands thick with tules and a wide diversity of wildlife. But as irrigators began to divert the rivers that fed Tulare Lake, the lake dried up. By 1900, the lake bed was being used for agriculture. Throughout the Central Valley, other wetlands were also drained for use as farmland. Draining wetlands together with massive irrigation projects produced unprecedented alterations in the landscape, to the point that the Central Valley now has deservedly been called “one of the most transformed landscapes in the world.”

In the 1870s, some companies that had initially been formed to supply water for gold mining began to sell water to cities and for irrigation. To meet the demand for electricity in the late 1880s and after, entrepreneurs in most California cities were building generating plants that burned coal. Some, however, began to adapt the miners' waterways and high-pressure technologies to generate electricity more cheaply and with less pollution. By the early 1890s, there were several hydroelectric generating plants operating in the gold country. Mining towns like Grass Valley were among the first to have lights from hydroelectric power. By 1900, there were 25 hydroelectric generating plants in California, most in northern California, and that area was well on its way to becoming the region of the nation with the most intense use of water power to generate electricity.

Rise of Organized Labor

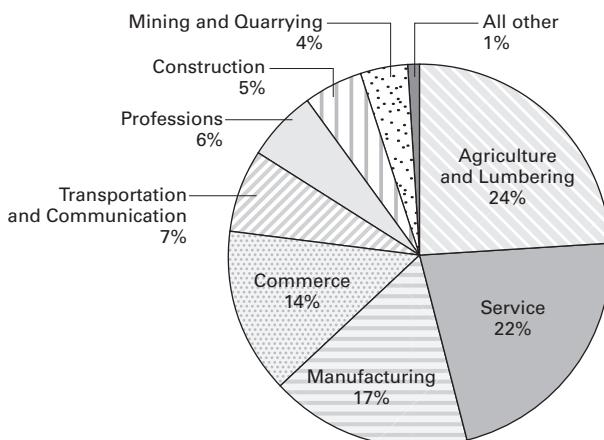
During the Gilded Age, changes in the state's economy resulted in a more complex work force. Figure 6.1 indicates components of the work force, based on the 1900 census. The census data understate the number of women who worked in agriculture, so that proportion could be as high as a third. Also, women who ran boarding houses and prostitutes were often undercounted, which would increase the service sector somewhat. Increasing the agriculture and service sectors would, of course, proportionately decrease the others. Otherwise, Figure 6.1 provides a reasonable approximation of the California work force.

As the scale of operations grew in mining, transportation, and some parts of agriculture and manufacturing, and as reliance on technologically

Figure 6.1 Major Components of the Wage-Earning Work Force, 1900

This graph suggests how complex the California economy had become by 1900. It also points to the continuing importance of agriculture and lumbering, as well as to the major role of manufacturing.

Source: *Occupations at the twelfth census* (Washington, 1904)



sophisticated machinery increased in those areas, fewer people had the necessary capital to enter such fields. Instead, those who worked in these fields were increasingly likely to be wage-earning employees. Some of them helped to organize unions. In 1910, Lucile Eaves published one of the first scholarly histories of California labor. In it, she wrote that trade union activity appeared so early “that one is tempted to believe that the craftsmen met each other on the way to California and agreed to unite.” And, indeed, many immigrants to California brought a concept of trade unionism in their mental baggage.

The first recorded union activity in California came in San Francisco in 1849, when carpenters went on strike for higher wages. Local unions were common in San Francisco and other cities from the Gold Rush onward, though most were short-lived until the 1880s. The history of early California unions is much like that of their counterparts to the east—workers with a particular skill formed local unions to seek better wages or working conditions, and those organizations often fell apart if they lost a strike.

As in other parts of the country in the 1880s, many local unions in California affiliated with newly formed national trade union organizations and sometimes with the American Federation of Labor (AFL), organized in 1886. Such trade unions typically limited their membership to skilled workers in one particular field, such as carpentry or printing, and many excluded women and people of color. The 1880s also saw the rapid rise of the Knights of Labor, who admitted both skilled and unskilled workers, including women and African Americans, but the Knights were short-lived. All California unions excluded Chinese workers. In fact, most California unions in the 1880s presented themselves as defending white workers against competition with Chinese workers, arguing that employers used Chinese workers to drive down wage levels and working conditions. Most historians agree that opposition to Chinese labor gave California unions what historian Alexander Saxton called “the indispensable enemy.” This common “enemy” proved useful in efforts to organize white workers.

Unions also thrived in the prosperous 1880s because many employers found it to their financial advantage to give in to employee demands for better wages, rather than to face a strike. In 1891, employers formed the Board of Manufacturers and Employers of California, centered in San Francisco and devoted to opposing unions. A major depression that began in 1893 caused many unions to collapse when they lost members due to unemployment or were unable to maintain wage levels. Only with the revival of prosperity in the late 1890s did trade unions revive.

San Francisco: Metropolis of the West

The Southern Pacific, Hearst, Sharon, Flood and Fair, cattle barons, lumber companies, and other entrepreneurs located their corporate headquarters in San Francisco, which was, by any criterion of that day, a major city. In 1880, San Francisco’s population reached nearly 300,000, ranking it seventh among the nation’s cities—the only large city west of St. Louis. James Bryce, an English

visitor, noted in the 1880s that San Francisco “dwarfs” other western cities and “is a commercial and intellectual centre, and source of influence for the surrounding regions, more powerful over them than is any Eastern city over its neighborhood.”

Beyond being a commercial and literary center, San Francisco had about it an air of excitement. Rudyard Kipling, the British author, visited in 1891 and likened the cable cars to a miracle for their ability to climb and descend hills smoothly. The expanding population alone provided opportunities that couldn’t exist elsewhere. For example, aspiring women artists formed a sketching club to encourage and critique each other’s work, amateur photographers (including Mary Tape) formed the California Camera Club, and German immigrants formed German gymnastics societies and singing groups. Seamen the world over knew of the city’s storied Barbary Coast, reputed to contain every conceivable form of pleasure and vice. San Francisco’s Chinatown was the largest in the United States and already attracted curious tourists—Oscar Wilde, in 1881, thought it was “the most artistic town I have ever come across.”

This photograph of San Francisco, the metropolis of the West, was taken looking southwestward along Market Street. Jack London called the area to the left of Market Street “South of the Slot” (south of the cable-car slot), and described it as home to the city’s working class. The area closest to the Ferry Building on both sides of Market Street included many saloons, cheap eating places, and union offices, all catering to the men who worked on the waterfront. Why might newcomers from small towns and rural areas, arriving in San Francisco through the Ferry Building, feel uncomfortable in such surroundings?



Market St./Tabor Photo, San Francisco, Tabor I.W. (Isaias West), Library of Congress, public domain, no known restrictions

San Francisco was the metropolis of the West because of its economic prowess. It was a center for finance and held the headquarters of corporations that dominated much of the Pacific coast and intermountain West. Its dominance also stemmed from its port: In 1880, 99 percent of all imports to the Pacific coast arrived on its docks, and 83 percent of all Pacific coast exports were loaded there. Western mining, transportation, and agriculture stimulated San Francisco's manufacturing sector. By 1880, San Francisco's foundries produced advanced mining equipment, large-scale agricultural implements, locomotives, and ships. San Francisco also became a major center for food processing.

San Francisco's entrepreneurs extended their reach throughout the West and into the Pacific. Claus Spreckels, an immigrant from Germany, established a sugar refinery in the city in 1863. In the 1870s, he developed a huge sugar plantation on the Hawaiian island of Maui and soon controlled nearly all the Hawaiian sugar crop. By the 1890s, Spreckels was one of the three largest sugar producers in the nation, drawing not only upon Hawai'i but also on sugar beet fields in several western states. In the late 1890s, Hawaiian-born sugar planters wrested control from Spreckels, then replicated the chain of vertical integration that Spreckels had pioneered, investing in a steamship company to carry raw sugar to the new C&H (California and Hawaiian) refinery they built at Crockett, northeast of San Francisco.

As the population of California's cities burgeoned, lumberjacks cut the coastal redwoods for use in construction. When timberlands near San Francisco Bay were exhausted, lumbering moved to northern California, Oregon, and Washington. Some lumber companies became vertically integrated, owning lumber mills, schooners that carried rough-cut lumber down the coast, and lumberyards and planing mills in the San Francisco Bay area. Born in Scotland, Robert Dollar grew up in lumber camps and worked his way up to sawmill owner. He purchased a ship in 1895 to carry his lumber to San Francisco and then added more ships. His Dollar Line eventually became a major oceanic shipping company and the predecessor of today's American President Lines.

Some of California's Gold Rush fortunes were extended and expanded by a second generation. By 1900, George Hearst's former newspaper, the *San Francisco Examiner*, was one of several papers owned by his son, William Randolph Hearst, who created a nationwide publishing empire in the early 20th century. William H. Crocker, son of Charles Crocker of the Big Four, formed Crocker Bank in the 1880s and invested widely throughout the West, including electrical power companies, hydroelectric generating plants, mining, agriculture, shipping, and southern California oil. Claus Spreckels's son John invested heavily in San Diego in commercial properties, banks, newspapers, and the Hotel del Coronado, the city's leading tourist attraction. His investments helped San Diego grow to almost 18,000 people by 1900. Henry Huntington—the nephew and heir of Collis Huntington of the SP—created an extensive streetcar system in the Los Angeles basin that both fed upon and contributed to the growth of Los Angeles.

New Social Patterns

California was becoming ever more urban—by 1900, more than 40 percent of Californians lived in its 10 largest cities. Urban growth was just one of the social and cultural changes that were also occurring elsewhere in the United States, including the emergence of new educational institutions, changes in the status of women, and large-scale immigration.

Education

During the Gilded Age, great changes occurred in education, including the expansion of higher education. Religious organizations created California's earliest colleges. Methodists received the state's first college charter, in 1851, for California Wesleyan College, later the University of the Pacific. In 1851, Joseph Alemany, first Catholic bishop of California, gave the Santa Clara mission to Jesuit priests for a college, and Santa Clara College (later Santa Clara University) obtained its charter in 1855. Southern California lagged in creating colleges. Los Angeles Methodists planned the University of Southern California in the 1870s, but the university opened in 1880 only because of a gift of land by three donors—one Protestant, one Catholic, and one Jewish. Presbyterians founded Occidental College in 1887.

Compared with eastern colleges, more of the early California colleges admitted women. Even so, as was the case in the East, separate women's colleges began to appear, notably Mills College, chartered in 1885 as a private, nondenominational women's college.

Denominational colleges were older than the nation itself. Public universities—nondenominational, tax-supported—appeared in a few places after the American Revolution, but most public universities were created only after 1862, when Congress approved the Morrill Act, giving land to states for use in funding a university. The University of California derived from both traditions. The College of California, founded in 1853 as a private academy, drew upon the traditions of Harvard and Yale. In 1867, the trustees donated their institution to the state. The legislature added to that gift the state's land grant under the Morrill Act and created the University of California. In 1873, the university acquired a medical college in San Francisco. As was occurring elsewhere, the university moved away from its original classical curriculum and created majors, including engineering, agriculture, and commerce. The university also increased its emphasis on research and service to the state.

The need for better-trained teachers led the legislature to create state-funded, two-year schools called “normal schools.” These institutions bore little resemblance to the colleges of the day. Instead of the classical curriculum or the new system of majors, they concentrated on training teachers for grades