

*Through the treaty ending the war with Mexico, the United States controlled Texas, California, and what was then New Mexico territory.*

## California Gold Rush

SS.8.A.4.1, SS.8.A.4.3, SS.8.E.2.1, SS.8.E.2.3, LA.8.1.6.1, LA.8.1.6.2, LA.8.1.6.3

### *How did the discovery of gold help California?*

When gold was discovered at Sutter's Mill in 1848, people from all over the world traveled to California in search of riches. Those who arrived in 1849 were called **forty-niners**. As one official reported, "The farmers have thrown aside their plows, the lawyers their briefs, the doctors their pills, the priests their prayer books, and all are now digging gold." Some people arrived by sea. Others traveled on the Oregon Trail or the Santa Fe Trail.

Americans made up about 80 percent of the forty-niners. Others came from Mexico, South America, Europe, and Australia. About 300 men arrived from China, the first large group of Asian immigrants to settle in America. Although some eventually returned to China, others remained and established California's Chinese American community.

### The Californios

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended the war with Mexico and made Californios—Mexicans living in California—citizens of the United States. The treaty also guaranteed them the rights to their lands. The Land Law of 1851, however, established a group of reviewers who examined the Californios' land rights.

When a new settler claimed land that was held by a Californio, the two parties would go to court. There, it was the Californio who had to prove his or her ownership of the land. Some Californios were able to prove their claims. Many others lost their cases and their land.

### The Life of a Forty-Niner

As people rushed to a new area to look for gold, they built new communities. Towns and small cities appeared almost overnight. One site on the Yuba River had only two houses in September 1849. A year later, a miner arrived to find a bustling town of 1,000 people "with a large number of hotels, stores, groceries, bakeries, and . . . gambling houses."

Cities also flourished during the Gold Rush. As ships arrived daily with gold seekers, San Francisco became a **boomtown**, growing quickly from a tiny village to a city of about 20,000 people.

Most forty-niners had no experience in mining. Whenever they heard that gold had been discovered at a particular site, they rushed to it and attacked the hillsides with pickaxes and shovels. They spent hours bent over streambeds, "panning" for gold dust and nuggets. Panning involved gently swirling water and gravel in a pan in order to remove dirt and, perhaps, reveal a small speck of gold.

The California Gold Rush more than doubled the world's supply of gold. For all their hard work, however, very few forty-niners achieved lasting wealth. Most found little or no gold. Many of those who did find gold lost their riches through gambling or wild spending.

Boomtown merchants, however, made huge profits. They could charge whatever they liked for food and other essential items because there were no other nearby stores that sold these products. For example, an immigrant named Levi Strauss sold the miners sturdy pants made of denim. His "Levi's" made him rich.

### Gold Rush Society

Mining camps contained men of all backgrounds but few women. Lonely and suffering hardships, many men spent their free hours drinking, gambling, and fighting. Mining towns had no police or prisons. As a result, citizens known as vigilantes (vih • juh • LAN • teez) formed committees to protect themselves. Vigilantes took the law into their own hands and acted as police, judge, jury, and sometimes executioner.

### Economic and Political Progress

The Gold Rush had lasting effects on California. Agriculture, shipping, and trade grew to meet the demand for food and other goods. Many people who had arrived looking for gold stayed to farm or run a business.

Rapid growth brought the need for better government. In 1849, Californians applied for statehood and wrote a **constitution**. The constitution's ban on slavery, however, caused a crisis in Congress. Southern states opposed California's admission. Congress eventually worked out a compromise by which California became a free state in 1850.

**Determining Cause and Effect** How did the California Gold Rush lead to the expansion of cities?

## A Religious Refuge in Utah

SS.8.A.4.1, SS.8.A.4.3, SS.8.E.2.1, SS.8.E.2.3

## Why did the Mormons settle in Utah?

While the Gold Rush was transforming California, change was also taking place in nearby Utah. There, Mormons, or members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, were building a new community and fulfilling their vision of the godly life.

### The Mormons Move On

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was among a number of religious movements that sprang up during the religious awakenings of the 1830s and 1840s. The founder of the Mormon Church was Joseph Smith, a New Englander living in western New York. Smith said that he had received visions that led him to build a new church. He began preaching Mormon ideas in 1830.

Smith published *The Book of Mormon* that year, announcing that it was a translation of words written on golden plates that he had received from an angel. The text told of the coming of the Christ and the need to build a kingdom on Earth to receive him.

Smith hoped to use his visions to build an ideal society. He believed that property should be held in common, rather than belong to individuals. He also supported polygamy, the idea that a man could have more than one wife. This angered a large number of people. Mormons eventually gave up this practice.

Smith formed a community in New York, but neighbors disapproved of the Mormons' religion and forced them to leave. The Mormons eventually settled in Illinois. In 1839 they bought the town of Commerce, Illinois, and renamed it Nauvoo. Nauvoo became a prosperous community.

Still, the Mormons continued to suffer persecution, or mistreatment because of their beliefs. In 1844 a mob of local residents killed Joseph Smith. After Smith's death, Brigham Young took over as head of the Mormons. Young decided that the Mormons should move again to escape persecution and find religious freedom. This time, the Mormons would move west to the Great Salt Lake in present-day Utah. Although part of Mexico at the time, no Mexicans had settled in the region because of its harsh terrain.

### A Haven in the Desert

The Mormon migration began in 1846. About 12,000 Mormons made the trek in the largest single migration in American history. The Mormons' route became known as the Mormon Trail and served as a valuable route to the western United States.

In 1847 the Mormons finally reached the Great Salt Lake. There, Young declared that the Mormons would build a new settlement. The Mormons staked a claim on the dry, wild land they called Deseret. Soon they had set up farming communities.

At first life was difficult for the settlers. The Mormons, however, made Deseret flourish through hard work and determination. They carefully planned towns, such as Salt Lake City, and built irrigation canals for their farms. They taxed property and regulated the use of water, timber, and other resources. Mormons also founded industries so they could be self-sufficient. Mormon merchants sold supplies to the forty-niners who passed through Utah on their way to California.

In 1848 the United States acquired the Salt Lake area from Mexico after the Mexican War. In 1850 Congress established the Utah Territory. Brigham Young was named governor.

By 1860 there were many Mormon communities, but Utah was not easily **incorporated** into the United States. Problems included the Mormon practice of polygamy and frequent conflicts with federal officials. In 1857 and 1858, war almost broke out between the Mormons and the United States Army. Utah did not become a state until 1896, after the Mormons officially gave up the practice of polygamy.

**Summarizing** Why did the Mormons have to keep moving from one place to another?

## LESSON 4 REVIEW

### Review Vocabulary

1. Define each of the following words or terms, then use them to write a paragraph about the Gold Rush.

- a. forty-niner
- b. boomtown
- c. vigilante

LA.8.1.6.1

### Answer the Guiding Questions

2. **Explaining** Why was California's entry into the Union delayed?

SS.8.A.4.1

**3. Explaining** What did Joseph Smith believe was the goal for Mormons?

SS.8.A.4.3

**4. Making Connections** How did the Gold Rush affect California's population?

SS.8.A.4.1

**5. Listing** Make a list of reasons that Deseret was able to flourish.

SS.8.A.4.3

**6. EXPOSITORY WRITING** Consider the challenges and opportunities facing a fortyner. What kinds of qualities do you think this kind of person would have to possess?

SS.8.A.4.3