

NATION: Gold Rush in California

Forty-Niners Scramble for Gold

Sutter's Mill, California, 1849

There is gold in California! People from all over the world are rushing here to get rich. This run for gold is being called the **gold rush**.

Gold-hunters are coming to the land around **John Sutter's Sawmill**. In 1848, a worker spotted gold in the river there. Now:

- Men are leaving their farms, factories, and families to hunt for gold.

- Soldiers are leaving their army posts to hunt for gold.

- Men are leaving England, France, and Spain to hunt for gold.

- Sailors are leaving their ships to hunt for gold.

These "**forty-niners**" [the people who are rushing to find gold in 1849] are swelling the population of California. **Boomtowns** [towns that grow up quickly, sometimes in one or two weeks] dot the hills and fields.

Tents and wooden shacks make up these boomtowns. But the **prospectors** [men looking for gold in the rivers and hills] don't care what they live in. They put up with the mud and the bugs, hoping to find gold.

Getting the Gold

A look at how prospectors pan for gold in California.



Gold prospectors stand in water all day panning for gold.

The prospector uses a low pan [like a pie pan] to scoop water and dirt from the river.

He swishes the pan from side to side until most of the water and dirt have fallen out.

Any gold nuggets [pieces] are left at the bottom of the pan.

Wells, Fargo—Moving the Gold

1852

Wells, Fargo and Company is California's newest business. Its stagecoaches run gold from the gold fields to Wells, Fargo banks. Wells, Fargo also

carries mail and people between the Mississippi River and the West Coast. Wells, Fargo stagecoaches are fast. At times, they can go eight miles in 30 minutes.



California Joins Union—Outlaws Slavery

Washington, D.C.,
September, 1850

California joins the U.S. as the 31st state—and Southerners in Congress are not happy. California is a free state [without slavery].

Four years ago, Southerners kept the **Wilmot Proviso** from becoming a law. The **Wilmot Proviso** said that there could be no slaves in any lands the U.S. got from Mexico. Southerners

wanted to be free to move with their slaves to places like California.

In 1848, the U.S. Army, led by **John C. Fremont**, won California from Mexico. At that time, there were few Americans there. They had to cross hot deserts and snowy mountains to get to California. Many did not get there—they turned back or died.

One group, the **Donner Party**, got trapped in the mountains

over the winter. Many of them died. The ones who did get to California stayed alive by eating the dead.

Then gold was found at Sutter's Sawmill in 1848. No matter how hard it is to get to California, people are coming to find gold. So many have come in just one year that California already has the 60,000 people needed for a territory to become a state.

PEOPLE: Americans Moving West

We're Moving West

A look at eight groups of Americans that are packing up and moving to the West.

Prospectors:
Looking for
gold and
silver



Trappers:
Looking for
furs to sell



Immigrants:
Looking for a
new life



Frontiersmen:
Looking for adventure
and fun



Farmers:
Looking for
new land



Land Speculators:
Looking for
more land
to buy



Mormons:
Looking for
freedom of
religion



Dreamers:
Looking to
fulfill manifest
destiny



NATION: Looking for Freedom of Religion—Again

Immigrants Find New Life in U.S.

1850

Immigrants [people from one country coming to live in another country] are rushing to America. The Irish want to work in American cities. German and Swedish farmers are moving to the frontier and even the wilderness to get land. They need land to farm and America has plenty.



Pre-Emption Act Gives Settlers Cheap Land

1841

To please small farmers, Congress has passed the Pre-Emption Act. This new law says that people who have lived on a piece of government land for some time can buy it. They can buy 160 acres for \$1.25 an acre.

Land speculators do not like the Pre-Emption Act. Speculators are people who buy up large pieces of land. Then they sell this land piece by piece. For example, a speculator:

\$ Buys 10,000 acres of land for \$5,000—or 50¢ an acre.

\$ Sells the land in 100-acre pieces for \$300—or \$3 an acre.

\$ Takes in \$30,000 but paid \$5,000—a profit of \$25,000.

The government would not sell land to the farmers. And the farmers did not have the money to buy the land from the speculators. So these farmers have been moving onto land owned by the government. They have cleared the land of trees. They have plowed fields and built houses. These farmers are called **squatters** [people who take over land without buying it]. Now the Pre-Emption Act will let the squatters buy this land.

Farmers Push Frontier West

1855

Thousands of miles of unsettled land is drawing farmers West. Many farmers have used up the soil on their old farms. They are moving West to start new farms on land that has never been farmed.

Immigrant farmers are moving West, too. Their farms in Europe were too small. They could not make a living on them.

Farming in the West is different from farming in the East or in Europe.

Western land:

■ Has never been plowed for planting. But the John Deere Company has built steel plows. The hard earth does not break

these strong plows.

■ Is drier. But farmers are learning to plow after every rain to keep the water in the ground.

■ Is not as rich. But farmers are planting more acres. They can cut their crops faster than they used to because of the reaper. Cyrus McCormick built the first reaper [mower].



Mormons Find New Home in Utah

Great Salt Lake,
Utah Territory, 1847

A Mormon search party, led by Brigham Young, has claimed the desert around the Great Salt Lake. Over 5,000 Mormons are expected to come to this new Mormon settlement.

"Mormons" are people who belong to the Mormon church. Joseph Smith started this church in New York state in 1831.

Since then, many people have been afraid of the Mormons and treated them

Brigham Young: Founder of Mormon Community

1844: Takes over as Mormon leader after a non-Mormon mob kills leader Joseph Smith. Many people were afraid of Mormons because Mormons:

■ Lived and worked together. The church said how Mormon families and businesses should be run.

■ Lived by rules different from other people. For example, Mormon men could have several wives.

■ Had beliefs different from other religions.

1846: Young leads Mormons out of Nauvoo, Illinois, to a winter camp on the Mississippi River.

1846: In April, Young leaves the U.S. with 146 Mormons to look for a new home in Mexican lands.

1847: In July, Young claims the Great Salt Lake and the Great Basin for the new Mormon settlement.

badly. People have chased the Mormons from New York to Ohio to Missouri to Illinois. A mob killed Joseph Smith in Illinois.

Brigham Young is the Mormons' new leader. He sees Utah as the promised land for the Mormons.

NATION: How We Moved West

Roads, Canals, Railroads Speed Settlers West

U.S., 1850s

Americans are on the move—pushing civilization west.

Americans are moving:

■ **From civilization** [settled land with many people]. Some people do not like to have many people around. So many Americans are moving to the frontier.

■ **To the frontier** [land that borders civilization]. There are not many towns, homes, and farms on the frontier. Yet some people want no other people around. They are going to the wilderness.

■ **To the wilderness** [land where no people live]. In Ameri-

ca, there is not much wilderness left. As Americans move west, wilderness becomes frontier. The frontier becomes civilization.

Traders and settlers going west are making more paths through the wilderness—the **Wilderness Trail**, the **Santa Fe Trail**, the **Oregon Trail**, and the **California Trail** all have been pounded out by people, horses, and wagons going west.

Other ways to travel are often easier:

■ **The National Road**—The U.S. government paid for this so East and West could trade with each other.

■ **Toll roads**—Businesses built these so people and goods could travel among eastern states. People pay a toll [money] to use these roads.

■ **Rivers and lakes**—**Steamboats** are fast, cheap, and clean.

■ **Canals**—There was no river to join the Great Lakes with the Atlantic Ocean. So **De Witt Clinton**, governor of New York, had the **Eric Canal** built. The Eric Canal opened in 1825.

■ **Railroads**—They are spreading north, south, east, and west. Already they are carrying people and goods as far as St. Louis, Missouri.

How We're Moving West



A look at American roads.

Early Roads
WHEN: Used between 1700-1860.
WHERE: The first 13 states.
WHAT: Post roads (old Indian trails); ooduroy roads (logs laid across trails); toll roads (crushed stone).
Posting (bringing mail) on horseback; carrying passengers in wagons.

Wilderness Trail
WHEN: Made between 1770-1775.
WHERE: From the Potomac River over the Cumberland Gap in the Blue Ridge Mountains to Kentucky.
WHAT: At first, a narrow trail. Later widened for wagons.
USED FOR: Settlers moving west; trade.

National Road (Cumberland Road)
WHEN: Built between 1811-1840.
WHERE: From Cumberland, Maryland, to Vandalia, Illinois.
WHAT: A well-made road paid for by the U.S. government.
USED FOR: Settlers moving west; goods moving east and west.

Santa Fe Trail
WHEN: From 1822
WHERE: From Independence, Missouri, to Santa Fe, Mexico.
WHAT: A narrow, rough trail.
USED FOR: Trading goods with the Mexicans; later for settlers moving west.

Oregon Trail
WHEN: From 1832 through the 1840s.
WHERE: From Independence, Missouri, to Portland and Fort Vancouver, Oregon.
WHAT: A rough, hard trail; not marked.
USED FOR: Trading furs at first; later for settlers moving to Oregon territory.

California Trail
WHEN: 1840s-1850s.
WHERE: From Fort Hall, Idaho, on the Oregon Trail south across the Sierra Nevada Mountains to Sacramento, California.
WHAT: A narrow, hard trail; not marked.
USED FOR: Settlers and "forty-niners" moving to California.